

Wake Up, Stop Whining and Start Leading!



Use Your Leadership Experience
To Make A Difference On Your
Campus and In Your Life

Michael Poll

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► ***About the author, Michael Poll***

Your success in school depends on one person. And that person is reading this right now.

You are the one who will create your destiny, your future. It is in your hands. But it is dependant on what you do today. You have the opportunity, one might even say, the responsibility, to do everything you can to get you from point A to point B.

Trouble is, most college students don't know what or where point B is.

That is the purpose of resources by Michael Poll. Michael's worked on campuses in both academic affairs and student affairs. He worked with one college president to design a new campus building and was appointed Dean of Students by another one. Two more presidents served as senior reviewers for a student leadership assessments Michael developed.

For 14 years he has been speaking to college students at association meetings, conferences and on college campuses. In a nutshell, Michael works with colleges that want to develop better leaders and with students who want to get ready for the world of work. He has fun and really enjoys what he does.

Additionally, Michael runs a corporate consultancy where he has consulted with people from more than 1,200 different companies, businesses and non-profits.

Originally from the East Coast, Michael now resides in the Chicago area with his family.

He is available, *schedule permitting*, to speak on college campuses. You can reach him at www.LeadersMakeItHappen.com or at michaelpoll@comcast.net.

► ***Other books by Michael Poll:***

Ka-Ching! How To Make \$1,000,000 After Graduation

Affiliation Is Not Enough!

Sweaty Palms, Pits and Parts! Present Like A Pro Without Peeing Your Pants

Burn Your College Resume

▶ *Dedication*

For Marita.

You have always been my guidepost, my
sounding board
and my coach.

You are best my best friend,
a caring Wife and a wonderful Mother.

You are a leader in every sense of the word.

--Michael

*** WARNING ***

**Hardcore Stuff
That Works**

Why I wrote this book...

Quite frankly, I got mad and a little disappointed. You see, I worked as a student affairs administrator on various college campuses for about ten years. During that time I also wrote articles for student leaders, advised student government officers, served on a board of directors for a higher education association for student leaders and created, administered and wrote about two student leadership assessments which I created. I had articles published on various topics related to campus student leadership in regional, national and even international publications.

During the current chapter of my life I travel to college and university campuses consulting with and presenting to students and student leaders on the topics of leadership, student success and student career preparation and advancement. I have been invited to campuses throughout the United States having now spoken in 43 states. (Does anybody know a school in Hawaii that is interested in bringing me there?!) I have also had the good fortune of being asked to keynote at student professional association conferences, institutes and retreats. (These are the ones where you might have 3,000 student leaders in the room.)

And yet, I've learned one interesting thing among many....and that is that many student leaders just don't get it. They are students involved in some type of student leadership experience but they have no clue that they are a student leader. They don't see themselves as a student "leader" per se. Many of them just see it as a thing they do. And while that may be alright, serving as a student leader is an awesome responsibility which I believe student leaders take too lightly.

So, it makes me sick that many student leaders, regardless of position, title or role, don't get it. Further, many of them are lazy. Now I know I am going out on a limb here saying this but quite frankly, I'm just tired of hearing all the whining from student leaders. You know, they say things like "I'm so busy!" or "Nobody helps me!" You've heard it before and you may be guilty of saying these things.

Well, I may upset you a bit but life is short and your tenure as a campus student leader is very, very, very short. So, I'm going to go out on a limb and tell you to Wake Up, Stop Whining and Start Leading! Get off your butt, stop the excuses and make things happen on your campus.

Yes, this book might upset you a bit....but heck, did you get for it so it would make you "feel good?" Or, do you want to learn something and make a difference for yourself and your campus?

My guess is that you are serious about yourself. So, let me mess with your head a bit and make you think. Just think of me as your personal consultant. I'm going to challenge you a bit and in the process, push you. In the end it will be you, not me, who will make you a better student leader and a better person. I'm just along for the ride.

So, wake up, stop whining, start learning and start leading your way to success! Following are some of the most important leadership lessons for student leaders.

The Real Deal

I've done some research in my time. As a matter of fact, perhaps too much. As much as I see myself as a "leadership educator" I too realize that there is a time to move from "learning" to "doing." And that is what this book is about for you as a student leader.

But back to my research. I have had the good fortune of not knowing I couldn't do it. You see, as a graduate student I created a student leadership inventory. I consulted with those who were tenured in higher education and those who knew something about how to create assessments, inventories and surveys.

Then, I created one, tested it and used it. I wrote the results and submitted them to a professor as it related to a class assignment. Then, I didn't know you couldn't, so I wrote and submitted my findings as a article to an international association with an international publication. Well guess what, they liked it, asked me to edit it a bit and published it!

(For information on how to get things done, how not to let your conscience and ego get in the way, you might benefit well from reading my book, "Create Your Own Destiny, Because Nobody Else Will!" If focuses on how to set yourself up for success, how to make plans and how to achieve

your goals to reach your destiny. I learned how to do this the hard way. Don't waste your time...if you are serious...get this one at www.LeadersMakeItHappen.com or call my office. Back to my little article. Yes, it got published in an international publication and before I knew it people were calling me. Seems that student affairs professionals and top student leaders wanted to get their hands on this student leadership inventory. They too wanted to find out what made student leaders tick...and not tick.

I made the instrument available and was invited to speak to groups on this topic and my results as well. I was surprised by two things: First, that people were interested in what student leaders thought and second, that I wasn't the only one.

Let's fast forward, about ten years and almost 11 more published articles later, I was on another quest. I wanted to do a more in depth assessment of student leaders. Without giving you all the boring details, I created a 50 question assessment which I called the Student Leadership Assessment. I involved some top higher education administrators in the process.

Two university presidents, two vice presidents, a national fraternity executive director and a few others served as my review committee. I used them to bounce my ideas off of. They provided feedback on the instrument and the administering

of it. Make a note here: involving smart people in your projects is important on many levels, which we will cover later.

By this time in my speaking and training career, I had amassed a large group of colleges and universities where I had spoken. I contacted administrators at many of these schools and asked if they would help me with this project. (Again, another relationship development strategy. People will almost always help and support you when even if there is nothing in it for them...as long as they see you as a person of integrity, one who cares about them and one who adds "soft" value to their life.)

Bottom line, in one four week period I had the SLA being administered across the country by student affairs professionals to student leaders who had never met me! The SLA's came back and I hired an evaluator to assist with the tabulation. I now had new information about student leaders....what they thought, how they thought, why they were and were not productive and much more.

Fast forward again. During the next few years I wrote more about my findings and was an invited guest to speak to students and student affairs professionals at national association meetings and on college campuses. Cool! REALLY COOL!

Why am I telling you this and why should you care? Well, it does nothing for my ego to tell you this. It doesn't matter to me if you know that I did all this work. But I tell you for several reasons.

1. I want you to know that what I share with you ahead in this book (and on college campuses) isn't some bunk that I just made up. I didn't just go to the local bookstore or library and get the latest self help or leadership book. Any moron can do that and then put together a flyer professing to be an expert on the topic. And, many do. And, many get paid to speak to students on this topic regularly. That's fine if that's what you want.

True situation... A person recently called requesting information about my work as a campus leadership speaker. They had their date already selected and to my surprise, I was available. I penciled them in as they were still in the "take-it-to-the-committee" stage of things. I overnighted them a three pound packet full of testimonials, my published articles and more. I encouraged them to share my website with the "committee members."

Two days later a different school called requesting the penciled in date. They were

firm on the date too and ready to commit. As a courtesy to the first school, I called them and offered to confirm the date with them since they had requested that date first. (This is a practice I have been doing for years. If something is penciled in, go to them first. Wouldn't be good business to do anything else.)

Well, they were not ready to make a decision and had to release the date. Once I was not "under consideration" by them any longer due to this, they wanted to know what kind of criteria they should use to select a campus leadership speaker. I told them not to go with the "chicken dinner" speaker. You know, the speaker who does this occasionally and maybe doesn't even work on a college campus.

Now, you may see my bias here, but again, I'm writing this book to give you information...not to just make you happy. It's easy to go with the easy or cheap thing. And, not that this type of speaker would serve the students wrong...I just think you have to be immersed and engaged in your topic, in your thing to really know what you are talking about, let alone convey it effectively to students.

So point number one is that while my writing style may not appear to be the typical research style of reading, my background and information comes from my own research, the research of others and my own implementation of these ideas, concepts and strategies.

2. The second reason I tell you about the research I have personally done on this topic is that I want you to have a sense that I am not a newbie at all of this. To date I have been engaged in work related to college and university campuses for 19 years. Yup, that's a long time. But before you say to yourself, "Wow, this dude is old!" you should realize I began college at age seven.

Well, that's the only fib you'll find in this book. Actually, I chose to stay engaged in working with college students. While I have branched out to do consulting work with companies and association, I stick with what I know and enjoy best...and that is college students.

Note: I have spoke to and/or consulted with people from more than 1,200 different companies, associations and businesses. Everything from the small "Mom and Pop" business owners to the biggies such as FedEx, AT&T, Kodak, Chase Bank and even

The White House. Yes, it's been quite a ride. So if you are interested in seeing more about my work with these audiences, or you know somebody in the world of work who might benefit from my consulting and/or speaking, please send them to www.MichaelPoll.com. I thank you!

Lest I sound arrogant, you should know that I also see myself as a never-ending student. I don't know it all, nor profess to. I pay for and attend conferences, meetings and seminars too. I buy and regularly read books on leadership, teambuilding, change, motivation, career enhancement, etc. I feel I have a responsibility to myself, to you my reader and to students in my audiences to keep current.

“Student Leader”....defined:

Every student. Yes, I believe every student is a leader. Students provide leadership all the time. In the classroom, on the athletic field, in the art studio, in your residence hall and with your student organization. You may or may not be called a “student leader” in those places.

In the end, it doesn't matter. What matters is what you do, how you contribute and what you learn. You don't have to have a title to be a leader.

So then, student leaders are students who provide some level of leadership. It could be formal or informal. It could be recognized or unrecognized. It could be profound or pathetic. Regardless of how it is, we call it leadership.

This brings up the question “Does leadership have to be ‘good’ to be considered leadership?” No. I believe we are constantly growing and as we do, we try things, we massage ideas, we develop personally and professionally. And along the way, we develop new beliefs about leadership. These new beliefs yield new actions, new strategies. We try things out. In doing so, we see what works and what doesn't. So, sometimes we are trying things that fail. But, we don't know until we try. So, student leaders risk trying new things and

those attempts might not be “good” but they are valuable.

I believe the bigger issue is helping students, especially those who are involved in campus life, see themselves as student leaders. Too often they don't see themselves that way. When I ask them about their role as a student leader, they shrug their shoulders and tell me they are not a student leader.

My recommendations to you on this point:

- See yourself as a student leader
- Talk about yourself, in a non-conceited way, as a student leader
- Talk about others you know as student leaders
- Talk with others you know about them as student leaders
- Be proud to say out loud that you are a student leader
- If you have a title such as President or Chairperson, try referring to yourself in the company of others in your organization as a student leader first and then your official title second. You will gain credibility as a leader who cares regardless of role or title. Others will follow you more!

It's Time To Wake Up!

Here's how I see it. And this may be hard to hear. If you are not where you want to be as a student leaders it is probably because of one of three reasons:

- You are too busy sleeping through life.
- You are too busy whining through life.
- You only care about yourself/resume.

You are too busy sleeping....Wake Up!

Many students let alone student leaders are too busy sleeping their way through their college student leadership experience.

You say, "Michael, you are being too hard on me." Well maybe I am. Experience tells me though that many student leaders get into positions of leadership because they were elected or selected. Some student leaders want the positions for the right reasons and others don't.

I have seen countless student leaders get into a position of leadership and just waste away. They don't seem to do anything. Yes, they have a position, they go to meetings, they speak to administrators and they may even have business cards printed up. But they are asleep most of the time.

What does “asleep” look like? Have you ever seen student leaders...

- Skipping office hours
- Not returning phone calls or emails
- Using student paid for resources for their personal use
- Saying one thing to students they represent and then doing something else

Asleep means that they are student leaders perhaps by title but not by doing. So at the end of the year they have just done the basics. They oversaw a few student programs or services but did nothing new of real substance.

Take note here...To get anything done means you have to do something. You have to take action even if that means you fail at what you are trying to accomplish.

If you are an elected or selected student leader in a role such as president, coordinator, officer, senator, chairperson...or whatever, it's easy to just slide by and do very little. However, your tenure as an student leader is very short. You may only have a semester or two. Get busy, do something, take action. Don't do nothing or just do the same thing that was done the year before. Don't sleep.

Years ago there was a skit on Saturday Night Live about "The Whiners." As you might imagine, they whined about everything. You name it, they complained about it.

It was not one of those "one hit wonder" skits either. SNL took this thing to the bank. Every week or so for months they had The Whiners on. The reason the skit worked is that every TV viewer could relate because we all sat, watched and said "I know somebody like that. It reminds me of (fill in the blank)."

Stop. Take your pointer finger right now and point at something in the room. Point at the phone, a light, the computer. Point and shake your finger as if you were blaming that thing for your current problems.

Go ahead, let it all out. Point at that computer and say "It's your fault. It's all you, you, you!"

Now stop. Look at your hand as you are pointing. You see, when we point at others and blame them (or things), we can look at our hands and realize that there are three other fingers always pointing back at us.

Point. Stop whining, complaining, blaming others and things for your problems as a student leader, for your challenges with school, your

girl/boyfriend, your job, your family. And the list can go on.

Too many people try to take little or no personal responsibility for what is going on with them by easily placing blame on others. Be a bigger, better person and place blame on yourself. (I told you that some of this stuff might hurt your feelings a little bit.)

How often do you hear other student leaders say:
“We don’t have money in the budget for that.”
“Nobody comes to our meetings.”
“I have to do all the work myself.”
“Nobody comes to our events.”

I have visited hundreds of campuses and consulted with students throughout the United States. In preparation for my keynote, training or consulting with them, I ask a few questions. One thing I try to discover is what they are most challenged by on their campus as student leaders. I often hear the above issues.

I then go into consultant mode. I open their minds by telling them what other schools are doing to deal with such issues. I provide strategies and solutions they can implement. I break things down to show them how things can be made easy.

I also recommend articles to them, books they can read and places they can go for more information.

What I find is that there are lots of well meaning student leaders out there. And many of them are happier whining and complaining that doing and succeeding. Complacency is easier. Doing is work.

Don't misunderstand my view. Although it might sound like I am slightly cynical, I bet you are reading this saying to yourself that you do know students like this and that YOU may actually be like this.

No need to apologize or get depressed. Now is the best time to get with it. Stop whining, stop pointing fingers, stop blaming others and things for your challenges and problems with your student organization.

For every student leadership whiner, I can't point to example after example of student leadership success. Student leaders who get it, who are busy doing something, who are MAKING IT HAPPEN!

Hey now, you're an All Star, get your game on, go play.

Hey now, you're a Rock Star, get the show on, get paid.

And all that glitters is gold.

Only shooting stars break the mold.

Get into the game and do something.

Don't Sleep Through It

Why did you choose to become involved with student leadership to begin with? If you are like most student leaders I've met over the years, you probably got involved for one of three reasons:

- A friend asked you to come to a meeting, to get involved.
- You were mad about something and wanted to make difference.
- You kind of fell into it. You participated as a member and before you know it, you were running for an office

Regardless of how you "made it," you are a student leader.

One of the most frustrating things for me is when I see a student leader who is just "made it" so they can put it on their resume. Basically, they don't care. They are just there for the wrong reason. They have little care for the responsibility they have as a student leader.

This "so-called" student leader wastes the privilege of serving as a student leader to represent others in the organization. They are in it for the wrong reasons. These "resume builders" fake their way through the leadership experience.

Are you sleeping through your leadership experience? Are you too busy whining about what doesn't work, what's wrong or complaining about others? Are you getting things done or just sitting back and sliding through while reaping the benefits of the leadership position?

It's simple...Wake Up, Stop Whining and Start Leading!

Leave Your Ego At The Door

Forget about your ego. Forget about your title. Forget about "Me, Me, Me."

Reality is, it's not about you. It's about them. It's about the students you represent. Whether you lead students in a fraternity, sorority, sports team, student government, residence halls or the student newspaper – it's not about you.

Focus on what is important...other students. Keep asking yourself every day "What are our students looking for? What do they want? What do they need?"

If you focus just on your needs, you will probably get by but will you succeed? As a former student organization advisor to student governments, sports teams, greek organizations and more, I can tell you that this issue is one of the biggest challenges for student leaders. They get into a position and then forget why they are there. And, they focus on themselves.

Action Item: Lose the attitude. Lose the ego. Focus on students you represent.

Stop Running Meetings

Yes, you read that correctly, stop running meetings. By this I mean two things.

First, stop meeting so much and start having more action. For years and years as an advisor I went to student organization meetings where students talked about T-Shirts. Yes, T-Shirts.

Now, while T-Shirts might sound important to you, it's not. I have seen student groups spend, or should I say waste, tons of time discussing logos and shirt colors when they could really use that time to discuss more meaningful things for the student organization. Have a sub-committee of 2-3 people do this work and bring it to the larger group with no more than two options for them to vote on. Vote and be done with it. T-Shirts cannot be the most important decision you and other students want or need to spend time on.

Second, start facilitating your meetings. Don't run your meetings, facilitate them. What do I mean by "facilitate?" I mean coordinate discussions, encourage participation, make it comfortable for others to talk during the meetings.

One of the biggest, no...make that THE biggest problem I see when student leaders are running meetings is that the student of highest rank

(president, chairperson, captain, etc.) does most of the talking.

Why do they do this? Probably because they think they are supposed to.

Quick story. The first school I worked at was in Maryland. The SGA President did a respectable job but always complained that nobody participated during the meetings. Seems that nobody spoke up or gave opinions. As the advisor, I gave her a few suggestions.

The following year saw an SGA President named Sue. She was very bright, well...she was wicked smart actually. She had friends but not as many as you might expect. She gave a positive and motivating speech and won the election.

I watched as Sue ran her SGA meetings. I remember by the third meeting just sitting back in my chair and wondering how she was doing it. She was running, or facilitating, the meetings so well that they were ending on time! Not only that, everyone was showing up! Not only that, THINGS WERE GETTING DONE!

What was her secret? During the last meeting of the semester, when everyone had left the meeting room I asked her how she learned how to run the meetings. She told me, "I saw how other officers ran the meetings in the past and it frustrated me.

I rarely got to say anything and neither did the other members of the group. It always seemed like the executive officers did 80-90% of the talking and the rest of the time was left for us.”

At this point she confided in me that she wanted to quit the group but stuck in there. She told me that if she ever became an officer, she would try to do 10-15% of the talking and leave the floor open for the members the rest of the time.

“Sounds scary,” I said. She said, “Not really. As long as I have some parameters in place to make sure people don’t dominate the discussion and that everyone who wants to participate gets a chance, it works.”

And she was right. I really learned from Sue...probably the best SGA President I ever advised. That experience motivated me to study meetings and learn how to better facilitate them. Sue doesn’t know it, but she was the catalyst for my desire to learn more about this topic. And for that I thank her.

I have since taught thousands of college students (and business people too) how to effectively facilitate meetings for improved success. I’ve presented on this topic on campuses and at national association meetings in a presentation called “Solving Problems, Avoiding Conflicts and Saving Time: 57 Strategies To Dramatically

Improve Your Meetings.” You can read more about this presentation at my website, www.LeadersMakeItHappen.com.

I'd also recommend you follow Sue's advice. Stop stealing the spotlight...that should not be your goal. Your goal should be to shine the light on others. Let them do most of the talking. Learn how to effectively facilitate, set time limits in meetings and bring closure to discussion. One resource I also love on this topic is "How To Make Meetings Work" by Doyle and Straus.

Stop meeting, start facilitating.

Find The Extra Hour

If you are like most students, you likely waste time. I know you are thinking “But Michael, I need time to goof off and just be me.” And, I agree with you.

I think you do need time to goof off, read a book outside of your field, listen to some cool music, jump in a river, go see a show, throw horseshoes or do whatever rocks your world.

I’m actually talking about the time we waste away with inactivity just waiting for stuff to happen. Have you ever been hanging out in the student center or in the dining hall just waiting for your friends to show up? Or how about when you arrive to class on time and teacher is late? There’s some more time.

My point is, if you are like me you easily have five minutes here, ten minutes there. That time adds up. If you are like most people, you can easily identify pockets of time during your day. Notice these pockets of time. Recognize them for what they are: gifts of time that you can use as a student leader.

Ideas for you:

- Carry a small notebook with you to be able to write things down (ideas, strategies, action

items) related to you and your student organization

- Wear a watch or regularly refer to the clock on your cell phone, your computer or your PDA.
- Let people know in a non-threatening way that your time is valuable and you know
- For one week, keep a running tab of the amount of time within each of those pockets, add up at the end of the week and you'll be amazed

Give Yourself A Whack On The Side Of The Head

Depending on your position, title or role as a student leader...you don't have much time. You may serve in this role for a semester or two and then you'll be on to something else. Maybe with the same student organization, maybe not. Regardless, you have to get a move on.

Don't waste your time doing the same thing they did last year. Now before you misunderstand my point, let me explain what I mean.

There are some things with most student organizations that will stay the same from year to year, certain traditional events or well know services. I'm not suggesting you change those things.

What I am suggesting is that you should take inventory of what your organization does and ask:

- Should we still be doing this?
- Does it serve a purpose?
- Does it make sense in terms of what it costs us in time, money, student organizational member energy?
- Are our students still asking for us to do this?
- Has this outlived itself?

- Are there other things we should/could be doing that are of greater need/demand today?

Sometimes it is hard to let go, I understand that. I once worked with a student organization that planned an annual dance marathon. Not only was it a longstanding campus event but students were emotionally tied to the event.

Problem was that it was not really generating the fundraising dollars it once did. It also took a tremendous amount of student, campus and local community resources. The students were afraid to ask the above questions. They went on for several more years until the campus community member, faculty and staff, called the question.

Student leaders were appalled that the faculty and staff were giving up on such a traditional event. Well, they weren't giving up. Many of those faculty and staff had been there for years and had given money, time and resources to the cause. They were now asking if, given changes in society and the campus, they should refocus.

After some initial rumblings, student leaders became engaged at a new level. They revamped the event and made participation even more stringent. Student participants now had financial goals to meet and a fee to pay if they wanted to participate. The result, less students participated

but the overall dollars collected was much higher than the previous year. The level of dancer commitment was greater.

Additionally, the committee changed aspects of the 24-hour dance marathon. They created incentives, special DJ spots, a special yearly dance, media coverage and much more.

Why did this happen? Because the student leaders took pause and said, "If it is to be, it is up to us!"

You too need to take pause and ask the above questions to see if what you and your organization is doing is really of relevance. It may not be. And that's OK. Make a decision and move on if needed. Or, do like these students did and look for ways to improve something already in existence.

"If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less."

-- General Eric Shinseki, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army

Set High Standards

I once worked as the director of Campus Life at a college. One day, two students proclaimed that they wanted to start a Crew Team. You know, boat in water, people paddling, someone sitting backwards in the front yelling at the rowers.

The problem was that we had bodies of water in the area where we were, but nothing on campus that would allow them to practice....no lake or river.

Regardless, they completed the paperwork and were on their way to achieving full time student organization status. The process involved several steps including gaining a specific number of members, finding a sponsor and of course, fundraising.

The two students put signs up on campus promoting the new Crew Team. To their surprise, 27 showed up to the first meeting. There, they told the other students and the benefits and enjoyment of rowing crew. They waxed on about being in the water and working in unison. They talked about the "big one" where the city held a big crew event on the river every spring with area colleges and other sponsored groups participating.

They also talked about hard work, hours of practice in and out of water, focused commitment,

exercise, sleep and dieting. The second meeting came and they only lost two of the 27. It was 5:30 am and the first morning exercise practice was about to begin. Part of the regimime was to get in shape physically which involved each member to participate in morning exercise sessions. They were optional, but necessary for success. The practice sessions were in the afternoon, three days a week. They practiced, sitting on beach towels on the quad.

Within three weeks, they had built a small box from wood with a spot for an oar on one side. One person could sit in it at a time. During the afternoon practice they (after getting permission) lowered the box 18" into the water in the small reflecting fountain on campus outside my office. Each student, now sitting in water, could practice rowing. Afternoon sessions involved in and out of water practice.

They got an advisor and several additional sponsors. Fundraising began too. By the end of the semester, they had attracted enough attention that a local businessperson donated a boat to them.

All along the way, the two who started the group did not waiver. They kept the exercise sessions even when students complained it was too early. They focuses on getting people real water practice time. They pushed hard on raising funds and

getting recognized by the campus and local media. They held students accountable for missed practices.

The standards were high, but so were the outcomes. By the end of the school year, they achieved official recognition, they had a thriving group of active and engaged student leaders, they had lots of resources to row on a campus with no real lake or pond, and, the President of the college accepted an invitation to attend their end of the year cookout.

How are your standards? Are you letting other members slide by? Are you sometimes just going through the motions? Are you focused on the goals even in troubled times? Are you getting by and succeeding even with little or no resources? Are members holding each other accountable for participation and fundraising efforts?

Being a student leader is not easy. Setting high standards and keeping them can be challenging, but not difficult. Part of setting the standards involves:

- Keeping others focused on the goals
- Staying motivated yourself
- Reminding others involved of the future and what that will look like
- Reaching out to others in the community, outside of your organization, for support and even funding

- Challenging others when you don't have all the resources you need to be creative
- Not wavering on the standards and practices you know you and others need to keep just because it would be easier to "do it at a different time" or to "stay inside where it is warm"

Part of setting standards means not whining!

Will you challenge yourself, the other leaders and your organizational goals? I hope so. The benefits are great and the rewards are gratifying.

Let Them Talk, Let The Talk, Let Them All Talk

Not just a lyric from one of my favorite music artist's songs, but a strategy for the most effective and successful leaders.

Face it, we love to hear ourselves talk. The best leaders realize that it is not about what they have to say, but how well they listen. Listening means not talking. Listening means asking questions. Listening means asking good questions. Listening means asking questions at the right time. Listening means asking questions to the right people.

Listening is difficult. Hearing is not.

What do you do most of the time?

"You have two ears and one mouth for a reason."

Connect One On One

How much do you really know about the other leaders you interact with? How much do you know about the students around you? How much do you know about the administrators and faculty you regularly learn from?

In the Jack Black movie "School of Rock," Ned (Black) is able to manipulate the students and the principal once he gets to know them. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying you should get in the habit of getting to know people so you can manipulate or use them. In the movie, things blow up on him because his intentions are deceitful.

I am however suggesting that getting to know people because you sincerely care helps you learn more about another person, and helps them open up more.

When people believe that you honestly care about them, they care more about you. They listen more intently. They focus more on your recommendations. They are more likely to think favorably of your ideas. They are more likely to want to be with you, work with you and be led by you.

Focus then on others. Ask questions. Listen. Compliment. Thank. Sincerely be with them. All

easy stuff...just stuff that we too often forget or lean away from doing.

The benefits are wonderful in many ways. You will create better partnering relationships and lifelong friends.

"People don't care how much you know until they know you care about them."

-- Zig Ziglar

Stop Doing All The Work

Yes, you heard me right. Stop it, just stop it!

Your efforts may seem well intentioned but they are futile. Here's why...if you are doing all the work, others are not. I can hear you now, you are screaming at this book saying, "But nobody else is willing to do the work!" or "If I don't do it, it won't get done right!"

I've heard it all before. Quick story. As an undergraduate student I was able to get an event to come to our campus for free. Doesn't matter to tell you here what it was...just know that it was an event that should have cost us a lot of money and an event that had the potential to draw lots of students to it. It was a popular program.

The problem was that as a new student leader, I thought I had to "do" all the work. So guess what, all of the organization members "let me." I ended up doing almost everything...developing posters, hanging posters, writing article for student newspaper, doing radio interviews, reserving facilities, arranging for food, working with vendors, contacting and working with campus security and more.

The day of the event came and went, and you can say it was a success. Lots of students came and people were buzzing about the event days later.

Planning for the next event came around and everyone relied on me. It was flattering but not much fun. I'm a slow learner so I didn't "get it" and continued to do all the work myself again.

After killing myself planning and implementing two events, I figured it out. At the next set of meetings, I asked for volunteers but nobody stood up. They figured that I had done it before and there was no problem.

Point: People Support What They Help Create!
This is a lesson I have taught to thousands of people. People are more likely to support things long term if they were involved in the development of the activity, project, program, etc.

Develop Other Leaders

There is a saying that goes “Each One, Teach One” which is an excellent way to think about leadership. Leadership is not just what you do, but it is how you live, how you act, how you believe and then do.

One of the exciting things about leadership is that while you are out there busy doing, others are watching. And that watching turns into them then doing. They tend to “do” as they have seen you “do.” So I always like to say, watch what you do as others will do the same.

Since you know this is going to happen, take responsibility and don’t just “do” leadership for the sake of doing. Rather do leadership with the intent of teaching and showing others. They are watching you anyway. And the path to great leadership is understanding your role as a leader. And your role is to help others excel as leaders too.

So when you are in the process of leading, look for opportunities to teach others, explain what you are doing, answer questions. If you just “do” leadership, you will continue to be very busy. The best leaders are the ones who make it their mission to grow other leaders.

Show Flexibility

Things aren't always as they appear to be. Scratch that...things are rarely the way they appear to be.

There will always be changes to your plans. People will not show up. People will not do the work they said they were going to do. People will wimp out on you.

Circumstances will change too. Funds you thought would be available won't. A room you are to use for an event will suddenly be "unavailable." Materials you were expecting to arrive on a certain day won't.

You can throw your hands up in the air and say "Well, what can I do? That's not my fault!"

It may not be your fault but it now may be your problem.

The best thing to do is to realize and expect that things won't work as planned. And, plan for that to happen. Yes, plan for things not to show up or people not to have done their work. It's a reality that people are sometimes lazy, selfish, inconsiderate and embarrassed. You may not like it, but you have to live with it.

Have a "Plan B." A "What if..." plan if you will. What if this person doesn't show up, what will we do? What if the materials arrive a day late, what will we do?

Plan in advance for those things. Have things arrive a few days earlier than needed. Have a backup person in mind. Plan, prepare and laugh when things don't work as planned. But always be flexible to things not working as you had planned...and then move on the "Plan B."

Stay Positive

One of the great marks of a leader is the ability to keep their head above water when others are losing theirs.

It's easy to stay positive when things are going well. And that is a time that you should enjoy leadership. When plans are executed, members are engaged, things work....people are upbeat, positive and happy. And, you should be too!

It is when things are not going so well, plans are falling through, people are not executing...that is when a true leader emerges. Others will see that leader because they are positive but not in a fake, unrealistic way. No, that leader realizes that they are in the middle of a mess and there are challenges ahead.

However, this is the time when the leader is thinking forward and moving ahead. This is when they are not paralyzed by the challenges, rather, they are challenged by them. They keep their head up and encourage others to do the same.

In these moments of challenge, you need to keep your head up, stay positive, stay strong. Help others see the possibilities of the new future just ahead. Yes, it may be ahead and filled with challenges, but there is a future. That is the picture you need to paint for them.

Stay positive, stay strong. Lead others.

"It's Your Attitude, Pump It Up!"

-- Michael Poll

Empathize

There will be other leaders who will come to you in confidence about their situations. Some will come to you out in the open. Most will come to you and they won't even know what they are doing or saying.

Effective leaders are excellent listeners. And if you are a good listener, chances are that people will come to you with their issues. They will look for somebody to be a sounding board for them. Don't let them have a pity party with you. Remember, no whining.

It's alright for them to complain or be upset but they need to pick themselves up and realize what they need to do to move forward. Some will just want you to listen, some will want your advice. Few will want you to help them solve their problems themselves...but that I believe is what you need to do to be an effective leader.

Ask them questions, challenge them, help them discover what they need to do to get unstuck. The key for you is to do those things AFTER you empathize with them. In other words, truly listen, make eye contact, nod your head and show them you are sincerely listening and care about them as a person. This behavior, although it sounds basic, takes work.

We are too caught up in trying to solve people's problems that we forget to show empathy. Or, we don't even think about trying to solve the problems. Instead, we hear of their woes and we begin to wax on about our problems, issues, challenges. Before you know it, we're both complaining and maybe whining. And, it usually has moved from the original issue on to something totally unrelated.

Empathize. That means listen; genuinely listen to the other person. Focus on them, not you. It's not about you and your issues. In that moment, resist the urge. It is about them. Then, help them help themselves by asking good questions and by appropriately challenging them or the situation.

Respect Uniqueness

Yes, it makes sense when you just read those words. But, it's more than those words.

Uniqueness means that people will be different, from each other and from you. They will have their own opinions. They will have their own ways of acting. They will have different value systems. All of these things may clash with you and your ways. And, they will clash with the ways of other leaders.

As a leader, realize it's not just about you respecting the uniqueness of other leaders. It's about you helping others respect the uniqueness of others.

You may have your head around this concept but the bigger challenge is helping others with this. Is it your responsibility to help one person understand the different approaches of another? To some degree it is the responsibility of those people involved. But, depending on your role as a leader with these people, you have a responsibility here too.

In other words, are you facilitating meetings? Are you coordinating a project? People will have different perspectives and approaches. Role model that you are open to respecting those differences:

- Ask to hear the different points of view by stating it out loud...“I’m sure people have different perspectives on this. Let’s here how other people view this situation.”
- Let them know they are heard and understood, even if you don’t agree with their perspective...“Thanks for explaining your viewpoint. Sounds like we have several different ways of viewing this situation. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts.”

In the end, people are going to have those different perspectives anyway. Be open to them and look for ways to invite others and help them feel open in sharing and living their uniqueness’s.

Have Fun

I am often amazed at the thousands of student leaders I have addressed and discussed leadership with them. I ask their definition of a leader and leadership. I ask questions to learn about how they act as a leader. I try to understand their beliefs.

I am surprised how often they miss this one. I shouldn't be though as I was once in their shoes and didn't see this one in front of me either. I "did" leadership and enjoyed it but didn't celebrate the enjoyment part. Leadership is work, it is challenging, it involves thinking. Sometimes that thinking can cloud your ability to enjoy and have fun.

When I say have fun, I'm not talking about bringing squirt guns to every meeting...although, not a bad idea.

Life is short and unfortunately, it can be filled with lots of challenges, sorrows and disappointments. It wasn't until my second job after college that I encountered someone who helped me understand, from his role modeling, the importance of just having fun.

Yes, bring a few water balloons to a meeting. Take time after an event to poke fun at the mistakes made and at yourself. Take five minutes

during a meeting to share a funny story. Take pictures, share them later to celebrate your “fun.”

Don't be so serious. Well, be serious in your plans and execution of events, of interacting with other leaders...but don't take yourself so seriously. Your sense of playfulness, of fun is contagious. And people want to be around others who like to have fun. There are too many people out there who don't want to have fun. (Run from them.)

Now What?

My best hope for you is not just that you got to the end of this book. My best hope is that you'll do something. That you'll do something different today as a result of what you have read. That you will think in new and different ways. That you will not do just what everyone else does, just because.

Leadership is hard stuff, but it's not terribly difficult if you follow certain paths, ideas, strategies and directions. Here I have set out to help you with the most common mistakes leaders make. I also set out to give you some ideas and suggestions on what to do to avoid them and more importantly, what to do instead.

I also set out to motivate you, to wake you up a bit.

So go ahead...Start Leading!

