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Lead With Distinction

10/31/2016



A few weeks ago I had the distinct pleasure of spending a day with Dick Motta, a great Aggie who spent a lifetime teaching young men about basketball and life. Motta won at every level of coaching, leading Grace High School to the Idaho state championship, Weber State College to three conference championships, and the NBA Washington Bullets to their only championship, in 1978. He was known as a players' coach, and his players, including former Utah Jazz head coach Jerry Sloan, were fiercely loyal to him. This from a man who never actually played the game beyond high school.

During conversations about his life in teaching and coaching, including over 25 years in the National Basketball Association, it was clear that Coach Motta knew every player as an individual, from his high school players in Grace, Idaho, to professional hall of fame players, knew every part of their lives, personally cared about them, and kept in touch with them, long after the end of their professional association. He had a deep sense of responsibility in his position as a leader of his teams.

For the past ten years, the Huntsman School journey has been marked by the guiding principle to get better fast. That simple direction has created transformational change in people, places, and programs. Incredible new faculty from world renowned programs, undergraduate extracurricular programs that expose students to entrepreneurship, leadership, study abroad, and critical thinking, and a new, classroom-centered building are bringing amazing new students and engaging our alumni and friends.

The results from a focus to get better fast are reflected in the success of our students. Our nationally ranked accounting program has produced three Elijah Watt Sells Award recipients in the past five years. Student teams from our MIS Department have won two national competitions, and students in our Economics & Finance Department have received the nationally competitive Goldwater Scholarship and Truman Scholarship. Scores of others have received recognition at the region, state, and university level. Upon graduation, our students have gone to graduate programs at Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, and Chicago, or to careers with Google, Goldman Sachs, and Honeywell. The entire Huntsman School community of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends shares in this success.

As we look to the next ten years, our attention has shifted from the input measures required to get better fast, to the output measurement evidenced by the lives and careers of our students. In fact, the mission statement of the school has changed to reflect that goal: Our mission is to develop leaders of distinction in commerce and public affairs.

Our definition of leadership is exemplified by the classic statement from Peter Drucker: "leadership is not rank or privileges, titles, or money. Leadership is responsibility." It is also deeply rooted in the examples of Dick Motta and countless of our alumni and friends who have demonstrated a principle-centered leadership focused not on the self, but on serving others. Some of them have shared their definitions of leadership in these pages.

Leadership is not rank or privileges, titles, or money. Leadership is responsibility.
— Peter Drucker

Leadership and Corporate Accountability (LCA), the required first-year MBA course at Harvard Business School, focuses almost entirely on the responsibilities of leaders, whether as front line managers or chief executives. In fact, the course is divided into four modules that discuss the responsibilities of leaders to investors, customers, employees, and society. According to Dean Doug Anderson, who taught LCA at Harvard last semester while on leave from the Huntsman School, the course "dealt with the 'gray area' issues a CEO deals with," through deep discussion of the ethical issues faced by organizations as varied as Enron, Johnson & Johnson, the National Football League, and IKEA.



"One of the cases we studied was the Enron case, which, of course, was a tremendous disaster. Jeff Skilling, the CEO of Enron at the time, graduated at the top of his class at Harvard Business School. The leadership lesson in that, for me, is to go back to the Greeks, back to Plato, which is, the importance of knowing yourself," stated Anderson.

When viewed through the lens of the leadership challenges all around us, Harvard's emphasis on teaching leadership and responsibility by making LCA a required course makes a lot of sense. From the questionable practices that contributed to the housing crisis in 2001 to the latest revelations of unethical behavior in the business community, the core issues of human behavior in the gray areas continue to vex us even while advances in technology improve the efficiencies around the mechanics of business operations.

For the past ten years, the Huntsman School journey has been marked by the guiding principle to get better fast.

Huntsman accounting professor Kari Olsen's research on CEO narcissism also provides some evidence of the negative impact of aggressive or questionable behavior by corporate leaders with skewed views about responsibility, while research by Nate Washburn, another Huntsman faculty member, shows that leaders focused on others, be they employees, investors, or customers, and who practice a leadership based in humility, tend to be much more successful.

At the Huntsman School, the thought process for ways to better prepare our students for the gray areas they will encounter throughout their lives has been to supplement a skills-based education with curricular and extracurricular courses and initiatives centered around attributes such as integrity, responsibility, and ethical leadership. The 2015 redesign of our core curriculum, the courses required of all business majors, and the expansion and creation of programs in leadership are based on providing context for business decisions, so that students better understand the political, cultural, and ethical dimensions of an issue while also possessing the analytical skills required in any vocation.

As we look to the next ten years, our attention has shifted...to the output measurement evidenced by the lives and careers of our students.

Among the initiatives to help us achieve our output-based mission of developing leaders of distinction are two new required courses, the Foundations of Business course for those entering the Huntsman School, and a capstone leadership course for departing seniors.

Professors John Ferguson and Bret Crane led development of those two courses, highlighted on pages 14-15. These curricular offerings will be supplemented by a host of experiential opportunities, including our new initiative, entitled [Focused Fridays](#), whereby we provide day-long programming designed to sharpen skills, explore career opportunities, and expose our students directly to the ethical leadership it takes to serve others, and thereby lead lives of meaning and contribution. It is also complemented by existing extracurricular opportunities such as our Buehler Leadership Scholar Program, a semester-long leadership development program whereby students learn about and cultivate leadership qualities through weekly readings and discussion-based learning.

The goal, as always, is to provide opportunities for our students so that they can compete with the best anywhere in the world, and more importantly, to provide experiences so that they can create value in the world, and thus make the world a better place.

As you read the definitions of leadership provided by a few of our alumni and friends, I hope you will reflect on your own experiences at Utah State University, how those experiences have contributed to your life today, and how you can engage with us to help future generations of students.

The Huntsman School is a very different place than it was ten years ago. It is focused on a mission to prepare young men and women for positions of responsible leadership in the world at a time when the world desperately needs more Aggies!

Leadership is Responsibility



We can be a leader every day by living our lives with integrity and mutual respect towards those who come in contact with us. When you are a leader of a team you have an obligation to do the best you can to help guide everyone to a common vision. A true leader listens, works hard, sets an example for those around them, makes a decision of a direction to pursue and stays out of the way after a vision is established. A responsible leader admits their mistakes and understands that some of the best learning comes from the mistakes they and their team make. There are many types of leaders in the world, but for me the best leader is the leader that can inspire others to be their best.

— *Crystal Maggelet, President & CEO, FJ Management, Inc.*



I am partial to Jack Clark's definition of leadership. Jack, the longtime rugby coach at Cal, says "Our definition of leadership is to make those around you better and more productive." As a result of that approach, Jack's teams have won 27 national championships — which as far as I know is the most of any coach in any sport in NCAA history.

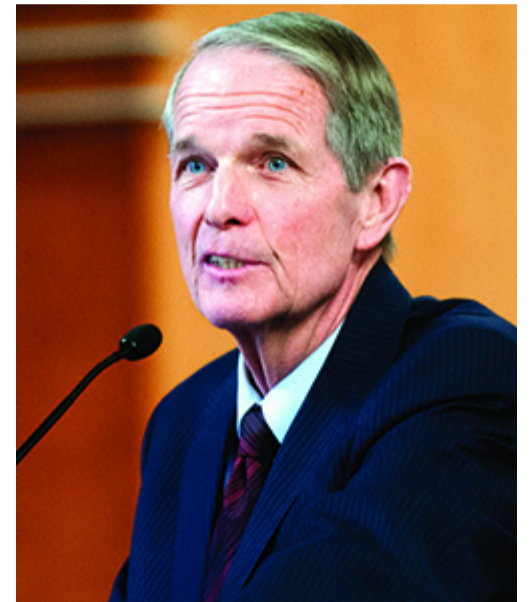
Leaders need to understand that they set the standard — both by how they lead and what they do. They are guardians of, and must be held accountable for, the culture of the organization. At Koch, we are guided by an explicit set of principles, including integrity, respect, and fulfillment. To be effective, our leaders must internalize and consistently apply these principles in a way that produces results.

We expect our leaders to not only be open to challenges from employees, but to solicit them. Humility is essential for leadership. No leader can know everything or always be right. Having the humility to seek the best knowledge — no matter where it originates — is a sure sign of good leadership.

— *Charles G. Koch, Chairman & CEO, Koch Industries*

Business in its best form has certain understood responsibilities to society, including economic, social, and ethical components. These responsibilities are only truly accomplished through exceptional leadership. When properly understood and practiced, leadership builds and improves communities, provides valuable and meaningful employment, develops individuals for excellence, and creates something of greater value out of something of lesser value. I firmly believe that if these key objectives are addressed first, with a passion that is clearly visible to the organization, all other financial objectives are more likely achieved and leadership's inherent responsibility is confirmed as essential for society.

— *David Jenkins, '95, Founder, President & CEO, Conservice*



Two great historical figures portrayed leadership in distinctively different ways. Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir counseled that “a leader who doesn’t hesitate before he sends his nation into battle is not fit to be a leader.” In contrast, Christian apologist Thomas Aquinas observed that “if the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would keep it in port forever.”

Both perspectives are necessary to be an effective leader. When entrusted with decision-making authority, a leader must be careful about making rash commitments. At the same time, leadership cannot be divorced from risk-taking. The ship that remains forever in port is nothing more than a slowly rotting floating pier.

— *The Honorable Craig Petersen, '68, Mayor, Logan City*

Great leaders operate from a platform of fixed principles, including personal integrity, accepting responsibility, having self-awareness to mindfully listen, and creating an environment where the truth can be spoken.

Great leaders put their own needs second to the needs of those whom they lead by understanding that their role is to provide the tools, guidance, and support required for success. When we are willing to allow people to experience personal growth by making decisions and being accountable, we set up our organizations for long term growth and sustainability.

— *John Miller, '77, Chairman and Managing Director, Dakota Pacific LLC*





I used to think leadership was an amorphous concept, one that called to mind the charismatic politician or the cool CEO. As something of an introvert, I had a hard time identifying with these archetypal leaders. It wasn't until college that my perspective on leadership broadened and matured. Group work in my business classes and my involvement in the Huntsman Scholar Program helped me see that leadership first and foremost means taking responsibility for yourself. Groups don't function well when every member tries to be the loudest, most dominant voice. But a group that complacently files behind a self-asserted or designated leader is also no better off.

This exercise of identifying when to lead versus lean on others is truly at the heart of responsible leadership. When looked at through the lens of personal responsibility, leadership is so much more than telling others what to do from a position of authority — it's recognizing our individual strengths and weaknesses, and then communicating them to those who are depending on us to do our parts.

— *Madelyn Fife, '18, Truman Scholar, Huntsman Scholar Program Co-President*