

# **Your Preference--More Effective or More Acclaim?**

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Would you like to be a more effective leader? Or would you prefer greater recognition for your current and past achievements? Think about this choice before reading further, because one of these two options likely drives you more strongly than the other.

You might ask, "Can't my answer be 'I want both'?" Maybe you think that's possible, and maybe you even think that's already true for you. But if I were to interview all the individuals under your authority, what percentage would say that you more frequently seek external praise over more consistently striving to improve as a leader?

A couple of months ago, I heard a presentation by Howard Behar, the former President of Starbucks, initially for the North American operations, then for Starbucks International. During his tenure, Starbucks grew from 28 stores to over 15,000 across five continents. Then, for twelve years before he retired, he served as a member of the Starbucks Board of Directors.

Behar recently spoke on a topic that resonates with me and ultimately influences most of my clients. Servant leadership is a concept not yet well understood by most leaders, and few actively execute it well. Yet in my opinion, it is THE concept that once understood, adopted, and practiced elevates the effectiveness of a leader more than any other.

Use a search engine to find examples of servant leaders. You'll discover some big names: Martin Luther King, Jr; Mother Teresa; Abraham Lincoln; Nelson Mandela; Albert Schweitzer; Mahatma Gandhi; Jesus Christ.

Those individuals seem out of my league. During Howard's presentation, I asked him for some servant-leader examples in business. He quickly named John Mackey, founder of Whole Foods, Kip Tindell, founder of The Container Store, and James Sinegal, founder of Costco.

Bob Thomas, Professor of Leadership in the Georgia Tech School of Business and the host for Behar's presentation, quickly added Bob Chapman, CEO of BarryWehmiller, Alex Gregory, former CEO of YKK of America, and Rose Marcario, former CEO of Patagonia.

Founders and CEOs of large companies are still out of my league. I wanted more information about servant leaders with whom I could relate. I reached out to Howard Behar, and he graciously granted me a phone conversation.

I learned three things I perhaps should have already known. Servant leadership by its very nature is low-profile. When your focus is on the people you serve, you deflect any attention that comes your way onto their achievements and needs. Some individuals, like Howard Behar, write books after they retire, so we have some servant leader examples more like you and me.

Second, the values of an individual drive his or her servant leadership. Yes, the behaviors are what people experience. But if the motivations are not genuine, they will quickly be recognized as hollow, and the individuals affected will be guarded and skeptical.

Third, Behar pointed out that the mindset of serving others (by affirming and enhancing their skills and experiences) isn't just a leadership style, it's a lifestyle. Genuine servant leaders are not different away from work. They routinely serve their families, neighbors, communities, and non-profit organizations. It all comes down to how much they value giving over receiving.

Ah, but how might you change your habits? The first step for anyone desiring to become an effective servant leader is awareness. My website (address below) contains several articles, including "Servant Leadership is Unnatural," "Abundance and a Serving Mentality," "Servant Leadership--Seeking Feedback Unselfishly," and "What Services Do Servant Leaders Provide?"

If you want another website to begin to understand servant leadership, I recommend <https://peoplemanagingpeople.com/topics/what-it-really-takes-to-do-servant-leadership/>

Stick with your efforts to learn and try some new approaches! I assure you that servant leadership will not only increase your effectiveness, it will also bring you and your direct reports far greater satisfaction than currently experienced! Blessings to you as you grow!

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