Personal Leadership-in-Practice

Some college students may wish to build their leadership skills beyond a single course. This is important and valuable. There are researchers that have devoted their entire academic and professional careers to the study of leadership.

Over the past thirty years, one of the most popular leadership approaches is:

Bennis, W. (2009), *On Becoming a Leader* (4th ed.), Basic Books.

Bennis' view is that leadership is different than management, and that the difference is subtle but critical. In fact it's in these small but nuanced differences that leadership emerges. For each of the terms below, both are important but the first term *is what* <u>*leaders do*</u>.

Judgment over Experience

Even in a long lifetime, individuals will never have accumulated enough education or enough experience. Leaders demonstrate extraordinary insight and foresight with keen judgment.

Candor over Loyalty

Loyalty without a system of check-and-balances does not allow a leader to challenge beliefs and assumptions. Leaders manifestly value the information from those with whom the leader disagrees with. Leaders constantly recruit mentors in their personal development network.

Crucible over Process

Every individual goes through projects, activities, and events associated with a myriad of processes. Leaders, however, have gone through some type of "rite of passage" that has transformed her or him. This "rite of passage", often a stressful one, is more than merely life experience or some pre-destined route of affairs. Leaders emerge from just those kinds of stressful passages. This singular, stressful passage or severe test that concentrates forces to cause permanent change or development in an individual is referred to as a crucible.

Compasses over Maps

Maps, by definition, can only help in known worlds: worlds that have been charted before. Leaders in a fast-changing, complex world must depend on compasses. Compasses help leaders assess the results of their actions, correct their course, and quickly act again.

Four Essential Characteristics

At the end of his long career, Bennis reflected on his work and concluded that leaders 1), create <u>shared meaning</u> (persuading others to make that vision their own), 2) offer a <u>distinctive voice</u> (a purpose, self-confidence, and sense of self), 3), embody <u>integrity</u> (ethical character), and 4), have <u>adaptive capacity</u> (respond quickly and intelligently to relentless change).