

Building PTA Leaders

Success begins with a plan. Do you have one?

Are PTA leaders born or developed?

- *Leadership is influence.*
- Leadership skills don't come naturally, they are developed.
- Are leaders born? Experts say no, leadership skills are learned. You can develop the skills necessary for becoming an effective leader.

The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary.

— Vidal Sassoon

What are you looking for?

Identify the traits of a successful PTA Leader.

From a faith organization

- A person who people can identify with.
- Someone who is there to serve.
- A person who is passionate about her purpose.
- A person who has vision.
- Someone with integrity. (Integrity is defined as having thoughts, words and actions as one.)

From the U.S. Air Force:

- Selflessness,
- Decisiveness,
- Energy,
- Commitment,
- Loyalty
- Integrity.

From the Small Business Association:

- Emotional stability
- Enthusiasm
- Conscientiousness
- Tough-mindedness
- Self-assurance
- Compulsiveness
- Dominance

The best of all leaders is the one who helps people so eventually they don't need him.

How can I mentor potential PTA leaders?

- By setting an example for others to follow, in what you say or do.
- By helping to settle differences and disagreements by encouraging a spirit of cooperation.
- By introducing new ideas that help solve problems—in other words, thinking up and speaking up.

The result of effective leadership is people working together to achieve a goal.



Pull the string, and it will follow wherever you wish. Push it, and it will go nowhere at all.

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower ~

Where can I find potential PTA leaders?

Current room parents• kindergarten parents• the school parking lot during drop-off and pick-up• from a PTA survey• from PTA interest finders• booster club parents• ask the office manager or teachers about classroom volunteers• ELAC meetings• site councils• talk to parent coordinators• ask the principal or superintendent about active parents•

“It is a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you’re trying to lead—and find no one there.”

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Is there such a thing as an ideal leader?

2,500 years ago, the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu wrote a description that is as close to an ideal leader as possible.

The best of all leaders is the one who helps people so eventually they don't need him.

Then comes the one they love and admire.

Then comes the one they fear.

The worst is the one who lets people push him around.

People don't trust a leader who doesn't trust them.

The best leader says little, but when he speaks people listen and when he is finished with his work, the people say we did it ourselves.

What if you can't find someone willing to take on the job?

Ideas from the League of Women Voters:

"We have often discussed making tasks smaller and more manageable, and how and what to delegate. People can only do what they can do."

- Would **re-defining**, being more **flexible about your expectations** help recruit someone?
- Would having an **executive vice-president** to handle daily details help?
- How up-to-date are your **bylaws**? Is the number of elected and appointed board realistic?
- What are your **expectations for each position**? When you approached people to be on the board, did you **define the responsibilities** in terms of essentials such as duties, attendance at meetings, hours required, etc?
- **Newer, and/or younger members** are often employed and find attending meetings or being active as too time-consuming until they are exposed to an issue or project of particular interest to them. Some younger members may prefer a project with others of their own age.
- Involve non-board members in **project work, on committees or one-time, finite activities**. Not everyone wants an ongoing responsibility. Value what they are willing to do, on their terms, and you will have potential board members!
- If the "way we've always done it" isn't working, **change it**. Many of the ways we operate come from earlier times, when members had more time. Look at your routine activities.
- **What are the barriers?** If a volunteer is willing to accept a job except for one duty, can you assign that duty to another officer or chairman? Sometimes **titles put people off**. Can you change a title whose name sounds scary or like too much work?



The two most important tools to give to a new board member:

- **An updated procedure book**
- **A smooth transition**

**According to Forbes Magazine, Fortune 500 companies are experiencing a shortage of business leaders. Their goal is to “build leaders.”
How do they do it??**

1. They identify promising leaders early.

Look at your current PTA board. Is there anyone who might take the reins when you leave? Is there anyone with a take-charge attitude? Is there anyone who your volunteers look to as a leader?

2. From studies, they have found that 2/3 of leadership skills come from on-the-job experience. Only 1/3 of leadership skills are learned from mentors, coaches, or teachers.

Look for PTA members who have done their current jobs well! Look for event planners, as well as event workers! Has one of your volunteers held every PTA position possible—and had lots of on-the-job experience?

3. They choose assignments strategically.

Give a promising PTA volunteer a variety of jobs or assignments. This will give him the experience he needs. It will also help you to see how he works in different situations. Another idea: will the promising leader serve on the nominating committee? Many times those serving on the nominating committee can be persuaded to take a leadership position.

4. They develop leaders within their current positions.

Are there promising leaders within your committees? Can you give them a position of leadership within that structure? PTA leaders are found in every job on your board. Watch to see how each board members performs their tasks, regardless of the size of the job.

5. Top companies are passionate about feedback and support.

Do everything you can to help your PTA volunteers succeed in their current positions —praise, recognition, incentives, mentoring. Listen to their ideas. Listen to feedback from them and their co-workers.

6. They develop teams, not individuals.

PTA volunteers who work together towards a goal strengthen each other. They also develop friendships which link them even tighter to your organization. Rarely will you have difficulty with a team, where you may have much difficulty with an individual who is trying to do everything herself.

7. They develop leadership through inspiration, i.e. inspire rather than demote. They inspire through a sense of mission.

An excellent PTA leader will inspire her team, encouraging them along. The mission of PTA is our unifying goal....to work for children. Are you inspiring your volunteers? Do you offer more positive communications than negative remarks? Do you build personal relationships with your board members?

8. They encourage leaders to be active in other areas in the community. (for training as well as for development of skills & integrity.)

A two-fold message here. First, we can look to businesses to encourage their employees to become involved in PTA. Second, we often find that the PTA volunteer is also the AYSO volunteer, the booster club president, the school board trustee. Support them in their other endeavors.

9. They make leadership development a part of the culture.

From the moment you were elected president, you should have been working to build your replacement. Find 5 potential people to replace you. Invite them to shadow you at events. This group will narrow down to one or two. Who is the best choice?

Random Building Blocks



- ✓ **Build personal relationships.**
- ✓ **Encourage two way communication.**
- ✓ **Recognize volunteer efforts. Value time and effort.**
- ✓ **Model good leadership skills.**
- ✓ **Provide incentives. MAKE IT FUN!**
- ✓ **Provide hands-on training. The leader should bring a volunteer in and then show them how to accomplish the job.**
- ✓ **Help them to get the big picture. Use the PTA mission statement and values.**
- ✓ **Enable men to get involved.**
- ✓ **Teach our children about PTA...they are future leaders!**
- ✓ **Develop mentorships—use the buddy system.**
- ✓ **Share your experiences. Share fun times and accomplishments.**
- ✓ **BE POSITIVE ABOUT PTA!**
- ✓ **Are you a PTA PR person? Do you speak positively to others about our organization?**
- ✓ **Build a better partnership with your principal or superintendents. Help them and train them to be successful in PTA. Show them what is in it for them.**
- ✓ **Always attend training! At council level, at district level, at State PTA convention, at National PTA convention. You can always learn something new!**
- ✓ **Include working parents. Host a Saturday meeting. Find a time to meet that works for working parents.**
- ✓ **Accept what they can give—with a smile. Whether a volunteer gives hundreds of hours or just a few hours, gratefully accept what they have to offer.**
- ✓ **Plan for your successor. Keep an updated procedure book. Encourage shadow leadership. THE SIGN OF A SUCCESSFUL LEADER IS ONE WHO FINDS HER OWN REPLACEMENT.**
- ✓ **Always have more than just a first string. Develop leaders for the near and far future.**
- ✓ **ASK! Most people say they don't volunteer in their child's school because they were never asked.**
- ✓ **Don't always rely on e-mail or text messages. Contact your board members by phone or in person on occasion.**
- ✓ **Use your newsletter to open up your organization to others. Entice them to become involved.**