

U.S. PRESIDENCY LEADERSHIP LESSONS

GOAL: To impart to U.S. Citizens a realization of the challenges and opportunities of leadership learning as evidenced historically by three great U.S. presidents.

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair...In short, the period was so far like the present period...”

Charles Dickens

So, it is- the pendulum swings between the great happenings and the foreboding leadership challenges.

Many leaders think they know the qualities of leadership; however, observing leadership behavior nowadays can be mesmerizing, and often, we see evidence of supposed leadership and shake our heads in disbelief as to what we see, hear, and the outcome of supposed leadership decisions.

Historically, we review the following U.S. leaders. Time has not erased the immense history of U.S. presidential leadership challenges. Even though the personal and presidential lives of the following three historical presidents differ, their contributions to the essence of great leadership behaviors are similar.

Perhaps our next consideration of determining a leader could be consciously predicated on historical evidence of U.S. leadership excellence and the search for evidence of potential intellect related to psychological astuteness, critical thinking, and common sense (The Three Amigos). Otherwise, qualities within a person are not governed by any set timetable, age, specifically known experience, or even U.S. presidential confirmation. To each qualified potential leader, there was historically (and is currently) an additional inherent leadership spirit, including personal behaviors of ambition, motivation, sociability, and other qualities that identify a leader with a sense of leadership ability within themselves.

The documented three U.S. leaders' success represents some of the finest leadership behaviors in U.S. history. Each of the three leaders is different; however, they succeeded in their leadership (presidential) positions. Each brought a unique personal history that led to leadership success that even today exemplifies the expected role of exceptional leadership behaviors.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN (ABE)—16TH PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.

(3-4-1861 TO 4-15-1865) WHIG PARTY & LATER A REPUBLICAN

Abraham Lincoln's ambitious traits were noted at an early age. Riding his horse through the town of the nation's capital to faithfully attend to his presidential duties, he proudly wore his top hat. On more than one occasion, he observed a new bullet hole in the elevated portion of his top hat; however, he continued to ride his horse daily toward his presidential office, where he attended to his presidential duties. He was motivated, committed, friendly, able to use effective conversation, possessed exceptional language skills, and was well-known for being an appropriate storyteller. He was recognized as possessing attributes of successfully managing inordinately prideful, ambitious, quarrelsome, jealous, supremely gifted men to support his ambitious leadership endeavors. To improve the capacity of people to govern themselves, he pieced together an unusual cabinet—Whigs, antislavery proponents, conservatives, moderates, radicals, conciliators, moderates, radicals, and hard-liners— "others to share with me the burden." His governing team was independent, strong-minded, experienced in public life, and even more educated than himself! His responsibilities were so great that he proclaimed, "I would not have believed it possible to survive them." With a temperament devoid of pessimism and questionable rhetoric yet brightened by his wit and humility in his ability to lead, he studied every aspect of important subjects. He considered numerous vantage points at a single time. As a result of his studies, he set forth a futuristic legal 6-month order known as the Emancipation Proclamation.

The legal notice (Emancipation Proclamation) proclaimed that on a future date (January 1, 1863), as the nation approached its third year of a bloody civil war, all persons held as enslaved people within any state or states wherein the constitutional authority of the U.S. *shall not be practically recognized, submitted to, and maintained* shall then, henceforward, and forever, be free. In essence, it was their last chance to end the war and return to the union before forfeiting their slaves—and forfeiting their slaves would result in work not done, money not acquired from slave work, and the integration of enslaved people into the normal flow of the American lifestyle and activities. Lincoln admitted it took time to accomplish the supportive rhetoric of the Emancipation Proclamation. Occasionally, he added or changed a line within the document, touching it up while anxiously watching the progression of events. The Emancipation Proclamation was a restrained legal notice subject to court examination and ruling laws. Once it was in place, Abraham Lincoln accepted there was no return from such a pivotal moment in history.

Abraham Lincoln's leadership behaviors for today's leaders:

1. Develop a natural tendency to relate, communicate, and truly care for other people—no matter their situation in life, circumstances, gender, socio-economic situation, or physiological characteristics.
2. Use communication skills and abilities to inform others of the expectations regarding the existing situation(s) to increase understanding of the expected process and how it relates to their current situation. This skill includes an exceptional ability to listen carefully to constituent messages.
3. Share your futuristic planning and constituent warnings prematurely regarding intended future desired or upcoming changes to promote constituent acceptance of the change as it occurs.

4. Take the necessary time to read and contemplate thoughts, words, and possible outcomes to help assure accuracy, appropriate changes, and predictable unforeseen outcomes.
5. Expect a firm futuristic adherence to final decisions and futuristic behaviors.
6. Use positive thinking and rhetoric to support and guide expected behaviors.
7. Exhibit the same psychological energy constituents expect when working together to accomplish organizational goals.
8. Problem-solve and intellectually consider problems and their outcome(s) from many viewpoints before making a final decision. (This intellectual problem-solving is one of the many purposes of councils, boards, and other group gatherings for positive support and compliance to change.)
9. Make your creative storytelling purposeful to reiterate evidence of goodness and kindness toward humanity.
10. Promote fairness toward all humankind.

THEODORE (TEDDY OR T.R.) ROOSEVELT---26TH PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. (9-14-01 TO 3-4-09) REPUBLICAN

His recognition of leadership desires and his ability to be a leader were belated. However, astute observers felt his emitted charisma and had seen his unique leadership potential, intense willpower, liveliness, and an interesting range of interests. He also had a unique ability to connect with people of all ages, backgrounds, interests, and controversial opinions. There was evidence of striking leadership attributes.

Despite his debilitating health problems, Theodore led a robust lifestyle indicative of a cowboy persona. He was homeschooled before attending Harvard College. As a conservationist, he established national parks, forests, and monuments that preserved the nation's natural resources. He was also interested in foreign policy and focused on helping construct the Panama Canal.

In 1906, at age 42, the youngest U.S. president, Theodore Roosevelt, demonstrated successful efforts to broker the end of the Russo-Japanese War, which won him the recognition of being the first American to win the Nobel Peace Prize. He promoted the Pure Food and Drug Act to promote food safety guidance and reinforce leadership abilities. He accomplished social and economic justice using governmental regulations and promoted the conservation movement of natural resources. Through his expansion of the Navy, the Navy was sent forth to project the Navy's great power. Theodore Roosevelt became a very popular president by appealing to the public for support.

Theodore Roosevelt's symbolic leadership behaviors for today's leaders:

1. Recognize in others the early qualities, perhaps preliminary and supportive behavioral signs that will eventually develop into true leadership qualities.
2. Reward verbally positive leadership behaviors—especially leadership that promotes a positive connection with others.
3. Assure constituents that leading others and maintaining lawful behavior supports established goodness within a society.
4. Encourage seeking anything kind and noteworthy for the betterment of all humankind.
5. Share the truth that strength, support, and recognition of leadership goodness come from service to the public.
6. Make opportunities for individuals to practice leadership skills.
7. Take time to build a potential leader's ability to "choose the right" from several choices.
8. Encourage leaders to enhance the existing and current resources and their appropriate use to promote desired outcomes.
9. Promote tranquility by establishing effective and stabilizing guidelines of behavior. Understand that greatness is not always recognized early; it is often developed and must be reinforced positively.
10. Teach that being a leader of all people is rewarding—regardless of their age.
11. Support superb education by supporting that the place/location of leadership education may not be as important as the quality of leadership education.
12. Set precedence in establishing and maintaining the best of what is available to increase future quality for all participants within an organization.
13. Participate as a leader in positive activities for the betterment of society and peaceful existence within society and the world.
14. Show pride by developing the best and most significant resource for the betterment of humankind.
15. Teach humility and respect even to the least of those for whom a leader is responsible.
16. Teach that being a first responder to positive problem-solving, for goodness' sake, is considered the epitome of the leadership role.
17. Encourage the retention, appreciation, and all that is good for the betterment of all humankind now and in the future.
18. Teach methods of being the first to recognize problems and identify a solution.
19. Set examples of leadership, goodness, and greatness so that your example will encourage goodness and greatness.

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT (FDR)- 32ND PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. (3-4-33 TO 4-12-45) DEMOCRAT

With his dominant personality, Franklin D. Roosevelt was one of the most important figures in the history of the U.S., with a fierce intention and desire to succeed. Friends were often invited to the White House to stay “for a while” and share in the president’s storytelling and friendship. Being an advocate of stamp collecting, he was inducted into the American Philatelic Society Hall of Fame in 1945. He was a cousin to Theodore Roosevelt, and Eleanor (FDR’s wife) was also a close relative—hence, her maiden name was Roosevelt, with no change in her last name upon marriage to FDR.

FDR was the only president to serve more than two terms as president of the U.S. His presidential abilities were tested as he was president during two pivotal crises—the Great Depression (first and second terms) and World War II (third term and start of his fourth term). He died when he was preparing to run for this fourth term at age 63. He was known as a Transformative Leader who guided the nation through difficult times. His legacy left a lasting positive impression on American governance.

After the longevity of three-plus terms FDR as president of the U.S., the U.S. Congress ruled that two terms for President of the U.S. would, subsequently, be the maximum terms.

Due to paralysis because of Polio, FDR was less physical and less demonstrative of physical strength, observed energy, and athletic ability. He used a wheelchair and had a physical condition much different than the leaders, as mentioned earlier. Being disabled and his environment reflecting such elements of disability, he reflected a quiet demeanor and less torrential energy than his preceptors. Even as a student of the considered high-powered educational institutions, he remained a somewhat quiet leader with a history of a conservative privileged class of leadership involvement and behaviors. Unlike Abraham Lincoln (Abe) and Theodore Roosevelt (Teddy), Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) was not known by his constituents as outwardly intelligent with a strong work ethic or a sense of purpose. However, when offered an opportunity to run for a governmental office, an unrecognizable eagerness emerged—excitable presidential energy unrecognized by his disabled self and others.

Being a university-educated man, he practiced law in New York City. As governor of New York State, FDR focused on tax relief for farmers and public utilities. His leadership resulted in the Lend-Lease Act providing allied nations military aid. After the Pearl Harbor attack, he rallied the country and declared war on Japan.

His history showed exceptional preparation for the presidency as governor of New York from 1929 to 1933, where he promoted programs to combat the Great Depression. His implementation of the New Deal coalition promoted economic recovery through federal activism to control agricultural production, stabilize wages and prices, and create a public works program for the unemployed. He provided relief programs for the farmers and unemployed by seeking economic recovery through the National Recovery Administration. These accomplishments showed a tenacious eagerness for leadership adventure.

The 1960s brought about the beginning of the Disability Rights Movement, which spurred on the recognition of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973---stating:

No otherwise qualified disabled individual in the U.S. shall solely on the basis of his handicap, be excluded from the participation, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Historically, let it be noted that the above-stated Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was not the first attempt to raise awareness of American's disability rights. For example, the Civil Rights Act occurred in 1964, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1973.

Franklin Roosevelt's Symbolic Leadership Behaviors for Today's Leaders:

1. Define leadership goodness by kindness, psychological astuteness, critical thinking skills, and common sense---not by physical strength or the lack of or existence of a personal physical disability!
2. Understand that experiencing trials and tribulations in leadership teaches lessons that cannot be learned in more comfortable situations.
3. Seek a better lifestyle for humankind that is productive for improved living as part of the leadership role.
4. Recognize that "stepping stones of experience" may lead to successful and significant leadership of humankind.
5. Seek happenings that bring about the greatest good for humankind.
6. Take faith as a leader that many of our "difficult times" in life and as a leader bring about the refining of the spirit of exceptional and positive leadership.
7. Presenting a quiet leadership behavior is often more impressive than behavior representing "a beat of a drum."
8. Recognize that "leadership" is a way of life---not a specific happening!
9. Maintain friendships and close relationships during difficult leadership times, as it brings solace to the spirit and support from those who know the true spirit of the leader.

In closing: This report on just three of the many leaders of our great land should bring a sense of personal gratitude for their spirit of leadership. In their difficult times and trials, they were always about us as Americans---and I wonder if we truly understand and appreciate their leadership efforts on our behalf based on the goodness of their souls, their love of country, and their desire to elevate humanity. May we never forget their leadership contributions and lessons of successful leadership in making our great land---The United States of America. May we imulate their goodness!

The heights by great men, reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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