

Assignment 3: Personal Values and Leadership Challenge

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Part A: Personal Vision, Values, and Learning Goals

1. Personal Vision Statement

The phrase and I using for my personal vision statement was written by my late brother, Steven, in a journal he gave me as I set off to travel Africa. I have adopted this as my vision statement as it notes my curiosity and ties it with my quest for knowledge and desire to act on what I see. The statement reminds me that I cannot be an armchair observer but instead must be a life participant. It reminds me to not take things for 'face value' and to look further, dig deeper and learn more. I have carried this personal vision statement in my back pocket (figuratively) and it will continue to travel with me into my future.

To look is simply seeing, to do is life. ~ Steven Dolinko

2. Personal Values

When reviewing my own values, I have reflected on what has inspired me to act. Some characteristics found in the Global Explorer Model (Black, Morrison and Gregerson, 1999a) and Pyramid Model of Global Leadership (Bird and Osland, 2004) have guided my work as a global and community leader.

Inquisitiveness - To explore possibility, opportunity and alternate perspectives.

I have an inquisitive nature and an interest in learning and exploring the world, people and situations around me. I am interested in learning new ways of thinking and fresh approaches to finding solutions. This valuable competency has shown me a new way of seeing things while learning to embrace alternate perspectives as they arise. The Global Explorer Model notes that with inquisitiveness, there is a love of learning and being intrigued by diversity, and that

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uncertainty certainly is invigorating. This is important to me because I am curious and will continue to seek knowledge and experiences as I travel and work around the world.

Integrity - To exhibit moral character and conviction while upholding ethical standards.

I value honesty and integrity, in both my professional and personal life. I feel that I respect myself and honour my family by living with integrity. This is one of the most important values as it is at the foundation for everything else. I have built a strong reputation as a community leader and earned the respect of my peers, in part due to my integrity working through complex issues. Integrity is important because it builds trust, and from that, everything else can grow.

Open Communication - To share vision and message, and foster common understanding.

Open communication can mean being upfront, honest and transparent with information and feeling safe enough to express yourself. In fostering an environment for open communications, dialogue flows and ideas can flourish and anything can be achieved. I value this because I have been in the opposite place, where there is no clarity or ability to share thoughts, or needs.

When traveling the world, I was in countries where I could not speak, nor read the language, and I became profoundly illiterate. Without the cultural clues and norms, nor the ability to speak, I was limited with who I could talk to and what I could understand. I had to make general assumptions about what was being said and try to understand the meaning. I remembered these experiences when I became the communications director of a global organization. Our information was available in multiple languages, in print and online and we created interactive, intercultural dialogue.

Architecting Vision - To coordinate and integrate all elements of a strategic plan, to manifest vision and achieve goals.

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I like lofty goals such as Save the Planet or Create World Peace and believe they can be achieved, but only with a strategic plan and the integration and coordination of all processes, systems and resources. I value the attention to the minutia as well as the 'big picture', holistic approach to architecting vision. It is important to me because I value the creative process of being able to construct a reality from a dream and bring a vision to life.

3. Learning Goals

Personal Leadership Working in a Global Context

A goal I have for the first of the competency domains is to recognize how my sexual orientation influences my global perspective. With so many different laws and thoughts around the LGBTQ community, I have to remember that I have to adjust to the circumstances around me. Although I am an out lesbian in Vancouver and safe in my city, when I go elsewhere, I orient myself to the cultural norms and values in that society and adapt to that way of being.

I am continuously aware of my sexual orientation, and the role of women around the world. My position as a gay woman offers insight to understanding complex and complicated social structures. My sexual orientation influences how I frame conversations and relate to people with perspectives different than mine, partially for safety and partly for respect. As a gay woman I am able to have a different perspective on race, religion, class, generation and my goal is to ensure it doesn't tarnish my outlook.

Leading in a Diverse Global Context

I would like to continue to develop the skills to consider an intersectional perspective as a goal for the second of the competency domains. This can be achieved by paying attention to diverse positions of dominance and power, as reflected in Gopaldas (2013) flower diagram. This

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is a goal that can be beneficial in both a personal and professional capacity as it considers other perspectives.

I recognize that a illiteracy and language can be a barrier to learning and sharing important information and that can create a power imbalance. I was first aware of this when I was the Communications Director for InterPride, (international association of Pride organizers) and heading to WorldPride for a global LGBTQ event. I knew our audience was global and we needed to have multiple languages represented in our literature and online. My goal was to be accessible to everybody everywhere by creating comprehensive and inclusive messaging and materials. It is important goal for me continually consider multiple perspectives to ensure messaging reaches people across different boundaries, beliefs and behaviours.

Leading Sustainable Change in Complex Environments

The final goal is ongoing and involves the lifelong learning of the interconnectedness of everything and the collaboration with others to find solutions to global issues. As a world traveler, I am aware of how issues abroad impact my community at home. The LGBTQ fight for equality is not only a civic or regional issue, it is international. My goal is to remain open to experiences, actively involved and continuously learning as it's the only way to understand the complexity and interconnectedness of LGBTQ issues and human rights inequalities.

Part B: Personal Leadership Challenge

When I started to write about my personal leadership challenge (PLC) I thought it was going to be in relation to my gender, which is only one of the social identity structures that impacts every interaction in my professional and personal life. But, the more I wrote, the more I realized my challenge is really bigger and is instead focused internally on creating greater self awareness of my communication style and tone. I am a public speaker, skilled with the art of

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commanding and reading an audience. I speak my mind with conviction and experience backing my words; thus I expect others to share my enthusiasm, drive and work ethic. I am a quick thinker and connect the dots fast, and as a result, I get frustrated waiting for others to catch up or contribute to the conversation. My challenge is to recognize that other people work with different processing styles and that my style can be misconstrued in different cultures and communities.

My personal leadership challenge is having greater self awareness in how I work with people and to find ways to consider, collaborate and engage others in the process. There are many styles of communication as noted in research by S. Ting-Toomey (1999) which includes direct intention or indirect meaning, or silence, which can be respectful, or disapproving. I have run online meetings with a board of directors across the planet in which I expected conversations but found silence. This created frustration. I assumed that others did not have much to contribute, yet it is possible that they may have not accurately understood, and rather than slow down the meeting, they remained silent. I did not consider that in some cultures, like Japan, subordinates do not question leaders, so a power dynamic is also in play, yet another cultural intersection.

The impact of not working on my communication style and reflecting on how intersectionality may impact the conversation, is that by not incorporating alternate approaches, I could miss important information as that could alter how I connect the dots. By hearing alternate views or learning new knowledge, my communications strategy can be influenced and without inviting opinions, or gaining all the information possible, I am limiting the potential for a successful outcome. I may have travelled the world expensively, but as Bennett (2009) notes, cultural knowledge does not equal intercultural competence. I have to contemplate a bigger picture and challenge myself to examine how different variables influence the affects of the result.

In my professional life, I have learned to invite collaboration, and know how different information can alter outcomes. Years ago, when working with the women's community, I was

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asked to create an event for them. I wanted to bring a proposal to their board meeting, so I charged ahead without any input. I got quotes for spaces and created budgets for food, drink, staffing and entertainment. I developed a fundraising scheme and a theme for the event, and it was going to be amazing! Unfortunately, at the board meeting, I learned that their idea of an event was a free picnic in a local park so that everybody and their kids and dogs could attend. Transportation was an issue as was accessibility and the choice of music as it had to be inclusive of all communities. I wrote the proposal from a specific perspective that had not considered the intersectionality within the women's community. Because my plan had no input and I had not considered the different approaches, my proposal was shown and I learned a lesson about diversity and intersectionality. I am continually challenged to make room and include the input of others and consider the differences among the intersectional points.

I am an independent thinker and my drive and ability to get the job done can make me hyper-focus but I need to include others in this process. If I do not include others, I reflect back on my women's event proposal and recognize that others need to be engaged. As a communications consultant, I work on a high level of goal setting and corporate vision, and constant input and collaboration is required. This constantly allows me to work on this personal leadership challenge of collaborating and engaging others.

At times, it can be a challenge to not get frustrated when working with a volunteer team without skills needed to accomplish a task. In the past, I have worked with many volunteers, and on boards, and with people who do not have the same work ethic, experience or knowledge as me. I move at a fast pace and at times, do not have the patience, empathy or interest to engage with others and prefer to stay focused on the task at hand. I recognize that others may not have the capacity to see how much needs to be accomplished or what it takes to achieve the vision. I have to learn how to not be so irritated by this deficiency and it is challenging .

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Another element of this personal leadership challenge how I represent to another culture when dealing with other styles of communication. As a woman, in work and during my travels, I am not in a dominant position due to my gender. My forthright and boisterous approach may not be the norm for places where women traditionally do not conduct business or speak openly. This can be a challenge as the 'audience' may be closed to hearing. This limits my ability to express my authentic sense of self (Shields, 2008).

As a social structure, gender maintains women in a subordinate position to that of men, across cultures. In parts of I have had to adopt an outspoken and forthright style to work and travel in a man's world and be resilient. I have adapted my behaviour to succeed and stay safe in complex and diverse environments where my gender and sexual orientation are devalued or even dangerous identities. My challenge will be a continual one as I need to be self-reflective and adapt to a model that will enable collaboration and participation across all spectrums.

In reflecting on my work with the international organizations, I found resonance in the writing about working with teams. I especially found it challenging when dealing with people across time zones and in terms of managing cultural diversity, dispersed distribution and virtual communication (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, Maznevski, Stevens, Stahl, 2013). As noted, "virtual teams find it more difficult to communicate effectively, especially complex and context-sensitive information regarding the task itself, and emotional information regarding team processes." Having developed systems for communications both internal and external, I continue to find frustration for those who don't use the systems or engage as expected. I stifle my frustration because with volunteers there is a limit to accountability, yet my professional standards cannot be compromised so I am challenged to manage my emotional response.

I have worked on this issue in my personal life by learning to share space and allowing others to engage more openly with me. I have adjusted my personal style to be more inclusive,

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reflective and present, which means I listen more and speak with intention and clarity. It is essential to continue my work in this area and implement similar self-reflecting actions in my capacity as a leader. When I provide a safe space for collaboration and engagement, and am able to innately acknowledge the intersectional perspective, I will be able to develop greater understanding and apply more robust solutions. As a communications consultant, a world traveler and a natural born leader, changing my behaviour really can change the world.

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