

Part 1: What?

I recently served as the Vice President of Community Service for the Omega Xi chapter of Kappa Delta Sorority. As the Vice President of Community Service, I was one of nine members on our chapter's council, or executive board. I assumed responsibility for our chapter's philanthropic efforts and events. This included organizing events to benefit our national philanthropies – the Girl Scouts of America and Prevent Child Abuse America; attending other chapter's philanthropic events; and raising money to donate to service events and organizations. In order to successfully perform all of the duties of my position, I had to learn to communicate effectively with various groups of people such as Kappa Delta chapter members, Kappa Delta alumnae, members of other Greek chapters, and members of Girl Scout troops. I also had to attend various meetings, including weekly council meetings and weekly chapter meetings.

Serving as my chapter's Vice President of Community Service was an amazing opportunity for me. As I was a member of the freshmen pledge class when I assumed my position, serving on council was an excellent way for me to very quickly become intensely involved in Kappa Delta. Because I was interacting so much with other council members and with the alumnae members of our Chapter Advisory Board, I got the chance to learn about Kappa Delta's national policies and workings. In addition, I quickly formed a deeper connection with the organization and with all of my sisters. I realized how amazing Kappa Delta is and how many amazing opportunities it has to offer, including leadership positions, service opportunities, professional networking capabilities, and social functions. In addition, I understood that each member has both the ability and the responsibility to make our sisterhood the best it can be. I saw how my actions could affect my sisters and members of the community, and I wanted to do as much as possible to benefit those around me.

When I assumed the position of Vice President of Community Service, I wasn't fully aware of how extensive the required time commitment would be. I understood that I would have at least two weekly meetings – council meeting on Sundays and chapter meetings on Tuesdays. However, I didn't anticipate how much time each meeting – especially council meetings – would take up. Furthermore, I didn't fully consider the additional obligations for which council meetings are responsible. For example, throughout each semester, each council member must host several study table sessions. These are opportunities for chapter members to come to the house to work on homework and study in a quiet environment. Although the time commitment required was greater than I had expected, I still enjoyed serving as the Vice President of Community Service because I knew that I was helping my chapter be the best it could be. At the beginning of my term, I hadn't anticipated how closely I would bond with my fellow council members. The great amount of time that we spent together and the sense of unity in our positions on council helped form this bond. Getting to know this small group of girls so closely was one of the best parts about being on council and made me appreciate Kappa Delta's sisterhood so much more.

As a member of council, I worked with numerous other leaders, each of whom had a distinct leadership style. According to Hersey and Blanchard, four leadership styles exist; these include Telling, Selling, Participating, and Delegating (Classical Models of Leadership). I observed our chapter President lead with a Delegating leadership style, especially when interacting with the rest of council. A Delegating

leadership style is most effective with followers who are highly competent and need little direction or motivation to complete tasks efficiently. Another member of council utilized the Telling leadership style, which involves giving orders and exerting a great deal of control over followers. From my observations, I have concluded that this leadership style is fairly ineffective when attempting to lead one's peers. Many of our chapter members viewed this individual's leadership style as rude and overbearing. I believe that a Participating leadership style is much more effective when leading one's peers. This involves interacting with followers to make decisions together and trusting that followers are competent enough to follow through with the necessary actions.

Part 2: So What?

When compiling my proposal for this self-designed learning experience, I read an article by Michele Erina Doyle and Mark K. Smith that discusses the classical models of managerial leadership. The topics discussed in this article were very helpful as I worked to improve my leadership capabilities. For example, I read about John Gardner's study that compiled a list of attributes that most successful leaders possess. Among these attributes were the following: self-confidence, adaptability, decisiveness, and skill in dealing with people (Classical Models of Leadership). After reading about these qualities, I have attempted to embody them in my leadership style. One attribute that I have focused on in particular is adaptability. I am very detail-oriented, and in the past unexpected changes to the schedule or plan often bothered me. However, I have really tried to react positively to change and focus on creating a solution, rather than worry about things deviating slightly from my original plan.

A leader must also be flexible in the way she approaches each situation. In my position as the Vice President of Community Service, I noticed that I had to adapt my communication style frequently. For example, when working with alumnae members of our Chapter Advisory Board, I was always careful to be respectful and speak professionally. When communicating with my fellow chapter members – at chapter meetings, for example – I could be more relaxed and casual in my communication. I also had to find a way to connect with my sisters. For example, when encouraging girls to support other chapter's philanthropy events, I had to understand what would motivate them to attend. Throughout my term as Vice President of Community Service, we hosted several events for local Girl Scout troops. I again had to adapt my communication style when working with the Girl Scouts. I noticed that I needed to give specific and concise directions when explaining activities to young children. I also realized that young children need to be engaged; they will lose interest quickly if they are not actively involved in the activity.

From reading about various models of leadership, I have determined that the ability to foster relationships is an extremely important quality for leaders to possess. As mentioned above, my sorority sisters were often put off by one of the council member's Telling leadership style. While this individual is a great sister and friend, she focused so heavily on giving directions as a leader that she sometimes neglected to treat her followers as fellow sisters. I tried to build positive relationships with all chapter

members and set an example through my actions rather than give orders constantly. Through leading by example, I was able to more easily earn the respect of my sisters.

Part 3: Now What?

During my term as the Vice President of Community Service, I strengthened my professional communication skills and realized the importance of fostering positive relationships with those around me. Both of these skills greatly benefitted me during my co-op in the fall semester. I worked for Marathon Petroleum as a Project Engineering Co-Op in their Terminal Engineering department. In this position, I was responsible for coordinating communication between third-party contractors, terminal operators, and other Project Engineers in my department. Having already developed some professional communication skills – both verbal and written – in my position as Vice President of Community Service was very helpful. I was then able to further strengthen these skills throughout my co-op rotation. Although my permanent work location was in the Marathon office complex in Findlay, Ohio, I often traveled to Marathon terminals in Michigan to oversee work and meet with contractors. I worked with several of the same contractors various times throughout the semester. Developing personal relationships with these groups of contractors helped our projects go smoothly because we understood each other and could trust each other. Furthermore, by talking to the contractors on a regular basis I was able to learn much more than I would have otherwise. I learned about welding and hydrotesting sections of pipe from one specific group of contractors that I worked with frequently.

At the end of my term as the Vice President of Community Service, I shared my learning with my fellow council members and with the chapter member who had been elected to take over my position. When meeting with the newly elected Vice President of Community Service, I focused on informing her of obstacles I had faced, successes I had experienced, and tips that I had thought would be helpful. I also gave her some guidelines for how to approach specific tasks, such as organizing Girl Scout events and filling out paperwork for the national Kappa Delta headquarters. The girl who served as the Vice President of Community Service before me didn't provide very much detailed information during her transition with me so I tried to provide as many details as possible. For example, I provided specific contact information for troop leaders I had communicated and worked with while organizing Girl Scout events. From putting together this information, I was able to realize the importance of documenting procedures and contact information that may be helpful in the future. This skill was beneficial to me during my co-op in the fall because I stored such information so that I would have it readily available and would not have to waste time researching it multiple times.