

Example of defining leadership research paper

[Business](#), [Company](#)



Literature Review for the concept of Leadership

This paper provides an overview of descriptive leadership theories that have advanced in over the last decades. The purpose of this literature review is anchoring an understanding of different attempts to come up with one definition of leadership, a leadership design that works for every organization. While exploring the different facets of the concept of leadership, the paper embarks on different scholastic analysis using divergent resources. Contemporary literature on leadership styles assesses the role of leadership and its impact on workers' competency and morale. However, while emphasizing the vital place of effective leadership on the success of organization, the literature admits that there is no conventional and universal form of leadership. However, scholars of leadership strategies admit that there are vital components of leadership that transcends across all generations. Accordingly, effective running of an organization requires leadership that must be able to have clearly defined priorities, visionary thinking, and efficient strategies. These are the common best practices that could define leadership.

Defining leadership often appears elusive due to the difference of understanding of what leadership means. Understanding leadership from the diverse and distinct definitions is a critical in developing a holistic paradigm for the study of leadership (Levy, 2006). In the last five decades, there have been over 60 classifications of varying concepts that are instrumental in having a comprehensive understanding of leadership. Brass (1990) defined leadership as “ focus of group process” (p. 38). Fielder (2002) argued that there is no evidence of one leadership trait, behavior or personality required

to be an effective leader. Instead, leadership effectiveness is the ability to get a group to accomplish its mission which does not entirely depend on a leader's ability and attributes. First, the trait emphasizes how the leader treats the subordinates while the second aspect premises on the leaders organizational skills.

Clark (2004) identifies identical mutual trust, effective communication skills, active empathy, accessibility by workers and personal courage as the key elements of an effective leader. In their part, effective leadership is fundamentally about developing people, setting defined directions to be followed and designing an organization to be successful. Effective leadership involves identifying people within the organization who would be potential leaders and letting them gain the knowledge and skills required for success. Ultimately, a good leadership team is a complimentary team where people's strength are made productive and their weaknesses made irrelevant by strength of others. While leadership focuses on the ability to communicate and acknowledge people and their potential, management is based on using the potential and talent to achieve a goal. Both leadership and management are vital, and they have to operate in one. Management and leadership are entwined in the general understanding of the human nature as Body, Mind and Spirit. The Whole man understanding of man is pivotal for twenty first century understanding of people and work. In a world where people are more informed, more educated, and have a lot of choices; it makes a lot of sense to govern them in a manner that makes them feel included, and where their ideas and opinions are freely expressed and tolerated (DuBrin, 2012).

Divergent Views on Leadership

Gabbaro (1985) document the reason for the success of other leaders and the failure of others. In general, he documents that most managers take a relatively longer period to adapt to the requirements of the new work environments. The article makes a case that experience play a critical role in the success in the process of transition using examples from American and European managers. Managers with experience of working in different environments take a relatively shorter time to take charge while workers with limited take the longest time to take charge. In addition to work experience, Gabbaro also argues that managerial techniques and leadership models also accounts for smooth or rough transition. He disregards the existence of the common belief in the all-purpose manager.

According to Gabbaro, the taking charge process is a process that develops overtime and passes through several stages. Each of the stage has a distinct purpose, problems and challenges. The transition period is a tedious and engaging period for a manager. In the United States, the transition period takes about two years, in Europe especially the UK it takes longer. The transition process begins with taking hold that includes getting to know the work place and the people and takes about six months. The second process is the immersion that is characterized with a more informed approach in management because of comfort and familiarity with the environment. The next stage in the transition process is the reshaping process where the new manager attempts to customize the system to shape his or her desire. This is followed by consolidation that means the workers understanding and the general operation of the system. The refinement is the final stage and

describes the last part of the transition. In Gabbbaro's views, the transition process is a combination of factors that hugely depend on the style of leadership, experience and the nature of the job. The corporate culture also determines how successful the transition can be.

Goleman (2005) reported that emotional intelligence plays a critical role in the success of leader. Emotional intelligence is the inborn capability to feel, use, relay, identify, retain information, illustrate, recognize, study from, and explain emotion. Emotional intelligence has five sections: knowing one's emotion; managing emotions; motivating one's self; recognizing emotions in others and handling relationships (Goleman, 2005). People's abilities in each of the five segments of emotional intelligence may differ, however, that does not mean that they certainly have no room for improvement. An individual with sufficient emotional intelligence controls emotions so that they do not spiral to harmful behavior. He or she understands that anger is a secondary emotion that comes from other reasons, and the only way of extinguishing anger is by understanding it. Goleman asserts that, anger is best managed by diffusing its primary root causes. Anger management is key to emotional intelligence. Understanding anger enables an individual dealing with the problem move forward with life. Having the ability to control emotions empowers an individual to become as a leader.

O'Reilly, C., & Pfeffer, (2000) make the case of servant leadership using the case of Men's Wearhouse. Men's Wearhouse is a successful clothing merchandise company that has fostered practice of servant leadership to the benefit and the success of the company. The company's policy of encouraging servant leadership implies that the company let the workers

manage themselves based on the company's values while giving up management. Servant leadership implies that the companies top leadership is denied the trappings that other CEOs is in other companies are accorded. As a result, few CEO's are comfortable working with Men's Wearhouse because of comparative low wages, modest offices, and less fancy lifestyle. Moreover, Men's Wearhouse lays emphasis on the mutual obligation between workers and company. For this reason, the company trades long-term employment for flexibility and performance. Still, this model for leadership places immense responsibility on the part of the subordinate workers and leads the growth of leadership qualities on the part of workers from bottom-top and not the usual top-bottom.

Dyer (2010) argued for teamwork and team formation as essential achieving effective leadership strategy. High performing teams have not developed by accident. Instead, they have developed by the ability to change by having stable and consistent team building processes that assist in evaluating the team context, team composition, and team competencies. A company must create a team spirit to improve performance. Traditionally, every team goes through five stages of development. Every stage development is helpful towards cultivating a team spirit and a coherent force that fosters productivity. The stages development of the team comprises of forming, storming, performing and transforming. At its formative stage, most companies experience a storm. At this stage, the group has divergent views on the mission, the approaches, and the mechanism that we can use to create a formidable working unit. A company must aspire to create high performance by following the above-mentioned guidelines.

According to Schein (2009), corporate culture refers to shared beliefs, values, and behaviors that a firm subscribes. These beliefs, values, and expected behavior provide a foundation upon which a firm is managed. The organizations executives articulate cultural statements to the workers. Usually, firms with a strong corporate culture outperform those without a strong corporate culture. Because culture is relative, organizations have the power to create a culture that fits organizations objectives. Corporate culture plays out in various ways. Company's culture can be distinct in ways such as the way they handle communication, feedback, project coordination, or customer relations (Kotter, 1992). In some cases, corporate culture is visible in the way an organization is structured. Some companies emphasize servant leadership while others focus on teamwork; others promote basing on appraisals while others promote basing on future objectives. In many cases, culture is also defined by the nature of the competition and the desire of the company to be like the rest or to form a unique identity (Schein, 2009). The article reasons that the barrier to effective customer engagement is "organizational and conceptual." A change in the organization of farm from the traditional methods of customer engagement to more comprehensive marketing system that includes all stakeholders in the product will go a big way in stimulating success. I am inclined to agree with the article particularly on the argument that mass media should be used differently for marketing. I believe that a comprehensive marketing approach that is interactive and focuses on equality will be beneficial to a company in the end.

Schein (2009) argues that the articulation of a corporation's culture would be

meaningless if a strong leadership is missing. Leaders of a corporation must be aware of the required culture in a corporation and determine ways in which the culture is understood by all sections for the firm. Leaders must also play the role models by exhibiting behaviors that are demonstrable of the organization's goals. Weinstein & Johnson (1999) write that successful companies do not satisfy customers, they work hard to please them.

Superior customer values mean continually creating a business experience that exceeds the ordinary expectations (p. 4). In their view, value is the strategic driver that most multinational corporations utilize to differentiate themselves from the rest in view of customers. In the abstract form, values mean the excellence usually based on the desirability or usefulness (Weinstein & Johnson, 1999, p. 5). Gale (2010) reports that a value driven marketing strategy help organizations.

Still, the success of an organization depends on effective communication. The goal of every business environment to foster communication strategies fosters peace and understanding in an environment. The fact that a conflict exists does not imply a bad thing. As long as conflict is resolved effectively, conflict can lead to personal and professional growth.

The increased understanding accrues from increased awareness of the situation and through building a compromise that is healthy for the two parties involved. While solving conflicts, employing communication skills play an important aspect in developing mutual understanding that fosters a relationship not based on winning or being right, but on peaceful resolution. While effective communication uses in solving conflicts take some times, it is important for business people to practice methods that are helpful in

diffusing antagonism and acrimony. Defensive communication makes conflict resolution difficult. One example of defensive communication is controlling speeches. Controlling speeches are speeches that attempt to develop resistance on one party in a conflict situation. They are characterized with orders and not statements. One example of a controlling speech is “ You should shut up!” Understanding whether a speech is controlling or not, requires that one master the history of the two parties involved. While others may read the speech as controlling, it may not be the same for the actors (Folger, Joseph P., Poole, Marshall Scott, & Stutman, Randall K, 2009).

In addition to communication, leadership requires upgrading to meet the demands of the world today. In the book *A Whole New New Mind: Why Right-brainers will Rule the Future* Daniel Pink argues that the future of the global business world depends on the right brainers. According to Pink, the right brainers refer to the people, not with different brains, but who are creative to go beyond the regular thinking of being technologically perceptive or informed. Pink asserts that people with a different mind (right thinkers) will capture the future of business. This new thinking draws from a combination of both talent and creativity. Business that seeks to exist in the new paradigm will need to change focus and accommodate the new holistic approach that deepens skills. Pink proposes a radically different approach to business people and workers. Because of the nature of the new business environment, business should realize that traditional consumers and workers do not operate the same way; this requires a completely different approach. This approach calls for an approach that takes advantage of the laxity in the business environment. An L-directed thinking that is old school creates this

laxity. L-directed thinking is not old school because it is not effective, but because it emphasizes stiff-necked approaches to ways of doing business. The new strategy should embrace a strategy that honors the worker by promoting quality, creativity, innovation, and talent. In addition, businesses must demonstrate empathy and desire for genuine pursuit of meaning for workers.

Perhaps a better way to examine the concept of leadership is to examine leadership strategies in the field of human resources management.

Armstrong (2000) defines Human Resource Management as an “ a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization’s most valued assets- the people” working who contribute to the achievement of the company’s objectives (p. 6). In simpler terms, SHRM is the proactive management of people. It involves thinking ahead, planning, and ensuring that the company satisfies all its parties. Schuler & Jackson argue that the advent of globalization has increased competition in the global economy making effective management of people essential in realizing profits.

Moreover, new forms of organization such as joint ventures, international mergers, and acquisitions require flexible mindset for effective management of personnel. Because of this change, the old hard methods of leadership do not succeed due to change in cultural dynamics.

Leadership requires that one take responsibility over many people. However, working with groups can be difficult in innumerable ways but working without groups is plainly impossible. While with different people, we should be thinking in terms of what makes work with others effective. The fact that conflict exists does not imply a bad thing. A good leader is one who resolves

conflict peacefully and takes the organization to higher levels.

Influence means the level of trust and respect people have in a person. The more influence a person has, more people will listen to his ideas/suggestions. To achieve influence, Covey cited the Greek philosophy of influence (p. 129), with 3 steps involved: ethos (trust), pathos (understanding others first), and logos (be understood). For me, leadership is about influence. The people in the leader's life, which includes family and closest friends, trust the leader in almost everything. I always think of myself as that embodiment of leadership. My best friends would trust me with their personal stories, knowing that I would not forward the story. When playing with my friends, I try to be the problem solver and to take charge of situations. The next step according to Covey is to be influenced, because "key to influence is always to be first be influenced" (p. 131). To win someone else's trust, we have to listen to them and understand their ideas. I always try to understand, or at least listen to what other people say. That would make them feel appreciated, and in turn will appreciate myself as well. Covey argues that to be an influential person, we have to own some level of initiative. This is especially important in organizations, where other people can assess someone's capability by his/her skills, and initiative would make someone stand out from the crowd.

Lessons from the Research

While covering up the leaders mistakes is indispensable for the wellbeing of the organization, it is essential for the leader to appear normal to his followers and thus allow to be corrected when in wrong. However, for the most part, his followers should share only leader's positive things. When a

leader is forward and ready to admit his mistakes, it becomes easy for the followers to be constructively critical of his approach. An opportunity for open disagreement is key for the organizations well being. This is a complex task but is created by a tactful leadership approach that embraces the idea that leadership is not about authority. Instead, it is created by a balancing act that recognizes the ability of the followers to make independent decisions and not follow the leader like “ passive sheep.”

Work cited

Armstrong, M. Strategic Human Resource Management: A Guide to Action. (2000). London, UK: Kogan Page Publishers

Brass, Daniel. The Nature of Organizational Leadership: Understanding the Performance N. p.: Ohn Wiley & Sons, 1990. Print

Clark, William. Into the Unknown: Leadership Lessons from Lewis & Clark’s Daring Westward. Washington D. C: AMACOM Div American Mgmt, 2004. Print.

Covey, S. (2006). 8th Habits: Habit Work book. NY: Simon & Schuster,

DuBrin, Andrew. Leadership: Research Findings, Practice and Skills. NY: Cengage Learning, 2012. Print.

Duncan, K. (2010). Business Greatest Hits: A Masterclass in Modern Business Ideas. New York: A&C Black.

Dyer, W., & Dyer, J. (2010). Team Building: Proven Strategies for Improving Team Performance. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Fielder, Donald. The Leadership Teachings of Geronimo:. Ny: Sterling House Pub, 2002. Print.

Folger, J., Poole, M., & Stutman, R. Working Through Conflict: Strategies for

Relationships, Groups, and Organizations (7th Edition). New York: Allyn & Bacon, Inc, 2009.

Gabarro, John. "When a New Manager Takes Charge." 2009 Harvard Business Review (1985): 1-114. Print.

Gale, B. (2010). Managing Customer Value: Creating Quality and Service That Customers Can See. Los Angeles, CA: Simon and Schuster.

Goleman, Daniel. (2005). Emotional Intelligence. New York. Bantam Books.

Laske, O. (2001). A Learning-and-Growth Metric for Strategy-Focused Organizations. Personnel Development Consultation, Vol. 40(1), p 230-283.

Levy, Charles. Social Work Ethics on the Line. Chicago, IL: Taylor & Francis, 2006. Print.

O'Reilly, C., & Pfeffer, E. (2000). Hidden Value: How Great Companies Achieve

Extraordinary Results With Ordinary People. Harvard College: Harvard Business Press.

Pink, D. H. (2006). A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future. New York: Penguin Publishers.

Schein, E. (2009). The Corporate Culture Survival Guide. Chicago: John Wiley & Sons.

Schuler, R., & Jackson, S. Strategic Human Resource Management. (2007). New York: Blackwell.

Weinstein, A., & Johnson, W. (1999). Designing and Delivering Superior Customer Value: Concepts, Cases, and Applications. Miami, FL: CRC Press.