

Good case study on leadership of coach knight and coach k

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



There is nothing greater that you can tell someone than, “ I believe in you; you are good, I’m there for you.”(Coach K)

“ Among all the things I believe, one tops the list-the importance of preparation. We talk about winner kids in coaching, the ones who will not allow themselves or the team to lose. Coaches’ call that a will to win. But I don’t. I think everyone one has the will to win, what’s far most important is the will for preparation.” (Coach Knight)

Coach Knight and Coach K are undoubtedly the invincible rulers of the American basketball league. Coach K was once a student of Coach Knight for United States Military Academy and under his leadership he learnt the importance of discipline and preparation that paved the foundation of his success as a coach. Coach K was the pride of Coach Knight, and they were friends even though their Coaching styles were incredibly different. It was like tough love v/s fatherly love. Coach K at the time of retirement of Coach Knight even went on to say on the record that after his ultimate family if he has learnt about life in these 40years is from Coach Knight, and he simply loves him. (Coach K) Even though, they are the history creators but their leadership styles and managing a team are poles apart.

Coach Knight a fierce, authoritarian, aggressive, a disciplinarian, everything he does is intense and has to be exactly the way he expected. According to Path-goal theory, there are four types of leadership patterns; Directive, Supportive, Achievement Oriented and Participative. It is indeed very difficult to gauge leadership pattern of Coach Knight as he was very direct as a coach. Only thing he expected his players was to Follow his rules and play exactly like that and you will never lose, but most important thing is you

have to listen to us (Coaches). Coach Knight was nothing less than a perfectionist when it came to basketball and was a notorious coach who torn apart his players and created the best out of the pieces. Many instances even showed his support and intense care for his players. One such incident was when one of his players Landon Turner met with an accident and was paralyzed for the rest of his life. Knight went out of his way and created a fund called Landon Turner Fund, and when Landon returned to college, he was presented with the scholarship and was made the captain of the team even though he could not play. Coach Knight was constantly criticized for his temper, lack of emotions and was even terminated from Indiana University because of his rage, but he was a man of passion which was on your face, but only for your betterment as tough love can only make a good character. Coach K a warm, supportive, fatherly figure who believed in open communications and creating a bond with the players. He gave a positive reinforcement to the team and was flexible, dynamic and an expressive coach. As a coach, he was not only about the game and technique but also used to get insight of the player's ideology. Maintaining personal relations with players, bonding them as a family and establishing mutual trust within the team were his leadership style. Coach K was more of a supportive leader and also followed participative leadership style. His involvement in the player's life made him connect to them on an emotional level, and players could vent their heart out in front him. One such incident of his humility and care is noteworthy when one of his layers was severely injured, and he went all the way to another country just to see him and support him at the hour of difficulty. On the occasion of the birth of his third daughter he told his wife

that he was not disappointed as he has fifteen sons out there. This showed his immense love for his players. But there was a hard and unyielding side of Coach K where he was all achievement oriented, stern and meant only business, and that was on the field. Even though, Coach Knight and Coach K had a very different leadership style but there was a streak of similarity between the student and the teacher. Both were on the face of the players when it came to taking tough decisions or preparation of the game and about the team. Coach K was a perfect integration of all the patterns in Path-Goal theory, he was a fatherly support who participated actively in the lives of the players on and off field and made efforts to go inside the mind of the player and get the best out of him. As a true leader, he was dynamic and flexible rather than controlling the players he preferred more of a paternalistic approach.

According to Leader- Member Exchange theory, interaction between a leader and subordinates create a relation between them, and it helps to perform better and give goal oriented results. A subordinate has a sense of belongingness with the leader and extends his responsibilities in an organization. In both the cases of Coach Knight and Coach K, the relation with the coach affected the performance of the players. Both the coaches brought the best out of the players and players respected them a lot. But in case of Coach Knight it was more of fear induced leadership, and he was a tyrant when it came to the players and Coach K maintained integral relations with the players and players felt being in a family even when they were away from the family. To summarize there is no comparison between the student and teacher and it cannot be clearly stated whether the student (Coach K) is

a better leader than the teacher (Coach Knight) but it could be summed up in the words of Coach Knight himself, “ It is not important to be liked as a coach important thing is to be respected.”

References

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