

# Welcome to **SERVICE LEADERSHIP**



An invitation to help create a new leadership tool grounded in equity, self-awareness and collaboration.

**S**ervant Leadership is broken. While it was an admirable approach to leading and supporting others, servant leadership has proven to be an outdated concept for our modern world. The opportunities and challenges facing families, communities and businesses are too urgent and complex to rely on this well-intentioned yet very limited model. Leaders absolutely need to serve those around them; leadership without service is unrewarding, ineffective and boring. However, our research tells us that the imbalance caused by the weight of the word *servant* makes this concept unapproachable and ineffective for the vast majority.

► Visit [FourSimpleWords.ca](https://FourSimpleWords.ca) to learn more about Service Leadership. Visit [ThePowerOf.FourSimpleWords.ca](https://ThePowerOf.FourSimpleWords.ca) to tell us what you think of these ideas.

IT'S NOT ABOUT ME

We need to retire Servant Leadership for a few important reasons:

- Anyone asked to be a servant is not in an equitable relationship
- It implies others have problems that only we can solve
- It sets unreasonable expectations about how we look after ourselves and those around us
- It can be driven by a need to lead, rather than a desire to serve

# ■ The Power of Service Leadership

**SERVICE LEADERSHIP** is a new way of thinking about how we look after ourselves, support those around us and inspire meaningful change, all at the same time. For individuals it allows us to build win-win relationships grounded in equity. For organizations and systems, Service Leadership is a call to action to build cultures that are focused on truly understanding and meeting needs.

## There are three steps to Service Leadership:

1. Self awareness of what I can and cannot bring to the table.  
Understanding what makes me tick (and ticks me off!) is the first step to serving. To best manage my own needs, time, and energy, I need to be clear with myself on how much of each I can spare to genuinely help without losing myself in the process.
2. With me looked after, I can shift my focus outward and actively look for gaps and needs. This is the fun part of Service Leadership: I can explore, learn and co-create meaningful change. Thanks to the hard (and ongoing) work in Step #1, my offer of support is coming from a place of authentic desire to serve and an eagerness to see others succeed. Their success will be my success.

3. Creating a transparent partnership between myself and the idea/person/organization I want to serve. This means that through conversation, listening and reflection, we understand how my time and skills can create positive impact. I am serving in a way that allows me to meet actual needs, not what I think they may be. Or even worse, what I want them to be.

These initial ideas around Service Leadership are the result of 10 months of research, dialogue, thinking and input. And while we have had hundreds of voices contribute to our learning, we need more. We hope that you will share your thoughts on Service Leadership 1.0 and help us grow it into a leadership platform that is accessible for people from all corners of our community.

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# ■ The Secret Ingredient

**SERVICE LEADERSHIP** asks us to understand and focus on the needs of those around us. To do that, we need a way to make sure that we can channel our energies so that we do not get lost or discounted through our service. Service Leadership demands dignity for everyone, starting with ourselves.

We have uncovered a tool that allows us to focus on the needs of others without giving our energy away or losing sight of our goals. It allows us to stay present in difficult conversations without feeling overwhelmed. It allows us to support others through challenging times without being drawn into negative spaces. This tool is four words that will simplify your life, clear your mind and amplify your impact: *It's Not About Me*.

Taking “me” out of just about every equation has an amazing impact on our ability to serve our family, community and work teams. *It's Not About Me* will:

## **Simplify Your Life**

When it's not about me, those small things that rub you the wrong way and take over your energy and joy just don't do that anymore. The rude email from your colleague that has you wondering what you did to bug her? That's not about me. That's about a mom who is

worried about a sick child and doesn't have the time for niceties. As a Service Leader, I can't and won't let the stress or negative energy of others knock me off my course because that stress isn't about me. I can sympathize with and support you but I won't let that energy consume my day.

## **Clear Your Mind**

When it's not about me and I am focused on meeting the needs of others, there is no room for that little voice inside my head telling me I am not good enough, constantly questioning my skills or telling me no one cares. As a service leader, my time, energy and focus fill all the capacity in my head and there is very little room for that nagging voice. My energy isn't being consumed by doubt: instead, it is being fueled by a sense of purpose.

## **Amplify Your Impact**

When we are focused on the needs of others, we begin to measure success differently. Rather than just calculating our own wins and accomplishments we have permission to be motivated to see and create more success in those around me. Service leaders know that celebrating the wins of others does not detract from their own. In fact, it is one and the same.



## ■ Service Leadership Benefits

**SERVICE LEADERSHIP** can benefit everyone regardless of the role they play in their home, community or business. Even those working in organizations that do not embrace a culture of contribution can enjoy the personal rewards of being in service to others. Regardless of where we live or work, these are (some of) the gifts we gain when living in service to one another.

1. Increased self-awareness
2. Creating equality for others and demanding it for ourselves
3. Stronger and more meaningful connections grounded in authenticity
4. Permission to embrace our curiosity
5. Cultures of win-win

## ■ Service Leadership Actions

**SERVICE LEADERSHIP** is not any single action. In fact, it is a personal journey to connect and lead with those around us. Based on our research, these are the actions (in order of importance) that Service Leaders take to look after their own needs and be in service to those around them.

1. Acknowledge
2. Listen
3. Ask
4. Focus
5. Contribute (Don't sacrifice)
6. Think Long Term
7. Honesty
8. Courage
9. Manage Energy

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## Service Leadership Behaviours

Our research has shown that Service Leaders have great intentionality when it comes to their behaviours. These are some of the specific ways Service Leaders look after themselves, support those around them and inspire change, all at the same time.

- Take less credit
- Shepherd ideas rather than own them
- Focus on results rather than winning or losing
- Solve problems instead of just managing them
- Practice gratitude
- Be a conduit for people and ideas
- Actively look for gaps that need to be filled
- Prioritize abundance over scarcity
- Lose the illusion of (and need for) control
- Protect energy levels of people and teams
- Think about legacy building ... for others
- Ask for permission
- Build genuine service into systems

## Service Leadership Language

| USE LESS ...        | USE MORE ...   |
|---------------------|----------------|
| I                   | You            |
| Talking             | Listening      |
| Answers             | Questions      |
| Today               | Tomorrow       |
| Lead from the front | Walk alongside |
| Jibberish           | Clarity        |
| Telling             | Mentoring      |
| Either or           | Grey           |
| Disappointment      | Gratitude      |
| Knowing             | Curiosity      |
| Guilt               | Joy            |
| Pretense            | Humility       |
| Winner              | Win-Win        |
| Problems            | Solutions      |
| Blame               | Accountability |

