Servant-Leadership in Practice at The Men’s Wearhouse

by George Zimmer, President and CEO, The Men’s Wearhouse

(Editors’ Note: Servant-leadership and The Greenleaf Center were recently featured on the website of The Men’s Wearhouse. This article also appears on their website and is reprinted with permission. For more information visit www.menswearhouse.com.)

A

lthough our Company only began using the term “servant-leadership” in the 1990s, we have long had an intuitive sense that the key to choosing leaders lies in looking for people who enjoy helping others learn, achieve, and grow as people. Why? Because it feels like the right way to build a company. And because it’s good for business.

We have always known that a store or office team will trust and respect a manager who is authentically concerned about their welfare and development. Mentoring takes time and effort. Leaders who naturally care about their team will take the time to provide specific feedback and direction — day after day. We recognize that individuals will make mistakes, but those mistakes are a necessary part of learning. Leaders must also care enough to have the “straight talk” conversations that are needed when employees are not honoring their commitment to learn.

Because servant-leadership is at the core of our management philosophy, our policies arise naturally out of the perspective of serving our teammates as well as our customers. We try to provide an environment that inspires, encourages, and supports the progress of our current and emerging servant leaders. How?

Through our training programs. We talk about what it means to be a servant-leader at the Men’s Wearhouse. We let our employees know that they can expect their leaders to be concerned about helping them reach their potential. We let our employees know that we expect them to be committed to continuous self-improvement. Setting clear expectations helps keep everyone’s eyes on the target.

We talk about behaviors — such as listening and demonstrating that you understand and value what someone has told you — that indicate to others that you respect and care for them. To get respect, you must first give it.

Here are some snapshots that show what servant-leadership looks like at the Men’s Wearhouse:

• On the way to work, a supervisor stops by a sick employee’s house to drop off his paycheck — along with a direct deposit form — and find out how he’s doing.

• A district manager reviews a list of skills that an under-performing employee needs to improve on.

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Center took up the challenge and for some months has been working on the campaign’s preliminary phase, and is now announcing the public phase of this endowment challenge.

In introducing and thanking Mr. Pieper and members of his family attending the conference, Walls challenged conferees to follow Mr. Pieper’s example. “If you believe in servant-leadership and its value to your life and that of your organization, we hope you will consider expressing that belief with your financial support of our endowment, as has this generous gentleman from Wisconsin.”

(Continued on page 3)
Connecting Spirit and Work: The Greenleaf Center’s 2001 Conference

by Judith Ryan

Judi Ryan is a Greenleaf Center member and conference participant. She works part time as an exhibit developer at The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, and is a writer and facilitator.

The theme of spirit and work was an evident thread in keynote addresses and break-out sessions alike at the Greenleaf Center’s 11th annual International Conference in June, 2001. Participants came from 38 states and 10 countries.

The conference opened with an Executive Panel led by Joyce DeShano (President of the Board of Trustees of Ascension Health, the largest not-for-profit healthcare system in the world), William Pollard (Chairman and former CEO of The ServiceMaster Company), and Jack Lowe, Jr., (CEO of TDIndustries, named in the top 10 of Fortune magazine’s list of the “100 Best Companies to Work For in America” 4 years in a row). The panelists spoke of the importance of developing a servant spirit in the management of their organizations, and calling forth the diverse gifts and beliefs of all associates.

Keynote speaker Danah Zohar, the author of SQ: Connecting With Our Spiritual Intelligence, said that leaders develop the qualities they need not just through IQ and EQ (emotional intelligence) but also through what she calls SQ (spiritual intelligence). She sees this spiritual intelligence as a transformative intelligence, serving our need for and access to fundamental meaning, values, deep purpose, and maintains that servant-leadership is a direct path to it.

Keynoter James Autry, the author of six books, including Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership, said what is missing today is a deeper connection with our work that transcends power, position, and money. Autry calls this connection “the spirit of work.” “It’s how your spirituality finds expression in the workplace, in your everyday attitudes and behaviors and relationships.” Autry said that spirituality in the workplace has to be manifested as behavior or it doesn’t mean anything.

“People almost always are drawn to the kind of work environment servant-leadership describes,” said keynoter Peter Senge, a senior lecturer at MIT and author of The Fifth Discipline. “So why isn’t that work environment the norm rather than the exception? Because there is such a great depth of commitment required to build that kind of enterprise. It is a profound journey.”

Call 317-259-1241, ext. 28, to obtain a listing of conference keynote tapes available for sale.
wardrobe consultant has committed to work on, and then jots down some strategies for observing that person and modeling correct behavior when she visits his store later that day.

- A regional tailor arranges a three-way phone conference with a Vietnamese translator and a tailor to discuss that employee’s benefits options.
- A field operations trainer stays late to close out the store so the assistant manager can leave early to spend time with his high school age daughter who is competing in the statewide debating championships the next day.
- A store manager takes two teammates out for a quick coffee break so she can facilitate some give and take communication about an angry interchange that took place that morning in the store.

You’ve probably witnessed similar examples in your own company — people going out of their way to help a teammate. We think that should be the norm. But we never stop appreciating the efforts of leaders who serve.

Ultimately, the motivation and creativity needed to lead by serving comes from within. Over time, servant-leaders naturally emerge within a group and gain the respect and trust of the people around them. We would rather promote someone we know, someone who has demonstrated the characteristics of a servant-leader — even if he or she has not managed before or mastered some of the technical skills or knowledge associated with a particular management role.

Individuals are not born as servant-leaders. All of us develop our own sense of how to treat ourselves and others, based on experience and the values we adopt as we progress through our lives. Each day’s activities provide opportunities for behaving like a servant-leader, and each individual makes his or her decisions about how to interact with others and respond to situations one decision at a time.

Servant-leadership is a moment-to-moment art, with each day posing new challenges and stretching the sensitivity, awareness, and creativity of its practitioners. We think it’s an art that is valuable both inside and outside the workplace.

Endowment Challenge Campaign (Continued from page 1)

“The flame of servant-leadership and The Greenleaf Center burns more brightly today than at any time since Robert K. Greenleaf first coined the term ‘servant-leadership’ in 1970,” said CEO Larry C. Spears. “Those who believe in this work have an unusually rare opportunity to demonstrate their support and to see it matched by Dick Pieper’s most kind-and-generous offer.”

Servant-leadership supporters are cordially invited to join with us in helping to meet this special endowment challenge. Your gift will be matched by half that amount by Mr. Pieper. Please send your check to The Greenleaf Center, or call (317) 259-1241 for more information.

Walls also reminded the conference that the Greenleaf Center depends on sponsors and donors to assist it in providing quality educational experiences at an affordable price. The Greenleaf Center would like to acknowledge and thank the following organizations and individuals whose support added so much to the quality of the 2001 conference.

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Who is the Servant-Leader?

The servant-leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant — first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely to themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?" — from The Servant as Leader by Robert K. Greenleaf

The Greenleaf Center’s Mission

The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership exists to support those who, through the practice of servant-leadership, seek to create organizations in which individual stakeholders become healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous; and in so doing, build a better, more humane society which welcomes the full diversity of the human family.

The Greenleaf Center’s Goals

1. To make all institutions aware of servant-leadership and to deepen their understanding and practice of it.
2. To create a larger base of caring people from which servant-leadership can arise (i.e., CEO’s, trustees, aspiring leaders and followers, external consultants).
3. To achieve widespread recognition, understanding and acceptance of spirituality in the workplace.
4. To create a new understanding and practice of moral persuasion toward organizational transformation, and to follow the methodologies of exemplary servant-leaders.

Originally founded in 1964 as the Center for Applied Ethics, Inc., the Center was renamed the Robert K. Greenleaf Center in 1985. The Center is an international, not-for-profit institution headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.
Servant-Leadership Around the World

(Servant-Leadership Around the World is a new feature intended to share with our readers information concerning the development of servant-leadership and The Greenleaf Center across the globe. Contact information for the Center’s international offices may be found in our masthead on page 2.)

Australia/New Zealand

• The first Australian servant-leadership conference organized by the Greenleaf Centre-Australia/New Zealand was held November 15-17, 2000 in Melbourne and at the Lancemore Hill Conference Centre in Kilmore, Victoria, Australia. The conference’s opening event was a CEO Dinner held in Melbourne, which featured presentations by Greenleaf Center Board Chair Jack Lowe, Jr. and CEO Larry C. Spears. From there the conference traveled to a beautiful retreat center where 80 conference participants in a series of presentations, workshops, and dialogues around the principles of servant-leadership and their practical applications. Information regarding the Greenleaf Centre-Australia/New Zealand may be accessed through their website at www.greenleaf.org.au.

The Netherlands

• The Greenleaf Centre for Servant-Leadership in Europe has recently published A New Vision for HR Professionals: To Serve and To Lead by Daan Fousert. The book looks at human resource management from the perspective of servant-leadership and is available in both Dutch and English. The English-language edition may be obtained from the U.S. office for $43 (S37 + $6 shipping and handling).

• The Greenleaf Center-Europe sponsored a public program on servant-leadership in February 2001 in Hilversum, The Netherlands. Tjeb Maris, director of the Center’s European office, and Larry C. Spears were among the presenters.

• In February Larry C. Spears also met with executives and managers of Voerman International Group in Leidschendam, The Netherlands. Managing Director Ed Voerman leads this large international company with a vision based on the principles of servant-leadership. Voerman International is involved in the business of moving, storage, and office relocations, and has offices in The Netherlands and throughout Eastern Europe.

• Dienstbaar Leiderschap (“Servant Leadership” in Dutch) was published by Tjeb Maris in 2000.

Indonesia

• Reflections on Leadership, edited by Larry C. Spears, has recently been translated and published in a Bahasa Indonesian-language edition as Renungan Tentang Kepemimpinan.

Korea

• Servant Leadership, by Robert K. Greenleaf, has recently been translated and published in a Korean-language edition. This important book by Robert K. Greenleaf was first published in English by Paulist Press in 1977 and has remained in print since that time.

• Also, in April 2001 Kwan Eung Lee and Miok Cho, directors of The Greenleaf Center-Korea, brought to the U.S. a delegation of a dozen business managers from Samsung Semiconductor for a series of site visits to companies practicing servant-leadership. Accompanied by The Greenleaf Center’s Chief Learning Officer Julie Beggs, the group traveled to Indianapolis where they visited Schneider Engineering and The Greenleaf Center; to Dallas, where they visited TDIndustries and The Container Store; and to Columbus, Georgia where they visited Synovus Financial.

• The Greenleaf Centre-Korea was launched in 2000 with a visit by Larry C. Spears, who gave several presentations to business leaders and participated in a variety of meetings and interviews.

Singapore

• Over 1,200 people attended the first servant-leadership conference in Singapore on February 12-13, 2001. Co-sponsored by The Greenleaf Centre-Singapore, The Girls’ Brigade Singapore, and Singapore’s Civil Service College Institute of Public Administration and Management, the conference theme was, “Leading the New Millennium Organisation: Creating Great Places to Work.” Among the featured presenters were Ann McGee-Cooper (consultant and author of You Don’t Have To Go Home From Work Exhausted!), Lim Siong Guan (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance in Singapore), Steven Hock (The Chaordic Alliance), Ho Peng Kee (Singapore’s Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs), Daniel Kim (consultant and facilitator), and Claus Otto Scharmer (teacher and co-founder of the Society for Organisational Learning). Former Greenleaf Centre trustee Diane Cory served as a “conference weaver.” In addition to the plenary sessions there were seven concurrent sessions.

South Africa

The latest Greenleaf Centre office is currently being organized and plans are underway for a launching conference to be held in South Africa in the Spring of 2002.

United Kingdom


• The fifth Greenleaf Centre-U.K. Conference was held on Feb. 16, 2001 and featured a variety of speakers from both the United Kingdom and the U.S.A., including a presentation by Jonathan Austin on the publication of the U.K.’s “Fifty Best Companies to Work For.” Conference participants also came from France, The Netherlands, and South Africa. The Greenleaf Centre-U.K. also hosted the Greenleaf Center’s scheduled board meeting.

• The fourth U.K. Conference was held earlier on November 2-3, 2000. Among the presenters at that conference were GC-U.K. board members Judith Leary-Joyce and Ralph Lewis, along with Julie Beggs from the U.S.A.
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On the Road and In the News with the Greenleaf Center

Listed below are some of the recent programs and outreach activities involving Greenleaf Center personnel. The Greenleaf Center offers a wide array of workshops, institutes, retreats, speakers, and consultative services. Please contact Julie Beggs at 317-259-1241, extension 23, or e-mail her at jbeggs@greenleaf.org if you are interested in our providing servant-leadership programs or speakers for your group or conference.

Recent Programs and Outreach

Julie Beggs, Chief Learning Officer, provided a short session for school nurses sponsored by the Indiana Department of Education in Indianapolis, IN.

Adjunct Facilitator Jamie Showkeir presented a day-long session on Distributing Organizational Power Through Servant-Leadership to members of the U.S. Synthetics organization in Orem, UT.

CEO Larry C. Spears participated in meetings in New York City and in Mahwah, NJ.

Adjunct Facilitator Isabel Lopez provided various presentations and consultation for the National CASA Leadership Institute 2001 in Seattle, WA.

Publications

The following is a selected listing of recent articles, books, and other publications featuring servant-leadership and The Greenleaf Center. Please let us know of any articles or books about servant-leadership that you may come across.


Upcoming Events

The following is a brief listing of selected upcoming events. Contact the Greenleaf Center for more information on any of them.

Servant-Leadership Retreats 2001:
October 26-28 in Chicago, IL; and December 28-30 in Niagara Falls, Canada.

Servant-Leadership in Paris: CEO Larry C. Spears will speak on servant-leadership at the first Greenleaf Center presentation to be held in Paris, France on Wednesday, November 7. Co-sponsored by the Paris Round Table 1, the program will be held at the Racing Club de France at 6 p.m.

Servant-Leadership in London: The Greenleaf Centre-United Kingdom will hold its sixth conference on Friday, November 9, 2001, in London.


Innovations in Business: November 15, in Indianapolis, IN. Margaret Wheatley, author of Leadership and the New Science, will be the featured presenter in this exciting new program sponsored by The Greenleaf Center. This is a half-day program and will be offered twice on that day. Registration fee is $199.

CEO Larry C. Spears and Chief Learning Officer Julie Beggs will be the featured speakers for a dinner program to be held in Philadelphia on Monday, December 3, 2001, from 6-9 p.m. at the White Dog Cafe as part of their program series called “White Dog Cafe Table Talks: Serving Food with Thought.” A three-course dinner will be served at this highly-regarded Philadelphia restaurant, followed by the program and discussion. The White Dog Cafe is owned-and-operated by Judy Wicks, who was a keynote speaker at The Greenleaf Center’s 2000 Servant-Leadership Conference. Cost is $30 per person and includes tax & gratuity. Reservations with advance payment required. Call the White Dog Cafe at (215) 386-9224 for reservations.

The Greenleaf Center’s 7th Annual Leadership Institute for Higher Education will be held April 4-5, 2002 in Indianapolis. This one-and-a-half day program for educators and educational administrators will be facilitated by former college president Dr. Jim Boyd and will include a special presentation by Dr. Margaret Wheatley (Leadership and the New Science).