



Some Thoughts on Leadership

Most of us want to be leaders of some kind, whether it's in our jobs, our communities, or volunteer service. IMA® has a program that can help us achieve this goal.

Leadership is a subject that gets much media attention. We hear and read about it in world and domestic politics, business, and sports. Articles are written about the styles, actions, and personalities of leaders. There's even a *Leaders* magazine.

Still, it's hard to pin down a clear-cut definition of leadership. Ask 10 people to define it, and you'll get 10 different definitions. Consider these notable ones from history:

"The superior leader gets things done with very little motion. He imparts instruction not through many words but through a few deeds. He keeps informed about everything but interferes hardly at all. He is a catalyst, and though things would not get done well if he weren't there, when they succeed he takes no credit. And because he takes no credit, credit never leaves him."—Lao Tse, considered the first philosopher of Taoism, about 600 B.C.

"Leadership is the art of getting

someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."—Dwight D. Eisenhower, five-star general and Supreme Allied Commander during World War II and 34th President of the United States

Some experts will tell you that the best way to define leadership is by reading many leadership definitions. Others will tell you that if you can't define leadership, you can't know it or be a leader. Despite the number of definitions, I've noticed most of them include these words: others, motivate, purpose, and results. Yet no matter how we define it, all of us have seen leadership in action. Some of us have learned through positive leadership examples and some of us through negative ones.

My business career included senior-level executive positions in both publicly and privately held companies. During that career, I saw many different leadership styles and examples of what I consider to be good and bad leadership. Yet, to this day, my favorite example comes from the basic training I completed for my military service during the Vietnam War following graduation from college. I was drafted into the U.S.

Army (yes, they were drafting people into the Army at that time!). Our platoon was assigned to a drill sergeant who I came to know as exacting, intelligent, and fair. At the end of the training, I would have been ready and willing to follow this man, whom I had known for only eight weeks, into combat. At that time, I didn't know the definition of leadership, but I could hear it, see it, and follow it.

Management accountants need both technical skills and leadership skills for career advancement. Your IMA offers help through the IMA Leadership Academy (IMALA), which is designed to assess leadership status, enhance leadership skills, and recognize leadership achievements. IMA has offered this program since 2009, and its establishment owes much to the vision and significant contributions of IMA volunteers (particularly former IMA Chair Bud Kulesza, who is now dean emeritus) over these last four years.

As part of the Volunteer Leadership Committee, these members have developed components of the IMALA, including course material, a mentor program, a system for capturing member leadership data, a recognition program, and a

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pool of additional volunteers to participate in the program. IMALA has a dean (David Elrod), as well as associate deans responsible for mentoring (Dave DiMare), course delivery (Marcine Johnson), and course development (Bobbe Barnes). Additionally, IMALA has 30+ faculty/content volunteers, 90+ mentor volunteers, and various staff members working in concert with IMA staff.

An IMA member who joins the IMA Leadership Academy is able to:

- ◆ Establish a leadership profile on the IMALA site (the database now has almost 24,000 member profiles), which then matches members' talents to regional and global volunteer leadership opportunities.
- ◆ Access more than 21 free IMALA webinar courses on topics such as leadership skills, coaching, team building, and problem solving.
- ◆ Attend live workshops offered via chapters and councils.
- ◆ Earn recognition for participation in the program.
- ◆ Connect to IMA's Mentor Identification Network (a community of experienced leaders) and participate as either a mentor or mentee.
- ◆ Contribute to monthly *Strategic Finance* Leadership columns on timely and relevant leadership topics.
- ◆ Join a very engaged volunteer structure that provides another avenue for members to grow and demonstrate leadership skills.

The IMA Leadership Academy offers a wealth of professional de-

velopment opportunities for members. You need technical skills and other qualities, such as leadership skills, to succeed in your career. IMA is here to help you with both.

I welcome your comments at wknese@imanet.org. **SF**