

Leadership Reflection

Leadership Seminar

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Introduction

Leaders provide the tools to make the organization successful. They make others around them better, by motivating them to want more. A leader can see the direction where the company is headed and take it there. Leaders have a traditional and legitimate right to exercise authority, rational-legal authority which rests on the belief in the "legality" of formal rules and hierarchies, and charismatic authority which rests on the belief in an exceptional character of an individual" (Scott and Davis, 2007).

Bennis (2007, p. 2) argued that, "leadership is always, in some sense, a matter of values" - guiding principles [philosophy] in an individual's life. Values guide or inspire attitudes and actions. Values are basic convictions that people have regarding what is right and wrong, good and bad, important and unimportant (Hodgetts, Luthans & Doh, 2006). And it is imperative that leaders have values. I concur with Bennis' postulation, "leadership is a matter of values."

Hogan & Kaiser (2005, p. 174) argued that good leaders are capable of projecting vision and they should have the ability to, "explain to the group the purpose, meaning, and significance of its key undertakings."

Current situation and context

During my early years my parents had the greatest impact on my leadership development. My parents had strong values and always pushed us [family] to achieve our goals; however, other factors effected my leadership development. According to Conger (2004) "Many factors shape the extent to which an individual becomes a leader, including genetic predisposition, family environment, school experiences, hardships, job experiences, bosses, organizational incentives, and training" (p. 136). That is why I concur with the postulation put forward by

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Conger (2004), “leaders are born and made” (p. 136). Many factors may perhaps affect that process. Unfortunately, I made many regrettable mistakes.

Ways in which I currently see myself as a leader

I currently see myself as a transformational leader. According to Brown & Treviño, (2006), “transformational leadership is moral leadership because transformational leaders inspire their followers to look beyond self-interest and work together for a collective purpose” (p. 598). Brown & Trevino, (2006, p. 608) affirmed that, “transformational leadership research found that leaders' high ratings on transformational leadership are associated with followers' satisfaction, commitment, and motivation (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).” Subsequently, transformational leaders are not focused on divergent interest and followers are satisfied, committed and motivated.

What are your strengths?

My primary strength is understanding and building teams. Teams are built on systemic foundations and leaders should understand the inter-connectivity, interrelationship and the interdependency of the team (the team is one). Teams can be small or large. Small teams are best for dealing with projects that need quick decisions. It's more difficult for large teams to make quick decisions because more people are involved in the decision making process.

My team experience was in a consulting group. The dynamics of this team were very interesting because individually we were average consultants; however, as a team we facilitated participating groups extremely well. What made this team experience so interesting is; each team member was focused on the total wellbeing of the team. Team effectiveness is not about individual ability/effort. Consulting, as a team, requires collaboration and cooperation, and the goal is to present a comprehensive package. Working on this team was stimulating because the

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consultants helped each other. If one consultant was having problems with a particular process another consultant would work with that consultant to solve the problem.

What areas do you wish to develop?

As a Sales Manager I am constantly searching for methodological approaches to motivate followers. This is an area that I wish to develop. “Researches on employee motivation especially highlight two types of factors: intrinsic and extrinsic” Cinar, Bektas & Aslan (2011). The foundations of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are multifaceted and have always been an interesting topic from an epistemological viewpoint. The variant state of flux related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, straightforwardly the connectedness/disconnectedness [causal relationship] of these factors on employee motivation and the paradoxical mechanism of those factors, mostly communicative methodologies, seems to have significant affects on motivation. In other terms, intrinsic and extrinsic factors have phenomenological complicatedness and compositionality.

Autobiographical timeline that includes experiences that marked key turning points

2011	Capella University (PhD in Organization and Management)
2009	Presently Adjunct Professor (teaching business classes)
2009	Leadership consulting (worked part time)
2008	University at Buffalo (Entrepreneurial Leadership Certification)
2006	Medaille College (Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership)
1989	State University of New York College (Bachelor of Science in Design)
1988	Present Sales-Manager/Buyer (employment)

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I submit that my work and educational experiences have had very distinct affects on my leadership development; however, my leadership development has received its greatest impact from an occurrence at school.

The true turning point on my autobiographical timeline that includes an experience that marked key turning point occurred in 2006 at Medaille College in Buffalo NY. I had just started working on my Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership (2004). I was part of a cohort that was comprised of various professional that decided to continue their education. As the first quarter started, I realized that the curriculum was an amalgamation of intense writing, statistical analysis and constant oral presentations – which I feared the most.

I have been employed as a Sales Manager (UMF) and subsequently, and I have conducted numerous sales meetings where I would present new organizational strategies to a group of employees; however, this cohort was extremely intellectual (and that made me feel tremendously nervous). As the second class was in progressed, our group was scheduled to present and finally it was my turn to speak. It was horrendous; communicatively I could not organize my thoughts.

After completing my segment, I was embarrassed and I did not want to return to the program. As I was leaving class, another student approached me (not in my group) – Carolyn. I told Carolyn how I felt about my presentation and she encourage me continue. It is interesting how a few kind words of encouragement can change the course of someone's life (another student did drop-out for similar reasons). After that conversation I challenged myself to face my fears and ironically my fear, of public speaking, turned into my passion - teaching. I am currently teaching at two colleges and I truly enjoy the experience. I often contemplate the impact that Carolyn had on my life.

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My greatest crucible that had a transformative effect

My greatest crucible that had a transformative effect was unmistakably when I had to dismiss an employee. I was newly promoted to Assistant Store Manager and the VP instructed me to terminate an employee that was with the company for eleven years.

This employee and I started out as equals and I was promoted to an Assistant Store Management position. Shortly-thereafter, I was asked to terminate her. I was completely uncomfortable. This termination was a fair and ethical decision. The UMFs principles of procedural and organizational justice were fashioned to promote social sensitivity, resolve disputes and make decisions fairly; however, I still felt exceptionally uncomfortable.

That experience had a profound impact on my leadership development and it has helped shape me into a leader. According to Conger (2004) “Many factors shape the extent to which an individual becomes a leader, including genetic predisposition, family environment, school experiences, hardships, job experiences, bosses, organizational incentives, and training” (p. 136). That is why I concur with the postulation put forward by Conger (2004), “leaders are born and made” (p. 136). Many factors may perhaps affect that process.

Theories and models of leadership

McClelland's theory of motivation

According to Brown & Treviño (2006), McClelland's theory of motivation identify that individuals are driven by three main motives:

1. Power motive
2. Achievement motive
3. Affiliation motive

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McClelland argued that managers should understand that most employees are motivated by ‘achievement needs’ (difficult tasks), ‘affiliation needs’ (relationships) or ‘power needs’ (control). McClelland explained that each of these needs are present in each of us, to some degree, their significance on the job depends on the status one occupies Brown & Treviño (2006).

David McClelland’s theories and models of leadership could be applied to individuals and teams in a work environment. Management can focus on motivating achievement needs’ (difficult tasks), ‘affiliation needs’ (relationships) or ‘power needs’ (control) for individuals’ as-well-as groups [ex. create “self-directed teams” – managing without supervisor] Brown & Treviño (2006).

Self-verification theory

According to self-verification theory, “one of the basic motives underlying interpersonal behavior is a desire to verify, validate and sustain one’s existing self-concepts (Swann, 1983; Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2003)” (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005, p.353). This theory discusses how leaders develop self-views to relate to the world by categorizing their behavior, and calculating the behavior of others.

Self-views theory seeks to sustain a level of stability and integrity and attempts to make others understand and substantiate their authentic self (Gardner, et. al., 2005).

Social learning theory

Brown & Trevino, (2006, p. 597) argued that, “social learning theory sheds light on why some individual characteristics of the leader and situational influences are related to followers’ perceptions of a leader as an ethical leader.”

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The epistemological compositionality of the social learning theory, posits that followers must see their leaders as ethical leaders and the leaders must be plausible examples.

According to Brown & Trevino, (2006, p. 597), “social learning theory assumes that much learning occurs vicariously. Vicarious learning should be particularly important for learning about ethical and unethical behavior in organizational contexts.”

Conclusion

I learned that “experience could be a harsh teacher” (Hill, 2004, p. 122); however, my experiences have prepared me for even tougher decisions that I had to face. Leadership is an art that cannot be taught in a classroom (Hill, 2004). Leadership is learned by doing (Hill, 2004); however, leaders must possess certain traits to be effective. One important trait that leaders must have is integrity. Brown & Trevino, (2006) argued that, “observers have long believed that personal traits such as integrity would be important to perceptions of leadership effectiveness” (p. 597).

If the leader lacks integrity, then the followers lose confidence. “In one national poll, only 13% of respondents expressed a great deal of confidence in business leaders who are running major companies (Harris Interactive, 2006)” (p. 608). The lack of trust was caused by the leader’s low level of integrity.

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