

## **Leadership Interview Assignment**

Sam Landa

School of Behavioral Sciences, Liberty University

COUC 860: Counseling Leadership and Advocacy

Dr. Mary Deacon

May 20, 2024

## **Leadership Interview Assignment**

Leadership is not only a skill or characteristic that a person has, but rather a set of values, beliefs, and behaviors that demonstrate care and concern for another's personal growth and development. The values, beliefs, and characteristics often associated with good leaders are integrity, good communication, competence, driven, and focused. Though these are all great to have as a leader, I am a strong believer that respect, grace, and authenticity are the key attributes to leading well. When a leader embodies these values, a culture of trust, compassion, and growth can be inspired in those we lead. One of the people that came to mind when I was thinking about these values was Dr. Jeffrey Boatner. I hope to expand more on these values through the interview I had with him.

### **Summary of Interview**

At the start of the interview, I reflected firstly on how I have been blessed to be surrounded by many great leaders throughout my academic and professional career, and one of the people I encountered along that journey was Dr. Jeffrey Boatner. He is a licensed professional counselor and licensed marriage and family therapist in the state of Virginia. Dr. Boatner had an interesting research focus in father-daughter relationships and helping them improve their relationship. He has been in leadership for several years in the psychology department at Liberty University.

My beliefs about leadership in counselor education at the graduate level include a focus on modeling what we want to see in our students, and Dr. Boatner is a great reflection of these values in his own leadership style. I asked questions regarding his personal philosophy of leadership and what experiences led him to adopt his philosophy. Additionally, I explored his work as a counselor and discussed what he learned about leadership after working in the

counseling field for several years. Lastly, I concluded with who his favorite types of leaders were and why. The interview lasted close to 40 minutes, and Dr. Boatner did an excellent job sharing his experiences in leadership. In the following section, I will share what my personal reactions were to interviewing him.

### **Personal Reactions to Interview**

Dr. Boatner and I worked together on the content for a class we both were teaching when I first met him, so there was some level of trust at the start of our interview. We had common interests in psychology mostly around parenting, but shared different experiences since I have only boys (3) and he had mostly girls (3/4). There is something to be said about being able to lead his family well and determine how the skills he uses at home translate into his leadership style at work or in the field of counseling. To have the opportunity to interview him from more of a leadership role than a teaching role provided me with new insights as to how he approaches the field of counseling from a theoretical, practical, relational perspective.

Theoretically, Dr. Boatner emphasized the importance of leaders needing to understand that they are leading people not machines. As such, people need to feel important before they can be led. He communicated that though leaders want to encourage, guide, and communicate effectively to their teams, the more critical factor to consider is how one can make their teams feel important.

Practically, he shared how he would take some simple steps in asking his team how they were doing, what the Lord was teaching them in the current season of their lives, and even what plans they had for their weekends. In general, he would ask about areas of their lives that were unrelated to work to show that he cares for more than what they can produce at work. He added that speaking to them respectfully and in a caring manner made a difference in their lives,

because he believed that people tend to be harsher critics of themselves. Thus, he felt it was important to be another voice in their minds that would have a more non-judgmental, caring, and empathetic voice that understands what they are experiencing.

Lastly, at the relational level, Dr. Boatner felt that the strength of one's leadership is highly contingent on how they relate and communicate with those we are serving. He emphasized this aspect of serving our teams rather than demanding from them. This provides a shift in leadership because our tendency is often to expect from our teams rather than to serve them. In essence, Dr. Boatner felt that the best way to lead is to serve. He often references Jesus's posture towards others in that he was always there to serve others. I appreciated how he highlighted how every good leader must have a servant's heart, and this attribute has been evident in his own life based on my personal experience with him.

### **A Definition for Leadership**

The interview supported my definition of leadership in that it places treating people with love and respect as the foundation and the skills, hard work, and efficiency as a byproduct of the way we treat them. I believe there is much truth to this because if people feel cared for, they are more likely to want to meet the expectation of those who are giving them such care. The saying that "People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care" is a statement that most people can relate to and understand. How we treat others, especially those we lead, has a "multiplication effect" in that they learn how to treat people they will lead one day. Hence, the impact of caring for people we lead in a loving and gracious manner will impact their own influence in the lives of the people they will lead.

### **Becoming a Better Leader**

One of the lessons I was able to glean from this interview was to establish a strong, secure, and safe presence around others. I have often seen in leadership that people will use “scare tactics” to get people to behave in certain ways or complete tasks in an efficient manner. Though the people they lead may comply and complete the required tasks, they will not feel safe to do the work that they are called to do. Only an environment that displays respect, grace, and authenticity can create a trusting, safe environment. This is the type of environment where those who are being led can provide the greatest output while also loving the work that they do. However, it is the leader who needs to display these characteristics first in order to create this healthy environment for the team.