

Illuman Leadership Model

For the past 20 years we have seen leaders of our men's work come and go. We've learned a lot about men who aspire to leadership roles—both what makes for a good leader and also some of the typical pitfalls for men who have emerged to lead our work.

It's safe to say that leaders are made, not born. It takes discipline, persistence, passion, courage, vision, and commitment to become a leader. No man is the complete package. Our men's work affords a man the opportunity to grow as a leader by developing his leadership skills. This work will also expose a man's weaknesses; any hint that a man is not doing his spiritual work is often evident to the men in our organization. Leaders of any spiritual work should, rightfully, face intense scrutiny to ensure that their stated values match their actions in the world. Authentic, service-oriented men have emerged from our work and we must continue to foster the emergence of men, young and old, who will lead us into the future.

We embrace a model of servant leadership. This ancient model of leadership is found in many religious and philosophical texts. For our purposes, we simply think of servant leadership as a model where a man seeks to be of service. He rises to a leadership role because he seeks to serve first instead of aspiring to occupy a power role. The difference is obvious in our work—we have men in leadership roles who, having experienced the deepening of their spiritual journey, are keen to ensure that other men have an opportunity to do their spiritual work. These generative men serve other men in a way that makes the men involved wiser, freer, healthier, and more likely themselves to embrace service.

The Center for Servant Leadership defines servant leadership as a lifelong journey that includes discovery of one's self, a desire to serve others, and a commitment to lead. Servant-leaders continually strive to be trustworthy, self-aware, humble, caring, visionary, empowering, relational, competent, good stewards, and community builders.

This model of leadership stands in contrast to typical hierarchal leadership models. Men operating in more typical models usually aspire to acquire status and/or power through leadership positions. In contrast, men who have a deep service orientation do not propose themselves for key roles and rarely engage in self-promotion or advocate that they take a Weaver, Teacher, or Ritual Elder role. Other men usually notice a man's gifts and invite him into a leadership role.

A man who aspires to be an Illuman leader understands that his ego is both a catalyst and a potential obstacle. He understands that "high" ego is as detrimental as "low" ego. Such a man is self-aware and has a realistic self-assessment of his gifts and shortcomings, and is in active discernment about "his work in the world." He understands that his shadow and golden shadow both impact how he shows up and works with others.

There are five characteristics of Illuman leaders:

1. Walk the Talk. Illuman leaders walk their talk. It is evident to other men that their behavior is aligned with their values. Other men can see that they model a commitment to the Journey of Illumination. Their life is a personal example of the pursuit of spiritual wisdom, not just as an intellectual exercise, but as a way of life. They model the journey into which they invite other men. All men understand that, at times, any of us might be out of sync with how we aspire to live and lead.

2. Share a Big Vision. An Illuman leader can hold a big vision for our men's work. It is not his vision, but a shared vision. He understands that every local expression of our work is deeply connected to a larger vision of a world where men are doing their spiritual work. He helps other men connect to and be part of this bigger vision. In this way, he extends and multiplies our work. Such a man understands that our vision will evolve as we respond to the needs of our times.

Our leaders understand and respect that while our work is largely grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition, we hold ourselves open to all wisdom traditions. [Our bigger vision](#) includes *all* men who are genuinely searching for a deeper spiritual life. We welcome men from all spiritual traditions and no spiritual tradition—any

man who is seeking a life-changing spirituality. We are fed by the wisdom traditions of forgiveness and radical inclusivity.

3. Challenge Respectfully to Keep “Hot Edges.” Illuman leaders commit to learning how to challenge from a place of love and wisdom. They understand that, in a spiritual organization, leaders are often reluctant to challenge processes and people. Yet we know that men won’t take us seriously if we are not serious about learning from each other. So we lead with a model of “keeping the edges hot.”

Illuman men commit to keeping “hot edges” by learning the art of providing, soliciting, and accepting feedback—both about our personal lives and about our work. All leaders must learn to challenge from a place of humility and love. When done well, this differentiates Illuman from leaders of other men’s spiritual organizations.

4. Support Others to Grow Spiritually. Illuman leaders are committed to growing with the men with whom they work. We are not looking for leaders who are “good administrators”; we look to our leaders to develop the skills needed to support other men in their journey. Our leaders are supportive and practical in helping men on their spiritual journey. Some pastoral or spiritual direction training is ideal, but not a requirement. An Illuman leader can only lead other men as far as he has gone on his own spiritual journey.

5. Lead With Love. An Illuman leader should always communicate from a place of love for his brothers. We are all broken; if we are not now, then we will be at some point in the future. For this truly to be a community of brothers, men who lead need to be able to reach into their hearts and stand from a place of love. In our core program, the MROP, it is learning that we are loved that changes everything. We model this disposition—even when it’s the hardest thing we might ever do. We will not give up on a man and the possibility of reconciliation and forgiveness.

This is the model of servant leadership to which we aspire. We understand that all men fall short. We hold this model as aspirational and turn to God, our higher power, or whatever source of wisdom we need, to support us in this ongoing journey toward leadership maturity and wisdom.