

## Further Reflections on Jane Addams' Leadership – Personal Relevance?

Greetings Developing Leaders –

To model what scholars of leadership teach us about leadership development, I set about reflecting after our concluding discussion at last Monday's seminar session. Your comments gave me several "ah-ha s" – and I am grateful to you for that!

In addition, I decided to challenge myself to think about the Jane Addams story, and how I believe it is relevant to your own leadership development. I provide my shorthand rambling thoughts below should you care to think about this same question yourself.

Your question was...."how does identifying JA's leadership qualities apply to what I need to know/practice as a public health professional?"...or something like that. Good question!

To formulate some answer, I thought about the scenario where you are beginning your next professional job. With this position, you have inherited management responsibility for a program/project unit of about 8 or 9 people; some have been with the host organization for some several years, others are fairly new to the enterprise. What will you need to do? What leadership qualities might you need to draw on?

Drawing on the list you generated in your cover letters and on the board, my thoughts are as follows....

- You will need to gather data, conduct an environmental scan, to understand fully what your tasks are, what your challenges will be, and what "resources" (human, fiscal, and professional/organizational support) you have to move forward both internally in the unit, and externally in the larger organization and beyond (potential collaborators). You will need to do this starting on day two in order to begin to evolve your vision for the future of the project/enterprise that you are now in charge of. In this process, you will need to listen well.
- You will need to use the "data" you gather to craft your understanding of the "whole" (the context) and the individual "parts" (specific activities/products, resources, capabilities, etc.).
- You will need confidence, determination, an "indefatigable spirit" for getting through your first few staff meetings and potentially for getting through your first few meetings with external organizations/collaborators. It is not unlikely that some folks will set out to "put you in your place."
- You will need to be creative/imaginative in formulating your vision, such that your vision incorporates principles that your staff, your bosses, and your external collaborators can find common ground in. If you communicate a vision that is understood to be new, you will not be alienating some by choosing to promote the beliefs of some over others.
- You will need share in tasks at all levels of your staff's work in order to engender trust, and model high standards of work and behavior.
- If you are passionate in all of this, you are highly likely to excite and motivate, and to mobilize others in the enterprise.
- You will need to carefully craft your verbal and written communications in order to be effective with respect to the bullet above.

My list could continue, but I fear that I've lost you by now, particularly since you are studying for mid-terms. Much to read, much to do.

What you have here, I believe, are some ideas and identified skills that you can reflect on and practice as you travel your career path. Few are as "evolved" as it appears Jane Addams was, but all can practice self-awareness at every step of the way in search of their own excellence. In my experience, it is much about the journey. And if others see that you are a seeker of excellence for yourself, they will want to do the same. And when that happens your shared journey will yield fine contributions to society.

Thanks for listening to my rambling thoughts; I hope something in them resonated for you.

Cheers, Holly

Ps. Something to keep in mind when you are writing cover letters to job applications.....you probably want to highlight some of your qualities and skills applicable to the advertised position along with your past accomplishments.