

## PHOENIX Business Journal

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# Rise of leadership in Phoenix must be in hands of many

Phoenix Business Journal - by [Andrew Ortiz](#)

I long have been a student of leadership and community affairs. For many years, I have followed the lives and examples of those paragons of the business, political, education and nonprofit sectors who have contributed to making Phoenix the thriving city it is today.

As Phoenix stands poised to become one of the nation's premier cities, and indeed, of the world, we are faced with many issues that will determine how effectively we sustain this greatness once it is achieved.

One of the issues I have heard a great deal about over the past several years is the "leadership vacuum" that exists in Phoenix, or as some others refer to it, the "brain drain." In other words, many have expressed some trepidation over the fact that we are not producing or identifying the next generation of leaders.

Some of the causes of this so-called "leadership vacuum" are of our own creation. Once power or influence is attained, it is not diffused, but rather concentrated in select groups. Phoenix long has been a city run by a corps of business and political leaders, from the era of the historic "Phoenix 40" to today's more modern iterations, such as Greater Phoenix Leadership.

This structure has done some good things and has helped to usher Phoenix into the big time.

However, this structure may not provide the formula to help Phoenix maintain its edge as it grows and prospers.

I am concerned about the power and responsibility of community leadership being concentrated in the hands of the few, for democracy requires an active, knowledgeable and engaged citizenry. This engaged citizenry must be cultivated like a garden.

The great social thinker, John Dewey, once said, "People support what they help to create."

I am a firm believer in this simple wisdom. We need to reach out broadly and widely to bring in diverse individuals and groups from the arenas of business, education, government, nonprofits, medicine, media, architecture, arts and culture, the faith community, and others. But we cannot stop there.

We also must seek the vision and creative spirit of our youth as well as the sage wisdom of our seniors.

The Bible states, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." I would paraphrase this scriptural call to say where there are no people, the vision perishes. We must ensure that the vision for Phoenix's future is forged out of the input, advice and commitment of the many constituencies that look to the city with hope and great expectations.

The symbol of Phoenix is the mythological bird. The Phoenix consumed itself by fire every 500 years, and a new, young Phoenix sprang from its ashes. In the religion of ancient Egypt, the Phoenix represented the Sun, which dies at night and is reborn in the morning.

Early Christian tradition adopted the Phoenix as a symbol of immortality and resurrection.

Much like its legendary namesake, the city of Phoenix rises again to meet its destiny as a leader of cities.

Let all of its citizens resolve to participate fully, as vested partners, in creating a vision for the city that is as rich as its heritage and diversity -- a vision that appeals to our hopes rather than our fears, to excellence rather than just effectiveness, that builds on the ties that bind rather than those that divide.

As the great cities of the world that have served as our models in the days of yore, Phoenix is prepared to take its rightful place in the pantheon of these great urban centers.

Any great city worth its salt is only as great as the citizens who comprise it. Phoenix is no exception.

As Phoenix prepares for its bright future, let its citizens be bold beacons of hope and vision, carrying the torch of wisdom and lighting the path as we seek to transform our great civic vision into a reality that we can all support because we literally helped to create it.

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