Principles of Leadership

This section describes why leaders exist and what knowledge, skills, and abilities are important to manage learning. We know, to begin, that leaders exist because man is a social creature. The leader in our society is responsible for the essential tasks in the collections of groups that make up civilization.

In most traditional or conventional training events, because of a lack of systematic programming, most of the emphasis is focused on attempts to change people's perception. Little time is usually allocated for practice and even less to measure changes in performance during the training situation. The White Stag method puts a strong emphasis on individual and group participation and practice long to ensure sufficient habit-formation during the training situation. We also systematically evaluate the participants, staff, and the overall program. We take a direct approach to leadership development.

Leadership and Leaders: the Direct Approach

The leader is the central person who guides the group toward its goal. No single trait has been found which separates leaders from non-leaders; nonetheless, leaders usually have more drive and determination and probably a greater concentration of positive qualities than non-leaders.

Research over many years, some of which formed the basis for the original conceptualization of the White Stag program, has revealed that leaders commonly share a definite set of skills, or competencies. We do not believe in "born leaders;" we believe the leadership is a skill, ability, or competency that can be acquired. In White Stag, our functional definition of competence is: knowledge, understanding, way of thinking, skills and disposition. Our program is designed to affect all of these qualities.

The idea of born-leaders has become outdated. The founder of White Stag, Béla Bánáthy, in his research for his Master's thesis on leadership, compiled a list of over 80 behaviors that authorities in the field described as "leadership." The key notion here is that these behaviors are skills that can be learned.

For many years, leadership in traditional Boy Scout of America junior leader training programs was referred to only indirectly, by example and inference.

White Stag does not depend on happenstance or luck for leadership training to take place. This "indirect" way of training for leadership is what the White Stag method challenges and transforms into a "direct approach." The skills of leadership are specifically described.
Defining Leadership Objectively

The direct approach is oriented toward a specific leadership behavior which is clearly and objectively defined. The elements of leadership behavior are isolated as specific learnings which are systematically programmed into a long-term developmental process.

The direct approach ensures that appropriate and sufficient time is given the development of leadership skills, to bring about the desired change in behavior and to achieve leadership competence.

The SECOND concept is that, rather than being some nebulous characteristic which one has to be born with, leadership can be defined as a set of competencies which can be learned. Some eighty aspects of knowledge, skills, and attitudes have been taken into account in our research which have been clustered into competencies. To sum it up, an understanding of the concepts described here has helped us to bring into focus that the acquisition of leadership competencies should occur by plan and design, rather than by accident. Although leaders may emerge - as they do today - as by-products of group processes, this is neither an economical nor an effective way of developing leadership. Based on the concepts described above, in our experimental program:

Specific competencies of leadership--relevant to Scouting--have been identified...

The Leadership Curriculum

Bánáthy condensed his 80 descriptors into eleven competencies that now comprise the curriculum of White Stag Leadership Development. Much research has been done since then to supplement, amend, and above all, keep the knowledge base current.

The eleven competencies are part of the overall leadership development design. The framework of competencies provides a consistent reference base for all members as they gain increased knowledge. Instead of learning greater and greater numbers of competencies, members reach higher "plateaus" of knowledge within the existing schema. The objectives within each competency will eventually be so discrete that selective groups of objectives may be chosen by the manager of learning that reflect exactly the needs of the learners.

Knowledge of or the ability to manage the learning of any or several of these competencies does not a leader make. What makes a leader is the degree to which the competency is an integral characteristic of an individual and the degree to which it influences the individual's behavior (and by inference, his values).

A competency of primary significance is communication, or "Getting and Giving Information." Nothing else can happen until communication, on one or more levels, has been established. Identification of and with group norms and group
goals leads to the maintenance of group membership; the ability to call on group members' knowledge, skills and abilities insures that the task can be tackled. "Knowing the Needs and Characteristics of the Group," and "Knowing and Using Group Resources" are the next most important.

The need among program participants for them to learn more about these competencies is made plain to them in a number of ways. Specific learning activities are conceived and executed that draw their attention to the group dynamic and the role of leadership among them.

One of the most important talents a leader needs is empathy; that is, an appreciation for and understanding of others' needs. (Empathy includes both the ability to uncover needs and sensitivity to those needs.) The empathic leader is one with the group, is helpful; he is willing to face problems, and has at his disposal a variety of problem-solving tools.

Some other behaviors that indicate positive qualities of leadership are cheerfulness, enthusiasm, alertness, integrated character, deliberate will control, risk-taking, and absence of suspicious anxiety.

Leadership can be developed by acquiring the competencies described below.

**Leadership Can be Learned**

Leadership competencies cannot be acquired in a few training sessions or in a single training course, but only as the result of a long-range development process over a number of years. Leadership development must begin during the formative years of youth, and is a life-long process that never ends.

The acquisition of leadership competencies occurs by plan and design.

[It is a] process with a purpose. It is a process of the learner moving from a state wherein he cannot yet perform as the described purpose of the training to a state where he can demonstrate such performance. This move is what training is about. Training is the making of specific arrangements in the environment of the learner which provide him with experiences by which he can confront and master the learning task, by which he can be transformed to the state where he can perform as desired.

Leadership development cannot be perceived as a single training course or as a one-shot event, but must be a continuous sequence of closely chained and systematically organized learning and experience-building opportunities.

Developmental psychologists postulate that each child passes through a series of specific stages; White Stag addresses each youth in terms appropriate to his particular stage of development and levels of need. The program is structured in three tiers, or "phases," each designed to meet the needs of developing adolescents. (Refer to Chapter 4 - "Organizational Structure" for more information.)

We understand that organized learning opportunities like the White Stag program are not for every youth, and that many youth grow into fine, mature adults and leaders in their communities without participating in organized youth groups.

However, participants in the White Stag program strongly feel that the program helps young people realize their full potential, assists them in developing positive concepts of self esteem, self evaluation, and the ability to get along with others in the widest variety of situations. The White Stag program plants a seed in some who then grow it themselves; others return to partake again and again of the distinctive spirit which nurtures growth, that is marrow to the bone of White Stag.
Growth in leadership capacity does not happen in isolation as a member or learner in the program. The support and understanding of peers and adults in the youths’ home environment is critically important. The opportunity to apply what he has learned, to experiment, is essential if the leadership competencies are to be transferred out of the White Stag program. It is at home, in the school, in their church or temple, in the community, and at work while helping others grow, that the youth applies the leadership competencies and captures the White Stag Spirit.

**The Focus is on the Learner**

We have shifted our attention from instruction to learning. This does not mean that we minimize the importance of instruction or the role of the instructor.

The significance of instruction is not questioned here at all. The point that is made here is that the learning task is the nucleus around which to design instruction. The role and function of instruction should be viewed in its proper relationship to learning. It should be planned for and provided for accordingly. Instruction is a means to an end and not an end in itself. Its function is to facilitate learning.

The effectiveness of the program is not measured by the effort made by the instructor but by the amount of learning achieved by the learner.

**Leadership is a Property of the Group**

Leadership is a combination of three dynamic factors: the group, the environment, and the task. More than one member of the group will perform leadership functions. Several members may contribute to goal achievements, depending on the requirements of the situation and the resources it offers, including the people, time, and material available. The task in which the group is engaged also affects the type of leadership needed. Leadership, therefore, may be looked upon as the property of the group.

**What is a Group?**

The group is "an assemblage of persons or objects gathered or located together; an aggregation." We believe that when two or more people gather for the purpose of accomplishing a task, leadership emerges. This is the concept of leadership with which we concern ourselves in White Stag. It is vital in all cultures that groups are able to work together to achieve the maximum benefit for society.

**How do Groups Come About?**

The most basic and obvious group is our family.

Leaders are needed in all circumstances, even for the most routine tasks, in the most common affairs of every day...In the family the leadership function of a parent is most basic. There is scarcely any leadership role in society which would be of greater significance than parenthood.

With the many challenges facing society today, it is abundantly clear that many families lack leadership.

Beyond the family, people band themselves together for numerous reasons. Some involve simple interpersonal relations such as neighbors organized to form a neighborhood association. Others may involve quite complex interrelationships, such as a large integrated manufacturing enterprise. In each case the group has been organized to meet a need that is recognized by or is common to all the members of the group.
About Leaders

What constitutes leadership? How can a leader be recognized? Leadership in most dictionaries is simply the "capacity or ability to lead." In White Stag, we argue that it is not quite so simple or that obvious.

The Leader's Function

Some groups persist and prosper and some blow up or wither away. Those that prosper are characterized by having a leader, someone who functions in two ways.

- The leader helps the group meet the needs of the individuals.
- No two members join for exactly the same reason. The leader helps knit the individuals into a cooperating group. The leader helps them all to see a common reason, a common goal that is mutually desired, and he delegates responsibilities among the individuals so they can see how their efforts will lead toward reaching the goal.
- The leader helps the group realize the purpose for which it was created. The leader helps the group:
  - Define the purposes for which it exists.
  - Keep its activity within the defined purposes and goals.
  - Find alternative ways of attaining their goal.
  - Grow to a more progressive organization in its own eyes.
  - Clarify the responsibilities of its officers and members to carry out the program.
  - Evaluate itself--why it exists, where it is headed, how much progress it is making.

Simply put, leadership is...

...influencing the group to accomplish a mutually agreed-upon task while advancing the group's integrity and morale.

In the language of an eleven-year old, it's "getting the job done and keeping the group together."

The group remains in existence only as long as these two needs are being fulfilled. The leader is not the same as the boss. The following poem says it well.

The Leader

The boss drives group members; the leader coaches them.
The boss depends upon authority; the leader on good will.
The boss inspires fear; the leader inspires enthusiasm.
The boss says "I"; the leader says "we."
The boss assigns the task, the leader sets the pace.
The boss says, "Get there on time"; the leader gets there ahead of time.
The boss fixes the blame for the breakdown; the leader fixes the breakdown.
The boss knows how it is done; the leader shows how.
The boss makes work a drudgery; the leader makes it a game.
The boss says, "Go"; the leader says, "Let's go."

--Author unknown
A Leader's Key Functions

The leader accepts three key functions in his role:

- Authority: the right to make decisions.
- Responsibility: assignment for achieving a goal.
- Accountability: acceptance of success or failure.

You may at times be asked to accept a leadership position but are granted only two of these three responsibilities. If this happens, watch out. When you do not possess any one of the three functions, just imagine you are sitting on a three-legged stool—and you've just had one of the legs broken off from under you. You know what's going to happen next.

What the Leader Must Know

What must you, as the leader, know to be able to help the group? You must know:

- The members and be interested in their welfare.
- Their hopes, ambitions, abilities, limitations and prejudices.
- The things the members want to learn, or at least where and how to get the knowledge, such as woodcraft skills.
- How to motivate members to want to learn new skills and gain new attitudes. Without motivation no learning takes place and without learning the member stagnates and consequently finds no satisfaction from being a part of the group.
- How to establish communication between the members of the group.
- How to conduct or supervise meetings, discussions, and informal activities. Within White Stag, these include campfires, singing, Sunday services, troop leader councils, work parties and so forth. Common experiences that the group enjoys or that they are proud of help weld the group together.
- How to assess his own effectiveness, how to get the group to evaluate itself, its goals and its progress toward them. This in turn becomes a powerful motivating force for further learning.

Can a Group Have Several Leaders?

This leadership capability is usually assumed by the world at large to rest in a designated individual. He or she, in modern democratic social structures, typically governs with the consent of the governed for a specified period of weeks, months or years.

In White Stag we implicitly include as a leader any member of the group who possesses the knowledge, skill, and ability needed by group members to help the group achieve cooperative results. While there is usually a designated leader--someone appointed or elected to that role--for our purposes a leader is someone who is exerting more influence on the group than anyone else at that moment.

At any specific moment, one person is exercising more influence than anyone else on the group and therefore by definition is the leader. This functional take on leadership assumes that different leaders exercise different roles in keeping the group moving towards its purpose. The leader of the moment does not automatically usurp the responsibility and authority of any designated leader, although in certain crisis situations this may in fact take place.
The leader of the moment is usually fulfilling only one of the many functions necessary to the group's continued success. The leadership control of the group continues to rest with the person selected to function in most of the required roles. Some leaders excel in several leadership functions and neglect others. Those women and men who are recognized and acclaimed as outstanding leaders have cultivated excellent skill in many areas, are in effect multi-disciplinary leaders.

To give you a practical example, take a group of Scouts on a hike. The Patrol Leader is the designated individual in charge. But perhaps one of the members had just been hiking in the same area last week. That person then might assume temporary leadership in guiding the group towards its campsite over the next ridge. If, during the hike, a Scout falls and sprains his ankle, yet another Scout with superior skills in first aid may assume leadership in treating and managing the care of the injured Scout. Everyone, including the designated leader, willingly takes direction from another member of the group who demonstrates the leadership skills necessary in the moment.

Some might say that map reading and first aid are practical skills and not a demonstration of leadership. True for only a moment. For the Scout familiar with the terrain, or the knowledgeable first aider, what must each be able to do to persuade the others that he really knows what he's talking about? If either is non-communicative, uncertain, cannot articulate a plan, does not demonstrate resourcefulness, fails to be sensitive to group members' needs--then they fail as leaders. To implement the practical skill in a group setting requires something more, which we conceive of as a specific set of leadership skills.

The real measure of leadership excellence is evident when members of the group talk in terms of "we" instead of "I". They are identifying their personal goals as the group's goals and feel they belong to the very best group.

Lao-Tzu

Of the best rulers,
The people only know that they exist;
The next best they love and praise
The next they fear;
And the next they revile.
When they do not command the people's faith,
Some will lose faith in them,
And then they resort to oaths!
But of the best when their task is accomplished,
their work done,
The people all remark, "We have done it ourselves."

—Lao-Tzu (6th century B.C.), Chinese philosopher.

A group is successful when group members believe preserving the integrity of the group has an overriding importance to each of them and they desire to stay and work together. They may not hold strong affection for every member in the group, in fact they might dislike a member or two, but the group is more important than any individual differences.

Source: http://www.whitestag.org/aims/leadership_principles.html