

# Taking the lead

Want to be a leader? Then start acting like one

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**LEADERSHIP IS A CHOICE** you make. You choose to have an impact personally, professionally and in your community. Leaders are catalysts for change. They do not accept circumstances as an excuse or the status quo as a direction. Leaders have a mindset for positive growth.

## Do you have the leader's mindset?

For Halifax to grow as a dynamic and attractive community, we need leaders at all levels who will celebrate and challenge our city and guide much-needed change. We need leaders to put us on the map.

## Can you be one of those leaders?

I firmly believe that all of us can be leaders—we just need to make the choice. Being a leader brings confidence, growth and meaning to your life and a bigger future for you and those around you. The challenges in making the choice are understanding what leadership truly is and how it best fits in our lives.

Rather than providing an academic explanation of leadership, I've been surveying people in our community to get their take on the subject. The following quotes come from that survey. In conversations with professionals in the community, the definition of leadership became clear: leadership is more about others than about you personally.

"Leadership is the ability to inspire others to their greatest potential." People clearly see leaders as those who inspire confidence in others to take action. Leadership isn't about self-motivation but the ability to move people forward. Leaders have the ability to "use every player's assets to contribute to the best possible outcome while respecting and honoring the differences." To inspire, you need the passion to want to make a change and the conviction to communicate the direction. Leadership is "about articulating and working towards a vision in a way that makes people want to contribute."

Leadership is based in achievement. "Leadership is about transferability" in



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that leaders have the "responsibility of educating, assisting, motivating, and inspiring others into setting and achieving their goals." Leaders act as examples for others to invest and take action.

To be a leader, you need to act like one. How do you fit leadership into your life? This was a more challenging question for people but again there was overwhelming clarity for direction. Leading professionally was important although the greatest impact for young leaders was in volunteer activities and participating in their community.

Contributing to your community is an incredible opportunity to be a leader. There is such a variety of options and tremendous need that young professionals who want to develop their leadership capabilities can make a meaningful investment. "Many of my great memories growing up were because people volunteered their time to help me learn. I want to give back and be part of their memories." Participating in community activities is a rewarding path to demonstrate leadership and often can be easier to create space for being a leader than at work. The experience invariably leads to professional growth as well. "I have grown immensely from the experience and it has helped me in all areas of my life."

Where in the community can you be a

leader? Again, your passion and heart is your best guide. Begin with what matters to you. Think of the areas of your life that give the greatest energy and generate passion for you. People think and act as leaders in areas "where they have the most responsibility and have the potential to make an impact."

Identify three potential areas for you to participate. You love hockey—think about coaching kids and helping them enjoy the sport and make a difference for them. Maybe you can join a community action group, volunteer for non-profit organizations and boards, start your own change group, or mentor individuals. Find the avenue that works best for you. Take one area and step up.

Each of us has the capability to contribute as a leader—we need to make the choice to do so.

Think what would happen if each of us thought and acted as a leader in our community and took one leadership action in an area of passion and meaning for us. Where would Halifax be? There would be no limit to what we could accomplish as a community. Plus the individual rewards would be tremendous.

"Leadership is not what a person says; it is what they do to encourage action and inspire results."

Be a leader. ■