

TEAM

RWB

Team Red, White and Blue: Leadership Matters

BACKGROUND

Team Red, White, and Blue (RWB) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2010 with the mission of enriching the lives of America's veterans by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity. With 12 fulltime employees, bringing local, consistent, and inclusive programs to build strong leaders, a strong team, and a strong community would not be possible without the support of hundreds of volunteer leaders. We investigated the ways being a volunteer RWB chapter leader impacts self-reported change in leadership behaviors.

Volunteer leadership at the chapter level is comprised of a five person leadership team which includes: a Chapter Captain ("CC"), Athletic Director, Community Outreach Director, Veteran Outreach Director, and a Social Director, although most Chapters create additional leadership positions. We define leadership as "a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal"¹. In other words, leadership is moving a team to accomplish something it cannot on its own. There are three fundamental elements to leadership: 1. Vision: providing inspiration and direction to approach goals with clarity and focus 2. Relationships: connecting and sharing the vision by caring about others, listening, and creating more leaders and 3. Execution: working together to achieve the vision through effective communication, competence, passion, and positivity.

We surveyed volunteer RWB leaders in December 2014, with a self-report, computer administered survey. The questionnaire was designed based upon our definition of leadership and the academic literature, and pilot tested by ten full time employees. 103 CCs and 200 volunteer leaders in non-CC positions ("other leaders") responded to the survey.

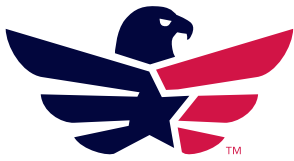
FINDINGS

Vision

Volunteer leaders agreed that being a RWB leader caused them to: actively promote wearing RWB's emblem "the Eagle" to build camaraderie (97%), inspire others by talking about the future of the team (92%), set achievable goals (88%) and go outside of one's comfort zone to model behavior (82%). CC's reported higher agreement than other leaders to these items.

Relationships

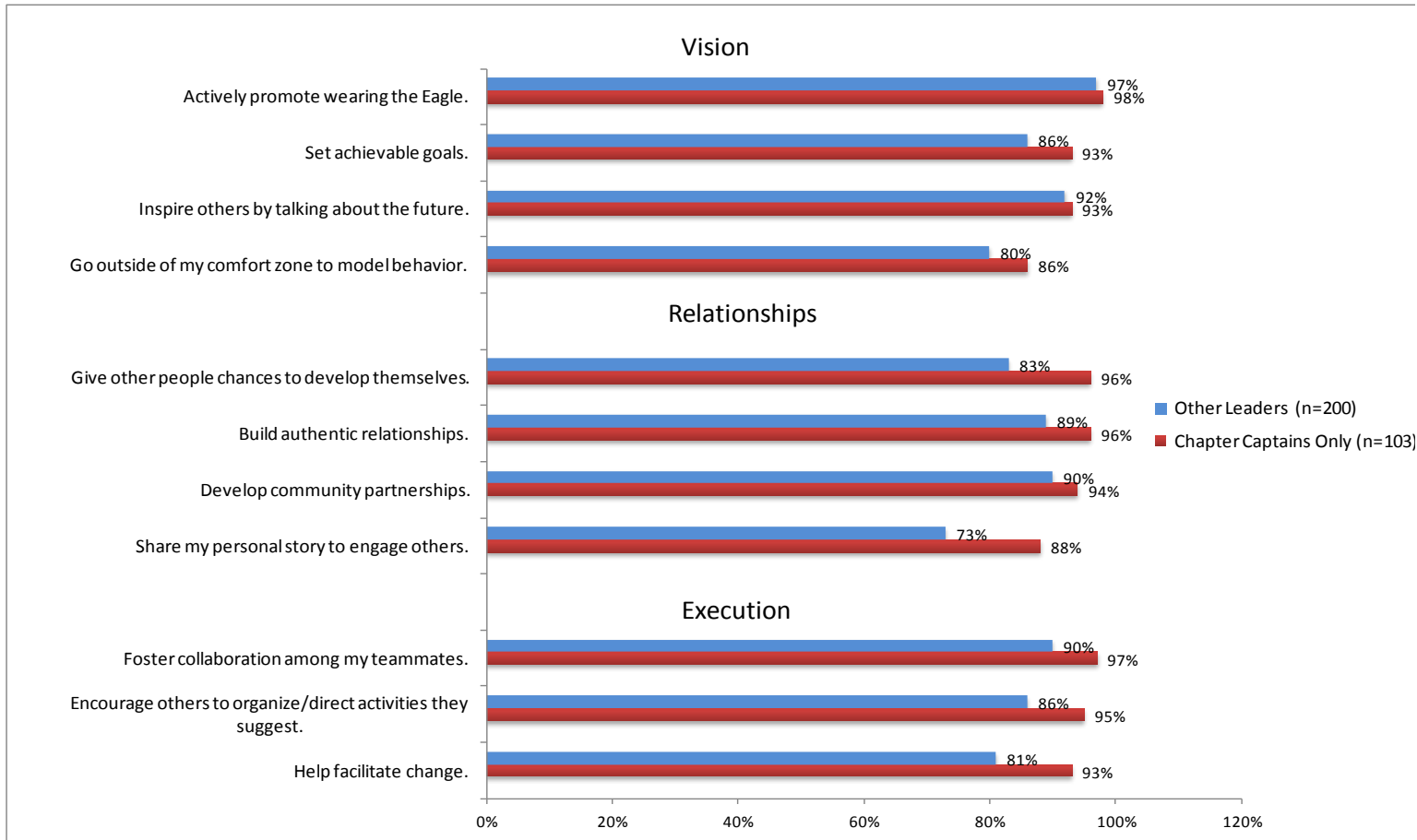
Over 90% of all leaders reported that being that being a volunteer RWB leader caused them to build authentic relationships (91%) and develop community partnerships (91%). CCs were more inclined than other leaders to report that they gave opportunities for others to develop themselves (96% vs. 83%) and share their story to engage others (88% vs. 73%).



Execution

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Eighty-five percent or more of all leaders agreed that being that being a volunteer RWB leader caused them to foster collaboration among teammates (92%), encourage members to organize and direct activities that they suggested (89%), and help facilitate change (85%). CCs reported higher agreement than other leaders on every measure for these outcomes as well.



SUMMARY

Team RWB is developing leaders. Volunteer Team RWB leaders reported that being a Chapter leader causes them to provide **vision** through inspiration and goal setting, build authentic **relationships**, and get others to work together to **execute** the vision. Volunteer leaders also report significant impact on professional skill development, such as improvements in business skills (64%), public speaking (68%), and networking skills (86%). This impact is especially noticeable in CCs, who have the most responsibility for the Chapter and the most consistent interaction with national level leaders. The Eagle Leadership Development Program will provide additional structured opportunities for leadership experience, education, and mentorship. Our increased investment in our volunteer leaders will maximize the experiential leadership training that occurs by becoming a volunteer Team RWB leader.

#leadershipmatters

¹ Kruse (2013) <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership>