

WHAT  
MAKES A  
GREAT  
LEADER?

BY KRISTI PORTER



**TYLER REAGIN**

**Executive Director, Catalyst**

Reagin leads the charge for all Catalyst events, which exist to embolden leaders from around the world. He also serves the team internally, leading the development coaching of the staff. Reagin received a master of divinity degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Prior to his position at Catalyst, he served at Browns Bridge Church (a campus of North Point Ministries in Cumming, Georgia) as service programming director.



**HOLLY MOORE**

**Vice President and COO, Growing Leaders**

Moore has worked to create cost-effective leader development training programs that produce positive outcomes for Growing Leaders, a nonprofit that seeks to teach leadership and career skills to students. She has more than 10 years of executive experience with nonprofits. Moore is also a certified practitioner for the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, consulting with individuals and groups to present characteristics of the different psychological types and how they apply to relationships and team dynamics.



**KAREN YANG**

**Director of Operations, Be the Bridge**

Yang's heart is for restoring individuals, organizations and communities toward God's intended design. This involves leading change within corporations, and facilitating professional and personal coaching for leaders. Yang has contributed to the formation of Be the Bridge, a ministry committed to racial unity within the church, where she assists with strategy development.



**BRAD SCHOLLE**

**Event Logistics Director, The reThink Group**

Scholle has been a part of the reThink/Orange team since 2007, following his role at Catalyst as events director. He holds a degree in finance from University of Missouri and is an avid follower of Missouri sports teams. Scholle and his wife, Jennifer, live in Suwanee, Georgia, where they are most passionate about investing their time into serving at Gwinnett Church.

**THIS QUESTION HAS DOMINATED CONVERSATIONS, BUILT ORGANIZATIONS, INSPIRED CONFERENCES, SPAWNED PODCASTS AND FILLED THE SHELVES OF BOOKSTORES. YET WE CONTINUE TO TRY TO DEFINE THE ANSWER—A PROCESS WITHOUT THE PROMISE OF PERFECTION.**

The good news is that great leaders can be found everywhere. In fact, it doesn't take someone famous to teach you how to become one, only the person one step ahead of you. And whether you find your leadership mentors across the table, onstage, online or in books, chances are they share some common values and qualities worth noting as you develop your own abilities.

Connect Faith spoke with four faith conference industry leaders from organizations of different shapes and sizes to get their takes on what makes a person worth following.

## WHAT QUALITIES DEFINE AN EFFECTIVE LEADER?

**TR:** Great leaders ask great questions, choose humility and fight for integrity. In other words, they choose to be consistent, and people want to follow consistent leaders. Great leaders also serve. There's nothing too little for great leaders to do.

**HM:** The most effective leaders excel in two key areas. First, they are trustworthy. If my team doesn't trust me, I will never be able to lead them and get the momentum needed to impact the culture of our organization. Secondly, great leaders set the example and pace for the team in how the work is done. I can't ask my team to serve our partners extravagantly and work hard if they don't see those qualities in me.

**BS:** There are a number of leadership qualities that matter to me: positive energy, clear and consistent communication, confidence, passion, patience and perseverance. But the few that top my list are wisdom, a servant heart and humility.

**KY:** Great leaders have a compelling "why" and effective "hows." In terms of the "how," an effective leader is someone who is continuously learning and listening. The humility and willingness to listen and learn not only produce an informed perspective, but also allow the leader to notice the common ground among those he or she desires to influence and lead. Additionally, effective leaders know their "why." Their vision is clear and compelling, and they take the necessary risks and actions to communicate and lead others toward achieving that vision.

## HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY SEEK TO IMPROVE YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS?

**KY:** I place a high value on learning. I recognize that I still have a lot to learn not only in the areas of justice, diversity and racial unity, but also personally as a leader of our community and movement. So I learn from others and build mentoring relationships.

**HM:** I want to be a lifelong learner. I seek mentors in areas in which I want to grow. For example, I have a strategic planning mentor who is the CEO of a company I respect and admire. When we meet,

## WHAT KIND OF LEADER ARE YOU?

Take one (or all) of these leadership assessments to determine your leadership values. Then, have your team and potential employees take a test and share their results with you. This interaction will help you better understand how to lead them.

### MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR

When people toss around a combo of four letters to describe their personality, they're referencing their results from the MBTI. Go to [myersbriggs.org](http://myersbriggs.org) for info on how to take the test.

### STRENGTHSFINDER 2.0

This book by Tom Rath includes an access code to take an online assessment. It determines which of its 34 strength themes you align with, and the book gives strategy for how to capitalize on those strengths.

### 5 VOICES

The book attached to this assessment works on the basis that everyone has a natural leadership voice, but not every type of voice is heard. The assessment helps you understand which voice resonates with you, and how to better hear members of your team.

### RIGHTPATH LQ360

This assessment lets you know how other people, your team or clients, are feeling about your leadership. And while it can be scary to have people more or less rate you on your emotional intelligence, trust and results (among other qualities), the best leaders are those who can take criticism and make a change.

I bring a list of questions, and all [my mentor] has to do is respond. I also read two books a month and listen to several leadership podcasts.

**BS:** I invest regular time into learning from other great leaders, and even more time studying the incredible leadership lessons in God's word.

**TR:** I try to read something—no matter how short—every day that makes me think about leadership. And I'm constantly trying new principles with my team to see if they stick or make sense.

## WHAT KIND OF ENVIRONMENT SHOULD LEADERS FOSTER?

**BS:** Leaders should foster an environment where it is not a sign of weakness to ask for help or admit mistakes. I also believe it is important to have a "team comes first" attitude where we

all own the rough moments and the victorious moments together.

**KY:** Leaders need to develop a culture where people can participate in making a difference in a vision that is greater than themselves. They must model values that facilitate the vision; create a safe, open, and honest space for dialogue and learning; and provide resources and tools to equip those they lead.

**TR:** I believe leaders need to develop a trusting, instead of suspicious, workplace. Andy Stanley did a talk on that years ago, and it's been the bedrock for the culture I want to create with Catalyst. Leaders want to be trusted. When your team feels trusted, they trust you.

**HM:** We have all probably heard the Peter Drucker quote: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." The culture I create with my team will either equip and excite them to fulfill our vision and mission, or I will have a team that does just enough to get by but never has the loyalty, work ethic and momentum that come from a team that is thriving.

## WHAT ARE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES IN LEADERSHIP? HOW DO YOU HANDLE THEM?

**TR:** Some of the biggest challenges come from the weight of leadership. When you are responsible for something, you don't take off that weight when you go home. But you can do three things: first, weight management. Get rid of excess weight by delegating it when possible. Second, exercise your leadership muscle to get stronger, so you can carry more. Third, practice good nutrition through thinking the right thoughts. Just like eating right helps you stay in shape, so does thinking right with leadership.

**HM:** Most of my greatest challenges in leadership have been in the area of people: learning how to best communicate, speak with clarity, and encourage and lead each person based on their uniqueness. I have found I must start with listening. When I really listen to someone, I get a window into their heart, mind and soul, which helps me avoid making wrong assumptions.

**KY:** My greatest challenges right now include staying focused on what is most important,

dedicating time and energy to only what I can and should do, and building the necessary systems to support and equip our community to more effectively accomplish our vision. To help meet these challenges, I am praying, distributing more of the work among our committed volunteers and seeking counsel.

**BS:** The uniqueness of the next generation of leaders is my biggest challenge. I believe listening and valuing my teammates' opinions, and spending time earning my team's respect, are the keys to solving internal team challenges.

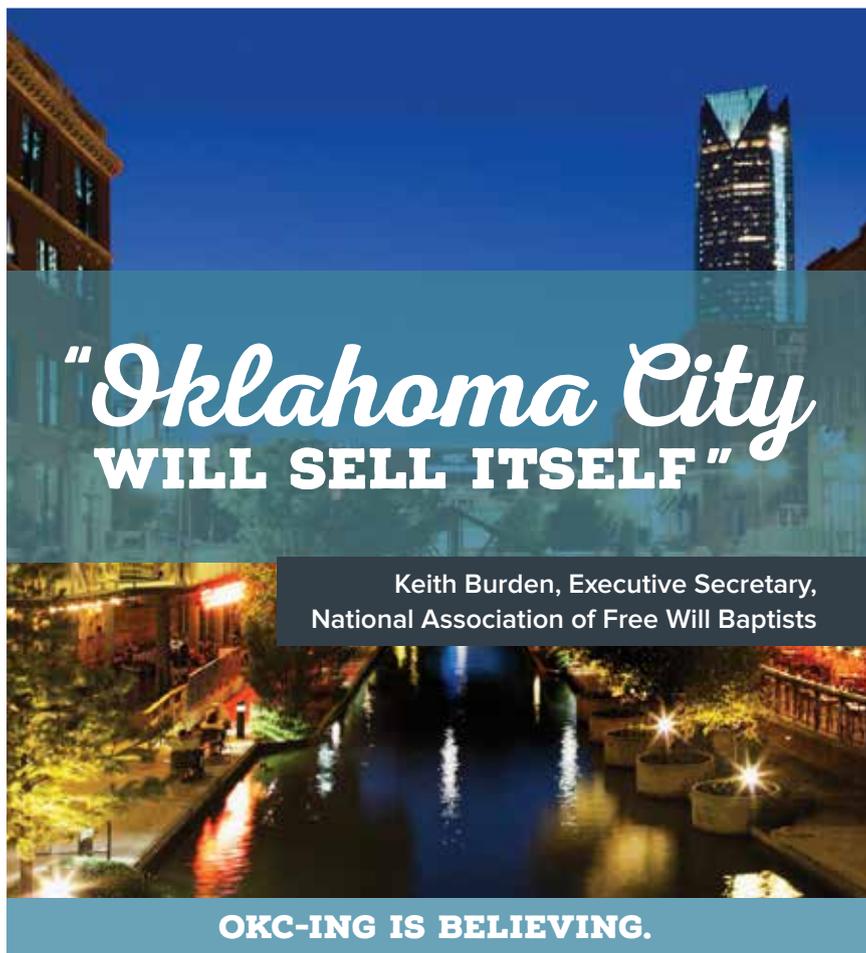
## HOW CAN YOU BE A GREAT LEADER, EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT THE ONE AT THE TOP?

**HM:** I have taken Andy Stanley's advice here. In "leading from the middle," it's important to support my leader. As I prove trustworthy and loyal, I gain a voice to speak into [my leader's] life. It is also important to praise and support in public so I can raise questions or challenge assumptions in private. Despite these things, there have been times I still was unable to influence my leader in the way I desired, so I focused on being the best leader I could for my team. I learned a lot in those situations that helped me later when I held more significant leadership positions.

**TR:** Again, choose to serve, and be a great listener. Don't expect respect, but earn it. When young leaders on my team show their ability to steward whatever influence they have to the best of their ability without always talking about what's next, I give them more. Character is the central litmus test for me when looking for great leadership qualities on my team.

**BS:** I always stress that great leaders are great servants. That is the beautiful thing about leading by serving others. It doesn't matter where you are on the company ladder. You can serve from wherever you sit.

**KY:** Be a great follower! Those who follow well tend to be the ones who are fully committed to the mission of their cause/organization. They are the ones who are willing to do whatever it takes, and that passion and commitment is a very effective form of leadership, regardless of a formal position or title. ■



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