

Article from **Policy Perspectives**

(http://www.imakenews.com/cppa/e_article000564116.cfm?x=b6Gdd3k,b30DNQvw,w)

April 26, 2006

Measure of a Leader

by Ken Embley, CPPA

Are you a good leader? How do you know? What are some good measures of an effective leader? In their latest book, *Measure of a Leader*, Aubrey C. Daniels and James E. Daniels offer some thoughts.

I am not in a position to judge the quality of a leader like Colin Powell, but let us have some fun with leadership concepts. First, review the leadership concepts found in this article. Then, apply your perception of Colin Powell's leadership style, and your leadership style then compare that to the measures of a leader (see side bar of article for survey).

What are the measures of a leader? Review the following five leadership concepts and for each, measure yourself as a leader (and Colin Powell). From your perspective, how do you stack up? (see side bar of article for survey)



Measure of a leader—is **effectiveness**. A manager is a technician who helps people, processes, and systems function together efficiently. Leadership builds on these management skills. The leadership task is to energize the maximum number of followers to pursue the mission, vision and values in the most effective way. Many "leaders" mistake efficiency (doing things right) for effectiveness (doing the right thing). It seems that the day to day pressures of the job—sometimes thought of as a daily list of tasks—overshadow the leader's need to energize performers around mission, vision and values accomplishment so that the agency can meet its challenges more effectively.

Measure of a leader—is the **deliberate refinement of leadership techniques and skills**. Something to remember, learning to lead is a function of deliberately observing follower responses. This deliberate search for the impact of your actions will set you apart from those who try to replicate the actions of other leaders.

For example, when a leader follows through to see what impact mission, vision, and values statements have on follower behaviors the product is a more focused and connected effort on the part of the agency. Unfortunately, where efforts at mission, vision, and values failed, these powerful tools turned into static and useless slogans and wall hangings.

Measure of a leader—is when **followers grant the "leader" authority to lead**. A test of leadership is whether followers will remain focused on the mission, vision and values when no immediate benefits are available to them for doing so or when there are often many immediate negatives involved in the work. The true leader makes the consequences of achieving mission, vision and values so valuable that performers ultimately overcome any skepticism they might have about participation.

No man is good enough to govern another man without that man's consent. - Abraham Lincoln (1864)

Measure of a leader—is when **followers exert discretionary effort**. Among great military leaders, we recognize few for their use of discipline. Clearly, leaders do discipline but we remember most great leaders for their accomplishments and their ability to inspire than for

their disciplinary methods. General Norman Schwarzkopf, the U.S. Commander of the Desert Storm forces said that he believes the challenge of leadership is "to get people to willingly do that which they ordinarily would not do."

Measure of a leader—is attention to ***agency mission, vision and values***. Leaders constantly examine the mission of the agency. Are we doing the right things? Is our structure such that we can achieve the mission in the most effective manner? Leaders repeatedly re-evaluate their vision. What does the future look like? Why would someone want to be part of this agency? In addition, they teach the values that determine acceptable and unacceptable practices in achieving that vision.

When leaders observe and reinforce follower behavior supportive of mission, vision and values, followers see these things as the right thing to do. Again, the leader learns from the followers' responses.

Obviously, we do not know all the details about Colin Powell, we only have our individual perspectives regarding his abilities as a leader. However, Daniels and Daniels have some good ideas about the measure of a leader—ideas that may help you to be a better leader and this has to do with:

- The effectiveness of the leader
- The leaders deliberate refinement of his or her leadership skills
- Followers granting the "leader" authority to lead
- Followers exerting discretionary efforts
- Making mundane behaviors directed at the mission, vision, and values more valuable in the sight of the followers

Many of the concepts found herein are from the book titled *Measure of a Leader* by Aubrey C. Daniels and James E. Daniels. Please visit their website at: www.MeasureofaLeader.com

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