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Thankfully, It Never Stops

The year went by quickly. I am almost done with my term as ALA President and I could not be more thankful for the education I received over the last year. I learned a lot about myself and even more about leadership. Some may think that once you take over this type of a leadership role, it's because you have finely honed your leadership skills. I am happy to report that is not the case. Thankfully, there is always so much more to learn.

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For me, leadership has always been about experimentation. I go with my gut a lot, and I spend a lot of time observing what is going on around me to get a read on the room or situation. Leadership also requires patience toward yourself and others. It requires you to be very in tune with those with whom you are working; leadership should be fun and should equally fill and empty your buckets.

Here are the three most important things that I learned about leadership this past year:

- **Be vulnerable and have humility.** No one is perfect, and that should be expected and embraced. If you are vulnerable as a leader and open yourself up to those around you, you create a great trust. This trust encourages stronger collaboration, fosters a positive-conflict environment and creates a greater opportunity for wider perspectives. If you make yourself vulnerable, everyone in the room will follow. If you make a mistake or change your mind, that's OK — shout it from the rooftops. If you try to hide things, it discredits your authenticity. Everyone appreciates a leader who is open and honest and creates trust.
- **Be accountable.** Like it or not, people are counting on you. If you say you are going to do something, do it. And, if you find yourself in a situation where you cannot meet the deadline, speak up and ask for help. The best leaders are those who do not do everything themselves. What better way to foster succession planning and real buy-in from the entire team than to share the work and make everyone a part of the movement — not just by soliciting opinions, but by putting words into action?

- **Be communicative.** How many times have we heard that you can never communicate too much? I am still surprised by how much communication is appreciated by others. It never hurts to let people know what is going on, even if all that is going on is that you are still thinking about it. The void created by silence is always filled by something, so it might as well be filled with information. Let people know what you are thinking about doing, even if a final decision has not yet been made. You may receive some very helpful feedback that adds value to your ultimate decision.

Even though I have spent a lot of time learning about these topics over the last year, I definitely do not have them

perfected — and I'm thankful for that. I encourage you all to experiment with your own leadership skills, whether it's in your workplace, in your local chapter, at home or in a community organization. For me, leadership is the gift that keeps on giving me an education. I thank all of you for allowing me to learn while I served the Association and you! ■



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