



# THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE®

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## Taking Leadership from School to Career

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*Brennen was introduced to The Student Leadership Challenge® as a junior in high school and wrote about his leadership experiences in high school and college. Now he's begun his career and The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® continue to inform his path.*

Every employer, regardless of the industry, looks for strong leadership skills and leadership potential. I believe that The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership can not only change students' lives, but also help them land a job, perform well in their professional role, and progress in the career of their choice. As just one example of thousands of lives that have been changed by The Five Practices, I see the positive returns of The Student Leadership Challenge in my work and personal life each day.

**"A job candidate who cannot challenge the process with new ideas and efficiency will not be as valuable as another candidate who can."**

When I began my own job search after college I found myself relying on my leadership experiences and self-knowledge of my leadership skillset to find a career path that was right for me. As I looked for a profession, I noticed that companies were looking for candidates who could lead by example and think differently about the conventional processes used to satisfy their customers. Model the Way and Challenge the Process are two Practices that I focused on exemplifying in all of my interviews. By modeling the way, or leading by example, potential employers see that you are not afraid to take the front seat and face a challenge head-on, and do it in a way that allows coworkers to follow. I also found that many companies have not updated the ways they do business. But we live in an ever-changing world, and the mindset that processes are better left unchanged is detrimental to success. A job candidate who cannot challenge the process with new ideas and efficiency will not be as valuable as another candidate who can

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As a Product Marketing Manager at Microsoft I get the opportunity to market brands such as Skype® and Office. Such large brands require large teams to ensure their success and leadership capabilities are essential. Especially at such a large organization, it's important for me to recognize that part of being a leader is doing the best I can so that I encourage others to follow my example. When I work on projects, I continually keep in the back of my head that other people may be looking at my work to learn more, build upon the existing work, or produce insights. Model the Way helps me to remember how I am setting an example within my team for others to also build on top of my leadership. In addition, keeping spirits high within such a large team can be tough. Producing creativity and inspiration in the workplace requires you to encourage new ideas and celebrate the accomplishments of your team. The Encourage the Heart Practice is essential in helping me understand how and when to celebrate our team's successes and continue the flow of creativity inside the company. Because of my experience with The Student Leadership Challenge, I'm able to better understand my leadership capabilities and my own opportunities for improvement at work.

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In thinking about my career path I know that my ability to understand leadership skills and to identify which skills I have and which ones I need to develop will ultimately help me progress. Not only in my professional life, but also in my personal life, the leadership skills I curate and work toward improving will always help me get to my next goal. Inspiring a Shared Vision, one of The Five Practices, is something that every leader and manager must do to grow and push a team forward. Not everyone should or will be a manager, but in a team those who can inspire a shared vision are looked to as natural leaders who will push the team to success. Working in a way that allows those around you to reach their highest potential is also necessary as a leader. The Practice of Enable Others to Act helps me assess how I can continue to grow in my team by enabling others to act and ultimately progress my own career through continual leadership development. Leadership is an

### What they are saying...

"Leadership is a journey of personal and organizational discovery... understanding that the best way to learn is to teach, we decided to take on the challenge of having our students teach others."

– Vince Bellafiore  
Marmion Academy

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invaluable skill that every person, group, and organization needs to propel it forward. Investing time in leadership development is one of the most valuable things any student can do.



**Brennen Clouse** is a Product Marketing Manager at Microsoft where he works on a marketing team for Skype and Office. Prior to working at Microsoft Brennen graduated from Stanford University with his Bachelor of Arts in Human Biology. In his spare time he enjoys traveling, thinking about how foods are marketed, technology innovations, and design. Find Brennen on Twitter [@BrennenClouse](#).

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