

November 2018

Volume 12, Issue 4

The positive influence of an open and intellectually humble leader

“No matter how good you think you are as a leader, my goodness, the people around you will have all kinds of ideas for how you can get better. So for me, the most fundamental thing about leadership is to have the humility to continue to get feedback and to try to get better - because your job is to try to help everybody else get better.”

This quote by Jim Yong Kim, president of the World Bank, sums up the essence of humble leadership. It is a powerful statement from someone whose career achievements include serving as president of Dartmouth College and in global health leadership roles.

Openness to experience

When leaders show that they’re willing to learn something new—psychologists call it “openness to experience”—they set an example for those around them. They seek intellectual enrichment and are curious about new ideas, concepts and activities. They welcome differing opinions and perspectives. Openness

to experience is important to creativity, and it can help individuals succeed in leadership roles.

A humble mindset

Intellectual humility is a trait innovative organizations seek. Google, for example, looks for new hires who demonstrate a willingness to learn new things and argue passionately about their point of view. Yet the most successful are those who are also willing to weigh new facts and then admit that they weren’t right.¹

Intellectual humility may be one of the factors that can make disagreements more constructive, research by Tenelle Porter and Karina Schumann suggests. They investigated intellectual humility — “recognizing the limits of one’s knowledge and appreciating others’ intellectual strengths” and report that “a growth mindset of intelligence may increase intellectual humility.”²



Top leadership traits

In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins introduces the concept of Level 5 leadership. “Level 5 leaders display a powerful mixture of personal humility and indomitable will,” the author writes. “They’re incredibly ambitious, but their ambition is first and foremost for the cause, for the organization and its purpose, not themselves.”

1 “Why Google Wants New Hires Who Are Humble and Argue,” Fast Company, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3027116/why-google-wants-new-hires-who-are-humble-and-argue>, accessed November 5, 2018.

2 “Intellectual humility and openness to the opposing view, Self and Identity,” Tenelle Porter & Karina Schumann, published online 09 Aug 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15298868.2017.1361861>, accessed November 9, 2018

“Empowering those around you to be heard and valued makes the difference between a leader who simply instructs and one who inspires.”

“There’s a part of me that’s always charging ahead. I’m the curious kid, always going to the edge.”

- Yo-Yo Ma



Your Faculty Assistance Program: A Caring, Confidential Resource

**(813) 871-1293
(800) 343-4670**

We care about your wellbeing on and off the job. Your Faculty Assistance Program (FAP), administered by the professionals at Wood & Associates, is a confidential resource you can rely on, 24/7, when you need an assist during times of change, stress or crisis. This service is a faculty benefit. We're also a resource for helping you grow personally and professionally.

The FAP newsletter is provided as a benefit to USF Health faculty.

We welcome your comments on newsletter topics, however, we cannot provide FAP services by email.

Gary L. Wood & Associates, P.A.
4700 N. Habana Avenue Suite 300
Tampa, FL 33614
www.woodassociates.net

Editor

Patricia N. Alexander, Ph.D.
palexander@woodassociates.net

Writer

Susan H. Burnell, APR
SusanBurnellAPR@gmail.com

Tenets to consider in order to develop intellectual humility

Wanting to be better than the day before is a common thread that most successful people share, says James Vena, business strategist, adviser, philanthropist and author of *The Entrepreneur's Edge*. “I’ve had an extraordinary and rewarding career. Not just in attaining the success that is typically gauged by material wealth, but also in recognizing the importance of seeking to acquire ‘intellectual humility.’ It has helped me in every aspect of my life.” Vena offers these tenets for building intellectual humility:

- Underachievers always make excuses; winners always make time.
- Learn when to give in, but don’t EVER to give up.
- Lapses in judgment are human and often forgiven, however there is no such thing as a lapse of integrity.
- Intelligent people fight fire with water, never with fire. Only the unintelligent allow emotions to cloud their judgment to control their subsequent actions.
- Be equally passionate about understanding others as you are in wanting to be understood.
- Winners are articulate storytellers and know that to be interesting to someone, you must first be genuinely interested in that same someone.
- Understand that while TIME may heal all wounds, it will kill all deals. Be expeditious, passionate and determined to finish what you start.
- Possess a childlike curiosity to go along with a contagious smile and humbleness.
- Know what you don’t know, and be so open minded that you want to learn something from EVERYONE you meet.
- Have high expectations of others, but even higher expectations for yourself.
- Compromise to cooperate, but never at the expense of your own principles or the integrity of your partners.
- Always be understated with a grasp that extends past your reach. The world already has too many overstated people with reaches that extend beyond their grasp.
- Always be optimistic and genuinely excited about the future and success of others, and let them know it.
- Demand the highest in quality from your partners and always choose “character” over “characters” when building a team.
- Express genuine benevolence, compassion, responsibility, tolerance and understanding towards everyone, everyday.

Excerpted with permission, James Vena 11/14/2018, *The Entrepreneur's Edge*,

<https://outskirtspress.com/theentrepreneursedge>

Additional Reading

“Humility Is the Ultimate Innovation Tool” <https://newandimproved.com/2015/10/20/humility-innovation-tool/> Oct 20, 2015

“6 Ways Humility Can Make You A Better Leader” <https://www.fastcompany.com/3034144/6-ways-humility-can-make-you-a-better-leader> August 11, 2014