

# Example of critical thinking on my philosophy of leadership

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The essence of leadership can be summed up as forming good relationships with the people you lead – both between members and with members and the leader. Collaboration is the essence of good leadership, utilizing everyone's strengths and diminishing their weaknesses. No strategy for effective leadership is the same between two organizations or two leaders – the attitudes and strengths of each member of the team has to be taken into account, as well as the objectives and efficiencies of the organization itself. My definition of leadership works well with good followship, which involves having members of a group who are willing to heed the leader's orders and instructions, and provide their part of the well-oiled machine that is an effective organization. A good follower must be able to understand their subordinate role in the organization itself, but also provide advice and counsel as needed or asked by the leader. A follower must be at the disposal of the leader, and not vice versa. Ego is a secondary concern for good followship, as an organization full of people who think their idea is the best idea is just full of leaders, not followers.

Followship does not have to require mindless obedience; in fact, a good follower keeps track of the leader, providing accountability and a greater pool of information from which the leader can draw. The leader can make final decisions, but it does not mean they only choose their ideas – leaders rely on their followers to assist them with their own jobs. This is a vital task, as the pool of ideas an organization brings to bear must be funneled through a singular vision (the leader's).

Situational (or contingency) leadership involves a very context-based leadership style – it shifts and morphs depending on the situation or

individual a leader is working with (Nohria & Khurana, p. 411). There are many different types of people, and with that different ways of handling them in order to get what a leader wants out of them. Confrontational people need to be reminded of their place within the hierarchy, and shyer people need to know that their contributions are respected and encouraged. A situational leader takes a subtly different approach to each person they encounter, tailoring their managerial style to what best works for that person. The type of individual that becomes a situational leader must be constantly flexible, ever willing to adapt - there is no specific personality or singular management style that the situational leader develops. Instead, they improvise according to the situation, developing a plethora of skills to deal with every personality type imaginable (Hersey, Blanchard & Natemeyer, 1979).

There are two particular types of behavior in situational leadership that must be adopted by situational leaders in order to thrive. With directive behavior, one takes a firmer hand with employees, making sure to dictate their every move and get them working where you need them to work. These people need to be closely supervised - this works well with individuals who are good workers, but unfocused and not prone to initiating work on their own.

Alternatively, supportive behavior is used most effectively on people with significant initiative, in order to keep their motivation up (and make them feel that they are part of the group). Supportive behavior includes encouragement of their existing duties, and bringing them into the decision-making process (Hersey, Blanchard & Natemeyer, 1979).

Transformational leadership is a type of leadership wherein the leader takes

a more inspiring, personal role in the lives and motivations of their workers, and attempts to tackle a problem with enthusiasm and energy. When someone chooses to become a transformational leader, the goal is to 'transform' and alter the attitudes of their workers in an inspirational way. A transformational leader takes an active role in why the worker works the way they do, and seeks to insert an enthusiasm and energy into the workplace. A transformational leader's goal is to get everyone under their command excited and energized for the task ahead, making them not only productive, but high in morale (Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999).

A transformational leader is much more concerned with the welfare of their workers than other types of leaders, as they recognize that the heads of their workers have to be in the game in order to get the most out of them. They create 'followers,' those who not only want to do their job, but earn the satisfaction of the leader. This is accomplished through a giving attitude and the creation of a specific 'vision' for the organization, which must be developed and sold; the vision itself will excite and encourage one's followers to work toward it (Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999). Examining my leadership gifts and challenges is an extremely difficult proposition, as it can be hard to truly know oneself. Based on the Northouse (2012) skills inventory, I score very high on human skill, and moderately on technical skill. I score the lowest on conceptual skill, meaning that my greatest challenge is to understand the bigger picture and working with abstract ideas; I must not be afraid to be complex and think outside the box. I subscribe very strongly to the idea of identity-based leader development, in which people start out with different levels of intrinsic ability for leadership, and their own

development is individualized based on their experiences and expertise (Nohria & Khurana, p. 657). To that end, I feel as though my greatest challenge as a leader is developing those skills, as I feel I did not start out with them. Growing up, I often followed along with my parents, siblings, teachers and friends, not taking initiative as much as I might have wanted to. Due to my shyness, I would hardly ever lead, giving me the impression that a vast majority of my leadership skills were taught and given to me over the course of my professional and personal development. Continuing to cultivate those skills through hard work and dedication will be a huge challenge in allowing me to gain further ground as a leader, and to maintain the progress I have made.

At the same time, I feel one of my strongest gifts as a leader is my idealism; this falls in greatly with Hegel's notion of human action working toward ideals, or Geist (Nohria & Khurana, p. 79). I am a very ideological leader, as I tend to work toward a philosophical or ethical goal – making sure my actions or business is ecologically sustainable, or productive, or without human relations conflicts. To that end, I have high expectations for those around me, and I work hard to facilitate those ends. In terms of improving my practice of leadership in my personal life, I feel there are a number of things I could do. First and foremost, I feel that I must get a better grasp on the “relationship triangle,” in which my behavior patterns revolve around the different relationships between myself and the “other” – both present and past (Nohria & Khurana, p. 209-210). I often focus on my past relationship with a person; gauging their moods and past behaviors, I change my behavior to best get what I want out of whoever I'm talking to – whether it is

a meaningful conversation or something more practical. By better understanding how this affects my behavior, I can become a better leader through honing my interactions to achieve more positive outcomes. I also believe I can improve myself as a leader through better connection to social interactions and my fellow man. This falls in with Rousseau's social contract, in which "the quest for meaning is attained through social communion" (Nohria & Khurana, p. 79). I feel that, by making myself a more personable and socially conscious leader, I can better command the intrinsic respect of those around me, and set good examples for others to follow. By being more mindful of the interactions of others, I can better place myself in a favorable position with them. Being an organizational leader means being a manager - someone who has to juggle a great many duties, from the actual task at hand to the personal and professional needs of one's followers. A good manager must see to the needs of all their employees and subordinates, while still keeping the best interests of the organization in mind. Managers, in order to handle the ebb and flow of a given day in their organization, should not plan things out too rigidly; instead they just remain flexible, having plenty of overall goals in mind, but making sure they can accommodate emergencies and situations with their followers. Of course, there is more to manager's behavior than working on one's employees - the business itself must take precedence. Networking, handling administrative duties and third parties/clients are other essential parts of the job. At the same time, the employees must not be ignored; if they have latent issues with a manager's organizational methods, that incompatibility has to be addressed in order to ensure unit cohesion and a united front that

all parts of the machine are working toward the same goal.

One of the best ways I can improve my professional leadership development will be to find ways to better handle change processes. One thing I believe will help is finding a transitional space – since change can often be difficult, especially in the workplace, I want to have a safe place where that can occur (Nohria & Khurana, p. 213). This could be done with trusted colleagues, or other leaders who are outside my jurisdiction (and vice versa) – this could allow me to take advice without feeling threatened or threatening.

Sometimes, I get extremely stressed at the prospect of failure, or handling a difficult employee – one skill I can use to improve my leadership skills in an organization is reframing, “ a cognitive technique used to assist people in diffusing or sidestepping a painful situation, thus enhancing self esteem” (Nohria & Khurana, p. 213). By better learning how to recontextualize arguments and difficult situations, I can compartmentalize those painful emotions and memories, thus giving them less influence over my mood and leadership style. I can then take defeats with better grace and move on, instead of dwelling on them and allowing them to diminish my morale and that of others.

Developing my leadership capabilities involves a great deal of forethought and consideration; I have several things I wish to improve about my leadership. In terms of my authentic leadership, I wish to improve my level of insight and impact. I want to be able to make a difference, all while demonstrating superior decision making skills. With contingency leadership, I wish to become cognizant of new challenges, improve my improvisational ability, and still keep a firm grasp of essential values and capacities.

Actionable changes I wish to make in my leadership ability include: becoming a better long-term thinker, increasing my level of organization, and gaining a greater amount of patience. If I am able to improve these aspects of my leadership, I believe I will have achieved a net positive result from this exercise. In the end, I want to be a leader that can accomplish tasks quickly, in an organized fashion, with a great deal of forethought. I wish my projects to work out fantastically on a long-term basis; not only should my accomplishments work now, they should be helpful far down the road and not cause problems. I wish to improve the command and respect of my peers that I have worked hard to gain so far, and ensure that I can lead with greater authenticity and adaptability. In practicing these aspects of my leadership, I will learn to adapt these habits into a broader scale within my own life.

## References

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