

# Servant leadership key to success

*The best leaders don't focus on themselves, says Don Page*

By Doug Koop  
ChristianWeek Staff

LANGLEY, BC—Don Page has a lot to look back on, but he keeps his eyes fixed forward. “I’m excited about a meeting I just had with other Christian leaders on the evangelism of the future,” says the veteran educator and former senior government advisor.

He continues. While Christian evangelism used to discuss the human need for a Saviour from the standpoint of sin, “we’re now looking more in the context of soul cravings. For example, our feelings of loneliness indicate our desire for connection. These are things that God gives us. It’s a new paradigm for sharing the salvation message.”

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Page may be 71 and officially retired, but he’s still in high demand as a mentor and leadership development guru. It’s a status he’s earned after a stellar career at the highest levels of public service and a long run developing leadership-training opportunities through Christian institutions.

“I’m still passionate about developing Christ-centred leaders,” he says. These days he meets with countless Christian and non-Christian organizations, giving leadership counsel and presenting training seminars on servant leadership and teamwork.

Servant leadership is Page’s mantra. “It means that we see our work through the eyes of those who work for us. The role of a leader is to serve others, not to be served. It is used to advance a vision for impacting society in positive ways,” he explains.

#### Helpful training

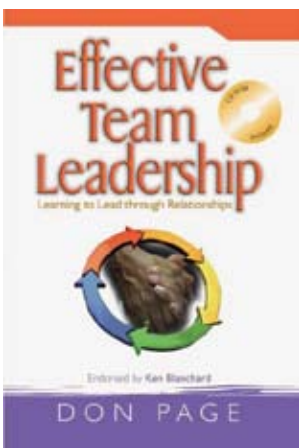
“The most helpful Christian training is a combination of understanding the word of God and understanding the society in which we live,” he says. “If we don’t connect those two, we might be good biblical scholars and live a wholesome moral life, but we won’t fully engage or influence the world.”

As for his own formal education, Page earned a



Don Page is a veteran educator and former government advisor.

doctorate in history from the University of Toronto (1972). And although all three of his degrees are from same school, “I never took more than one course from a professor.” In the 1960s, the history department at the U of T had 65 full time faculty plus adjuncts and associates.



After university he went to work for the federal government as deputy director of research. Later he served as a senior policy analyst and speechwriter in the department of foreign affairs and international trade, drafting the government’s foreign policy throughout the 1980s and crafting speeches for three prime ministers and five foreign ministers.

He surprised virtually everyone in 1989 when he walked away from the public service and set out to make little known Trinity Western University, a Christian school in Langley, B.C., a model of leadership training.

“I left government to come to TWU to help bring a culture of leadership into every classroom and develop leaders in every discipline. I went to faculty and said I wanted TWU to be best known in Canada for leadership development,” he recalls.

His grand ambitions were initially greeted with skepticism. But a scant five years

later, the Economic Council of Canada and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada acclaimed TWU as “the foremost example for leadership development for Canadian undergraduate university students.”

He went on to establish the Masters of Arts and Leadership program at TWU in 1999. The Laurentian Leadership Centre in Ottawa followed in 2002.

#### Leadership matters

A good education is vitally important, says Page. “It is virtually impossible for students to advance in any career without solid academic credentials and the intellectual capacity to understand the world and business they’re in. That comes from education. When you start

your employment it’s because of your technical skills.”

So why does he emphasize leadership development so keenly? “Because over time an employee starts to manage small projects and then moves on to larger ones. Ultimately leadership skills are required, but there’s been no particular training for that transition. Consequently we have poor leaders; people are expected to learn on the job but many of them have poor models to learn from.”

This is a problem in both secular and ministry workplaces. A comprehensive survey conducted by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in 2005 showed that supervisors were either poor role models or too busy to mentor their younger colleagues. “Youth pastors, in particular, said senior pastor didn’t have time to mentor them,” says Page.

“Learning by observing is not good enough,” he insists. In order to develop younger leaders, an intentional strategy

is necessary.

Many of Page’s ideas are detailed in his recent book, *Servant Empowered Leadership: A Hands-On Guide to Transforming You and Your Organization* (Power To Change Ministries, 2009). The book carries endorsements from well-known business leaders including Ken Blanchard and a host of senior ministry executives from both the United States and Canada ([www.servantempoweredleadership.com](http://www.servantempoweredleadership.com)).

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