

## Task

Commitment, pragmatism, and risk-taking comprise the Task orientation of the Vincentian Leadership Model. The Task orientation identifies leaders who strive for excellence through commitment, set clear and realistic goals and welcome innovation when it involves risk.

## Commitment

Vincentian leaders are committed. They strive for excellence by staying involved with a task until it is completed and clearly direct people to achieve set objectives.

# Servant Leadership for the 21st Century

“Today’s efforts will make tomorrow’s easier.”  
St. Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul dedicated his life to helping the poor in France in the 17th century. I dedicated my life to serving the poor for two short years. As a result, I started to study Vincentian leadership and servant leadership. Serving others is the best way to serve oneself. Through my experience with AmeriCorps and working with economically disadvantaged children, I learned a great deal. Before my involvement with AmeriCorps, I did not feel a need to serve my community. Now, I am dedicating the rest of my life to being a servant leader for the poor through education of all children.

Education is the key to a successful future. This education — whether obtained through a school setting or a life learning opportunity — is a great instrument for change. I see a bigger vision of the future because of my AmeriCorps experience. My new knowledge of Vincentian leadership forms a structure allowing me to appreciate my experience and shape the future of my leadership roles.

Vincent was only fifteen years old when he began to lead others in the church. My work with economically disadvantaged youth is with adolescents between the ages of 12-15 years old. I believe that they — just as Vincent did — can become leaders in their community, and the best way to realize this leadership possibility is through service to others. Many of these children have very few opportunities in their lives.

A chance to be a positive leader to their peers forces them to lead with values and a high level of commitment. Because these children — at such a young age — understand the importance of servant leadership, I must lead them with the

same high level of commitment that they show me.

For a leader to build another leader is to further the mission of one's cause. Although I was unaware of Vincentian leadership at the time, guiding these children exposes me to a new mission in life — that of servant leadership.

*Carlye Greene*

## **Reflection**

1. Name three things you are committed to. What motivates these commitments?
2. How do these commitments help guide and focus your leadership?

# Not just another L Ride

“Some persons look and never see.  
Others see and never look.”  
St. Vincent de Paul

As I saw the red line “L” train approaching, all I could think of was the delicious lunch I would eat back at my dorm and hope to find a seat in the crowded train to avoid bumping into unfriendly strangers. My focus was getting from point A to point B, no interruptions, and no confrontations. However, this particular ride moved me in a way that I never imagined. As I found a seat, I looked to my left and saw a blind homeless man walking aimlessly through the aisle, shaking a cup with coins in it. He was repeating a phrase of words over and over again that I could not quite understand, but it was clear that he was desperately trying to reach out to the commuters on the train for some sort of help. As usual, I immediately clammed up and hoped to stay clear of confrontation from this man, until something so unique, so genuine occurred.

As the man stumbled through the aisle, a young man stopped and said to the man, “Sir, do you need to know where you are? The man replied with hope and relief in his eyes, “Yes, yes I do!” “You’re approaching the Monroe stop of the red line,” he said. The man responded, “Thank you so much. God bless you!” As I watched the homeless man get off the train, I looked around the car at my fellow commuters. Dozens of people sat untouched by the amazing exchange that occurred before our eyes. While we sat desperately trying to ignore an uncomfortable situation, one man decided to reach out and acknowledge this blind man as a person, a fellow citizen that just needed help to find his way off the train. From this, I began to realize and appreciate the idea of the movement away from charity to change.

As a university, DePaul’s view on the movement away from charity is clear in its mission and responsibility for public

service. As declared in its mission statement, “The University encourages faculty, staff, and students to apply specialized expertise in ways that contribute to the societal, economic, cultural, and ethical quality of life in the metropolitan area and beyond.” Many organizations and offices at DePaul exist and revolve around the purpose of serving the public and reaching out to and helping those in need. These organizations pride themselves on their vast service learning opportunities, mission trips, community service, and the hours of work they put into serving the community. I am a firm believer that all people have good inside of them, but why is it that so many DePaul students are not actively involved in the University’s many public service organizations? I believe it is because of a simple, but jarring word that haunts many college students of today: commitment.

As college students, time management and prioritizing are drilled into our heads until fear of over-scheduling ourselves or spreading ourselves too thin is at the forefront of our worries and problems. Juggling classes and a social life is hard enough, but to throw in hours of community service seems way too much of a commitment to many students today, making the idea of public service an automatic turn-off. What students fail to realize, however, is that serving the public, reaching out to the needy, can be as easy as walking to your next class. When Greg Stolhand, Service Day coordinator and representative for University Ministry came to speak to our class about the opportunities DePaul had for community service, he stressed the simplicity of reaching out to the needy. He explained that serving the public does not have to be done through hours of service learning, but rather by a simple hello to a poor man on the street, making eye contact with the pan-handler outside of the DePaul Center, or even standing next to the homeless woman in the back pew during chapel. Public service begins with giving dignity to those who have lost it. To acknowledge someone as a human being is one of the greatest gifts, we, as students, can share with one another and with someone in need.

Thus, I believe that the movement from charity to change begins with a simple recognition of humanity. One can learn

from St. Vincent de Paul, “who instilled a love of God by leading his contemporaries in serving urgent human needs that the DePaul community is above all characterized by ennobling the God-given dignity of each person.” Public service begins inside one’s soul; public service begins with a simple hello.

*Melanie Safford*

## **Reflection**

1. Think of a time when you had an experience that reinforced why you commit to something. What occurred during this experience that reminded you of your commitment?
2. How do you decide if you commit to something? Is your decision guided by values, mission, beliefs or something to put on a resume?

## Risk-Taking

Vincentian leaders are risk-takers. They view conflict as an opportunity to grow, welcome innovation even when it involves risk, and openly accept criticism and challenge from others.

# Why Not?

“Everything should be given the best interpretation. As the Bishop of Geneva used to say, if a thing could be looked at from a hundred different angles, we should always look at it from the best.”

St. Vincent de Paul

Becoming executive director of DePaul Ireland was a role Kerry Anthony least expected when she began her journey with the organization as a frontline caseworker. Over the years, Kerry served DePaul Ireland in various capacities, ultimately blazing a path to becoming the executive director. Kerry considers herself a young executive director to lead a large organization. At the age of 34, DePaul Ireland asked Kerry to fill the position after serving as interim executive director. It only seemed natural for Kerry to be the one to continue in this role. With this position, Kerry assumed responsibility to protect and promote the vision, mission, and values of DePaul Ireland while encouraging an environment where her employees thrive and learn. One leadership attribute of Kerry’s that defines her ability to lead DePaul Ireland is her willingness to take risks. This characteristic encourages trust in the organization and creates an environment of innovation and learning.

Several employees approached Kerry about starting counseling sessions at one of the hostels for homeless men. Kerry disagreed with her employees, sharing that she did not think it was a good idea because the counseling sessions would occur where the men live and Kerry felt these sessions would be more effective in another location. After a little prodding, Kerry agreed to let her employees run a pilot group and, if successful, they could continue the counseling sessions. Kerry’s willingness to set aside her power to make decisions and entrust decision-making to other employees exemplifies her leadership.

Kerry knew the counseling sessions might be unsuccessful, but she recognized that telling her employees this was ineffective. She needed to provide them guidance different from telling staff what to do. From this experience with her employees, Kerry learned the importance of being able and willing to ask the question, “Why not?” She asked this question of herself and DePaul Ireland when debating what to do about offering counseling at the hostel. Unable to determine any risks that they could not handle, Kerry supported her staff and trusted them to do the best job they could. By asking “Why not?” Kerry opens herself and DePaul Ireland up to opportunities and possibilities that they might not otherwise embark upon. From this experience and others, DePaul Ireland became inspired to use the question, “Why not?” as the theme for their three-year strategic plan. In their strategic plan, DePaul Ireland addresses goals and objectives that will define their organization and propel them into the future. It communicates their openness to engage in innovative projects, programs, collaborations, and opportunities to serve all stakeholders.

By asking “Why not?” of all individuals, DePaul Ireland challenges everyone involved to let go of their power and trust in one another to learn and grow. Kerry creates this among her employees because of her ability to understand that ownership of DePaul Ireland belongs to everyone. Her role is to protect and promote that mission, vision, and values of the organization. From this understanding, Kerry fosters leadership and ownership among the DePaul Ireland community to move the organization in achieving its mission and vision — “To offer homeless and disadvantaged people the opportunity to fulfill their potential and make positive, informed choices about their future.”

*Jenny Mohan*

## **Reflection**

1. Think of a time when you let someone take a risk for which you would be responsible. What did you learn from this experience?

2. Are there opportunities for you to take more risks or let others? If so, how?

# The Holiness of Risk-Taking

“Do not worry yourself over much. Grace has its moments. Let us abandon ourselves to the providence of God and be very careful not to run ahead of it.”  
St. Vincent de Paul

In Vincent’s words, “The works of God have their moment, it is then when providence executes them, and not before or after.”

Vincent de Paul was a man of faith. His profound trust in the providence of God never led him to passivity or negligence. We can apply his wisdom to today. What is reality telling us? Many times the risk-taking of leaders today is an act of pride and overwhelming self-confidence. How are we living life with open eyes and ears to see and listen, to take risks while innovating and answering to real issues? Vincent doubted precipitation and a false sense of urgency, but at the same time, urged the missionaries “to serve the poor as if they were going to put out a fire!” Today, this wisdom is what Stephen Covey calls “prioritizing” — responding to what is important, not only to what is urgent, but also finding the right moment to do it. When we work with students at DePaul University in the Vincentians in Action (VIA) Program, our main goal is to bring our students to places of awareness. Many times this is a painful process because we, humans, are afraid of what is real. But how can we educate new generations to be risk takers if they do not have a profound sense of —and are faithful to—what is real?

The secret of risk-taking in Vincent’s life was discernment. We call this process awareness. There is no doubt sufficient contact with reality is what leads people to honor their personal intuitions with a profound sense of integrative transformation. In our society, we often witness that our leaders take unnecessary risks because of their lack of discernment and attentiveness to the real needs of people, communities, and

institutions. This did not happen to Vincent de Paul. His profound sense of reality provoked spontaneous risk-taking that was a careful, premeditated decision, led not by the accurate reading and understanding of what reality told him.

Vincent de Paul's risk-taking allowed him to become an innovator. His innovation reached the highest peaks of somebody who was not inferior to the times within which he lived. Vincent understood his time and helped others to become responsible. An example of this Vincentian innovation and risk-taking is Vincent's countercultural appreciation of women's roles in religious and broader societal life.

While visiting a displaced community called Los Altos de la Florida on the south-side of Bogota during a University Ministry trip with 16 students from the VIA senior leadership team, we witnessed how the leadership of this community was completely in the hands of 14 risk-taking widows. These women experienced first-hand the effects of internal violence in Colombia, such as displacement, loss of loved ones, rape, and violence. They stood in front of us as a sign of a new time in which the leadership of women and social organizations is emerging the way Vincent de Paul envisioned 350 years ago

Prudence, patience, and internal peace are essential dimensions of intelligent and clever risk-taking in Vincent's life. These are constant in most of his decisions when called to open new houses, send members of his communities to new countries, and find additional ways to serve the poor. Risk-taking was the way of holiness and the wholeness of this man led by a profound discernment and understanding of reality, even unseen reality. As he used to say, "We need to see the other side of the coin." Vincent de Paul is saying to leaders of today, are you taking any risks?

*Fr. Guillermo Campuzano Velez, C.M.*

## **Reflection**

1. How can Vincent de Paul inspire risk-taking in your life?
2. What holds you back from taking a risk or letting others take a risk?

## Pragmatism

Vincentian leaders are pragmatic. They effectively communicate ideas and plans, base their judgments on facts, and set clear and realistic goals.

# The Creation of Vincent on Leadership: The Hay Project

“It is not enough to do good; it must be done well.”  
St. Vincent de Paul

I have always been a student of leadership and an organization-design-junkie, as an undergraduate at the University of Illinois and as a graduate student at DePaul’s Graduate School of Business in the 1960s. My fascination with the topic further refined itself as I became a full-time faculty member and then continued as I redirected my career to management consulting, advising some of Chicago’s major companies on organizational planning and leadership selection. Throughout this transition, I continued to teach at DePaul as an adjunct faculty member, never straying far from my roots.

When I joined the DePaul Board of Trustees in 2001, I decided it was high time to think about giving back to the University in gratitude for giving me the grounding and inspiration to achieve in the consulting world under the name of Hay & Company. Like so many of my fellow Trustees who are alums, I realized I would not have achieved or succeeded without my training from DePaul. However, I did not know how I wanted to give back. I considered a donation to the general fund, creating an endowed faculty position, or creating a scholarship for students of leadership. I just was not sure what felt right to me.

I turned to my friend and colleague, Rev. J. Patrick Murphy, C.M., for his advice and counsel. Over wonderful dinners in his home, we explored the options. We finally lit upon the one that felt right to me: funding the Vincentian Leadership Project on the DePaul campus. The project would review the literature and codify all that we knew about Vincent de Paul’s leadership pattern, style, and the management techniques he employed to achieve the astounding results

credited to him and his close associate, Louise De Marillac. Once we knew the leadership profile that drove his success, we could then train students, faculty, administrators, Board of Trustees, and others in the community interested in the very principles that guide and drive the Vincentian leadership style.

It made perfectly good sense to me. It was a way to prevent what happened to me in all my years at DePaul as a graduate student and faculty member from happening again to all future generations of students. In all those years, 1965-2001, I never knew a thing about the man, the Saint, whose name appeared on the door. I saw the Vincentian Leadership Project as perhaps the answer to solving the problem and filling the void for future generations who pass through these same halls.

In 2001, I attended my first official DePaul Board meeting as part of a retreat for Trustees held in Paris. As my wife, Mary Pat, and I actually retraced the very footsteps of St. Vincent, as he spun his magic in helping the poor and disadvantaged — I knew we did the right thing. We all could benefit from knowing more about this figure who changed his own life to the benefit of countless others in the 17th century and understanding how he did it — finally.

*Bill Hay*

## **Reflection**

1. When have you succeeded in turning a vision into action?
2. How do you work with others to determine a pragmatic solution or idea?

# We Must Give Them a Life Worthy of The Name

“Let us work with a new love in the service of the poor, looking for the most destitute and abandoned among them.”  
St. Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul Center is best known as a large childcare setting. Over 400 adorable children ages four months to thirteen years come to the center every day. Community Outreach Services (COS) is the other programming focus at our Center. COS includes community-based case management to seniors, an intergenerational home for college students and older adults, and homeless outreach. Those we serve through Community Outreach Services are not as adorable as our young childcare charges. COS clients are old. They are homeless. Some smell badly. Some are mentally ill and refuse to take medication. Some cannot see or hear. Some have addictions are not ready to live clean and sober. Many are manipulative, angry, and negative. They all have had difficult lives, and often make poor choices.

We do not get referrals for apple pie-baking, rosy-cheeked grandmas, because they have family and friends helping them. We do not get referrals for people in recovery who have jobs and a place to live, because they have a support network. We get the people who desperately need for someone to treat them with respect, and meet them where they are right now on their journeys. We get the people who hope for someone to simply, genuinely listen. We get the people who need everything we can give them and more, yet may not appreciate our efforts. Andrea is seventy-five-year-old woman in an abusive marriage for eight years. She wanted to leave but was afraid. Andrea thought she had no options. She came to live at Laboure House, our intergenerational residence. Fearful and angry, Andrea alternately hid from and lashed out at the staff. Over time, she accepted counseling and legal referrals. She began to feel safe. She came to see she could choose a different path for herself, and that we would support her choices. She said the love and acceptance in a safe

environment allowed her to move forward.

Kim was a Homeless Outreach client for eight years. He came to us each Monday morning, ready for a shower and a change of clothes. He spent the rest of his week hustling money to pay for his drug and alcohol addictions. Each Monday, we greeted him with a smile and asked if he wanted to talk. The Outreach Coordinator always told him he was smart, capable, and that he could handle a job and apartment if he could handle surviving on the street. After five years, Kim decided he was ready to try rehab. He tried three times before becoming clean and sober. Now, he is a dependable volunteer in the Homeless Outreach program. He was baptized two years ago at the age of forty-seven. He has a part-time maintenance job at his church. Kim says this is all because we treated him with respect. A smile, a shower, and trust in his abilities during the eight years he was our client convinced him to try a new approach to his life.

Why do we serve such people?

Simply put, they are the ones most in need. They are the ones most aligned with our mission, core values and Vincentian heritage. We choose to serve them, following the example set by St. Vincent de Paul 400 years ago. Even when it may seem hopeless, we can make a positive difference in someone's life. Those we serve are poor and in need, but they are not hopeless people. They are people who need hope. We learn from them, we are humbled by them, and it is truly a gift to serve them.

*Kathy Slover*

## **Reflection**

This story shows how Vincent's pragmatic approach to assisting the poor is still alive today, helping people set clear and realistic goals.

1. How does the work you do demonstrate pragmatism?

2. What can you do to ensure that your mission and work will continue to live on?

