

The ACTIV²E Leadership Model

Introduction

Leadership is the lifeblood of all organizations. It draws people together for a common mission, provides direction, offers encouragement, augments resource management, and provides role models. People who are well led are retained in the organization. They want to play a role. But how does one build an organizational culture that celebrates what individual members have to offer, yet keeps everyone mission focused, safe, and productive?

Leadership is key to the success of all organizations, and everyone has a role to play. Commanders, managers, and executives assume the “mantle” of leadership when they assume their positions. And yet, often these people confuse leadership with management and command. Management is the allocation of things (that can’t think, talk, or walk), and command represents control, while leadership is the motivation, encouragement, and tasking of people (who can choose). Management represents half the foundation of leadership; it distinguishes order from chaos. Leadership, however, is a much broader issue; and being an inherently human task, may take a lifetime to master.

With that in mind, we’d like to offer some thoughts on leadership in the form of a model: ACTIV²E Leadership. While it is certainly not the only approach to leadership, you may find it to be an easy way to think about leading in CAP.

ACTIV²E Leadership stands for:

APPRECIATION

COMMUNICATION

TRAINING

INVOLVEMENT

VALUE/**V**ISION

EXECUTION

The discussion of ACTIV²E Leadership does not revolve around leadership styles, such as the authoritarian, laissez faire, and democratic styles you’ve probably learned about in CAP or elsewhere, though they will be mentioned at times for context. Styles are situational. Components in the ACTIV²E Leadership model – among the many models possible – provide a structure to leadership within an organization.

Over the next few essays, we will discuss the ACTIV²E Leadership model in detail, what it means, and how adopting this model can help your organization. It is not a breakthrough. What it is really is a package of tried and true leadership principles seen for decades. What it will do is help you develop an awareness of what your organization's members may need and the programs your organization already has in place to fulfill its needs. With that in mind, let's briefly introduce ACTIV²E Leadership.

Appreciation

People need to be **appreciated** (no surprise). There aren't too many things in life more gratifying than to receive thanks for a job well done, and fewer still more motivational. Most organizations have some formal and informal appreciation programs. They range from awards and decorations, STEP promotions for enlisted members, and some monetary awards. "Thank you" programs are an extremely effective leadership tool.

Communication

To be effective, organizations need to master the art of **communication** up, down, and within the chain of command or organizational structure. The flow and accuracy of information is absolutely vital, for without it no one will know what to do or when to do it. If people feel "out of the loop" they will not feel needed, and they will be ineffective.

Training

People have to be trained, and they have to know why they are being asked to do the things they do. How do they fit? How do they contribute to the mission or the bottom line? **Training** and education are integral parts of achieving corporate objectives and employee/member retention. Once assigned to a job, s/he must understand and be comfortable with the tasks assigned. The member must also value the process. Think of training as teaching the skills, and education as building the value. Both are essential. If a member doesn't value the importance of the procedure, task, or mission, no amount of training in the world can make up for it.

Involvement

Leadership entails direct participation in objective or mission accomplishment. As a leader, your **involvement** is important. Your role as a leader necessarily makes you a role model; people will follow your example. Be sure that the example you set is the best one for your organization and your members. Being involved, yet knowing the best times to be the center of attention (there is a difference), will make you an effective role model. Better still, you'll have a clear picture of what's going on around you.

Value/Vision

Value

As a leader, you must build **value** for your members: value in your organization, value in the mission/objectives, value in the culture, value in their service. This is often an under-appreciated component of leadership, and yet it may be among the most important. Building value talks to the human component of leadership. It is here where you set the culture. It is here where the members decide what, when, and how to use what they've learned.

Vision

Vision in leadership goes hand-in-hand with value. Your vision creates value for the member. Your vision is their roadmap, and what they will adopt as their goal. Visions must be clear, consistent with the mission and objectives of your organization, and be attainable. It must be sold to the member. Building value can be thought of as selling vision. Vision and value get your members to do the tough stuff.

Execution

Finally, we'll discuss **execution**, because all the other things are great, but if the mission isn't accomplished or the objectives not attained, it's not worth a thing. Proper execution: mission focused, humane, accomplished with excellence and with integrity are the goals.

ACTIV²E Leadership is a discussion about "people issues" in your organization. Here's hoping that our future discussions on the ACTIV²E Leadership model will provide you with perspective and tools, and give you a fresh look at your responsibilities as a leader.