

## Effective Leadership

by Jim Barbush, P.E.

**W**hat comes to mind when you think of being effective in anything?

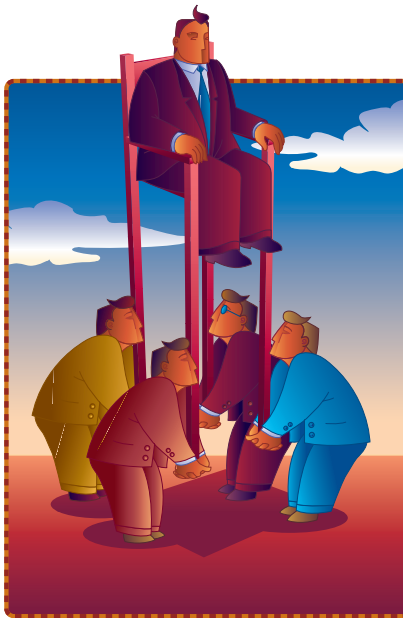
Without looking into a dictionary for a definition, I have considered this word “effective” as related to what I have been learning over the past few years after having attended various leadership seminars, read various books on leadership, and read articles that have been published in APPA’s *Facilities Manager* since 1998. I have considered my effectiveness as a leader, the effect I am having on people and organizations.

The opportunity to write this article has caused me to do some additional soul searching to determine if I am indeed being an effective leader. In that searching, I also want to provide you with thoughts to consider for application to your life in your quest to be an effective leader.

So often, when I am reading a book about leadership, my first reaction after reading a thought is to apply it to my workplace, a place that includes the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, ERAPPA (Eastern Region of APPA), and APPA. These are places where I spend a major portion of my life. I have realized that it is so easy to overlook the application of learned principles to other areas of my life, such as the home front—my wife, our son at home, our son at college, our three grown daughters, our two sons-in-law, our church, and wherever else I

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am called to be. Therefore, I am making a conscious effort to lead in all areas of my life, not just at work.

The best place for me to start this soul searching is with the definition of “effective.” The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary provides the following definitions: an adjective that means 1) producing a decided, decisive, or desired effect, 2) ready for service or action, 3) producing or capable of producing a result. As we look at these definitions, we need to ask: Are we producing a decided, decisive, or desired effect in and from the people we are leading? Are we ready to serve the people we are leading? Are we prepared to take appropriate action when leading, whether easy or difficult? Are we producing or capable of producing a desired result in and from the people we are leading?

There, we have the definition of “effective” and have asked some questions related to that definition. Now what? Do I now give you five pointers on how to be an effective leader, or do

I further inspire you to make your own self analysis as to whether you are leading in an effective manner or not? I choose the latter because I believe we need to make a conscious effort to answer questions like these for ourselves, rather than simply read someone else’s pointers on how to be an effective leader.

There’s a ton of excellent material out there on leadership—books, seminars, mentors, examples walking before us daily. I have read and continue to read books that have been and are vital to my growth as a leader. I’ve been to excellent seminars that have greatly impacted me. I’ve watched leaders to see what they do well and what they do not do so well. We must never quit reading and learning, adjusting and fine tuning. We never fully “arrive.” There is always another level to pursue. I encourage you to read much, attend a suitable number of excellent seminars, watch other leaders, and have a mentor. I leave that part of your growth in leadership to you. If you are not doing one or more of those, consider that you may be limiting your growth and the growth of those you are leading, and those you are supposed to lead.

Reading, attending seminars, having mentors, and making observations are great, if we apply their content directly to our lives. If we read a book and then put it in our library without further thought, then what have we really accomplished? If we attend a seminar and then file our notes and display our certificate of completion, then what have we accomplished if we do not apply some of the learned principles? We must take the time after the book is read and after the seminar is attended to see if and how

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we can apply the learned principles to our lives. We must assess what we have been doing well, what we have not been doing well, and what we have not been doing at all.

To evaluate our effectiveness as a leader in any arena we are positioned, we must determine if we are producing decided, decisive, and desired effects; or are we in a state of indecision and producing undesirable results in the people and organizations that we lead? We must determine if we have fully prepared ourselves to serve in our various positions and are we ready to cause action that is desirable; or are we unprepared and causing distress to people and our organizations? These determinations show what kind of a result we are producing, whether positive or negative, whether inspiring or deflating, whether encouraging or discouraging.

No one of us is perfect. Not one of us does it right all the time and always produces positive results in people and our organizations. Mistakes are made and negative results do appear. Sometimes the leader causes the results, sometimes the ones being led cause the results, sometimes the whole team.

The question then is, what does the effective leader do when those negative results appear? How does the effective leader bring the people and the organization out of the negative results and redirect the path taken to one that will produce desired results? Every situation is different and must be handled accordingly. People’s needs differ in how they should be managed

and organizational needs differ in what is necessary.

So, there may be no hard and fast rules. I believe that the effective leader must look at the definition of “effective” and determine how he is going to cause the desired results in a descent and productive way.

How many leaders really think about how they are affecting people and their organizations? How many leaders consider the impact of how they are leading? How many leaders make adjustments in themselves and their styles of leadership, adjustments that are going to cause desired results? These are question that leaders need to consider. No matter what arena we are in at a particular moment, whether at work, at an APPA function, at home, at church, in our neighborhood, or wherever else, we are leading in some fashion. We are causing something to happen in that arena, whether positive or negative. We need to be conscious of that. We all affect our surroundings in our own special way at a particular moment. We need to do that “effectively.”

I want to leave you with this: In the past year, I have read many of the articles on leadership that APPA has published in *Facilities Manager*. I started with one article: “A Legacy of Leadership” by Lander Medlin, *Facilities Manager*, Jan/Feb 2005. From there I was led to numerous other articles that were written since the implementation of APPA’s Leadership Academy in 1998.

I have found an excellent resource for leadership development in what APPA has been providing. APPA’s focus on leadership development has helped to fuel my own search and growth in the area of leadership. I hope that you recognize the same and continue your own growth in being an effective leader. 🏰

## An Effective Leader:

### MAINTAINS HIS LEADERSHIP AND IMPROVES LEADERSHIP SKILLS BY

- Being a continual learner. Growing though the reading of various leadership books. Attending training seminars. Observing other leaders to see what works and what does not work.
- Recognizing and feeding off the leadership of others.
- Having a standard of truth and holding to that truth.
- Seeking to discover what is holding his followers back from receiving his leadership. Making adjustments so that the non-followers within his sphere of influence will be able to receive what they need to accomplish the vision and not what the leader wants them to need to accomplish the vision.

### ACTS IN HER ASSIGNED SPHERE OF INFLUENCE BY

- Positively affecting the atmosphere around her by his actions, words, habits, and demeanor.
- Adjusting to problems that adversely affect her, whether by correcting the problem or determining that a new direction is needed to achieve desired results, and then seeks that new direction. Not necessarily a total change but at times only a partial change in what is being done.
- Holding herself and other people accountable for their actions.
- Considering an apparently impossible and unachievable vision to be a possible and achievable vision. Recognizing opportunities and taking action, though with some risk at times, to help reach the vision.
- Recognizing, acknowledging, and attempting to correct one’s own failures.

### MULTIPLIES WHAT HE OR SHE IS DOING BY

- Giving away what has been learned.
- Encouraging others to excel in their spheres of influence.
- Sharing the results of success.