



## The Most Trusted Source on Becoming a Better Leader

### Trust for Public Land Personifies *The Leadership Challenge*

Having a park, garden or other natural area “within a 10-minute stroller ride of any child in America” is the goal that motivates the 435 employees of the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit organization whose leaders personify The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® as outlined in *The Leadership Challenge*: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

Founded in 1972, TPL is a land conservation organization that protects land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. “Our founders set out to Inspire a Shared Vision, to change the way communities think about themselves,” said Dan Schwab, Director of Training for TPL. “In addition to preserving land in communities across America, TPL served a ‘Johnny Appleseed’ role and helped create hundreds of local land trusts throughout the country – focusing on the notion of Enabling Others to Act. Often people don’t believe they can affect change, but TPL shows them they can—and must. We want Challenge the Process to become the American way of life when it comes to improving the health of communities through folding nature into our everyday lives.”

While unofficially the mantra of TPL from the beginning, The Five Practices and *The Leadership Challenge* became a formal part of the organization five years ago when Schwab joined the organization. Schwab has a long history with *The Leadership Challenge*, first working with co-authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner in 1987, when he partnered with the duo to create an experiential component for their leadership material. A certified facilitator, Schwab has conducted several Leadership Challenge® Workshops at TPL, including sessions for non-managerial employees with the theme, “Leadership is Everyone’s Business.”

“We are fortunate to have leaders who personify the Leadership Challenge values,” said Schwab. “The training has helped them become more in tune with those values and to be more aware of the impact of their leadership style on others. They better understand the importance of self-awareness and constant improvement, as *The Leadership Challenge* is as much about who you are as an individual as it is about who you are as a leader.”

The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® have taken hold at TPL. Will Rogers, TPL’s CEO, conducts his role within the organization by Encouraging the Heart, as he understands the importance of valuing employees by recognizing them with small, but significant, celebrations. Rogers Models the Way by being an accessible leader, someone who enjoys his job each and every day, encouraging others to follow suit.

Rose Harvey, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director, also Models the Way by leading through her values and being consistent with her vision and her actions. Chief Operating Officer Felicia Marcus serves as the driver of the organization, Inspiring a Shared Vision and motivating others to act through her strong values and commitment to the organization’s mission.

Another advocate for *The Leadership Challenge* process is Reed Holderman, California Executive Director. “*The Leadership Challenge* has been a tremendous help to our organization,” said Holderman. “Everyone who has been involved with the program has become a better leader because of it. Our senior management also works better as a team because of the shared experience.”

After his senior managers went through *The Leadership Challenge*, Holderman encouraged them to put together 30-minute presentations to share at a staff meeting about their values, what drives them, and what makes them the leaders that they are. This very revealing, often incredibly emotional experience was an astounding success. “It was amazing,” said Holderman. “Several employees commented that this was the most inspiring, surprising, motivating thing they’d experienced anywhere they’d ever worked. The exercise led to an unprecedented level of loyalty and commitment.”

Since its inception TPL has worked with willing landowners, community groups, and national, state, and local agencies to complete more than 3,000 land conservation projects in 46 states, placing more than 2 million acres of land in permanent protection. Since 1994, TPL has helped states and communities craft and pass almost 300 ballot measures, generating over \$19 billion in new conservation-related funding. As TPL strives to build on this success, *The Leadership Challenge* will continue to be part of the culture of the organization. “We plan on continuing the discussions generated by the program and continuing exploring and learning through *The Leadership Challenge*,” said Holderman.

Schwab encourages other nonprofits to incorporate *The Leadership Challenge* into their organizations. “*The Leadership Challenge* is about purpose and vision, about striving to create a future that matches our values,” he said. “TPL is one small example of a public benefit organization that understands how critical this is. The entire nonprofit and government sector could benefit from this process.”