

# Leadership and Its Impact on Organizations

*Daren Schumaker*

*Senior United States Probation Officer  
Northern District of Iowa*

**THE FEDERAL JUDICIAL Center's** Leadership Development Program teaches and develops leadership skills in participants through a combination of formal instruction, project-based learning, and one-on-one interaction with faculty mentors. During the course of the three-year program, participants formulate and carry out three major projects: a management practices report, an in-district improvement project, and a temporary duty assignment. The following article was prepared as a management practices report—the objective of which is to gain a better understanding of the meaning of leadership and the impact that leaders and managers have on their organizations. For those employed in the field of community corrections, leadership is one resource that is not limited by budgetary constraints. Leadership is renewable and, more importantly, a resource that positively impacts community corrections on all levels—from clients to employees to organizations.

Have you ever tried to bake a cake from scratch? For some, such an undertaking comes naturally. For others, it requires a great deal of concentration. Regardless of the effort utilized, most cakes generally require the same basic ingredients: flour, sugar, baking powder, milk, and eggs. Although the same ingredients are generally used in most cakes, outcomes vary. Too much of one ingredient or too little of another or the addition of one ingredient too soon or too late directly impacts the quality of the cake that you ultimately pull out of the oven. One thing is for sure, although recipes vary, each of us knows a good cake when we taste one.

For many, the path to baking a great cake may start with a review of cookbooks authored by experts in the field of baking cakes and a related search for what they consider to be the “best” cake recipe. However, this tactic does not guarantee success. A further step down the path to baking a great cake might be to seek out those who have successfully baked great cakes and take the time to discuss with each baker their personal recipes and the skills that they found most helpful in baking great cakes.

As odd as it may sound, I have come to think that developing leadership is like baking a cake. The path to successful leadership also begins with a review of literature authored by experts in the field of leadership, followed by discussions of leadership with those who serve or have served as managers and leaders in various organizations. Such a course of action, as I have personally experienced, makes it much easier to follow the often hidden path to leadership in the real world in which we live. However, even when made easier to follow, the path to leadership remains challenging and will always “end” at a spot just over the horizon.

After a detailed review of selected management and leadership-related articles and books authored during the last 25 years, I discussed the concept of leadership with three very different experts in the field of leadership, individuals with varied backgrounds who each possess a wealth of leadership-related knowledge. First, I spoke with Meg Rintoul, who has been employed as the Manager of Commodity Services and Budgeting at Siemens Industry, Inc., in Columbia, South Carolina, for five

years. Meg supervises 12 employees who are located in both Columbia, South Carolina, and London, England. Next, I spoke with Jerry Vahl, who was employed as the President of Western Reserve Life and the Vice President of Aegon USA Holding Company from about 1991 to 2004, leading a total of 1,500 employees at various locations throughout the United States. Last, I spoke with Waylyn McCulloh, who has been employed in the field of community-based corrections for nearly 40 years, serving the past six and a half years as the Assistant Director for the Seventh Judicial District Department of Correctional Services in Davenport, Iowa. Waylyn has served as a supervisor and manager of pretrial release services, residential facilities, and probation/parole field offices.

In order to preheat the “leadership oven” and ensure that we were on the same page, I opened each of these conversations with the same question, “What does leadership mean to you?” Meg described leadership as the use of organizational knowledge to set both short- and long-term goals, the ability to establish appropriate deadlines to reach those goals, and the ability to effectively communicate goals and deadlines to employees. Meg noted that she sets deadlines about 25 percent early so that, if the amount of work increases, she can keep employees on schedule without increasing their stress levels. In Meg’s opinion, leadership means planning so as to reduce stress, keep up morale, and allow for an appropriate work and personal life balance. In Meg’s words, “Happy workers are generally your best workers.”

Jerry's description of leadership focused on the ability to craft a sound vision of where an organization is headed, including the development of a 10-year plan with specific benchmarks of what needs to be achieved during each phase of the plan in order to successfully move toward the vision. In Jerry's words, "You really have to know your vision and where you're heading." Jerry further described leadership as a form of service in which one works with an organization's "front line" employees to assist them in understanding where the organization is going and to knock down the obstacles blocking their paths to success.

Waylyn described leadership as the ability to act as a role model, specifically as a role model who has the ability to challenge others by "raising the bar" to a reasonable and attainable level that they can aspire to without becoming overly frustrated. Leadership as described by Waylyn also encompasses the aptitude to display a great deal of patience and a willingness to counsel others, as one's personal life often impacts work and vice versa.

Next, I asked the experts with whom I spoke to determine which "ingredients" or qualities are most vital to the creation of a successful leader. Meg listed a willingness to "get into the trenches" and work with her team—to lead by example—and the ability to effectively communicate as vital components of leadership. Meg also cited the ability to be empathetic to her employees and their personal lives and stressors (understanding without making excuses) and the ability to allow time for the development of employees, even if such development means that a valued employee will likely be promoted to a position outside of her team.

First, Jerry indicated that leaders must truly care about other people, explaining that once followers understand that a leader truly cares about them and wants them to be successful, then leaders are more likely to be followed and be successful. Jerry listed many other characteristics as important components of successful leaders, including general intelligence, approachability, vast knowledge of the organization, and a well-balanced combination of technical proficiencies and social skills. In addition, Jerry described leaders as having the ability to be confident enough (and unafraid enough) to follow their instincts or "gut feelings," to take time to be creative and think, and to take time to reflect on what they've learned and think about how things are done so as to look for potential improvements.

Waylyn described an ideal leader as an individual who is forward thinking, who plans for the future, and who has a vision. Waylyn further described an ideal leader as being genuine and warm and as having both the ability and willingness to provide opportunities for staff members to develop professionally, what Waylyn described as the most rewarding aspect of leadership and one of the main reasons that he enjoys his role as a leader.

Just as the use of certain ingredients can ruin the consistency and flavor of a cake, certain traits and attributes can ruin the quality of a leader. Meg listed poor communication as a trait that can negatively impact leadership. Meg explained that, if specific tasks and general expectations are not clearly defined and expressed, then employees can be "surprised" when they fail—noting that she finds such poor communication to be the "most frustrating" element of poor leadership. Meg also noted the negative impact of leaders who take credit for the good work of their followers and leaders who "disappear" for extended periods of time and have no contact or communication with their followers.

Jerry discussed his numerous and frequent experiences with "bad" leadership and listed the inability to provide positive feedback, the development of friendships with followers, and the use of a leadership style based on "like-mindedness and loyalty" as traits that are often displayed by "bad" leaders. Jerry cautioned that, although a leadership style based on "like-mindedness and loyalty" allows organizations to move faster toward their goals, such a style often fosters an environment in which it is much easier to quickly move down the wrong path.

Waylyn reflected on his experiences during his 40-plus years of employment and identified several behaviors that are frequently displayed by "bad" leaders, such as engaging in personal relationships and friendships with defendants and other staff members, disciplining subordinates in public and in front of other members of the organization, yelling and shouting at other members of the organization, and relying on the use of nepotism, intimidation, and/or friendship (all instead of merit) in order to accomplish what the leader has personally defined as the organization's goals.

Regardless of whom you talk to or the words they use, it appears as if leadership can't exist without some component of mission or, in the words of the experts I consulted, a plan for or a soundly crafted vision of the future that is effectively communicated to

followers by a leader. With this in mind, how do managers and leaders effectively communicate a sense of mission to their employees? According to Meg, she communicates a sense of mission to the members of her team by specifically outlining her expectations for what she considers to be the mission of Siemens Industry, Inc.—the provision of "client-focused" services to clients and the development of working relationships with them. Meg noted that she initially outlines expectations in writing, so as to avoid any confusion, and incorporates behaviors that support these expectations into the metrics that are used to evaluate the members of her team. In addition, Meg organizes the members of her team so that experienced members have opportunities to model mission-supporting behaviors to the newer team members.

Jerry noted that he communicated a sense of mission to his 1,500 employees through "direct communication" to ensure clarity. Jerry used yearly full staff meetings, quarterly meetings with supervisory staff and managers (during which current progress would be compared to goals), weekly meetings with a core group of advisors, and conversations with individual employees. Jerry reported that he also communicated a sense of mission by disseminating a newsletter as well as having monthly "birthday meetings" during which he would meet with randomly selected employees (whose birthdays were all in a given month) and discuss how their efforts fit into the overall mission of the organization.

Waylyn cited the textbook definition of how to most effectively communicate a sense of mission to employees: ensuring that all levels of the organization are actively involved in formulating the vision. Waylyn noted that this definition is often not practical and reported that he therefore communicates such a sense of mission by formulating small goals that he outlines within the context of the organization's overall mission. Waylyn explained that he is able to most effectively communicate such mission by setting an example for others, by "walking the walk and talking the talk."

Now that each of these three leadership experts has identified and selected the "ingredients" they feel are the most vital to the development of leadership and the most essential to those who serve as effective leaders, what happens next? How does each of them mix the ingredients that they have identified as vital and essential into a form of leadership that brings out the best in their employees? Meg addressed the complexity of

the task by explaining that each employee is motivated differently. Meg indicated that she motivates her employees through one-on-one discussions, group lunch outings, reduced work hours, bonuses, and opportunities for education and skill development—attempting to determine what makes each of her team members happy, as “happy workers” are most often her “best workers.”

Jerry explained that, despite the large amount of academic research to the contrary, he has always found that a soundly structured compensation program appears to have most effectively motivated his employees. Jerry reported that financial incentives need to fit into the “big picture” and be based on the achievement of both individual and organizational goals (70 percent personal performance and 30 percent company performance). In addition, Jerry indicated that he motivated his employees to engage in self-improvement by providing constructive criticism (obtained by engaging in conversations with a supervisor’s employees). Most important, Jerry learned to motivate many of his difficult employees by moving them to positions where their weaknesses were not used or were not as important and where their strengths were used and were very important, allowing employees to pursue positions where they were more likely to succeed—resulting in “happier employees” who become “happier people.”

Waylyn reported that he brings the best out of his staff by employing his “personal skills” and developing rapport to show the employees that he truly cares about them. Waylyn noted that if his “personal skills” are not effective, then he is forced to rely on his positional power to motivate an employee to correct or improve performance. Waylyn explained that he also motivates his staff by providing them with opportunities for success, including opportunities to act as a role model to other staff or to serve as either a mentor or a mentee. Waylyn indicated that he relies on alignment to bring the best out of difficult employees, helping them to both identify the aspects of their position that they most enjoy and excel at and focus on those aspects for movement or specialization within the structure of the agency. In summary, Waylyn reported that effective employee motivation is rooted in a leader’s ability to show employees that the leader is genuine and really cares about employees’ success.

Despite the care and effort with which each of these three leadership experts have followed their recipes, their leadership experiences

have not been without surprises—some good and some bad. Meg reported that she was most surprised by how frequently members of her team came to her with their personal problems. Meg believes this may be because they realize that their personal problems likely have a negative impact on their work performance. She also noted that she was surprised at how quickly bonds develop among the members of her team and how quickly they help each other out when one of them starts to fall behind.

Jerry reported that he was most surprised by the number of people who were afraid to take the first step in a project, to share an idea, or to make a recommendation. Jerry noted that he was also surprised at how unwilling or unable individuals are to make decisions, specifically a decision to start or stop a project or course of action. In addition, Jerry was caught off guard at how unproductive competition can be within an organization if left unchecked, resulting in poor decision making by those who are competing against each other.

Within the realm of community corrections, Waylyn was most surprised by the negative attitudes of staff, the number and nature of personal problems between staff members, and the personal problems brought to work by staff. As a consequence, Waylyn was also surprised that his role as a manager involved much more problem diffusing than mentoring. In addition, Waylyn was surprised by how greatly poor leadership can negatively impact the overall functioning of an organization, resulting in low morale and staff turnover.

In addition to the presence of surprises, each leader reported that they view leadership differently now than they did at the beginning of their careers. Meg reported that, early in her career, she wanted everything—both more money and more time off. She acknowledged that, as a manager, she has now gained a “new” perspective that has helped her realize that her old managers really weren’t as “difficult” as she thought they were at the time.

Jerry stated that, at the beginning of his career, he believed that leadership was a naturally occurring trait, something that you were either born with or didn’t have. Later in his career, he learned that many aspects of leadership can be developed—including the ability to craft a vision, motivate others, be objective, and make decisions or change directions. Despite this, Jerry noted that some aspects of leadership, specifically the charisma

often displayed by former Presidents John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton, are difficult to “develop.”

Waylyn indicated that, after nearly 40 years in the field of community corrections, he has learned to appreciate how difficult it is to be a manager or leader. Through his promotion to a management position, he developed a different perspective, reporting that he has developed a more positive view of leaders during the course of his employment, in particular a more positive view of leaders whose leadership methods he questioned earlier in his career. In addition, Waylyn noted that he has learned just how important good leadership is and the impact that such leadership can have on an organization.

Each of our leadership experts reported that, if given the opportunity, they would gladly offer a few words of advice to anyone who is stepping into a leadership role for the first time. Meg offered the following words, “People are different, so treat them differently.” To Meg, it is important for a new manager or leader to remember that you can’t motivate and help people the same way every time, that people have different motivators, and that people learn differently and react differently to positive and negative experiences. In addition, Meg cited the importance of hiring employees who will fit well into the culture of her team, as such a “fit” can’t be learned.

Jerry noted that he would encourage new managers or leaders to not be afraid to follow their instincts or “go with their gut.” In addition, Jerry cited the importance of learning how to recognize when someone is in the “right spot” or “not in the right spot,” and developing the skill to tell them one way or the other. Jerry advised that, when an employee performance evaluation reveals deficiencies in certain areas, it is more effective to simply move that specific employee to a position where their strengths are utilized and their weaknesses are not used. Simply stated, move employees to the position that best fits the employee, which in turn is the best position for the company. Jerry stated that he would also encourage new managers or leaders to not worry so much about making decisions or making a mistake, and to be “slow to hire and quick to fire.”

Waylyn likewise stressed the importance of the hiring process and encouraged both new managers and leaders to hire carefully and to not be afraid to let an employee go when you need to do so. Within the realm of community corrections, Waylyn noted the importance of

reminding new managers and leaders to be realistic with both themselves and their staff about the ability of defendants to succeed while subject to correctional supervision, to avoid power struggles and/or power trips, and to not take things personally. Last, Waylyn cited the importance of ensuring a “work/life balance” and allowing for time for reflection and for finding a “sanctuary” where you can recharge so as to avoid the burnout that is so common in the field of corrections.

Each of these three leadership experts listed several experiences that they felt were vital to their development into a manager or leader. Meg recalled that, when she took over her team, things were poorly organized to such an extent that she is now “hyper-organized” and may even be “anal” about organization as she doesn’t want to be “caught off guard or surprised”—a feeling that she experienced when she was first assigned to manage her team and that she has disliked since.

Jerry advised that he learned from each of his experiences with “bad” leadership to create his own vision of what a true leader should be and the qualities that they should possess. Jerry indicated that he also developed a great deal when given opportunities to solve problems, develop solutions, and make mistakes doing so. In particular, Jerry cited his experiences with a supervisor who indirectly challenged him to take the initiative to learn about all aspects of the companies that they were acquiring, conduct that helped him to develop a desire to learn on his own and build a knowledge base, a desire which served him well for the remainder of his career.

Waylyn noted that he also learned a great deal from his experiences with poor management in community corrections and learned what he didn’t want to be like as a manager or supervisor. Waylyn specifically cited the growth and learning that he experienced when he was forced to work through “bad spots” and when he was given formal opportunities to learn management or leadership-related skills. In addition, Waylyn discussed how important spending time with and observing an effective leader at work (during difficult times) were to his development.

In addition, each of our leadership experts identified aspects of their formal education that they felt prepared them for leadership, and identified additional characteristics of leadership for which they wished they had been better prepared. Meg, who earned a bachelor’s degree related to the field of the religious studies of southeastern Asia, wished

that she had developed a better and more comprehensive understanding of the concepts used in business, so she enrolled in and completed online business and management-related courses offered by her employer. Meg indicated that, in her opinion, the most valuable training she received was related to hiring practices. To Meg, such training helped her understand the importance of assessing a candidate’s personality, as personality isn’t a trait that you can teach to a new employee if it is incompatible with the company’s culture.

Jerry explained that he earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting and a master’s degree in business administration, and indicated that, if he could “do it again,” he would take more classes related to the field of psychology in order to learn more about the differences between people, how to better understand people, and how to better motivate people. Jerry reported that he believes he would have benefited greatly from having a mentor to help him learn to be confident in making decisions and know that it is okay to make mistakes. However, as he did not have a formal leadership program available to him, he was forced to develop his own path to leadership, an experience that he believes made him a stronger leader than he would have been if he had participated in a formal course of management or leadership-related training.

Waylyn, who earned both a bachelor’s degree in political science and a master’s degree in criminal justice, wished that he would have had more coursework related to management and leadership as a general foundation for his employment and role in an organization. Waylyn also wished he had enrolled in a course that would have stressed to him the importance of developing relationships with fellow managers or leaders so as to share ideas and seek guidance. Waylyn noted that his formal education failed to prepare him to develop such a network.

Unfortunately, the success or effectiveness of a manager or leader often boils down to one thing—their ability to improve their employer’s financial condition. Meg noted that she has reduced costs for her employer by improving how work is organized so as to eliminate redundant or overlapping tasks, thus improving efficiency. Jerry explained that he also reduced costs for his employer by improving efficiency in both his employees and the organization as a whole. Waylyn acknowledged that reduced budgets in the field of community corrections have forced individuals such as himself to develop ways to

do more with less, noting that he has done so by correcting inefficiencies in organizational structure, ensuring that work duties are not duplicated at any level within the organization, and empowering staff members.

Although managers and leaders seek to better the organization within which they manage and lead, organizations can directly impact the ability of a manager or leader to succeed or fail. Meg noted that, to ensure success, organizations need to provide leadership-related opportunities and courses to employees, helping them learn how to improve their communication skills so as to better work with other people. Meg noted that, if organizations promote employees to positions as managers without the proper management-related training, both are more likely to fail. In Meg’s words, “Being a good employee doesn’t mean that they will be a good manager.”

Jerry reported that organizations can encourage leadership by providing employees with leadership experiences in which they have the opportunity to fail or succeed. Jerry noted that, to stifle leadership, organizations need only foster “an atmosphere of fear” in which employees are afraid to take a risk or make a mistake, a mood that will eventually result in a complete lack of leadership. Waylyn reported that organizations can encourage leadership by providing opportunities for employees to lead or to display leadership skills. Waylyn noted that, despite this, a lack of vision or a lack of needed funds (which is often common in the realm of community corrections) can easily suppress the development of leadership.

As should now be clear, just as good cakes often have many of the same ingredients, good leaders often have many of the same qualities. It should also be quite clear that the meaning of leadership varies from person to person. Such a reality is best displayed in the answers offered by each of these three leadership experts. The best way to summarize each of the differing yet similar views of leadership discussed by our experts is to ask one additional question, “What is your most important role as a leader?”

Meg reported that her most important role as a leader is to clearly outline work tasks and her expectations for the members of her team and ensure that the members of her team know that she is their “champion” and willing to fight for them if they are doing their jobs well. To Meg, her role as a leader requires her to be accountable to both her supervisor and

to the members of her team.

Jerry described his most important leadership role as that of an innovator who is tasked with developing the organization's vision, and more important, as the individual who ensures that his key leaders understand the goal of the vision and stay on task so as to continually move toward the organization's vision. Jerry further noted the importance of his role as the unifier and developer of the organization's key leadership in order to plan for the present and the future, ensuring that able and willing leaders are ready to take over when the opportunities to do so arise.

Waylyn described his most important leadership role as being a role model who inspires others to learn more about the job that they are doing, aspire to do their job well, and develop both an intellectual curiosity and a desire to find the answer themselves. In addition, Waylyn noted that, as a role model, he inspires his staff to develop a sense of ownership in their work, to effectively communicate in both writing and verbally, and to be proud of the work that they do and who they are.

So, what have I learned about leadership? Several months ago, at the onset of my journey into the world of leadership, I sat down and read Christensen, Allworth, and Dillon's (2012) *How Will You Measure Your Life?* I found that many of the examples offered by Christensen (2012) from the business world and his personal life supported my general beliefs that effective leadership and the qualities inherent in effective leaders include vision to make good decisions, keep followers on track and change course when needed, and allocate resources appropriately; a desire to help others by providing motivation and opportunities to develop processes, opportunities that are provided well before they are needed; and an ability to lead by example by being present and modeling appropriate behavior, working with others to solve problems, and displaying integrity (setting a "good example"), in part by admitting your errors and mistakes to your followers and not being afraid of making mistakes in the future.

Since a great deal of what I had read in *How Will You Measure Your Life?* supported my limited outlook on leadership, I simply adopted these qualities as my "working definition" of leadership. A few months later, I found myself methodically turning the pages of *Quiet* by Susan Cain (2013) and, soon thereafter, the pages of *The Situational Leader* by Dr. Paul Hersey (2012); *The Powers to Lead* by Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (2010); and *On Becoming a*

*Leader* by Warren Bennis (2009). In addition, I read several articles related to both management and leadership.

As I read each of these books, my view of leadership took on a life of its own, it started to shift and evolve. Cain (2013) helped me realize that I'm an introvert and helped me gain a greater understanding of myself during her discussion of the stresses and strains often experienced by introverts who reside in a world where extroversion is the "ideal." Hersey (2012) taught the value of learning how to assess an employee's current performance readiness level (their ability and willingness to complete a given task) and later match the appropriate leadership style to this performance readiness level so as to best motivate that employee. Nye (2010) taught the difference between transformational and transactional leadership, and more important, the importance of blending "hard power" and "soft power" in different proportions based on the context of the situation, resulting in the use of "smart power." Bennis (2009) provided a lesson in leadership that revolved around the need for education, unlearning, learning, reflection, risk-taking, mistakes, and competency in the development of a leader.

Each management or leadership-related article that I read also added an "ingredient" to the growing list that I felt was required for the proper development of "good" leadership. Kotter (1990, May/June) discussed how management and leadership are complementary and focused on the importance of vision, alignment, and motivation. Abramson & Scanlon (1991, July) reviewed the "five dimensions" of leadership in which leaders must operate—hierarchical, subordinate, collegial, public, and process, and stressed the importance of employing interpersonal skills in each dimension. Williams (1994) focused on the need for court systems to be willing to clearly understand their mission, to create an ethic of service, to both rethink and reorganize how they use their human resources, and to measure performance and engage in a process of continuous improvement if they want to survive in a world where public expectations are heightened and public resources are shrinking. Collins & Porras (1996, September/October) discussed how any company's vision is the sum of the company's core ideology (core values and core purpose) and envisioned future ("big, hairy, audacious goals" and a vivid description of said goals). White (1997, January) stressed the need for future leaders to focus on "difficult learning" and to seek

out uncertainty and vulnerability to gain an advantage, modeling their behavior after the adaptive conduct of children and experienced travelers.

Goleman (1998, November/December) discussed how the combination of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills creates emotional intelligence, which can be learned. Hamel (1999, September/October) lectured on two very different types of innovation, resource allocation and resource attraction, and their relationship to risk and opportunity. Goffee & Jones (2000, September/October) dissected each of the four qualities of inspirational leaders—an ability to selectively reveal their weaknesses, rely on their intuition, employ "tough" empathy, and dare to be different. Stupak (2001) offered a lesson on the types of power available to leaders and stressed the importance of court managers and leaders understanding how each of these types of power is used and where such power exists within the judiciary.

After spending hours reading and taking notes on each of these books and articles, I realized that I had been taught many things but had yet to really "learn" anything. Despite the wealth of leadership-related knowledge that I had built, I did not start to truly "learn" about leadership until after I had spoken with each of the three experts whose words I have outlined above. After a great deal of reflection, I finally determined that, in its essence, leadership means being yourself and learning from each of your experiences—both the good and the bad. In the words of Bennis (2009), "At bottom, becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It's precisely that simple, and it's also that difficult." As summarized by Goffee & Jones (2000, September/October), "So the challenge facing prospective leaders is for them to be themselves, but with more skill."

The importance of being oneself became clear to me as I discussed leadership with Meg, Jerry, and Waylyn. In speaking with these experts, it became readily apparent that each of their definitions of leadership were molded by their experiences, and more important, were a direct reflection of the type of person that they are outside of their role as a manager or leader. In reviewing the statements made by each of our leadership experts, I soon realized that I agreed with nearly everything that they had to say about leadership—in part because they each so easily and directly set forth in only a few words leadership-related concepts

that others had explained in published books and articles, effectively bringing what had seemed to be lifeless concepts to life.

In order to seek out leadership, I must learn how I have been molded by each of my experiences, and more important, how the type of person that I am will reflect on me as a leader—building on each of my strengths and both identifying and improving on each of my weaknesses. In other words, I must learn from each of my experiences to become a better version of myself and, in doing so, a better leader.

In the words of Nye (2010), “Good leadership matters.” This is true for all organizations, but it is especially true for those of us employed in the field of correctional supervision as federal probation officers. If not for good leadership, federal probation officers may find that they have no reason to continue to do the dangerous job that they are tasked with in an environment where public expectations are heightened and limited resources, staff, and pay are all too common. In other words, good leadership in the field of correctional supervision must include an ability to motivate staff in an environment where financial resources, specifically the “soundly structured compensation program” discussed by Jerry, are controlled by outside factors.

The organizational chart in the Northern District of Iowa is quite flat and the few positions to which officers could be promoted are occupied by officers with many years left until retirement. With that in mind, how will my development as a leader be beneficial to the Northern District of Iowa? Simply stated, I will “lead from the middle,” taking each

leadership opportunity to gladly lead in “all directions of the compass”—acting as a leader to both my superiors and my peers (Nye, 2010, pp. 23, 35).

Baking a cake from scratch is not easy, but as one works through the process, a great deal can be learned. The same stands true for leadership. Developing into a leader is not easy, but as one works through the process, a great deal can be learned. After reading several management and leadership-related books and articles and interviewing three leadership experts, I learned that leadership means being yourself and learning from each of your experiences—learning how to more skillfully be yourself. Although it appears as if this process has cleared one of the often hidden paths to leadership, this path to leadership remains challenging and continues to “end” at a spot just over the horizon.

For better or worse, leadership impacts organizations. In the end, I think the baking analogy holds true: Leadership is like baking a cake. Although recipes vary, and at times can be difficult to understand, each of us knows a good cake when we taste one. Each of us also knows a good leader and effective leadership when we see it—in part through the positive impact that they have on organizations.

## References

- Abramson, M., & Scanlon, J. W. (1991, July). The five dimensions of leadership. *Government Executive*.
- Bennis, W. (2009). *On becoming a leader*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Cain, S. (2013). *Quiet*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Christensen, C. M., Allworth, J., & Dillon, K. (2012). *How will you measure your life?* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Collins, J. C., & Porras, J. I. (1996, September/October). Building your company's vision. *Harvard Business Review*, 65-77.
- Goffee, R., & Jones, G. (2000, September/October). Why should anyone be led by you? *Harvard Business Review*, 63-70.
- Goleman, D. (1998, November/December). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, 93-102.
- Hamel, G. (1999, September/October). Bringing Silicon Valley inside. *Harvard Business Review*, 71-84.
- Hersey, P. (2012). *The situational leader*. Cary, NC: Center for Leadership Studies.
- Kotter, J. P. (1990, May/June). What leaders really do. *Harvard Business Review*, 103-111.
- Nye, J. S. (2010). *The powers to lead*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Stupak, R. J. (2001). Court managers as leaders: An active strategy for understanding and using power. *The Court Manager*, 16(2), 19-22.
- White, R. P. (1997, January). Seekers and scalers: The future leaders. *Training and Development*, 20-24.
- Williams, R. J. (1994). Envisioning the courts: Old myths or new realities. *The Court Manager*, 9(4), 45-52.