



# Being a Leader Means Asking Yourself Tough Questions

*The snow is falling, and many of us are still catching up on our sleep from last season. We are evaluating the programs that worked for this past season and starting to formulate a strategy for the coming season. I would call these plans the “nuts and bolts” of our given operations. We will take advantage of early-order programs for fertilizers and chemicals. Most of our capital equipment has been purchased.*

*If we can put ourselves in the shoes of those who are evaluating us as leaders, it would give us a better perspective of the questions that they are thinking of but will never ask.*


These issues are all important to our success at our respective clubs, but we might overlook the one issue that is MOST important to our clubs and to our own success. Have we answered for ourselves the questions that are never asked of us as leaders? Each of us is, as one Hall of Fame baseball player put it, “the straw that stirs the drink.” It is important that we evaluate ourselves and ask, are we ready for the challenges of a new year?

I was recently at a meeting where a fellow superintendent by the name of Tom Mason posed a variety of questions to help us evaluate the state of our careers and questions that our employers use, but never ask of us, in evaluating our leadership skills.

- Are you responsive?
- Do you do what you said you would do?
- Do you make other people better?
- Do you evaluate yourself at the expense of others?
- Are your budgets and reports on time and correct?
- Can you speak to a group and get your point across?
- Do you see the “big picture” at your facility?
- Can you teach and inspire attention to detail?
- Can you handle adversity? Do you have a plan for handling adversity?

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- Do you develop your employees?
- Can you develop a plan, can you sell the plan and then, can you implement the plan?
- Are you consistently polite and courteous to everyone, even to difficult people?
- Can you separate professional positions from personal positions?
- Are you perceived as accountable? Do you act accountable?
- Can you hide anger and frustration?
- Can you admit when you are wrong? Do you apologize when you are?
- Do you know how to make people feel included?
- Do you understand and utilize empowerment?
- Are you perceived as innovative? Do you reward innovation on your staff?
- Are you perceived as proactive? Or are you perceived as reactive?
- Are you perceived to have vision?
- Do others think you are a good listener?
- Do people think you have a good understanding of quality?

It would be unrealistic to say that we as superintendents could answer yes to all of the above questions. If we can put ourselves in the shoes of those who are evaluating us as leaders, it would give us a better perspective of the questions that they are thinking of but will never ask. It is incumbent upon us as leaders to understand these questions and strive to answer yes to them each and everyday. 



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