

Media paper assignment



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The movie “ Remember the Titans” by Boaz Yakin is based on a true story of African American coach who gets assigned to racially integrated high school football team in Alexandria, Virginia during 1970s. The story depicts the clear benefits of merging cultures (two races in this case), group cohesiveness and effective leadership, which results in The Titans becoming the champions of the league. It also shows the hardships that the process of integration of two cultures can bring and is a good example of effectively managing diversity in an organization.

Diversity in general is very beneficial to any organization as it makes the best human talent available to the organization, and that talent adds more creativity, innovation and better problem solving skills to the team. Even so, managing diversity proved to be very challenging for organizations and in order to benefit from diversity, effective leadership as well as profound knowledge and respect of different cultures is necessary. Leadership skills that later makes the successful merging of the two races possible.

Coach Boone does a great job of transforming the team players’ personal goals into the team’s goal as a whole. At the camp he sets achieving perfection and winning as the team’s goals and starts training the team to serve that goal. This approach makes coach Boone a transformational leader defining him from being a transactional leader or manager. The fact that he inspires the team, sets the goals for the team and develops creative strategies and practices for uniting the team clearly shows that he is a leader not a manager.

Coach Boone's actions and his effect on the team demonstrates the importance of transformational leadership while managing diversity as it would not be possible for the Titans to succeed with a transactional manager heading the team. Coach Boone first uses his legitimate power to take control over the team and the situation that he is facing by announcing the organizational structure of the team to be dictatorship – him being the dictator.

Only after he achieves compliance from the team players as well as other coaches, he starts to use reward power to motivate his players and also tries to develop close/ personal relationships with team players. A good example is his initiative to help Louie (one of the players) to pass the college acceptance exams. By developing these relationships and also forcing the team players of opposite race to get to know each other closely, coach helps players associate the team with a big family which helps unite the team the most.

Even though coach Boone's strategies and efforts play a huge role in the Titan's success, coach Yoast's role is also vital in achieving it. Coach Yoast is also a transformational leader because he equally inspires the team players and plays an important role in transforming the Titans into a racially integrated, strong team. Even though coach Yoast and coach Boone find themselves in a disagreement with each other in the beginning, they manage to work together and serve a common organizational goal, which is Titans' success in the championship.

Coach Yoast demonstrates his importance to the team when he makes a dangerous yet creative strategic move by substituting Alan Bosley by Petey Jones in one of the games which brings the Titans victory in the game, saving them from being removed from the championship. One common trait that these two leaders have is that they both care for the team and it's players – Coach Yoast sacrifices his hall of fame award for the team and coach Boone's family is directly depended on the team as he will have to move his family again to a different Town even if he loses one game.

As for differences, coach Boone demonstrates to be more success/winning oriented, strict and optimistic than coach Yoast. As mentioned above coach Boone and coach Yoast are both similar, and different in their approaches to leadership, but the major point is that their compliance between each other makes it possible for the Titans to succeed. Together coaches create a vision of a racially integrated, diverse high school football team that can win the championship and then use their bases of power and skills to enact that vision.

The main reason of Titans' success then, is that coaches effectively manage diversity in the team and successfully merge the two cultures to serve a greater organizational goal. In the beginning of the movie the team faces a very dramatic structural change – the team with all white players is transformed into a racially diverse unit. Culture in African American players were added to the team, cultural traditions and relationships of former team members and coach were disrupted.

A successful and effective coach Yoast lost his job as coach Boone was assigned to lead the team which itself caused disagreements among football players who were loyal to the former coach. A new, strong, African American player Julius challenged the team captain Gerry. Because the team was successful with the old structure, it started to fear failure with this new assembly. The group cohesiveness of the old team, which is one of the most important unifying aspects of any team in nature, was ruined by this transformation.

During 1970s racial discrimination was a global problem in the US and other than internal issues the Titans were also facing pressure from the society. In order to have managed the diversity and the cultural change, coach Boone took the team out of town – to the camp by which he reduced the social pressure on the team and enabled all the players to perform up to their maximum potential. He started to merge the two races by forcing the football players of opposite race to sit next to each other in the bus, room together and learn personal traits of each other.

This resulted in team players of opposite race developing strong personal relationships with each other, which later induced the unification of the team as a whole. During the training at the camp coach clearly addresses the importance of change to achieve winning and perfection: “ Everything we gonna do is changing. We are change. We’re gonna change the way we run. We’re gonna change the way we eat. We’re gonna change the way we block. We’re gonna change the way we tackle. We’re gonna change the way we win. By encouraging fundamental changes in the team’s structure coach Boone managed to successfully transform the team and form a new and

effective structure. The presence of this new diverse structure was reaffirmed when coaches as well as team members accepted Ronnie Bass because of his physical abilities, disregarding his sexual orientation. By introducing the new structure and enforcing fundamental changes, coach Boone created a strongly unified team, so that when the Titans returned to the Town, the outside social pressure did little to no harm to them.

What coach Boone did was he transformed the team's major weakness (diversity) into its major strength as he addressed his team before the first game: " I'm not gonna talk to you tonight about winnin' and losin'. You are already winners cause you didn't kill each other up at camp. Tonight we got Hayfield. Like all the other schools at this conference they are all white. They don't have to worry about race. We do. But we are better for it, men. "

Following his speech Titans get their first victory in the championship.

Through skillful and creative coaching of Yoast and Boon as well as devotion of the football players towards the team's goal, Titans become the champions of the League and a unifying symbol for the community of Alexandria. About 4 decades have passed since this story, but managing diversity is still an issue to many organizations worldwide. One of the major reasons for this is that diversity is not conceived as an organizational priority. The story of the Titans reminds us about the benefits that diversity can bring to an organization (creativity, innovation, added problem solving etc. . Even though managing diversity and cultural change in general is a painful process to any organization, the benefits it brings managers not to have inaccurate stereotypes and prejudice, a deep knowledge and respect of different cultures is essential. Even though diversity is still an issue today, it

is less of a problem than it was before and society is more aware of the importance of treating diverse people fairly. However, the word “fairly” is sometimes misunderstood in our modern society.

One of the most important points made in this movie in my opinion is coach Boone explaining coach Yoast the true meaning of treating diversity fairly when coach Yoast supports African American players with special attention: “I may be a mean cuss, but I am the same mean cuss with everybody out there on that football team field. The world don’t give a damn about how sensitive these kids are – especially the young black kids. You ain’t doing these kids a favor by patronizing them. You’re crippling them. You’re crippling them for life. By this quote, coach Boone explains that treating diverse employees (people in general) fairly doesn’t mean treating them with special attention or support, it means considering them full-time members of the community/organization and equating them to other non-diverse members at all levels. Bibliography: “Remember The Titans” (2000) – Director: Boaz Yalkin. Writer: Gregory Allen Howard “Organizational Behavior Key Concepts, Skills & Best Practices 5e” – Angelo Kinicki, Mel Fugate. IMDb Movie quotes – http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0210945?ref_=nv_sr_1