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July 18th, 2016

## Leadership (Chattanooga, TN)

C. William Pollard

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## **10 PROJECT VIDEO TALK**

### **Monday, July 18, 2016**

#### I. BACKGROUND – Refer to the 10 Project

- Rodger Piersant, Frank Brock, and Scott Quatro
- It is a privilege to be with you this afternoon and share some thoughts about "Leadership." I appreciate the work of Rodger, Frank, Scott, and others, as well as this group, in helping the Chattanooga community continue to grow and develop. I have spent some time in your community, and I appreciate what it offers. My daughter is a graduate of Covenant College, and the man she married played basketball for Covenant College. I had the privilege of serving on the Provident Insurance Company Board which later became Unum/Provident.
- Explain why I'm not there.
- As I share some thoughts with you on leadership and with a focus on the awesome responsibility of leadership, I want to first share with you some of my own experiences. As I do so, I trust we can move this time together as a dialogue and not just a monologue. Therefore, I will be asking you some questions, and please feel free to interrupt me and ask me questions as well.
- Describe a little bit of background including law school, practice of law, illness, change in leadership at Wheaton College, then after 5 years back to practice of law and being recruited by Ken Hansen and Ken Wessner to join ServiceMaster in the spring of 1977. At that point, ServiceMaster was a public company with a little over 200 million in revenue and 4 meaningful objectives as part of its mission statement:

- To honor God in all we do
  - To help people develop
  - To pursue excellence
  - To grow profitably
- They wanted me to come and be a part of the senior management team responsible for all of the staff functions of the company, including finance, legal, human resources, and other supporting functions.
- TELL STORY ABOUT MY RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND SPENDING THE FIRST 2 MONTHS OUT DOING OUR SERVICE WORK
- The 2 Kens would play an important role as mentors in my life as I would become Chief Operating Officer of the company 3 years after I joined it, and then in 1983 becoming the CEO of the firm. During my leadership, we were experiencing rapid expansion as we grew from a 200 million dollar company to, 25 years later when I retired, over 7 billion dollars in annual revenue, serving in both the United States and 45 foreign countries, employing and managing over 200 million people.
- During this period, there was another person who became an important advisor, mentor, and friend in my life. He was Peter Drucker. He was often referred to as “the father of modern day management principles.” Peter would usually start out his advice by asking key questions. Three of his most familiar questions are:
    - What is your business?
    - Who is your customer?
    - What does your customer see as value?
- While most of you are serving in business-related organizations, Dan, you come from Covenant College, and Ashley, you are from an organization named “Choices” which is a not-for-profit ministry. How would either of you answer these questions? What is your

business? Joe, how would you answer that question? Greg, how would you describe your business? Lucas, how would you respond to the first question: What is your business? Or the second question, Who is your customer?

- One day I had a bright idea of inviting Peter Drucker to come speak to our Board of Directors. As he did so, sure enough he started out by asking them his favorite questions:
  - What is your business?
  - Who is your customer?
  - What does your customer see as value?

After listening to our various board members respond to these questions telling Peter the various services we offered (providing cleaning services in the office and at home through our housekeeping division, managing the maintenance of facilities for hospitals, educational organizations, and some major industrial facilities, killing bugs through our subsidiary Terminix, caring for lawns through our subsidiary TruGreen, and doing some special cleaning in homes as maids through our maid service company Merry Maids), he looked at our board and said:

“You’re all wrong. That’s what you **do**, but that’s not your business. Your business is about the people doing it and the people you’re serving. You are in the business of training and developing people. Training them to fulfill the service function they perform, but also developing them and the person they are becoming—not only in their work life, but also in the leadership in their home life and in their community.”

He reminded the board that this is part of the “mission” of our firm. We were serving the needs of the people. We were making money and creating wealth for our shareholders in so doing, but we were also becoming a moral community with the development of the human character. Peter felt very strongly about this point as he related to how the corporation, the business, the social

organization could have an end goal that reached the character of the people they employ and the character of the people they were serving. For Peter, this was the awesome responsibility of leadership.

- How many leaders do we have in the room today?
  - What makes up a good leader?
  - Are leaders born or are they made?
  - Is leadership something we should seek after?
  - How would we describe the most important essentials of leadership?
  
- When Drucker was pressed to describe his definition and thoughts of leadership, he would often say, "Leadership in and of itself is not something you should seek after. Leadership is just a means. To what end is the real question."
  
- What should be our end objective of leadership? For Drucker, the end objective of leadership were the people that followed, the direction they were going, and who they were becoming.
  
- There are some dangers in leadership, especially as a leader in motivating people to be successful in accomplishing significant results for the firm or organization he or she leads. Success can result in the leader focusing on self. Let me tell you another story involving me and Peter Drucker in an experience in Japan.
  - **Here tell story of the seminar in Tokyo, the failure of our partner to support it, and my "wrong" decision to go back to the States instead of solving the problem. As Peter put it, I was suffering from hubris.**

## II. CONCLUSION

- Probably the most important point in leadership about this example is what occurred 6 months later. The president of our partner in Japan suddenly died of a heart attack, and his wife contacted me and asked me if I would participate in his funeral and share my thoughts about him as a leader and also about my faith. She told me 2 other people would be participating in his funeral: a Shinto priest and a Buddhist monk. A week later, as I shared in that unusual funeral session about not only the relationship of friendship I had with her husband, I also shared the importance of my relationship with God and what that first objective of ServiceMaster meant to me as a person, and I referred to the discussions I had with her husband on this subject over the years we did business together.
- I end our thoughts today about leadership and the responsibility we have to the people we serve, to our family, and to our community. Where does the role of faith fit into this? And as we are serving, are we doing it in a way that provides respect by those that we work with with the faith of what we believe? One of the convictions of the founder of ServiceMaster is that he couldn't leave God in the pew on Sunday. He had to bring Him to work with him on Monday. Is there room to do so in our society today? How do we embrace and share with people of different faiths, including Muslims?