

Community Leadership PDF Resource

This Community Leadership website is the result of a partnership project between the Education and Research Unit of [Volunteering Queensland](#) and the School of Learning and Professional Studies (within the Faculty of Education) [Queensland University of Technology](#).

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Mohammed Yusuf – Case Study

Mohammed Yusuf has been President of the Darra Islamic Society for the past 4 years. During this time, he has lead the community in the construction of their Mosque and Islamic Centre. This project has been successfully achieved despite appearing beyond the capacity of this small community.

When asked whether he considered himself a “leader” Mohammed Yusuf replied *“Yes in position, but not in intent. I am part of the group. I just lead by example.”*

Mohammed explains his philosophy of leadership as *“it’s important to get people involved, and to do this you must win their confidence.”* According to him, leaders need to *“be involved and show people the vision”*. Mohammed believes successful leaders have *“... the ability to inspire others, [and] ... the ability to listen, and effectively communicate”*. Moreover, he adds they *“... must be able to accept criticism and suggestions”*.

“Recognition”, Mohammed states, is essential in leadership. Mohammed refers to recognition which takes account of what individuals have to offer. During the project Mohammed ensured that community members were given opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways. For example when it was determined that 32 fans were required for the Mosque, Mohammed did not seek funding from one major source, rather, he invited community members to contribute one fan each. Thus enabling a whole range of people to contribute towards the project in a meaningful and tangible way.

Mohammed believes in involving members in projects from the beginning. For the Mosque project, this meant meeting and discussing with community members their needs and wants with respect to the development. Though requiring a lot of time, this ensured community members were actively involved in the design of the Mosque. This involvement was carried into the construction phases of the project.

Another key aspect leaders need to consider is the importance of being realistic about needs and resources. Mohammed approached the task of building the Mosque by breaking the project into steps, identifying the types of skills and experience required of workers for each step, as well as calculating exactly, the quantities of materials required at each stage. This process enabled identification of where skilled tradespersons were needed. Members of the community then volunteered to work under the guidance of these tradespersons to complete jobs such as concreting and bricklaying. In this way, tasks were completed in an affordable way and Mohammed states ownership and support of the Mosque project rested with the community.

As a leader Mohammed seeks to impact others *“by encouraging them to work together”*. Mohammed reported this was not always easy and notes that as a leader he needed patience as well as strength of purpose to ensure goals are achieved. Furthermore, focus on the end result needs to be balanced with the needs and expectations of individual community members. Mohammed reflected that this project has shown him you need to focus on ensuring open communication is maintained throughout the project. He stated

“you can’t read the minds of other people. Everyone can’t get their own way. You need to encourage and to see other views – not just your own suggestions. Everyone has something to offer”



A challenge for community leaders is to manage the diversity of characters involved. Mohammed notes that some *"...people only want to be involved when things are running smoothly"*. To help build the commitment of people in this situation Mohammed states, *"...you have to make sure people achieve their goals"*.

Mohammed notes it is important to know when your time as leader is up and advises,

"bow out gracefully when you know you're finished. When your interest is gone, your time is up. It is very rewarding to be a part of something like this, but you really have to know when it's time to move on."

Satisfied with the achievement of completing the Mosque Mohammed will move on to other projects in line with his philosophy that - *"it's your duty to give if you feel you can.... If you live in a society, you have something to contribute"*.