

# Followership: The Lost Art of Playing Second Fiddle

A Workshop  
Presented At  
The Association of Pediatric Program Directors  
Annual Meeting  
April 28, 2009  
Baltimore, Maryland

By  
Fred McCurdy, MD, PhD, MBA  
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center  
Program Director  
Texas Tech University (Amarillo) Program  
Amarillo, Texas

**Objectives**

1. What is followership?
2. What are some models and characteristics of followership?
3. What followers want from leaders?
4. Identify your followership style in the workplace.

**What followership is not:**

Subservience  
 Passivity  
 A waiting game  
 Indifference

**Types of Follower – Leader Models**

**Apprentice** – skill mastery, aspiring to be

**Disciple** – intellectual, spiritual learning

**Mentee** – one on one personal maturation

**Comrade** – social bonding, a community

**Loyalist** – emotional, commitment, duty, trust

**Dreamer** – commitment to a vision, a dream

**Lifeway** – personal preference, primary interest in helping others

**Followership: Attitude**

Servanthood - sacrificing something that you value so that someone else will be better off.

***Dr. Tony Evans***

When you are good to others, you are best for yourself.

***Benjamin Franklin***

Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.

***Muhammed Ali***

**Followership: Leading Quietly**

They move patiently, carefully, and incrementally. They do what is right – for their organizations, for the people around them and for themselves . . . I have come to call these people quiet leaders.

***J Badaracco***

Self interest and altruism run together.

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I am? ***Hiller the Elder***

**Followership: A journey or a dead end?**

Along the Road  
*by Robert Browning Hamilton*

I walked a mile with Pleasure,  
    She chattered all the way,  
But left me none the wiser  
    For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow  
    And ne'er a word said she,  
But oh, the things I learned from her  
    When Sorrow walked with me!

**Followership: Video clips****Principle #1****Principle #2**

Followership: The Lost Art of Playing Second Fiddle

**Principle #3**

**Principle #4**

**Principle #5**

**Principle #6**

**Principle # 7**

**Principle #8****Exceptional Followers**

1. Support their leader's decisions
2. Encourage their leaders
3. Defend their leaders
4. Challenge their leaders
  - a. Followers protect other followers by containing inappropriate behavior.
  - b. Not asking questions or not challenging the leader is a disservice to the leader



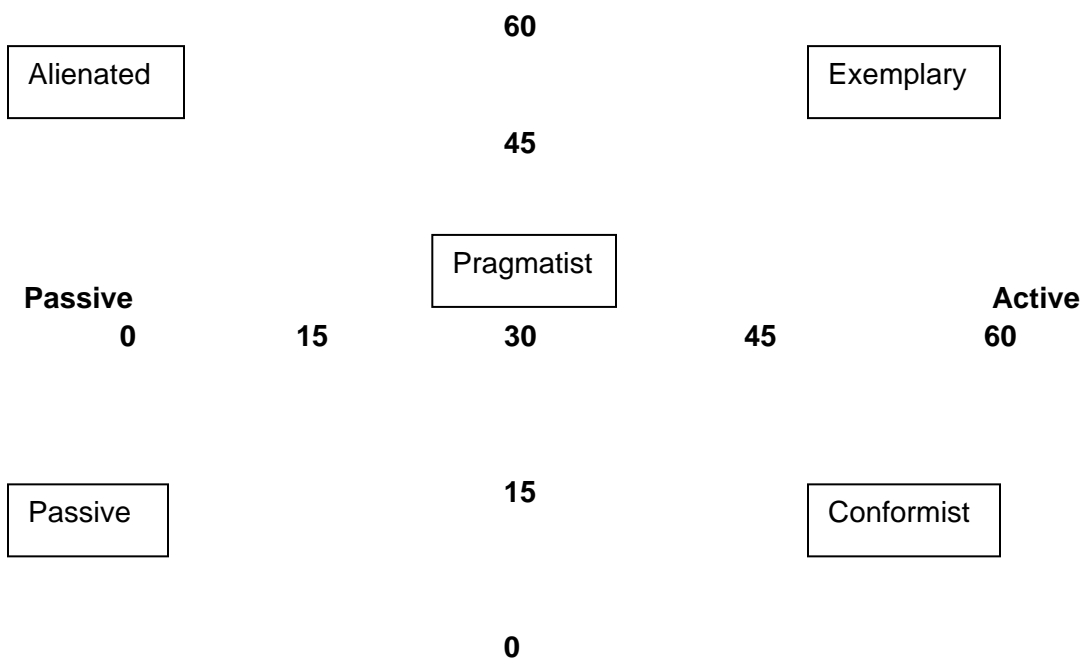
## Followership: The Lost Art of Playing Second Fiddle

- \_\_\_ 14. Do you help the leader or group see both the upside potential and downside risks of ideas or plans, playing the devil's advocate if need be?
- \_\_\_ 15. Do you understand the leader's needs, goals, and constraints, and work hard to help meet them?
- \_\_\_ 16. Do you actively and honestly own up to your strengths and weaknesses rather than put off evaluation?
- \_\_\_ 17. Do you make a habit of internally questioning wisdom of the leader's decision rather than just doing what you are told?
- \_\_\_ 18. When the leader asks you to do something that runs contrary to your professional or personally preferences, do you say "no" rather than "yes"?
- \_\_\_ 19. Do you act on your own ethical standards rather than the leader's or the groups standards?
- \_\_\_ 20. Do you assert your views on important issues, even though it might mean conflict with your group or reprisals from the leader?

**SCORING**

<b>Independent Thinking</b>	<b>Scoring</b>	<b>Active Engagement</b>	<b>Scoring</b>
Question 1	_____	Question 2	_____
Question 5	_____	Question 3	_____
Question 11	_____	Question 4	_____
Question 12	_____	Question 6	_____
Question 14	_____	Question 7	_____
Question 16	_____	Question 8	_____
Question 17	_____	Question 9	_____
Question 18	_____	Question 10	_____
Question 19	_____	Question 13	_____
Question 20	_____	Question 15	_____
<b>Total</b>	_____	<b>Total</b>	_____

**Independent, Critical Thinker**



**Dependent, Uncritical Thinking**

## Followership: The Lost Art of Playing Second Fiddle

<p><b>The Alienated Follower</b></p> <p>Troublesome, cynical or negative?          Having a chip on your shoulder – a rebel without a cause?          Headstrong and lacking judgment?          Not a team player?          Adversarial to the point of being hostile?</p> <p><b>Root Cause:</b> Unmet expectations and broken trust. Leaders who emphasize their authority and are critical of work effort.</p>	<p><b>The Exemplary Follower</b></p> <p>Focus on the goal          Do a great job on critical path activities related to the goal          Take the initiative to increase their value to the organization          Realize that they add value not just by going above and beyond their work but being who they are - experience, ideals and dreams.</p> <p><b>Root Cause:</b> Successful completion of Followership Workshop.</p>
<p><b>The Passive Follower</b></p> <p>Rely on the leader's judgment and thinking?          Take action only when the boss gives instruction?          Let the people who get paid for it handle the headaches?          Putting in the time but little else?</p> <p><b>Root Cause:</b> Herd instinct and failure to understand role of the follower results in shut down. Leaders who do all the decision making.</p>	<p><b>The Conformist</b></p> <p>Lacking your own ideas?          Obsequious and self deprecating?          Unwilling to take an unpopular position and stick to it?          Averse to conflict, even at the risk of going over the cliff with the group?          Compromising your or your family's needs and ideas to please the organization?</p> <p><b>Root Cause:</b> Dependent personality and submission to oppressive authority.</p>
<p><b>The Pragmatist</b></p> <p>Playing political games?          Bargaining to maximize your own self-interest?          Being averse to risk and prone to cover your tracks?          Carrying out your assignments with middling enthusiasm and in a mediocre fashion?          Being a bureaucrat who adheres to the letter of the rule rather than the spirit?</p> <p><b>Root Cause:</b> Low risk tolerance and high coping response. Political astute and transactional leaders – tit for tat.</p>	

## References

### Texts

1. Todd Hahn, Song of the Second Fiddle. Horizon Books, Camp Hill PA. 1984.
2. Ira Chaleff, The Courageous Follower Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco. 1998.
3. David Schwartz, The Magic of Thinking Big, Simon & Schuster, New York. 1987.
4. Sam Deep, Lyle Sussman, What to Say to Get What You Want. Persus Books, Reading Mass. 1992.
5. Ken Blanchard, Sheldon Bowles, Gung Ho, Morrow, New York. 1998.
6. John Maxwell, The Winning Attitude, Nelson, Nashville. 1993.
7. Peter Northhouse, Leadership, Theory and Practice, Sage Pubs, London.1997.
8. Richard Daft, Leadership Theory and Practice, Dryden Press, Fort Worth. 1999.
9. Emmet C. Murphy, Leadership IQ, Wiley and Sons, New York. 1996.
10. John Maxwell, Jim Dornan, Becoming a Person of Influence, Nelson, Nashville. 1997.
11. Kim Krisco, Leadership and the Art of Conversation, Prima Publications, Rocklin CA. 1997.
12. Spencer Johnson, Who Moved My Cheese, Putnam, New York. 1998.
13. Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, Spiritual Leadership, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville. 2001.
14. Peter Block, Stewardship, Berret-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco. 1993.
15. Dennis Gorton, Leading the Followers by Following the Leader, Christian Publications, Camp Hill PA. 2000.
16. Joseph Badaracco, Leading Quietly, Harvard Business School Press, Boston. 2002.
17. Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee. Primal Leadership. Harvard Business School Press, Boston. 2002.
18. Larry Donnithorne. The West Point Way of Leadership. Currency-Doubleday. New York. 1993.
19. Robert Kelley. The Power of Followership. Currency-Doubleday. New York. 1992.
20. James Kouzes, Barry Posner. What Followers Expect from Leaders. Jossey – Bass Publishers. San Francisco. 1988 – Audio books.

Followership: The Lost Art of Playing Second Fiddle

21. Sviatoslav Steve Seteroff. Beyond Leadership to Followership. Trafford Publishing. Victoria BC. 2003.
22. Tom Atchison. Followership, a practical guide to aligning leaders and followers. Health Administration Press. Chicago. 2004.
23. Jean Lipman-Blumen. The Allure of Toxic Leaders. Oxford Press. New York. 2005.
24. Barbara Kellerman. Bad Leadership. Harvard Business School Press. Boston. 2004.
25. John Hoover. How to work for an Idiot. Career Press. Franklin Lakes NJ. 2004.

**Articles**

1. Robert Kelley, In Praise of Followers, Harvard Business Review, Nov/Dec. 1988.
2. Leaders and Their Followers: Understanding the Role of Exceptional Followers, Administrator, Jan 2000, 19:1;1-5.
3. S. Travis. Followership. Leading is a skill; so is following. Hosp Health Netw 2005, May; 79(5):32.
4. MF Lyons. Leadership and followership. Physician Exec. 2002, Jan-Feb; 28(1):91-3.

***Selected excerpts from Warren Bennis “Why Leaders Can’t Lead.” 1989.  
Jossey Bass Publishers San Francisco***

Over two hundred years ago, when our nation’s founders gathered in Philadelphia to write the constitution, the United States had a population of 3 million people yet six world class leaders contributed to the making of that extraordinary document. Today, there are almost 300 million of us. What happened? (By comparison, we should have 600 world-class leaders).

We are a material people in a volatile world. American cultural tradition defines personality, achievement, and the purpose of human life in ways that shower the individual with glory. We are less interested in preserving our common rights than in exercising our individual rights. Alexis de Tawkvill (sp), a penetrating 19<sup>th</sup> century observer of American society wrote “Americans acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine their whole destiny is in their hands.” Ralph Waldo Emerson made individualism his religion. Never before have individuals wanted and been able to seize so much power unto themselves, and never before have they had so many tools to ensure their autonomy. Yet anyone who believes that he or she can do no wrong is a menace to him or herself as well as to the rest of us.

At the heart of America is a vacuum into which self-anointed saviors have rushed. They pretend to be leaders, and we, half out of envy, half out of longing – pretend to think of them as leaders. Our need for true leaders goes unspoken, but it manifests itself in pathetic ways – as in our idolatry of show business stars and our admiration for corporate kings. Precisely at the time when the trust and credibility of our alleged leaders are at an all time low and when potential leaders feel most inhibited in exercising their gifts, America most needs leaders – because, of course, as the quality of leaders decline, the quantity of problems escalates. Where have all the leaders gone?

"Managers are accountable for various processes that help an organization accomplish its mission. However, if every manager, from a president on down, does only what is in his or her job description, the organization will still eventually grind to a halt. Throughout the organization there are opportunities to find better ways to accomplish whatever tasks or services are required, and the college needs leaders in these places to move college forward."

The posting below looks at the importance of the leader-follower relationship. It is from Chapter 8, *Following the Leader and Leading the Followers* by Joseph Barwick, in *Leadership in Place: How Academic Professionals Can Find Their Leadership Voice*, edited by Jon F. Wergin, of Antioch University. Copyright © 2007 by Anker Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved. ISBN 978-1-933371-18-4 Anker Publishing Company, Inc. 563 Main Street P.O. Box 249 Bolton, MA 01740-0249 USA [[www.ankerpub.com](http://www.ankerpub.com)]. Reprinted with permission.

### **Without Followers, Leaders Are Just Out for a Walk**

The second basic assumption in this concept of leadership is that others are following the leader. Because this is a necessary component, good leaders have usually been good followers themselves (Hollander, 1987; Kelley, 1992). The leader-follower relationship is formed around an objective that is larger than the needs of either entity. The leader needs the followers in order to reach the objective, and the followers need the guidance, encouragement, and vision of the leader. In other words, leading cannot exist outside the leader-follower relationship.

In academic organizations, leading generally falls into two categories. The first is protecting the interests of one group against the competing interests of another. Faculty often feel in competition with administration, because they do not believe the allocation of resources supports what they do (i.e., teaching and research). Likewise, administrators often believe that faculty are stuck in traditions that impede the progress of the college. Because this rift is so common in academia, leaders in both camps easily take on these oppositional ideologies, and communication becomes strained at best. R.H., president of a large southern college, had a management style most would describe as autocratic. He had very strong opinions about the mission of the college, the value of students, the importance of technology, and even about how to teach. As he was not inclined to keep his opinions to himself, he was openly critical of traditional forms of teaching, in particular the lecture method. Needless to say, the campus began to polarize. R.H. was the founding president and, therefore, had followers who supported him with almost fanatical zeal. On the other side, however, were faculty who were quite successful teaching in ways the president seemed to criticize. Anyone in an academic environment can readily see the multitude of issues at stake here and the potential for an ever-widening division that could eventually bog down the entire college.

A good leader, however - and this is essential to the leader-follower relationship - has enough confidence in his or her own goals and direction not only to allow dissenting opinions but to encourage them (Stout, 1984; Ouchi, 1981). To R.H.'s credit, he sought out opportunities to engage in dialogue with teachers he considered traditional, and he encouraged a strong faculty senate, meeting weekly with representatives of the faculty. Gradually, another group of followers began to emerge. These faculty recognized that R.H.'s criticism of traditional methods of teaching came from a combination of his value for student learning and his belief that every teacher had an obligation to students and the college to constantly seek a better way to teach. New informal leaders arose, who enjoyed experimenting with ways to improve learning, and as they gained recognition within the organization, the dialectic about traditional teaching became less visible. Under R.H.'s leadership, the college gained national recognition for being one of the most innovative colleges in the country. R.H. had the authority to compel faculty through various forms of censure and reward. Instead, he chose to effect change through open debate (see House, 1971). The new faculty leaders who emerged could easily have moved into the camp of traditional teachers, but instead they chose to listen more closely to what the president was trying to say. In doing so, they discovered that the apparently competing interest of the traditional faculty (i.e., autonomy in the classroom) was never really in jeopardy. R.H. wanted innovation. As long as he had it, others were free to do whatever worked. As with most successful organizations, the credit for their success is due as much to the formal leaders-the committed followers-as to the president (Kelley, 1992).

The second category of leading is aligning the interests of one group with those of another (see McGregor, 1960). Colleges have missions, values, and goals, and every employee of the college should support those or have the courage to seek employment with a college whose mission, values, and goals he or she can support. That said, however, there is plenty of room for debate and dissent over specific initiatives, policies, or edicts. It is important, however, for leaders to always be aware of whether they are leading in the direction the college is going, even if they disagree on how to get there. Except in very rare instances, leaders within and throughout the organization cannot lead a college away from the direction established by the president and the board. Efforts to do so are extremely costly in terms of lost energy and creativity. For example, J.B. became head librarian shortly after the installation of a new president. The previous president had enjoyed technology and had invested heavily in making the library a showcase in terms of computers and electronic research. The new president brought a strong message of renewed community focus. He wanted the college to be inviting to the community while at the same time finding better ways to meet the needs of the students. J.B. realized that most of the community patrons avoided the high-tech resources in favor of print and that students usually wanted more personal help with their projects. Working through the dean and eventually the president, J.B. phased out some of the less-used technology and increased holdings in the periodicals. She paid attention to what the community patrons

checked out and moved these materials into more prominence with better access. As hiring opportunities occurred, she looked for interpersonal skills above computer skills, believing correctly that the latter could be more easily learned. In a fairly short period of time, use of the library by students had greatly increased, and more than one-third of the patrons were from the community. J.B. had the skills and the choice to continue to grow the library as a state-of-the-art, high-tech learning resource center, but she determined that a shift back to a more traditional library would move the college forward along the path the president had set, and she led in that direction.

J.T. became dean of instruction under a president who had been at the college only three years. The fairly new president had brought much-needed organization and structure to the college, based primarily on the concepts of total quality and continuous improvement. The employees bought into these methods, because they saw that issues were being assessed and problems were being addressed. Successes were evident and celebrated, so morale was also rising. Where the faculty balked, however, was over the president's approach to student learning through "customer focus." These faculty were having trouble thinking of students as customers, because it lessened the students' humanity and put teaching in the same category with selling used cars. J.T. realized that energy was being wasted over vocabulary, so he began to engage faculty in discussions about the needs of their students. They discussed what kinds of attendance policies are best for 35-year-old single mothers coming to school at night. They discussed how best to motivate 18-year-olds who have no clue what they want to do. As they discussed, they implemented and measured new processes and services to meet the needs of a diverse student body. J.T. helped the faculty see that providing better service to students is not just a good business model for improving the institution's bottom line, but it is the right thing to do, which they have already firmly believed. Once the needs of the faculty to hold on to their humanistic values were aligned with the president's need for a continuous improvement approach, students received better service. J.T. could have been a good manager and simply acted according to the president's direction. Instead, he used his leadership ability to bring the values of the faculty into alignment with the goals of the president.

Managers are accountable for various processes that help an organization accomplish its mission. However, if every manager, from a president on down, does only what is in his or her job description, the organization will still eventually grind to a halt. Throughout the organization there are opportunities to find better ways to accomplish whatever tasks or services are required, and the college needs leaders in these places to move college forward.

**References**

Hollander, E.P. (1987). Social psychological perspective on leadership. *Liberal Education*, 73(2), 9-15.

House, R. (1971). A path-goal theory of leader effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16(3), 321-338.

Kelley, R.E. (1992). *The power of followership: How to create leaders people want to follow and followers who lead themselves*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday.

McGregor, D.M. (1960). *The human side of enterprise*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Ouchi, W.G. (1981). *Theory Z: How American business can meet the Japanese challenge*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Stout, J.K. (1984). The role of self-concept in interpersonal communications. *Supervisory Management*, 29(2), 12-16.