Modeling the Way

Lead by example, learn by example

By Harriet Harral
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In our last discussion of leadership, we were introduced to a leadership model that is applicable in a wide variety of contexts. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership developed by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner are:

- **Model the Way**: Create standards of excellence; set an example for others to follow.
- **Inspire a Shared Vision**: Envision the future; enlist others in the vision.
- **Challenge the Process**: Search for opportunities to change the status quo.
- **Enable Others to Act**: Foster collaboration; build spirited teams.
- **Encourage the Heart**: Recognize contributions that individuals make.

Leadership skills are learnable; we can train ourselves to be better leaders. One of the effective ways to learn is through example – actually observing the practice in action.
The first practice for us to look at is “Model the Way.” Kouzes and Posner say that modeling the way rests on a foundation of values. Specifically, this requires aligning corporate actions with stated values.

Fidelity Investments provides a strong example of acting on its values. Consider one of its core values: “Good corporate citizenship has been one of Fidelity’s core values since the company was founded. Fidelity is committed to being a good corporate citizen in all of the communities we work and live in.”

A stronger way to understand this value is by observing the encouragement and support that Fidelity gives to its employees to serve communities where they live and work. “Everybody volunteers all the time. It’s a sense of giving back what Fidelity has given us,” said Kristopher Ayala, associate systems analyst.

Leadership Fort Worth has been the very fortunate recipient of skills-based volunteering by experienced Fidelity employees from across business areas who have worked closely with the LFW team to solve a specific, strategic technical need. This partnership has come about because Fidelity works with Common Impact, a nationally recognized nonprofit that connects corporate employees to nonprofit organizations tackling challenges in their communities. Common Impact has connected LFW with four different teams at Fidelity, all chosen because of their expertise and because the project will stretch the participating employees in their own critical growth areas.

Through four projects over three years, Fidelity has served LFW and the Fort Worth community in the following ways:

1. Strategic identification of appropriate database management system
2. Development of an app for an LFW membership directory
3. Creation of an RFP for a new website host
4. Development of a process to achieve an effective shared digital workspace as well as appropriate archiving of documents

Matthew Ashmore, a senior manager at Fidelity and team captain of the most recent project with LFW, spoke of the strong commitment that Fidelity has to local communities. In the DFW area, its community relations office has created opportunities for employees and their families to serve the local communities where they live, not just where Fidelity offices are located.

Molly Weinstein of Common Impact said Fidelity has “connected the dotted lines between social initiatives, human capital development, and business success and see(s) tremendous returns in the form of business benefits and social change.”

Fidelity Investments is modeling the way with its employees and the communities they serve.

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