

Revolutionary Leadership: Focus on your Members!

Accomplishing the goals of your student chapter or project team requires the combined contributions of individual members, each one benefitting from a personal investment of time and energy. Effective leaders work hard to make group-participation WORTHY of individual-members' time. Unless an hour spent in your group activity is more valuable than an hour spent on homework, studying for a test, exercising, eating, hanging-out, or washing-up, your members will lose motivation and find a better way to spend that hour. Leaders have to plan, coordinate, and communicate effectively in advance to maximize member accomplishment, and minimize time wasted by waiting for space, plans, materials, parts, training, instructions, or other team members. Schedule only those meetings that help your group achieve its real goals, and design the meeting-format to support its purpose. Your team members are your strongest asset. They are bright, full of ideas, want to learn more, and most of all, they "Want to do stuff!" Encourage your members to have their heads in the game. Get their ideas, invite their creativity, and give them latitude on means and methods, while the leaders define and clarify end-performance criteria and provide coaching and logistical support. Plan your work and work your plan, with everybody contributing, and you will be proudly amazed at the things you will accomplish. When the volunteers of the 13 colonies defeated a great military power, newspaper headlines pronounced a "World Turned Upside-Down." Win by turning you student organization upside-down, and "Join the Revolution!"

Learning Objectives

1. Leadership is not a position or status, but a means of accomplishing big things that you cannot accomplish by yourself.
2. The job of the leader is therefore to accomplish group goals by coordinating and focusing the talent and energy of the members.
3. The primary reward that you can offer your volunteer-members is a beneficial and enjoyable experience, with a positive return on their investment of time and energy.
4. Flip the Organization: Focus on the cutting edge.
5. The "Superhero" model of leadership is imaginary and ineffective. Superheroes are high-maintenance, and besides, there are no superheroes.

Bio Sketch

ACI Past President Ken Hover, P.E., Ph.D., is Professor and Weiss Presidential Fellow at Cornell University, where he teaches reinforced and prestressed concrete design, concrete materials, and leadership. He is faculty advisor to the ASCE student chapter, and has been mentoring the Concrete Canoe and Steel Bridge competition-team leaders for many years. Prior to joining the faculty at Cornell Ken served as a Captain the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, project Engineer and project manager for a general contractor, and as a partner and manager for a structural design firm. He is a licensed professional engineer in Ohio and New York.