Pre-Session Assignment #1

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J. G. Auguston's article, *Leading the Team – The Ultimate Oxymoron or the*

Ultimate Challenge, highlights the dilemma that IT leaders face in the twentieth century.

As the vice provost for IT at Pennsylvania State University, J. Gary Auguston describes

what is needed to be effective in this field. His statement: "In the complex world of IT,

we can't afford to be just average." is stressed throughout this article. What he proposes

from his experience in the field is delivered in his lessons, one for senior management

and one for future IT leaders.

In his lessons for senior management, he emphasizes enlightened leadership,

which creates an atmosphere that promotes success. The chief IT officer should be

included at all the key decision making meetings in order to be effective in guiding the

direction of the institution.   It is important to think future value and not the current cost.

Those who think current cost tend to outsource the work whereas those who think future

value tend to keep the services in-house in order to keep in line the strategic undertakings

of the institution.

Auguston also gives his thoughts on some of the lessons that he has learned as

future IT leader. First and foremost is to be who you are. The important qualities of not

being afraid to have an opinion and not being afraid at other times to admit being wrong

are all parts of being a leader. It is also the ability to win and lose without crowing or

bragging or excusing that differentiates a good leader from an effective leader. Second,

hire good people and listen to them. Try not to feel threatened by your subordinates and

view them as people who will help you stay on the leading edge and bring distinction to

the institution. Third, nurture and mentor future leaders. Current leaders need to reach

down in the organization to seek out and find leaders of the future. Fourth, practice

diversity. The diverse pool of IT talent that will result from this will give balance to the

IT team. Fifth, manage your ego. Being a senior executive has its pitfalls. One of which

is having a big ego. It is imperative that you leave the past in the past. Most people are

not interested in hearing about your past, but rather, what you can do for them now.

Sixth, leverage relationships. The strategy of leveraging relationships with all those who

are involved will benefit the institution in the long run. Seventh, get involved nationally.

In order to have impact on the community nationally, you must divert some of your

efforts into a cause that you believe to have value to both the national agenda and to your

institution. Finally, remember your family. The support of your family is integral in your

success as an IT leader.

This article challenges all IT leaders of tomorrow to find their true potential.

Reading it gave me a strong appreciation of those leaders of the past that have taken IT to

where we are today. Prior to the Internet days, people would not be in agreement that IT

would have such an impact on us as a society. This was the other reason that I selected

this article because I also will be an IT leader of tomorrow. To what level and impact

will depend on my commitment and determination. In fact, Auguston argues that the job

of the IT in higher education has only begun. He notes that the IT function is not simply

another well oiled machined that can be run like any other business. To be an effective

IT leader, you must have the vision as well as the work ethic. The way the article is

worded and the wisdom that it conveys makes it very readable. It also is very practical as

all these measures can be employed right away. For us, in the real world, this might

mean readjusting our attitudes or finding creative ways to do things. However, the same

dilemma remains: Are leaders born or can they be nurtured?

Auguston, J. G. (2002). *Leading the Team – The Ultimate Oxymoron or the Ultimate*
       Challenge. Retrieved April 17, 2003 from http://ericit.org/fulltext/IR545749.pdf