The Followership Continuum:

A Model for Increasing

Organizational Productivity

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ABSTRACT

The importance of promoting and developing exemplary followers is the underlying position of this article. The article re-positions followership and defends the importance of exemplary followers. Followership stages are presented and explained as being situational and dependent on external and internal variables. These stages are described within a model for measuring workforce performance level—the Followership Continuum. The article explains that focusing on assessing and developing the highest followership stages of the Followership Continuum provides a diagnostic and prescriptive approach for improving workforce productivity. The article highlights preliminary research that is used to confirm followership concepts presented by the author

The Followership Continuum: A Model for Increasing Organizational Productivity
Like the mythical Jason and the Argonauts, organizations and their leaders constantly seek their own magic bullet for improving productivity. These bullets present themselves as that special program, that renowned management guru, that visionary CEO, that better marketing plan to best position the company, or other current fads. The search is driven by a constant requirement to perform better, do more for less, exceed customer expectations, or compete successfully in the marketplace. The bottom line must continuously improve. While problems and issues in organizations vary and change is the only constant, the requirements to perform remain the same.

If the industry is in the private sector, there is the small business struggling for survival or the large business trying to maintain market share. In the non–profit sector, there is the requirement of sustaining and increasing funding support to ensure program integrity and quality. In the public sector, be it local, state or federal, there is the need to serve constituents, the need to ensure that programs operate successfully, and the need to provide services that optimize limited resources, while creating strategic direction for future advancements.

However, the strategies that consistently make the difference are those that mobilize and engage individuals to perform at their best. New tools and techniques or better leadership will not do the job unless there are followers who get on board. Programs, policies and procedures can create the environment for productivity. But the primary agent of productivity is the organizational workforce. The key requirements for ensuring and sustaining organizational productivity are mobilizing and developing the workforce, the organizational followers.

When the organization is viewed as a unified system, it becomes clear that all organizational elements are crucial for sustained productivity. However, without the "right" human capital factors, the right followership, the organization barely moves, or it lurches along. Reflect on this by looking at the organization and its components (i.e. the leader, the systems, and the followers) in the context of a car and all its component parts. Could you drive a car (the organization) with just a steering

wheel and the drive train (the leader)? Like cars, organizations need all components working together for full functionality. Tires, seats, windshield wipers, and other supporting components (systems) are important features of a fully working car. But, the car doesn't run without the engine, the battery, and gasoline (the followers). These components give the car its power.

Demystifying the Myth About Followers

The Case for the Importance of Followers –
But who wants to be a follower? This should be an obvious question in discussions about increasing productivity in the workforce. Because the general view held about followers is that of a submissive and subordinate role, people who are somehow sub-par.

We have all had experiences in which we were urged to be a leader: "Don't just follow along, think for yourself." Reproaches such as this one are replayed over and over and are part of our repeating mental film. The reality is that our perceptions about followers and followership are grounded in positioning. And for many, our mental reruns have positioned followers as being second best.

Consider the mental positioning of the General Electric Company products. Many of us perceive electrical appliances as this company's primary products, possibly encompassing related or vertical electrical product lines. But, in reality the General Electric Company is a conglomerate, with horizontal product lines that span many industries, including ownership of NBC, a television network, and insurance and financial institutions. Likewise, followership is positioned as a passive role that is dependent on the directions and actions of another--a superior, the leader. Like General Electric, the reality for followers is different, as well.

In actuality, followership is a relationship between followers and leaders, one of co-dependent roles rather then dependent ones.

Philosophically, from childhood, our focus has been on being a leader and has been directed away from the importance of followers. Maybe this one-sided focus has resulted in the undervaluing of followership. Yet no organized effort can succeed or be sustained without followers. Without military followers, brigades or platoons couldn't accomplish their missions. How would religions grow and be sustained, if parishioners and disciples didn't follow? And just imagine the Super Bowl without a team of followers. Who would receive and carry the ball; who would block; and who would kick or punt, if everyone coached? Each of these team members provide critical, but different, expertise. Success in these organized efforts occurs from the combined efforts of many people working together. The contribution of followers to organizational productivity is irrefutable; the case is strong for the importance of followership in organizations.

Traditions of Followership
Certain activities within institutions provide clear examples that reveal the integral relationship between the followers and the productivity of organized efforts. These institutions have followership as the cornerstone of their foundation; they have long standing traditions of followership. They have perfected the art of followership. The traditional fields of religion, military, politics, and team sports represent these key followership cornerstone institutions. The

information depicted in Table 1 which follows summarizes the followership precepts on which these organized systems endure*:*

TABLE 1 Institutions With Followership Foundations

Traditional Institutions of Followership	*Followership Foundation*	*Consequences of a Void in Followership*
RELIGION	Discipleship and stewardship, service to others	The religious beliefs would not spread and the institution would collapse.
MILITARY	Adherence to Chain of Command and following orders	Authority would not prevail, orders could be questioned and discipline would dissipate.
POLITICS	Party Loyalty	Political ideologies and strongholds would be eroded and crumble.
SPORTS	The team above self	Teams would not excel only individualism would exist.

 What successful followership elements can be culled from these followership traditions that help to increase productivity in organized work settings? Some lessons are clear. Among other areas, successful followership is built on the following:

- Belief in an organization's mission, vision or purpose,

- Willingness to subjugate personal interest for the greater good,

- Loyalty, and

- Unity of focus.

Efforts that help to integrate these elements into the workplace will further enhance workforce productivity.

Followership Perspectives-
Followers and followership exist in every walk of life. Again, wherever there are leaders there are followers. Wherever there are groups there are followers. Followers occur as a natural condition of organized efforts. Followership exists in situations where there is organized leadership, where there is no organized leadership, and where there is shared leadership.

Researchers and those who study this topic have developed different constructs for examining followership. For example, Robert Kelley describes five distinct types of followers that are all behaviorally based. Kelley's five followership types include: 1) Exemplary, 2) Alienation, 3) Conformist, 4) Pragmatist, and 5) Passive (Kelley, 1992). Kelley's work focuses attention on why people follow, as well as the type of followers.

Another construct for examining followership has evolved from research efforts on informal leaders. This research has focused on the leadership dimensions of followership, which is addressed to aid the non-manager and subordinate manager in meeting followership and leadership challenges.

In their book, *Everyone a Leader- A Grassroots Model for the New Workplace*, the authors and researchers, Horst Bergmann, Kathleen Hurson, and Darlene Russ identify grassroots leadership steps for persons who are not in the formal leadership roles (Bergmann, et.al., 1999). The authors and researchers are exploring the informal leadership requirements and roles played by followers and reaffirm the situational nature of followership and leadership.

A third perspective, from which followership is presented, evolves through the writings of Ira Chaleff (Chaleff, 1998), Geoffrey M. Bellman (Bellman, 1992), and others. They focus attention on the different characteristics of followership, such as being courageous, being a risk taker, and being willing to face the leader with the truth.

A fourth construct for examining followership is from the relationship of the servant-leader. This concept is the focus of research and the teachings of Robert K. Greenleaf and the Robert K. Greenleaf Center. The followership thesis promoted from Greenleaf's work explains that servant leaders provide the impetus for followers. The servant leader seeks to involve others in decision-making. This concept looks at followership from the related issues of power and authority. The contention is that those who choose to follow will not casually accept the authority of institutions. Instead, followers freely respond to chosen leaders because they have power as trusted servants (Greenleaf, 1991).

Taken together, there are just a few researchers who focus on the topic of followership, when compared to more thoroughly studied topics like leadership or even team building. Yet, although these few efforts address followership differently, they all present legitimate dimensions of followership, from different constructs. These differences provide greater insights about followers in the workplace environment and elsewhere in organized group efforts. Together, they promote greater understanding of the follower and the follower/leader relationship and provide the foundation for a different dimension of followership.

A new concept about followership is needed; one that adds to the recognition of and the importance of followership and the contributing roles played by followers in the workplace. A concept is needed that highlights followership as a range of different performance levels, just as leadership exists with many different styles and types. The exemplary follower encompasses the situational nature of followership. It also encompasses the development needed to sustain this best followership level. Moreover, the Followership Continuum promotes organizational development that focuses on the importance of followers and the development and promotion of exemplary followership in organized efforts.

The Followership Continuum
The Followership Continuum is an organizational development model that focuses on sustaining the productivity of the workforce. It provides a gauge for measuring and developing employee performance output, at the macro level. Consequently, when this workforce output measure is compared with other outcome measures, comprehensive decisions can be made about changes that are needed to determine a desired corrective course of action.
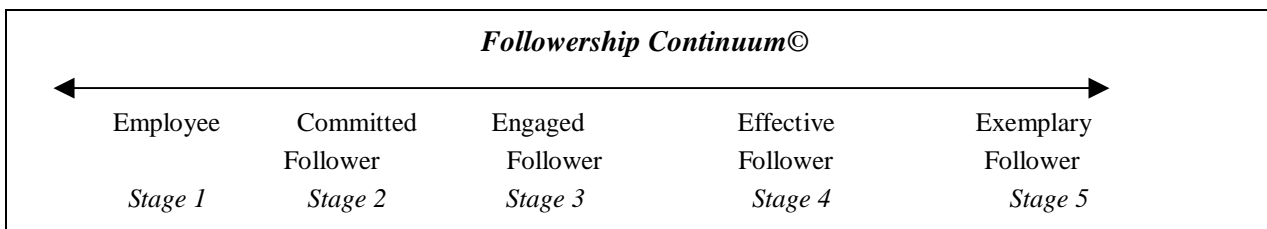
The Followership Continuum is based on the concept that an individual's performance, and thus the performance of the workforce, is not constant but is ever changing, caused by many variables. Therefore, superior performance by an individual under one leader or in a particular project can change. Also, the consistently non-performing or poor-performing individual can provide increased contribution toward the work effort. The impetuses for change in performance vary and are many. They can include changes in the leader, the organizational structures, systems and procedures, and the roles and attitudes of the individual, colleagues, and subordinates. So the question becomes how to address those variables that the organization can control or influence.

The impact of these many variables demonstrates that organizational productivity is never stable, but requires constant attention to sustain high output. This is contingent upon knowing where you are and taking corrective actions. In many ways the steps in improving organizational productivity is like reading a map. The starting point for any journey is knowing your current location and knowing the desired destination. With these beginning and ending points in mind, bridging the gap requires charting a course from one point to the others. The Followership Continuum provides a mapping of the organization's performance output status, from which the journey toward exemplary followership can be charted.

Likewise, the Followership Continuum provides an assessment of the intensity of output or energy contributed by the workforce. This output is measured along a continuum of performance levels, which range from the minimum to the most desired. This workforce performance output can be compared against desired output levels and outcome measures. Together this information provides the basis for needed corrective or remediation actions.

The continuum is represented by five stages of dynamic followership performance, presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1- Followership Continuum

Followership Continuum©				
Employee	Committed Follower	Engaged Follower	Effective Follower	Exemplary Follower
Stage 1	*Stage 2*	*Stage 3*	*Stage 4*	*Stage 5*

The five stages of dynamic and changing followership performance presented in the Followership Continuum are comprised of:

Stage 1
Employee

The first stage of followership in the workplace begins by becoming an employee, providing work in return for some form of pay.

Stage 2
Committed

At the committed followership stage the employee is bound to the mission, idea, organization, or has an internal pledge to an effort or person.

Stage 3

Engaged

At the engaged followership stage, the follower is an active supporter, willing to go above and beyond the routine

Stage 4

|Effective

The effective follower is capable and dependable.

Stage 5

Exemplary

The exemplary follower could easily be the leader. Instead, the exemplary follower sets ego aside and works to support the leader. They lead themselves.

Each stage of followership includes the prior stages and the exemplary follower is the crucial difference to the organization.

We all know people who demonstrate the followership stages. They include colleagues who barely come to work, or when at work, barely do anything. We also know those persons who are indeed exemplary; they're the organizations' shining stars, the ideal employees. At this "ideal" level of followership performance, there exists the exemplary follower, as described by Robert Kelley (Kelley, 1992). Progression toward exemplary followership can be depicted along the Followership Continuum presented in Figure 1. The Continuum also summarizes the levels of work effort that represent and contribute to exemplary followership. This label describes the "ideal follower" with behaviors that go above and beyond the norm; these are persons who lead themselves. The "ideal" follower is willing and able to help develop and sustain the best organizational performance.

Movement Along the Followership Continuum. The Followership Continuum presents workforce performance levels that capture the fluidity of work behaviors and movement from one stage of followership to another. Movement along the followership continuum goes in both directions.

As a person interacts in organizations, performance moves along the Continuum. This movement starts at the employee followership stage and could move to the highest level of being an exemplary follower. Research data from more than 300 survey subjects in work and academic settings have helped to confirm the three interim stages between these two ends of the spectrum: a committed follower, an engaged follower, and an effective follower. The beginning stage of followership differs, for a specific organization, based on the personal background, the organization, and the roles played, as well as other contributing factors. These factors or combinations of factors contribute toward or distract from the development and nurturing of various stages of followership.
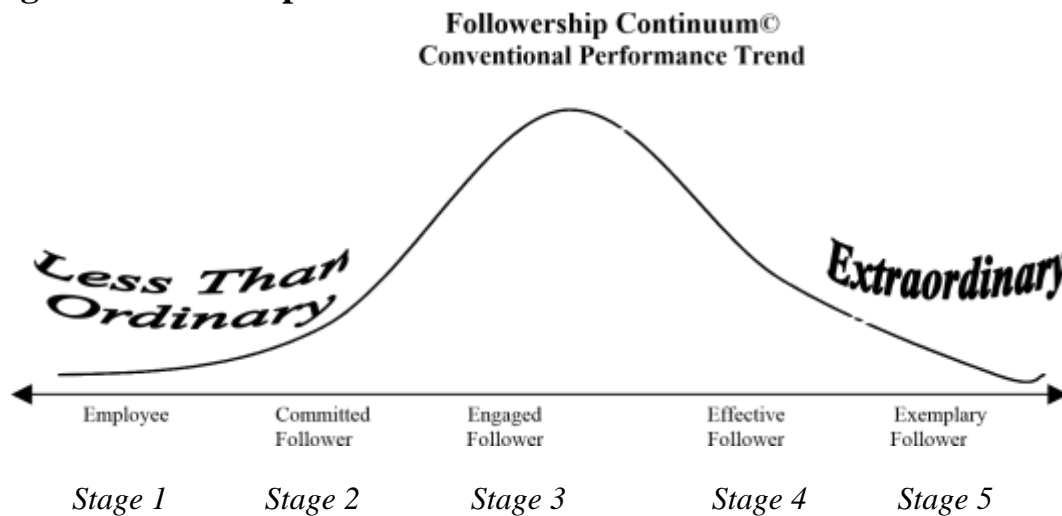
Based on workplace interactions an exemplary follower could encounter negative influences that reduce followership output levels. Moreover, persons below the exemplary followership stage could encounter positive influences that increase output levels. Development and support of the best followership stage requires the differentiation presented by the Followership Continuum.

Taking the Pulse of the Workforce - The Followership Continuum is used to take the pulse of a workforce; it supports a diagnostic prescriptive approach. The diagnostic approach comes from identifying and categorizing the followership patterns in the organization. The prescriptive component emerges from determining and implementing steps needed to ensure that individuals in the workforce are operating at the desired quality of performance. The diagram in Figure 2 shows a

balanced or conventional distribution of followership levels. Thus, a diagnosis resulting in conventional performance requires different actions, compared to a performance diagnosis trending toward being extraordinary or toward being less than ordinary.

The Followership Continuum is intended for use as one component of a more comprehensive organizational assessment process. The results from this model provide data for comparing workforce output efforts with other measures of performance outcomes, such as return on investment, occupancy rates, diplomas or degrees awarded, or other outcome measures specific to the organization under review. As a tool to facilitate desired performance, the Followership Continuum uses a cyclical process of periodic diagnosis--intervention--implementation-diagnosis. Using this cyclical approach generates a strategy for keeping the workforce "well-tuned". Using the Followership Continuum to improve productivity can be compared to maintaining any endeavor, like taking care of a car and keeping the car well-tuned.

Figure 2 Fellowship Continuum Conventional Performance Trend

Followership Continuum©
Conventional Performance Trend

Employee	Committed Follower	Engaged Follower	Effective Follower	Exemplary Follower
Stage 1	*Stage 2*	*Stage 3*	*Stage 4*	*Stage 5*

Cars run with engines, whether they use a V4, V6, or V8 model. But when road conditions are constantly changing, sometimes steep and hilly, and sometimes curvy and bumpy, the stronger engine makes a difference. For a car, the stronger the engine the better the performance in rough conditions. For governments or other organizations, the stronger the followership, the better the performance when faced with challenging and changing conditions. In such cases, quality and peak performance creates the difference in outcomes. Would a world-class driver consider entering the Indianapolis 500 with a poorly maintained vehicle? Organizations become world-class by doing no less than maintaining the highest quality workforce.

An individual's followership stage is not developed and then thereafter remains static. Instead, as situations and conditions change an individual's followership stage can change. The changing situations demand consistent attention to actualizing and developing the exemplary followers for organizational productivity.

Followership Continuum Research
Preliminary research on the Followership Continuum is helping to confirm the basic premises and related concepts by examining five primary areas:

1. The behavioral characteristics necessary for exemplary followership,
2. The followership stages,
3. The concept that exemplary followership builds on prior followership stages,
4. The impact of varying conditions on the followership stage of individuals, and
5. The identification of factors that promote and thwart exemplary followership.

To research these factors, different investigations and approaches are being employed. Employees in the workforce are being surveyed, and workforce productivity research and literature are being reviewed. These efforts are ongoing and have been conducted on critical factors in the workplace related to the productivity of employees. Among other areas, investigations have included the topics of followership; employee empowerment, commitment, and engagement; employee motivation. These fields provide related background and foundation for the Followership Continuum.

The author has obtained survey data from three primary feedback strategies. These surveys include: 1) posting a survey on the Internet, 2) conducting surveys with working professionals in college classes at the graduate and undergraduate levels, and 3) conducting surveys using employees in a medium size local government work setting and a small private business. To date, more than 300 respondents covering different types of work settings have completed the Followership Continuum surveys forms. These surveys address various elements of the followership and the Followership Continuum. Primarily these surveys have included feedback related to the following:

1. The conditions that thwart and promote followership.
2. Hypotheses related to the followership stages.
3. Hypotheses related to the conditional or situational nature of followership stages.

The summary information that follows evolved from survey data on the Followership Continuum. The information briefly highlights research aspects affecting three different followership concepts.

Research Concept #1 -Characteristics of the Exemplary Follower
- Literature reviews were used to identify the initial elements used in describing the exemplary follower or ideal employee. The compilations of these elements resulted in descriptors of the exemplary follower and the subsequent followership stages. These have been refined through surveys from all of the more than 300 survey participants. From these literature reviews and survey results, the lists of eight critical exemplary followership characteristics have been identified and refinements made:

1. Willing to set ego aside and function as a team player,
2. Self-empowered or internal locus of control with initiative and a willingness to act,
3. Persists or has staying power,
4. Entrepreneurial in approach and spirit with a focus on taking risk to accomplish results and doing what's necessary to get things done,
5. More proactive as a problem fixer rather than reactive as a problem identifier,
6. Adaptable, flexible and capable to manage change,

7. Optimistic or is positive in approach, and
8. Pursues continuous improvement and engages in personal development to achieve competence.

The preliminary research on the characteristics of exemplary followers also reaffirmed that the stages of followership are developmental, in that a follower is first committed before being actively engaged. This question was reaffirmed by more than 88% of the respondents.

The survey participants confirmed that commitment is necessary to have effective action or to be an engaged follower. Loyalty is created through commitment, which is reflected in an intrinsic belief in an effort. The committed follower moves to the next stage on the Followership Continuum, by demonstrating active engagement. Effective followers build on these preceding stages by adding competency to the work effort.

These early stages of the Followership Continuum provide the building blocks for becoming an exemplary follower. The results from the survey respondents confirm this hypothesis, by confirming the sequencing of these followership stages. An exemplary follower requires commitment, active engagement, and competence. But these behaviors are not enough. An exemplary follower must be willing to set ego aside, demonstrate initiative or self-empowerment, and operate with an internal locus of control, among other traits. Exemplary work effort by a critical mass of followers is needed to help sustain organizational productivity and to help organizations become world-class. Otherwise the workforce offers unfulfilled potential.

Research Concept #2- Movement Along the Followership Continuum –
Confirmation of this concept is attributable to data obtained from participants of a county government workforce.

It is this fluidity of an individual's movement on the Followership Continuum that provides the basis for its importance as a model for taking the pulse of the workforce. As noted, the Followership Continuum is intended as a model for both diagnostics and development. It allows organizations to take a pulse by answering such questions as the following:

- Where do most of the employees fall on the Followership Continuum?

- Do the followership patterns vary across organizational functions, operating units, tenure, or other elements of differentiation?

- Do the primary followership patterns for the organization show a normal or conventional distribution, or is the distribution skewed in some way?

- Over time, are followership patterns changing in the desired direction?

- Is there directional congruency or incongruence between the followership patterns and organizational outcome measures?

- Is there congruency or incongruence between followership patterns when the results from different measurement groups are compared, such as: different employee groups, managers, and peer units?

The specificity of the questions directs the responses.

To assess the variation in followership patterns, a Followership Assessment was given to a county government workforce. The assessment data and the resultant report were obtained from the Anne Arundel County, Maryland government workforce (The County) during 2001. County employees, representing about 7% of the County government workforce of roughly 3,700, completed 249 Followership Assessments. The survey was anonymous and participation was voluntary.

In completing the assessment, participants identified their followership stage is their "best job" and in their "worst job." One component of the results of The County's followership assessment is shown in the graphs depicted later by Graph 1 and Graph 2. These graphs show the followership patterns in best and worst job situations. The Followership Assessment defined the "best job" as the one in which the participants performed at the highest followership stage. The "worst job" was the one in which the participant operated at the lowest followership stage.

To complete the assessment the participants were given a Followership Continuum graph like the one presented in Figure 1. Each survey participant circled the two followership stages, which corresponded to the work situation: "best job" and "worst job". Participants also provided explanatory comments, identifying behaviors and conditions in the job settings that promoted or thwarted exemplary followership.

As expected, in response to the question about the followership stage in the "best job", the followership patterns for The County is skewed toward exemplary followership or extraordinary performance. This is shown in Graph 1. Likewise, the responses to followership patterns in the "worst job" reported a distribution skewed toward the "employee" followership stage, or less than ordinary performance. This distribution is shown in Graph 2.

In the "best job" followership stages (Graph 1), nearly 50 percent fewer respondents identified themselves as effective, rather than exemplary followers. The followership pattern in their "worst jobs" (Graph 2) encompasses performance patterns that are dispersed across several stages, although they are skewed toward the "employee" followership stage.

One of the basic premises of the Followership Continuum is that an individual's followership stage is situational. Given changing working conditions, even the best employees can perform at less than their potential. Among others, these changes could include policies and procedures, leadership, working conditions, and roles and assignments. Moreover, a poor performing individual can improve performance with the right attitude, skills, conditions, supports, and motivation. The results of implementing the Followership Assessment with The County provided confirmation of this premise.
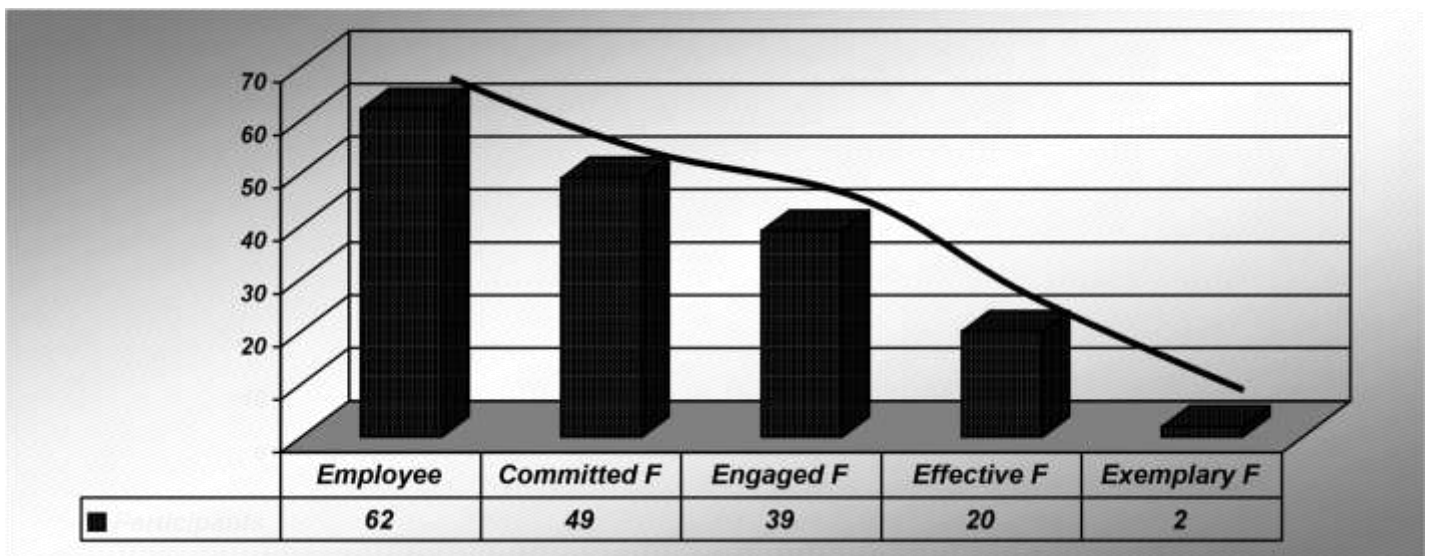
The explanatory comments from The County survey participants support this premise by showing the variability of their performance based on behaviors or conditions that promote or thwart exemplary followership.

Graph 1: Followership Stages In Best Jobs

	Employee	Committed F	Engaged F	Effective F	Exemplary F
■ Participants	2	3	5	53	119
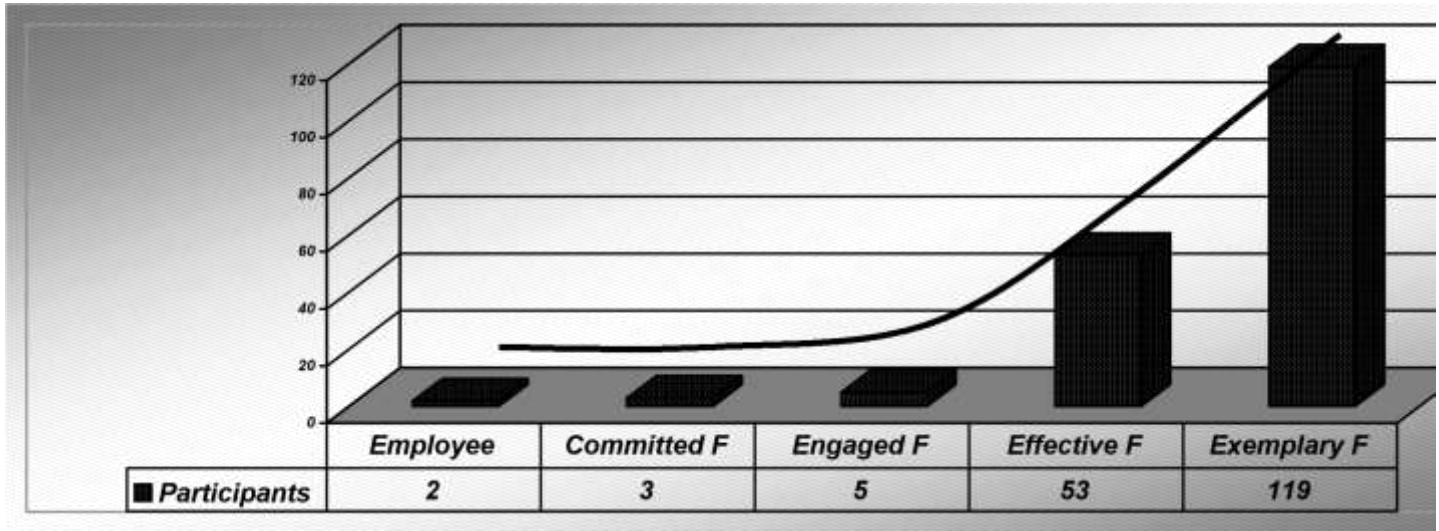
Followership Stages (F=Follower)

Graph 2 Felloship stages in worst Jobs

	Employee	Committed F	Engaged F	Effective F	Exemplary F
■ Participants	62	49	39	20	2

Followership Stages (F=Follower)

Research Concept #3- Elements That Promote or Thwart Exemplary Followership-
Confirmation of this concept is attributable to data obtained from participants of a county government workforce.

The information from The County survey data also provided a wealth of information about influences that promote and thwart exemplary followership. The summary chart that follows represents the top two aggregated comments from the survey participants. These have been grouped into three organizational development categories: (1) internal or personal influences, (2) leadership influences, and (3) system or structural influences. The cumulative explanatory comments come from 225 or 90% of the survey participants

IN MY BEST JOB   **IN MY WORST JOB**

Internal or Personal Influences

- Sense of personal satisfaction, self-empowerment, involvement, commitment or appreciation
- Attitude, drive, or initiative

- Lack of motivation or commitment
- Lack of interest in job, the organization or just doing something to get the bills paid

Leadership Influences

- Capability of and support from management and leaders management
- Management effectiveness, including communication and commitment

- Incompetent, over-controlling or poor

- Lack of respect, caring, and appreciation

System or Structural Influences

- Workplace atmospheres and co-workers or team-work status
- Reward and recognition

- Lack of communication
- Type of work and work conditions

The comments expressed have a general focus on ideas for forward movement, explaining behaviors that promote or support exemplary followership. Descriptions of behaviors or conditions that encouraged individuals to work at their best followership level came from 159 participants. These descriptions are compared to 116 responses about behaviors and conditions that thwart best performance.

The majority of the participants explained that performance is mostly influenced by external rather than internal factors, at a rate of 58% to 42%. Although at 42%, the survey participants clearly acknowledged that much of their performance is attributable to internal or personal factors, their own attitudes and behaviors.

Whether these factors are a matter of perception or fact, the beliefs reported by the survey participants reiterate the impact of external influences on an individual's performances. They further substantiate the variability of workplace performance based on the organization's as well as individual efforts. Thus, from the perspective of The County, conscious efforts to address "external factors" and to develop and sustain Exemplary Followers can help to create productivity in organizations. A more detailed and comprehensive form of the assessment results was shared with The County for use in training and other organizational development considerations.

An exemplary organization requires constant change to face continual challenges. Similarly, exemplary followership requires ongoing attention. The key elements for promoting exemplary followership described in the comments by The County survey participants can be summarized as work environments that:

1. Focus on creating organizational stakeholders;
2. Create work cultures where initiative and risk taking are encouraged, rather than ones where full compliance is required and mistakes are punished; 3. Provide strong leaders, who are fair, respectful, and open;
4. Strive for improvements in two-way communication, information sharing and feedback systems; and
5. Train individuals to develop and enhance skill levels.

This assessment of followership stages in the best and worst jobs points out that successful organizations need more than just employees. Individuals invest a lot of time in their work environments; as such, employees want to belong to and actively provide positive contributions toward the success of their organizations. The County employees reported that even in their "worst job" situation many described themselves as being committed and engaged. To gain the best from the workforce, the organization and its representative leaders, managers, and followers must attend to the critical factors that differentiate between contributing output at the employee followership stage versus the exemplary followership stage.

A Prescription for Change
Leaders should build organizational environments in which they would want to work. Does this cost a lot? Not really. The "Total Quality" movement showed that partial efforts miss the mark. In actuality it costs much less for an organization to maintain and improve top performance than the loss from redoing work, dissatisfied citizens, the loss of customers, and a constantly under-performing and changing workforce. The outcome from valuing and developing exemplary followers is an organization that is built to last; one that is built for the challenges and changes of the 21st Century; one where the right engine is built to handle any road conditions with the highest performance.

Again, the power of the Followership Continuum is not just in determining the workforce followership stage or performance output level, but also in using this information to prescribe targeted improvements toward desired followership stages. The Followership Continuum establishes a connective system for looking at the level of support for endeavors in the organization. When compared with outcome measures, the results move toward a comprehensive picture for improving and sustaining organizational performance.

We improve what we monitor and measure. An organization focused on measuring financial performance, over time, will get results linked to financial outcomes. Organizations focused on customer satisfaction will implement strategies and systems geared toward changing customer attitudes and behaviors. And organizations willing to focus on measuring and improving workforce contribution levels will fine-tune the organizational support systems. The Followership Continuum is a tuning system. It provides a model for focusing attention on a critical element in the organizational effort, the development and maintenance of exemplary followers.

The importance of the Followership Continuum for the organization and leaders is in understanding that through the development of exemplary followers, an organization's productivity is optimized,

because individual employees are able to provide their best contributions. Furthermore, by understanding the situational nature of followership, organizations should accept that an individual's followership stage is situational and dependent on many factors, which can impede and further followership stages. This dynamic nature of followership highlights the need for ongoing support for exemplary followers.

Finally, a clear recognition of the importance of followers and the contribution they make to organizations is a major step toward tearing down the negative stereotype associated with being a follower. Followership is a natural occurrence in our lives, in organized efforts and in work settings. In order for leadership to exist, followership must exist. Successful leadership without successful followership robs an organization of its potential. Hence, like the leadership mystique, the contribution of exemplary followers to organizations should be heralded. The Followership Continuum provides a model for supporting the best workforce output and unleashing organizational productivity.

About the Author

Patsy Blackshear has been a manager in local and federal governments, private industry and educational sectors. She is currently in the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program at the U.S. Department of Labor. Her former positions include the Deputy Director for Finance for the City of Baltimore and Deputy and Associate Superintendents for Management in the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore City Public School System. She holds degrees from the University of Maryland, American University, Howard University and the University of Arkansas, at Pine Bluff. *Contact Information:* pbblack@msn.com

ANNOTATED FOLLOWERSHIP REFERENCES

The availability of information about followership and the important role played by followers is limited. As a field of study that merits the attention of scholars and practitioners, there is very little available that directly focuses on followership, the importance of followership to organizations, and the need to develop and enhance followership. These authors and researchers are some of the most noted pioneers on the subject of followership and related perspectives.

Bergmann, Horst, Hurson, Kathleen, & Russ-Eft, Darlene. 1999. *Everyone A Leader: A Grassroots Model for the New Workplace*. Toronto, Canada: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Horst Bergmann, Kathleen Hurson, and Darlene Ross-Eft, are researchers who have centered their study of followership on the fact that change is constantly occurring in organizations. These changes require that employees must take on different roles, other than that of the formal leader, in order to facilitate the organization's success.

Bellman, Geoffrey M. 1992. *Getting Things Done When You Are Not in Charge*. New York, New York: Fireside, Simon & Schuster.

Geoffrey M. Bellman provides insight into how to lead from positions other than that of the leader.

Chaleff, Ira. 1998. *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up To And For Our Leaders*. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Ira Chaleff, author of "The Courageous Followers: Standing up to and for our Leaders", focuses his works on the courage that is needed for followers to be exemplary. From his assessment, leading from a followership position requires a willingness to be a risk taker.

Greenleaf, Robert K. 1991. *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. Indianapolis, Indiana: The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. Robert Greenleaf has authored various works that expound on ethical and moral elements of non-hierarchal leadership and concepts related to servant leadership. His work has been the impetus for numerous researchers and authors who have build on concepts related to servant leadership and stewardship. The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership provides teachings and trainings that support the concepts in different field of work.

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Robert E. Kelley has authored a number of books on followership and coined the concept "exemplary follower". His work provides a perspective on followership as a power in organizations, insights on why people follow, and the elements associated with becoming an effective or exemplary follower.