

**ORIENTATION PACKAGE  
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**“Taking the Lead”**

By

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Emerging Leaders Program - Pacific Leadership Academy 2004

Sample

## In the Beginning (Why Me?)

Early one morning last summer, I was called into my supervisor's office along with two other employees. The Federal Executive Board, Honolulu-Pacific, in partnership with the U.S. OPM, were soliciting nominations for an Emerging Leadership Program (ELP) (GS-9 through GS-12). She told us that management would nominate only 2 employees from our whole organization. She was nominating the three of us from her department. The goal of the ELP was to ensure Hawaii federal agencies were ready and able "to meet the future leadership challenges with well trained and qualified leaders" as a result of mass retirements - mainly those from the "boomer" generation.

Our organization is not immune to this; therefore, management felt compelled to act on a succession plan immediately. As other federal agencies that are faced with the same budgetary constraints and to remain competitive, survival meant constant evolution of our work processes to meet and exceed our customer's expectations. The reduction in human capital and resources by no means detracts our mission to maintain the best products and services to our customers. To combat this dilemma, we try not to backfill but hire from within -- this includes our future leadership. For us, the writing is on the wall and sooner than we think. We need to produce new leaders today to face the challenges of tomorrow.

My supervisor, Louise Chang, later informed us that Colleen Swain (my current lead specialist) and I were nominated to represent our organization because of our succession plan to in anticipation of our future organizational "leadership" needs. She informed us that the selection process was extensive and competitive, and that there were no guarantees of being accepted into the ELP as academy fellows. She told us that she would initiate the necessary application and nomination paperwork. It was an honor and privilege that my supervisor and managers nominated me. This indicated that management saw leadership potential in both of us. I remember one of my supervisors once telling me, "Dave, someday I can see you doing my job."

After a few weeks had passed, HRSC PAC Director Jeffrey Wataoka, approached me and asked me if I had heard anything about the ELP. I told him no. He said that he heard that they were selections made and that he would check on it. Later that week our supervisor told us that both Colleen and I were going to attend the ELP. We would become fellows of the ELP Academy - The Inaugural Class of 2004. Being selected for the ELP is more than an honor; it is a responsibility entrusted on me by the federal government and my superiors to "TAKE THE LEAD." The ELP promotes to set the foundation and present the basic core competencies for effective leadership. This includes two weeklong (Personal Leadership and Leading Through Others) classroom sessions, individual action plans, a book review and a final research paper. The ELP was an opportunity of a lifetime. For me, it was as if I won the "Leadership Lottery." In retrospect, I did.

## My Leadership Journey Begins

I currently work for the Department of Navy, Human Resources Services Center Pacific as a Human Resources Specialist (Recruitment and Placement). As a staffing specialist for the past 7 years, I am responsible for recruiting and filling civilian position for the Department of Navy, Pacific-wide. This basically means I place the best-qualified people in jobs as quickly as possible and yet maintain dynamic, innovative human resources services of the highest quality. I am a member of a team composed of staffing specialists, assistants and clerks. We are a close knit group of talented and dedicated individuals whose mission is to meet every challenge and succeed against all odds. Only through effective leadership can we expect to meet our mission and goals.

My training objectives for the ELP were to develop personal leadership skills, problem solving, flexibility, and influencing/negotiating skills. What does this actually mean to me? Were my expectations of the ELP met as far as providing a basic foundation of leadership tools and skills? What were my personal leadership thoughts, encounters, experiences and development? And finally, what were my personal overall evaluation and thoughts of the ELP.

I have served as an acting “leader” a number of times but had no formal training of any kind. Leadership to me was to ensure that everything at the workplace was going in the right direction and without any problems. My subordinates were expected to complete their tasks, and I ensured that they did. It was basically I lead and you follow. I had no real tools to measure my personal leadership traits as far as strengths and weaknesses necessary to be an effective leader. It was my raw leadership abilities that I think my supervisor and management hoped me to identify, learn and develop at the ELP.

The ELP orientation set the sails for my leadership voyage. We were told that we were a select group nominated by our managers who believed us to be future leaders of the Pacific. They were expectations set upon us and not to mention the big “money” coughed-up by our agencies. Anxiety, exhilaration and positive anticipation filled my thoughts. Captain Brad Bellis, Vice-Chair FEB-Honolulu, asked the group, “What are the characteristics of a good leader?” After much brainstorming, the fellows mutually arrived at the following characteristics: honesty and integrity, self-confidence/emotional stability, flexibility and adaptability, and creativity. Captain Bellis' closing remark was this, “Leadership comes from within . . . BRING IT OUT!” This was my first “aha” of the ELP.

### Classes In Session (1 & 2)

“Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (WMDC MAP spg, 11/07/03) was the first time I heard leadership officially “defined”. Designed to present leaderships through research, concern, cumulative development, hard work, linking approach (weave together), decrease derailment, instill courage, and to focus on strengths and management of weaknesses was the ELP (aha). The “Leadership Feedback Window” (Brown &

Evans: 1975; 83,90, 2002) which illustrated grids divided under instruments, peers, you and staff was introduced to us. The concepts here was give, get and go with the information provided.

The first session covered Personal Leadership competencies of interpersonal skills, team building, oral communication, influencing/negotiating, resilience and leveraging. Subject experts addressed the competencies by way of lecture, reference materials, resources, audio and visual presentation, demonstrations, group discussion, interactions, assessment; and individual assessment, self-reflection and homework.

The Physical Dimension of Leadership that dealt with a balanced diet and exercise program was not something that would jump out to me as far as leadership. However I definitely found it to be an important aspect of effective leadership. A balance and healthy lifestyle will enable you to face the mental and physical stresses or pressures by being resilient and energized.

The Creativity, Innovation and Change (Robert Wells and Dave Johnson) session was definitely an upbeat and gut-busting experience. Laughter and humor are part of leadership. Who would have connected the two? It's reputed to instill creativity and innovation, diffuses tense situations, and enhances external awareness and interpersonal skills. It also has physical benefits such as lowering of blood pressure, rising heart rate (aerobic exercise), and it releases pain-killing endorphins. "In today's fast-paced, fingernail-biting competitive environment, a leader who doesn't have a good sense of humor will probably not be effective in the long run. The grim, dour professional manager doesn't cut it anymore. Leaders want to inspire imagination, exuberance and passion in the workforce need to inject the yeast of humor into their organizations." (Oren Harari).

The talk on Generations at Work by Dr. Peter Ronayne was also an eye-opener. Identifying, respecting and appreciating their differences can be very empowering and essential to good leadership. According to Leadership the Benedictine Way, "Age is not a relevant measure of talent" (Craig & Oliver Gailbraith). This definitely holds true in today's work environment.

The FIRO-B and Leadership Bridge: MBTI & Temperaments Reports were key tools in understanding myself and with regard to interacting with others. The FIRO-B indicated that my highest expressed need was Inclusion. It suggested that I focused on fairness and involving my employees, integrating divergent interests, sharing decisions, deferring to group judgment, using democratic decision-making processes, and gaining leadership through endorsement and consent. The weakness here is that subordinates may challenge me for not showing appreciation or not allowing too much conflict in the group. "You must reward and trust the performers by promoting optimism and support" (Colin Powell). I readily acknowledge this deficiency and will work hard to manage it. My MBTI was ENTJ, and temperament as a Strategist. Understanding my MBTI and temperament is also important in understanding my leadership development as far as motivation, need and natural abilities. Knowing my temperament enhances my effectiveness as leader as far as positive interaction and respecting and understanding our

similarities and differences. A Strategist's weaknesses may include being impractical (discounting others input and advice), insensitive to the needs and imperfections of human beings (too critical and judgmental) and impatient with other work habits and time frames.

My first IAP, entitled "The Generation Factor" involved the competencies of team building, problem solving, interpersonal skills, oral communication and leveraging. The plan was to lead a diverse group of generations (traditionalist, booms, gen-xers and millennials) to tackle and bring about solutions to problems encountered during the staffing selection work processes. As the leader, I was able to establish and promote positive interaction through discussion, analysis, brainstorming, gather and sharing of information. We were able to collectively arrive at recommendations and solutions to preclude major problems from occurring. This exercise confirmed and tested my profile from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. I was logical, analytical, decisive, clear and assertive in our objectives, and definitely confident that the team would "meet the challenge."

The second session discussed Leading Through Others competencies such as Creativity and Innovation, Flexibility, Continual Learning, External Awareness, Problem Solving and Influencing/Negotiating. Again, subject experts addressed these competencies by way lecture, reference materials, resources, audio and visual presentation, demonstrations, group discussion, interaction, assessment and individual assessment, self-reflection and homework.

The presentations and discussions on the 9 Natural Laws of Leadership/108 Skills of Natural Born Leaders, The Substantive Dimension of Leadership, and Bringing Intelligent Emotions to Leadership were definitely interesting and informative. The leading through other concepts is an added arsenal to my leadership weaponry.

There were also indoor and outdoor team activities that presented potentially real life leadership challenges, situations, and problems. These team problem solving activities employed leader/follower interactions with actual application of the core leadership competencies, skills and knowledge from both sessions (aha). The final class project was awe-inspiring. It genuinely presented and engaged varying degrees of leader/follower interaction(s).

My second IAP, entitled "Responsible Rapport" involved the competencies of team building, problem solving, interpersonal skills, influencing/negotiating, oral communication, flexibility and vision. The objective was to develop "influence skills" by establishing trust, credibility, and respect from subordinates through interaction and rapport. "Rapport describes the affinity one person has with another. Rapport is a big reason some people gain the natural born leader attribution. When rapport is high others admire you and see in you what they want to become. They perceive in you the best that they can be." (Warren Blank) Promoting positive and productive relationships is essential to our high performing organization's "mission and vision." Some components of emotional intelligence employed included motivating, positive reinforcement, empathy, inspiring and self-awareness. My approach involved conducting impromptu

one-on-one, individual discussions (rapport) with my subordinates to solicit and identify their needs, interests, desires or concerns in order to improve performance. The results of our leader/follower interactions were positive. A sense of pride, trusts and respect manifested through smiles on their faces, quick responses to inquiries, sharing of information and ideas and a reconnecting of on expectations. “You can issue all the memos and give all the motivational speeches you want, but if the rest of the people in your organization don’t see you putting forth your best effort every single day, they won’t either.” (Colin Powell).

### Shoot for the Stars

Were my expectations of the ELP met? A resounding yes! The ELP has surely provided me with a copious amount of leadership information (i.e., basic core competencies, skills, tools, characteristics of a good leader, PIES Developmental Model, FIRO-B, OPM Leadership 360, identifying strengths and weaknesses, etc.). It has set the foundation for me to act and build on, a starting point, if you will.

The ELP goals of establishing and providing highest quality, graduate level leadership training through a rigorous curriculum based on established OPM competencies were on the nose. The coverage, organization, suitability and effectiveness of the ELP are unequivocally of the highest standard. Facilitator, Mr. Phil Evans’ approach and astute knowledge of the subject matter are an undeniable plus. He is the utmost professional and clearly dedicated to the success of the program. The ELP will foster and flourish under the direction of Executive Director L.A. Burke. Her outstanding support and direction for the ELP will make the Pacific proud.

Meeting and interacting with fellows from the various federal government agencies of the Pacific was a remarkable experience. They included scientists, researchers, budget analysts, security specialists, computer specialists, administrators, personnelists and educators. A lot had military leadership backgrounds and experiences to share. Some were already experienced leaders (i.e., traditional and old school) in their own right. But you could see that they too learned “new” approaches to leadership and appreciated this knowledge. They shared their individual leadership perceptions, ideas and concepts that they are applying in the work environment. I picked some brains and solicited their thoughts as far dealing with employees with negative attitudes (i.e., BMWers or RIPs) and how they went about motivating and influencing them in a positive direction. It was enlightening to know that they were already implementing some of the competencies (i.e., critical mass) conveyed at the ELP.

Political, habitual, religious, generational and cultural attitudes were common factors we are faced with and must consider as leaders. A majority of the fellows that I spoke with had little or no leadership experience; hence, “emerging leaders.” I observed leadership growth developing, individually and as a group, throughout this ELP experience happening right before my eyes. The group discussions and team building initiatives kicked-up a mix of attitudes, temperaments, notions, strategies, etc.; sometimes heated, but always constructive and positive to the end. It put in motion the intent of the ELP.

A “strategy” that I employed (at the on-set), was to deliberately and intentionally push myself to interact with individuals or groups, which I would otherwise feel uncomfortable. This was needed to test and engage my individual leadership acumen. It forced me to adapt, to be open-minded and flexible, and to be aware of the internal and external intricacies of leadership. It was a good strategy for me because “preconceived” notions are just that. They are self-defeating and abortive. You need to build rapport, interact, and connect (gain buy-in) to truly command leadership.

True leadership friendships and leadership connections were established at the ELP. I hope to maintain this leadership camaraderie throughout my federal career. I feel fortunate to know that I have caldron leadership knowledge from academy fellows, experts, and consultants to consent with in time of need. The fellows were ambitious and devoted to taking full advantage of this wonderful opportunity – we gave it our best. We all conducted ourselves in a professional manner, always being respectful and supportive of each other.

I especially liked the concept of alumni networking and partnership with other agencies, specifically mentorship (consultant). My consultant, Lt. Col. Benedict Fuata, was an invaluable component of the success of this leadership experience. He has definitely left a “leadership” impact on me that will last a lifetime. He coached, guided, motivated and inspired me throughout this journey. His words to me will be forever be imbedded in my mind, “The beauty is that there is no right answer, just the right direction that your gut feeling tells you to go. It should come from the heart, believe in yourself, and to make it your own.” (Benedict Fuata). Thank you Lt. Col. Fuata!

Leadership is a lifelong learning process. It involves the “willingness to push oneself out of one’s comfort zones.” (John P. Potter). You do not have to be a nice guy to be an effective leader. “As a leader you should select the best and talented, those with integrity, judgment and energy and drive to get things done. To not be afraid to confront, challenge or question authority for the benefit of the group you lead. Leadership is, ultimately, responsibility, and, it’s the ultimate responsibility.” (Colin Powell).

I am ready to “BRING IT OUT” and “TAKE THE LEAD!”

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