

# Leadership Seminar

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Being in Leadership is a big responsibility that none of us should take lightly. Webster's dictionary defines leadership as "the ability to lead". But let's break it down even further. What is a "leader"? Again, Mr. Webster comes to the rescue: "To go before or with - to show the way", "to influence or induce", "to act as a guide and take the initiative". All of these definitions put us in a place of importance and responsibility.

Many other experts have created an acrostic on the word "leadership" – I'm no different (except that I came up with these words during a fitful night of sleeplessness). Here is my "take" on the word "LEADERSHIP": L = learn, E = enthusiastic, A = ask questions, D = decisive, E = ego-less, R = reliable, S = service, H = healthy, I = impartial and P = positive. Now let me break that down.

## **L = Learn**

We must be willing to do some research and learn more about our position. If you've been elected as President of your organization, find articles and information about creating effective agendas, conducting meetings, parliamentary procedure and the like. One of the best sources is your Immediate Past President – he/she has a wealth of knowledge and experience that you can learn from. Whether or not he/she was a good leader, you can learn from his/her successes and mistakes. Speaking of mistakes, I never see them as negative – a mistake is actually an opportunity to learn something. Seize that opportunity with an open mind!

If you've been elected as your organization's Treasurer, do some research and learn a new software program such as Quicken or QuickBooks. Many of the local community colleges even offer a "quick" course on these programs. Who knows – you might just be able to organize all of your own personal finances this way!

Whatever leadership position you have accepted, do all you can to be visible to your members. Attend each local association meeting, attend the TMTA state convention and even try to attend the MTNA Conference annually. These meetings and conferences are designed to equip you with more knowledge about your art, motivate you to be a better teacher and leader and introduce you to more individuals that have the same common goal that you have. Networking across the state and even across the nation will boost you as leader.

Be informed! Know what your local association Constitution & By-laws, Standing Rules and Policies & Procedures say. Read over these important documents every so often so you will know the answers to those questions that *will* arise from your newer members.

## **E = Enthusiastic**

Approach your position with energy, excitement and enthusiasm! Being in leadership is a lot like being on the cheering squad. You are the individuals that will motivate your members to action. Let them know that the monthly meetings are “the place to be”. That’s when/where they will converse with other teachers and learn the details about what’s happening in your local association. You are given the responsibility to influence your members to action.

## **A = Ask Questions**

The hard questions must be asked and it usually needs to come from you. Don’t be afraid to “stir things up”. Sometimes the “what if’s” need to be known before the organization as a whole can make an educated decision. Take the initiative and introduce a new way of doing things in your organization.

A different aspect of asking questions is to not be afraid to ask questions of those former leaders of your association. I’m one of those people who literally hate to hear the phrase “we’ve always done it that way”. My husband, a tax attorney, says that around the tax season he hears “SALY” (Same as Last Year). Well, sometimes that’s a phrase you *want* to hear. Respect the history of your organization and its former leaders. They made those decisions at that time for a really good reason – for the betterment of the association. Find out why things were done that way. There’s no need to reinvent the wheel when your former leaders have already done it and it either fell apart or it worked beautifully. Respect their advice!

## **D = Decisive**

Be decisive and “stick” to your final decision. Try not to let the erratic emotions of your members sway you into changing your mind about important decisions that will affect the entire organization. Be firm. You can always cite your organizations’ by-laws, Standing Rules, and Polices & Procedures as reference to your decision. Even if some members don’t agree with your decision, they will respect you more for not being “wishy-washy”.

## **E = Ego-less**

Don’t let your “ego” get in the way of how effective you **can** be as leader. You were elected or “hand-picked” for this position and it should make you feel pretty good about yourself. Watch out - this is not a popularity contest and those that voted for you want you in this position because of your skill set and leadership ability. We’ve all heard the expression: “There’s no **I** in team”. It definitely applies to your role as a leader of your local organization – view your members as your “team” and encourage everyone to work together for the greater good of the entire organization. Egos need to be left at home.

## **R = Reliable**

Make sure that your members view you as a reliable source for many things. If a conflict arises among any of your members, they need to know that they can come to you and discuss the problem or situation and that you will be professional and handle the problem with discretion. They also need to know that you can be counted on in almost every situation regarding your organization. For example, if you are having trouble getting enough volunteers to “work” an event and you are not scheduled to work that specific event, step up to the plate and volunteer – be present at as many local association events as possible. Your members need to know that you really care about the organization and that you “want” to be a part of what’s happening (even if your students are not involved).

## **S = Service**

Holding a leadership position in your local association is actually an act of service. Let’s face it – all of us are VOLUNTEERS! None of us are getting paid; at least not monetarily. Your members need to know that you love your organization (and its students) and are willing to “go that extra mile”. Service comes from the heart – let it show!

## **H = Healthy**

Effective leaders are individuals that keep themselves in shape. It’s so easy to spend hour upon hour (I know, ask my husband) fulfilling all of the duties of your position. That is important but equally important is maintaining your health. Make sure you get enough sleep. I know, I know – the demands of the job are overwhelming! Believe me; no one has felt it more than me these past five months as I was asked to take over the helm of TMTA after our President passed away suddenly. But make it a point to organize your time. Schedule in time for friendships (coffee breaks with colleagues, tennis matches, date night with your spouse, etc.). Just get up from that computer and take a half hour walk in your neighborhood. I live on the golf course and actually look forward to taking an evening walk. The scenery is beautiful which refreshes my spirit and I have a chance to reflect upon many positive things during that walk. Make time for some exercise – whether it’s a good walk, bicycle ride, workout at the gym or vigorous jog – all of that has been proven to enhance our endorphins that stimulate our brain. This will help us in making sound decisions for our associations.

## **I = Impartial**

One of the biggest challenges that I have had to deal with as President this past year (both at the local and state levels) is remaining impartial. It’s not “if” but “when” you **will** have to deal with “sticky” situations. You must wear a different “hat” and be sure to listen to both sides of the story. You may totally agree with one party but you must be willing to listen to both camps. Take notes and write down the circumstances

of the situation. You just might hear an aspect of the situation you never deemed possible. It's okay to not know all of the answers. Let the parties know that you will balance each side with equal weight and make a decision that is best for the organization as a whole.

## **P = Positive**

And last but certainly not least, always remain positive! If a member senses that you are unhappy or critical, they will lose respect for your authority and ability to lead. Always be uplifting and encouraging in your speech. Even when reprimanding or correcting an individual, you can still remain positive. Ask them what you can do to make their life easier as a member. Negativity will not get results. Remain positive!

### **Responsibilities for Presidents**

The President sets the agenda for your organization's meetings. It is customary to prepare one in plenty of time to send out to all members one week prior to the meeting (if possible). This way, those individuals making a presentation at the meeting can be prepared. An agenda should list the approval of the previous months' meeting minutes and reports from each officer. Ideally, you should have a report related to all events that transpired prior to that meeting and also have last minute reminders for the events scheduled for the next month. That way those events get plenty of attention and exposure to the members. Be sure to make time for any unfinished business (from the previous month) and new business – you will be amazed at what some of your members will suggest. It might be something you will want to work into your calendar each year.

Make sure your local association has a mission statement. Know what your purpose is and what your goals are. Do you exist just for your students? Do you exist just for your teachers? Or both? Have it written down in your by-laws and keep it in mind when making decisions for the organization.

The President should be involved in all planning meetings of the association. This can relate to the calendar setting, repertoire selection for contests & ensembles and others. Have a procedure whereby your other officers report to you monthly about what they've dealt with. It's better to be informed than be surprised. Along the lines of being informed, make sure that you complete your TMTA Local association report annually and send it to the TMTA office by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Your TMTA leaders want to know about each local association – your accomplishments, people in leadership, deceased members, new chairmen, etc. Please keep your state leadership informed.

Relationship is key with any organization. See your members as people and not just a "number". Encourage social interaction among your members. One of the things my local association started a few years ago is getting together for lunch immediately following the monthly meeting. This is a great way to get to know each other in a relaxed setting. Take interest in each other. One thing that I remember distinctly from a

leadership presentation given by Phyllis Pieffer (an MTNA Past President) was to thank your members publicly. That extra minute taken in a meeting to do that will brighten up that member's day and they will be even more positive throughout that meeting.

Communicate effectively. This will be addressed later but I would like to stress that with the internet and all of the electronic media we have available today, we should be taking advantage of most of these opportunities. Set up a Facebook account for your association; send out a weekly email to all members about association-related activities and even non-association events (probably should stay "musical" in nature though). The more your membership knows about your association, the stronger your group will be.

In conclusion, enjoy being a leader! Take this as a responsibility to influence others in a positive way! Once again, I want to reiterate my acrostic for leadership: L = learn, E = enthusiastic, A = ask questions, D = decisive, E = ego-less, R = reliable, S = service, H = healthy, I = impartial and P = positive. I wish you all a very successful year!