

assessing your own leadership capability and performance essay sample

[Psychology](#), [Motivation](#)



Established in 1858, Cambridge Assessment is an international exams group designing and delivering assessments to over 170 countries worldwide. Cambridge Assessment operates three exam boards; CIE, Cambridge English and OCR (Cambridge Assessment, 2015a). Group Print and Operations operates as the role of service provider to the exam boards from two large distribution centres (DC10 and DC20). The purpose of this assignment is to review what is seen to be the prevailing leadership style within Cambridge Assessment. Throughout, the review will explore how the constraints and demands imposed by the business units on DC10 have an impact on the prevailing leadership style.

Understand Leadership Styles within an Organisation

At Cambridge Assessment the concern for task is always the main focus, which is evident in: The setting of key performance indicators (KPI's) and the close monitoring by managers to ensure all targets are being met. The traffic light systems used by all departments to ensure tasks are running on time and within budget. If a red light flags a problem, managers can reorganise or increase their teams to get back on track. The planning matrix, for a ' busy session', details every report to be despatched at DC10 from start to finish date so departments can organise the staff and number of shifts required. SOP's being enforced so that best practice is performed by the teams to ensure optimum efficiency and quality.

The ideology strives towards team leadership as shown on Blake and Mouton's managerial grid by giving equal concern to people, as is given to the task (The Open University, 2011). This is evident through the GPAO staff

discussion forum which empowers workers at all levels to have an input and discuss improvements which has a large impact on how DC10 operates.

Some of the improvements which were suggested and implemented by non-managers are the introduction of warm weather clothing and cooling fans in the warehouse to improve working conditions in the summer, as well as providing free Wi-Fi to all employees during break times.

It is clear to see that the use of democratic leadership showing equal importance to the team, task and individual creates a culture that promotes the core values and supports John Adair's action centred leadership model (Learn to be a leader, 2009). Examples where concern is shown for each are detailed below:

(Learn to be a leader, 2009)

Team

GPAO staff forum

Entertainments committee

Staff parties and Christmas lunches

Individual

Performance related pay rise

University discount card

Free support service

Training and development opportunities

Task

Staff brief from Directors

10GOG meetings

Senior management meetings

Session planning within department

Technology updates and purchases

SLA agreements

Team meetings

A process used within Cambridge Assessment that balances the needs for all three elements of John Adair's model is the Performance Management System (PMS) process. The PMS is used to set SMART objectives to individuals, ensuring that the task is clear and unambiguous. These are both short and long term so that the individual is developed to best suit the need of the organisations current and future direction, as determined by the GAP analysis as well as grow as part of a team that can be assembled and developed. This compliments John Adair's action centred leadership model because to complete a task, it requires an able team. If the team needs are not met the task will suffer and the individuals will not be satisfied.

If the individual needs are not met the team will suffer and performance of the task will be impaired (The Teambuilding Company, 2015). At Cambridge Assessment it is important that the leader invests time, effort and sometimes resources into developing the individuals with the aim to create an efficient and flexible team who are best equipped with the personal and professional skills required to complete the task. At DC10 and DC20 this emphasis was acted upon in 2014 with the implementation of the development programs greatly enhancing the opportunity for staff

progression on either the ILM level 5 in Leadership and Management or Six Sigma green and yellow belt qualifications.

Cambridge Assessment's core values are; innovation and improvement, collaboration, openness and responsibility (Cambridge Assessment, 2015b). These values allow management to show high concern for results and people. Several examples of each of the core values are demonstrated below:

Innovation and improvement – Purchasing and installation of newer and upgraded software is continuous at Cambridge Assessment. A third Sitma machine costing over £1, 000, 000 was installed to keep up with the demands of the ever growing market for examinations, almost doubling the processing capacity at DC10. When DC20 becomes live there is a plan to purchase a fourth machine to again increase production capacity but also act as a disaster recovery site. Another example of innovation and improvement is the implementation of the Kaizen Blitz (Corrigan, 2005) where staff are encouraged to make suggestions for improvement within the workplace and managers collectively decide whether to implement them ensuring feedback is given to the teams.

Collaboration – A SITMA Production Improvement Team was assembled in 2012 to improve the productivity and efficiency of the packing machines. All team members were empowered to make suggestions for improvement and communicate with many different departments within DC10. Suggestions were made by all members of the team and feedback was essential to

calculate success and further improvements, also known as double loop learning. Another good example is the planning for a busy session where all departments at DC10 meet with the business units to evaluate successes, areas for improvement, process reviews and create schedule plans based on last session's figures.

Openness - Managers are open to the suggestion of change as demonstrated in the Kaizen Blitz project and staff forums but a great example of openness within Cambridge Assessment is the 'Your work, your say' campaign where all staff are encouraged to express their honest opinion about work including relationships with colleagues and training. This aids senior management in developing the training course schedules and provides new ideas to post to the staff discussion forum on improving workplace conditions.

Responsibility - A good example of responsibility is self-responsibility where employees own up to their mistakes. This is beneficial as the team can address current processes and improve them to eliminate the risk of the mistake happening again.

Effectiveness of Own Leadership Capability and Performance in Meeting Organisational Values and Goals

My leadership style and the way I lead my team is influenced by many factors ranging from my direct line manager to the decisions of the CEO Cambridge Assessment to the external influences of PEST; Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors. My leadership capability and performance within my department is determined by the limiting factors

placed on me such as: Demands of the job such as manager/peer/self or staff imposed demands. Constraints such as legal regulations, organisational policies and procedures or people's attitudes and expectations. Choices with the freedom to decide what, how and when the work is done. To assess my leadership style in Sitma I completed a leadership style questionnaire and asked my direct reports to complete the questionnaire about myself to see and compare the perceived results. My questionnaire coincides with the leadership style category I thought I would fall in to which is coaching but the questionnaires received back from my direct reports were equal across all four categories of directive, coaching, supportive and delegating. I feel this would be due to two reasons:

1. The different periods of the year in which the teams work display different levels of pressure, therefore the time constraints, cost and safety implications of the busy period mean I am perceived to adopt different leadership styles.
2. The members of the team and my perception of their levels of expertise, experience and commitment may differ. Throughout the more relaxed periods of the year there is more time and less pressure to complete tasks and therefore I am able to spend more time coaching and supporting the development of individuals. The busier Sitma becomes, less time is spent coaching and the more directive I become to ensure tighter deadlines and the business unit's demands are met. Often it is the appropriate selection of leadership style that determines whether someone is successful as a leader. The most effective leaders are practiced in the use

of several leadership styles and are able to adopt the one most likely to help the organisation achieve its objectives (Boundless, 2014).

The ability to adapt my leadership style is supported by Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership model as it varies throughout each working day dependant on the situation I find myself in and the competency level of individuals I am working with.

(Club Managers Association of America, 2015)

Examples of where I adopt each leadership style to be used within Sitma are:

Directing - Delivering team and individual meetings, informing them what tasks to complete and the priority order. I use this leadership style when there are cost, time, quality or safety implications involved such as delivering SOP training and ensuring Health and Safety is adhered to.

Coaching - If the task is new, the team will discuss ideas for best practice but I will make the final decision. I also use coaching throughout the PMS process, developing individual's skill sets. Supporting - I will deliver a brief to the 3 SITMA teams on the upcoming workload in the department but allow them to agree on who takes what section of the workload. Delegating - I empower the team by delegating daily tasks they are highly competent and experienced in, such as housekeeping or quality control checks.

My leadership in relation to Hersey and Blanchard's model means I am constantly adapting my style accordingly to the situation - the situation being the competency and commitment of the individuals or team carrying out the task. This process will be from new starters until full competency and

commitment is achieved. In Sitma department there is a large emphasis set by senior management to increase the speed of the machines to accommodate the ever growing demand for our product. To motivate the team I highlight the benefits it would bring to them as portrayed in Vrooms expectancy theory (Your Coach, 2009): Expectancy - The team believe they can complete the task because they have clear direction from the fishbone diagram created to highlight possible areas for improvement. Valence - The team know that completing the task could only have a positive effect on their PMS grades and the potential to make their daily jobs of running the machines easier. Instrumentality - The team are aware that by participating in the projects they can use it as evidence in their PMS towards getting a higher grade, a bigger pay rise and recognition for their hard work.

Clear communication plays a major role in motivating staff and can be delivered via many methods. Communication in Cambridge Assessment is primarily by email although many methods of communication are used. This communication can be both; 'telling one-way' communications in examples such as noticeboards around site or Health and Safety updates. 'democratic two-way' communication in examples such as the GPAO forum or PMS process. To communicate with my team I predominantly use verbal face to face communication often backed up with email as this gives the opportunity for instant 2 way communication, followed up by a traceable email that can be used as a reference or reminder tool as well as evidence of the conversation.

The factors that determine my method of communication are determined by the content of the message, the urgency of a response and the availability of all personnel that need to receive the message. Face to face communication also allows two way conversations resulting in any misunderstandings or 'noise' as described by Shannon and Weaver (Communication Theory, 2010) to be dealt with immediately and messages can be reworded until understood. Noise is something that may go unresolved distorting the meaning/encoding or understanding/decoding of the message in one way communication or with messages delivered using the wrong method and this can be detrimental to gaining the 'buy in' and motivation of the audience.

The best way for me to determine whether I am successfully motivating my team and building commitment to the organisational values and goals is to receive 360 degree feedback and assess my relationship with the team alongside doing a GAP analysis (Mind Tools, 2015a) as seen in Fig 1. This enables me to plan how we will get from the current to the future state ensuring change is measurable, with milestones along the route of 3-6 month intervals, or as and when required to amend the actions to achieve the future state. An example can be seen below.

Figure 1

Future State

Current Situation

Next Actions/Proposals

Team members to actively and instinctively seek to demonstrate the organisations values, goals and behaviours without being prompted. Team

members know what the core values are and their meaning. Team members can identify situations that demonstrate the values and goals. Rewards via feedback and PMS process for demonstrating the values and behaviours.

Adopt an Effective Leadership Style to Motivate Staff to achieve Organisational Values and Goals

Cambridge Assessment has developed a strong brand that is internationally recognised for quality, performance and presentation which has a large impact on employee engagement and organisational performance. By feeling connected to the brand and core values of the organisation it creates motivation for employees (American Management Association, 2010) to understand the bigger picture and take pride in what Cambridge Assessment is.

By adopting a people orientated leadership style and democratic approach I am able to promote the core values of the organisation through all means of communication. However I gain evidence of how motivated my team are through 360 degree feedback, 1 to 1's with the team and the results of the tasks being completed, something that would be much more difficult to do in an autocratic leadership environment with one way communication channels. Professor Bill Reddin's 3D model of leadership (Reddin International, 2015a) shows 'developer' as being an appropriate method of leadership that draws high levels of managerial effectiveness. Some attributes of a developer are: Ability to express views

Two way communication and participation in decision making

Talent recognition

Staff development

Staff promotion

(Reddin International, 2015b)

It can sometimes be difficult to motivate my team as everybody has different career anchors. With Kaizen Blitz and Six Sigma being introduced to promote continuous improvement, people in my team whose career anchor is lifestyle or security (Changing Works, 2015) tend to struggle with change. As they like stability and continuity and tend to avoid risks and it is my responsibility to motivate them to take a risk and try something new. Supported by Johari Window model (Businessballs. com, 2014) it is important that I actively listen and gain an insight into their needs as well as opening up to the team to minimise and if possible, eliminate the blind, hidden and unknown areas of our relationship improving self-awareness and mutual understanding between me and my team members.

To best motivate my team I:

Am a proactive coach (Pert, 2015) where a clear and agreed path with clear expectations is planned giving a sense of accomplishment when tasks are achieved. Lead by example and set standards and benchmarks for the team. Build trust using emotional intelligence (Mulqueen, 2012) and being honest by listening to and understanding my teams' opinions, concerns and points of view. Communicate clearly by ensuring I deliver what my team consider vital information accurately, honestly and in a timely fashion. Create a

positive working environment by empowering my team to make decisions and take responsibility for their work. I ask questions, listen to and involve my team in decision making and encourage them to be innovative and creative in improving processes and achieving their targets.

I have coached my team through many continuous improvement projects. Kolbs learning cycle supports my teams learning because it allows me to experience and reflect on the task and improve processes with new ideas. This has been evident in projects to increase production and improve best practice for SOP's. My team have worked their way through implementing and improving SOP's using the steps in the learning cycle (Businessballs.com, 2013) to decrease downtime getting the machine ready for production.

I am an action oriented shaper as I challenge the team to improve through Kaizen Blitz, improvement projects and SMART objectives in their PMS but it is important I am able to adapt my role within the team (Mind Tools, 2015b) to develop individuals' strengths and manage their weaknesses to create a balanced team who demonstrate the organisations values and goals.

The core values promote the use of coaching leadership and using this style allows the 'motivation' factors in Herzberg's theory to be better attained (Hayden, 2012).

The 'hygiene factors' of employees are met by Cambridge Assessment in examples such as the security of having a permanent contract that pays well and endeavouring to constantly improve working conditions.

My leadership style of coaching is supported by Herzberg's model because two of the motivators' factors on Herzberg's model are prominent in how I aim to motivate my team. The PMS process is a great example of being a 'coach' and developing individuals and the team, and allows me to use the two motivators' factors to deliver recognition and training aiding personal growth. Individuals have a clear explanation of their tasks and responsibility within the team. The feedback from 1 to 1's during the PMS process demonstrates how the daily tasks impact the organisations goals and constant feedback and recognition of their performance drives improvement and enthusiasm for the organisation and their job role. The PMS has sections specifically designed towards the needs, aspirations and accomplishments of the individual which is then reviewed and rewarded with a pay rise related performance grade. These sections naturally make me a developer as it forces me to think about the development of the individual or team and how this best suits the team and organisations requirements and goals.

Conclusion

Although at Cambridge Assessment the concern for task is primary I feel that coaching leadership is predominantly being applied by leaders, displayed by the ever increasing implementation of effective in-house training programs and external development courses. I use situational leadership to adapt my leadership style and approach to cater for the requirements of the business units and my team. This is especially apparent during peak periods of the year when there are time and cost implications involved and the risk of mistakes could damage our organisations brand and reputation or the

motivation and effectiveness of my team. Outside of 'the busy period', being a coach and developing my teams abilities through training programs, setting SMART PMS objectives and regular two way communication ensures that individuals are efficient, flexible and motivated to meet the business needs and goals.

However, to achieve the organisations values and goals more consistently I feel it is vital that these staff developments and regular meetings occur all year round and don't 'take a back seat' during 'busy periods'. It is apparent that business requirements and budgetary constraints are predominantly the reasons for this change in priorities. I would need to complete further studies (such as a GAP analysis) to identify solutions to the issues. Leadership and management are ever progressing skills and my success as a leader is determined by my ability to motivate my team, enhancing both their capability and performance. I will achieve this by selecting the right leadership style for the current business situation.

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