



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
MAURER SCHOOL OF LAW
Bloomington

Summary of Leadership Exercise
Conducted with Indiana Law Alumni
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In the summer of 2014, I began drafting a proposal for a new law school course on leadership. My desire to create this course flowed from my conclusion that the legal industry is entering a period of tremendous transformation and that these challenges are a microcosm of broader issues affecting our social, economic, and political institutions. For quite some time, I have been asking myself, “Where will the leaders come from?” Forty years ago in the U.S., some eminent law school deans dubbed law school as “leader school.” Yet, that dialogue was soon eclipsed by several decades of prosperity and growth.

I am not qualified to teach a course on leadership, but few people are and the need for leadership is acute. Therefore, I asked a group of Indiana Law alumni to come together to help me think through the new course. Through two meetings held in Indianapolis (and via teleconference) in September and October 2014, the working group concluded that the new course should be called “Deliberative Leadership.” From my perspective, we settled on this title because a great deal of reflection and preparation is necessary before any of us are qualified to lead. Further, if we are not fully qualified to lead, we can nonetheless reliably identify the type of person we are willing to follow. Hence that is where this inquiry begins.

The following two questions were posed to our working group. This same exercise will be conducted with students on the first day of class.

- (a) Identify a person who has had a major positive influence on your life. What did you learn from them? How did you learn it (e.g., through words or behaviors or some combination)?
- (b) Identify a leader from your past who you decided to follow. Why did you decide to follow them? What were their sources of authority (based on job title, work experience, moral character)?

People who have positively influenced our lives

The following list is noteworthy for the wide range of people it includes: first AA sponsor; university president; older brother; father; mother; law partner; college professor; famous R&B singer who was a client; insurance broker. It is noteworthy that the people on this list were not necessarily close family, friends, or mentors. Moreover, they were not necessarily warm or likeable people. Yet, they were all respected by the people who mentioned them.

What did you learn from them?

- To show up and be honest, even if the facts are bad.
- Be who you are; thereafter, accept power to use in the service of others.

- Think for yourself; the views of your clan may not be the right views.
- We often learn best through failure; character really matters.
- Be forward in your thinking. Focus on the long term.
- Be a steward for others.
- There is value in serving the organization; don't be afraid to give yourself to it.
- I was an selfish college student focused on grades rather than learning.
- Self-belief; "You can be the first to break this barrier."
- To reserve judgment of others; to have empathy.
- Passion, discipline, dedication, professionalism, character in all things.
- Expect more from yourself.

How did you learn these lessons?

- By observing behavior, sometimes without a lot of close interactions.
- Behavior—its consistency over time.
- Behavior—the person consistently focused on others; deeds with few words.
- They said unflattering things I did not want to hear; they cared enough to say them.
- Through the quality and clarity of their thinking.
- They challenged me to do better through honest, fearless communication.

An implicit theme in the "how did you learn" question was respect, acceptance, or love. Participants suggested that one of these personal connections was necessary for significant positive influence to occur. The influencers were often referred to as "authentic."

A leader who you decided to follow

This list included a famous basketball coach who happened to be a client of the firm; a leader in the early community radio movement; a government lawyer; more than one law firm partner; an officer in the Israeli Army; an executive in the local television industry.

Why did you decide to follow them?

The answers tended to be combinations drawn from three rough categories. One attribute by itself, however, was not sufficient to create a desire to follow:

| Character | Ability | Values / Emotion |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthy • Other-regarding • Fair-minded, humble • Iron-willed, persistent • Unpretentious • Very little ego • Controlled temper • Always professional • Candid and honest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly skilled • Competence in job • Objective • Reality-based • Clarity of thought • Delivered great results • Enforced high standards • Concise with words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in people • Passion for others • Aura of confidence around the ability of the organization • Visionary who painted a picture of the future |

The source of the authority was never rooted in a formal title. Rather, it was always a combination of character, ability, and values/emotion.