Leaders in the Shadows: The Leadership Qualities of Successful Municipal CAOs

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• Brock University

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• Five successful CAOs
• Thick case studies
• Leadership qualities of successful CAOs
• Published by University of Toronto Press
Purpose of the book

• Contribute to literature on leadership
• Provide advice to current and aspiring CAOs
• Demystify the concept of leadership
• Tell the story of some exemplary people
The five case studies

• Robert Earl (Invermere and Port Edward, BC and Banff)
• Michael Fenn (Burlington and Hamilton-Wentworth, On)
• Mike Garrett (Peel, Toronto, and York, On)
• Keith Robicheau (Annapolis County and Kentville, NS; St. Andrews, NB)
• Judy Rogers (Vancouver)
Outline

• Role of the CAO

• Traits, skills and behaviours of successful CAOs

• Conclusion – advice to current and aspiring senior managers
The Role of the CAO
CAOs must lead in three directions

Leading up
Council

CAO

Leading down
Staff

Leading out
Business groups
Residents’ groups
Other governments
Media
Leading down

• Two-way communication channel between council and staff

• Manage staff

• Influence is better than authority
Leading out

• Residents’ groups
• Business groups
• Media
• Other governments
Leading out

• Power through influence
• Negotiator, broker
• Inspire confidence
• Guide groups
• Be proactive in identifying emerging issues
Leading up

- Most difficult
- Inspire confidence
  - Expertise
  - Objectivity
  - Professionalism
- Power through influence
- Mediator, negotiator
Leading in three directions

• Different directions require different skills

• Varying intensities depending on situation

• Use this as a check list
What do CAOs really do?

- Strategic decision making rather than hands-on management
- Build a team
- Establish the organizational culture
- Use influence rather than authority
- Delegate, but monitor
Small is different from large

• Large places – it’s a job
• Smaller places – you are the face of the municipality
• Residents expect to go to the top
• More hands-on activity
• More community involvement
Traits, skills and behaviours of successful CAOs
Definition of leadership

A municipal CAO who is a good leader has the ability to move the municipality forward by interacting in a mutually influential way with and motivating the council, external stakeholders, and organizational subordinates.

Traits, skills, and behaviours

1. Integrity

2. Respect

• Communication is important

• That includes listening
Traits, skills, and behaviours

• Perceptive judge of people – emotional intelligence

• Be change oriented, but

• Make change carefully – respect the local customs
Traits, skills, and behaviours

• Councillors are in charge, but

• Sometimes they need professional assistance

• Provide advice based on rationality, but

• Understand and anticipate the political impact of that advice
Traits, skills, and behaviours

- Support your staff, but
- Don’t micromanage
- Training and development; mentoring
- Develop the next generation
- Show your passion
Conclusion
Demystifying leadership

• Leadership is important

• Consider the traits, skills, and behaviours of successful leaders

• All of them can be developed, but it takes time and work