

It begins with the natural feeling  
that one wants to serve, to serve first.  
Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead...

## What is Servant Leadership?

Here are comments from other authors regarding Robert K. Greenleaf and servant leadership:

- **Ken Blanchard**
- **Stephen Covey**
- **Ann McGee-Cooper and Duane Trammell**
- **M.Scott Peck**
- **Peter M.Senge**
- **Margaret Wheatley**

The phrase "Servant Leadership" was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, he said:

"The servant-leader *is* servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature."

"The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?"

Here are websites of some organizations applying Servant Leadership principles:

- **TDIndustries**
- **PPC Partners**
- **The Schneider Corporation**
- **Broetje Orchards**
- **Schmidt Associates**

More organizations can also be found in the Greenleaf Center book, "*Servant Institutions in Business*", available in the online catalog.

In his second major essay, *The Institution as Servant*, Robert K. Greenleaf articulated what is often called the "credo." He said:

" This is my thesis: caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built. Whereas, until recently, caring was largely person to person, now most of it is mediated through institutions - often large, complex, powerful, impersonal; not always competent; sometimes corrupt. If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them."

There are many excellent books and articles about Servant Leadership. For a short bibliography on servant leadership, [click here](#). Books by Robert K. Greenleaf and colleagues of The Greenleaf Center can be found in our online bookstore. To view our selection [click here](#). For short articles on servant leadership by Dr. Keith, CEO of the Greenleaf Center, [click here](#).

The Greenleaf Center is always interested to learn about the servant-leaders or servant-led organizations that you encounter. Please share your examples with us by sending a note to Courtney Knies by email ([cknies@greenleaf.org](mailto:cknies@greenleaf.org)) or fax (317.669.8055). We look forward to hearing from you!