

Leadership essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Introduction This paper focuses on the Art of Leadership. In particular, this essay begins by summarizing various approaches to leadership and other key features and characteristics of effective leaders. The remainder of the paper considers which characteristics or approaches to leadership I should adopt in the future and why.

Additionally, I discuss my career plans and the steps that I must take in order to achieve my goals. The Current Environment of the Art of Leadership A leadership approach is a “ coherent, explicit style of management, not a reflection of personal style” (Farkas & Wetlaufer, 1996, p. 111). According to Charles M. Farkas and Suzy Wetlaufer, there are only five approaches to organizational leadership: (1) the strategy approach, (2) the human-assets approach, (3) the expertise approach, (4) the box approach, and (5) the change approach. Although there is some overlap between the approaches, Farkas and Wetlaufer suggest that an effective CEO must generally select a dominant approach to serve as a compass to direct the organization’s actions and decisions (p. 113).

Some organizational leaders, however, argue that they follow leadership approaches that are not outlined in Farkas and Wetlaufer’s article (L. Katz, personal communication, July 15, 2011; B. Ulrichsen, personal communication, July 22, 2011).

Farkas and Wetlaufer also argue that a CEO’s approach can and should change over the course of his or her career. CEOs who adopt the strategy approach focus on creating and implementing a long-term strategy for the organization. This approach tends to be most prevalent in highly complex

companies or industries, in terms of technology, geography, or organizational structure.

Additionally, the strategy approach is often adopted when the volume and pace of change is substantial, such that the CEO must assume the responsibilities of planning and guiding the organization into the future. Finally, CEOs who frequently make decisions that have significant consequences often adopt this approach in order to weigh the risks of making a given decision. Leaders who utilize the human-assets approach emphasize specific values, behaviors, and attitudes by closely managing the growth and development of individuals within the organization. These executives seek to communicate their views to the entire organization such that managers at every level will act and make decisions as the CEO would. Under the expertise approach, a leader's most important responsibility is to obtain a competitive advantage by carefully selecting and disseminating within the organization a specific area of expertise. Executives who adopt the box approach believe that their organization's success depends on the ability to provide customers with a consistent and risk-free experience.

This approach is frequently adopted by CEOs in highly regulated industries, such as banking, or in industries in which safety is a primary concern, such as airlines. Lastly, CEOs who follow the change approach seek to create an environment of constant reinvention. They spend the majority of their time using speeches, meetings, and other modes of communication to encourage members of the organization to embrace the “gestalt of change” (p. 112).

Unlike Farkas and Wetlaufer, Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) propose two different

models of leadership. Transactional leadership denotes those exchanges in which both the leader and the employees influence one another reciprocally so that each derives something of value from the other. These are mutually dependent relationships in which the contributions of both sides are acknowledged and rewarded. To be effective, the leader must meet and respond to reactions and changing expectations of the followers.

Transformational leaders, on the other hand, are able to unite followers and change followers' goals and beliefs by expressing personal values and standards. A transformational leader gains influence by demonstrating his or her personal value system. Contrary to Farkas and Wetlaufer's study, Daniel Goleman (1998) argues that an individual's level of "emotional intelligence" is the most important consideration in evaluating a leader's effectiveness.

According to Goleman, IQ and technical skills constitute entry-level requirements for executive positions, whereas emotional intelligence determines whether an executive is effective. According to Goleman and Boyatzis (2008), when a leader exhibits empathy and demonstrates an understanding of others' moods, the brain chemistry of both the leader and his or her followers will be affected. Chris Rice, President and CEO of a prominent leadership consulting firm, agrees with Goleman regarding the importance of emotional intelligence (personal communication, July 18, 2011). According to Heifetz and Laurie (1997), another key trait of an effective leader is the ability to push employees outside of their comfort zones in order to train them to respond in times of change or crisis. This approach seeks to inspire employees to constantly surpass themselves.

Leaders should be candid and address issues head on instead of giving false assurances and brushing conflicts aside.

Barbara Ulrichsen agrees that it is important for a leader to bring conflicts to the surface in order to foster honesty and cooperation within the office (personal communication, July 22, 2011). Ms. Ulrichsen is a partner in a small family law firm and feels that addressing conflicts head on is the only way to make it through the day. There may be a variety of leadership models, however, there does not appear to be a consensus regarding which approaches or characteristics are most effective.

Instead, it seems that the most effective approach to leadership depends on the leader's individual personality, the nature and culture of the organization, and the business in which the organization is engaged.