Evaluate the effectiveness of substitutes for leadership

Business, Management

Effectiveness of Substitutes for Leadership Leadership is defined as " the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of a vision or set of goals" (Robbins and Judge, 2010, p. 376). The role of leadership has historically been an integral part of an organization because it helps to focus employees on the task at hand. The problem is that most people think of leadership coming from key positions within a company, but the role of leadership can come from anybody who has a good opinion. Nowadays, the role of a leader is not considered as important as it once was. There are other factors that can often be more effective than leaders in certain situations. One type of these factors is that of substitutes, which comprise subordinate, task, and organization characteristics.

Subordinate characteristics can reduce the need for a leader because their instructions are either irrelevant or do not add value to the workplace. If employees have prior experience or training, then they likely possess the needed skills and knowledge to perform a task without input from a superior (Yukl, 2008, p. 236). One example of a profession that would make use of this is that of professional sportsmen. Once they are able to perform to a high standard of play, the effectiveness of a leader, or coach, lessens. What highly skilled people like this need is a type of manager to get them to perform to the best of their abilities consistently.

Task characteristics often don't require a leader simply because of the mundane nature of the job. Low skilled labor jobs are likely to make leaders ineffective because employees are able to guide themselves. Feedback may still be an important part of a job, but it is not necessary for a leader to do this. It may be that a technologically advanced system can judge an

employee's work, or peer review could provide feedback from fellow employees. The key premise to this type of substitute for leadership is that subordinates are able to follow instructions by themselves and are high motivated individuals (Yukl, 2008, p. 237)

Organizational characteristics also can be used in place of a leader because the organization as a whole is more efficient than one person. Once employees because used to a company's organizational structure and daily work tasks, there are many things that can be completed without consulting top management first. Also, the concept of team work can be enhanced so that group discussion can occur horizontally rather than vertically.

Despite the number of leaders decreasing, the initial concept of what a leader was supposed to entail will still be held in high regard. Going forward, leaders will have a reduced role, as groupthink becomes the new norm. As Howell et al. (1990) stated: " formal leadership tends to be underproductive and can even be counterproductive." As technology improves, and work standards are taken more into consideration, the need for a number of different leaders will continue to grow. Certain factors, known as substitutes, will introduce new ideas into a workplace, such as subordinate, task, and organization characteristics.

References

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