

Use of the path-goal
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The Reasoning for the Use of the Path-Goal Theory in the “ Jeanne Lewis” Case

Jeanne Lewis, by any measure of the imagination is any prospective employer's dream team member. She was committed, articulate, productive, smart, sensitive, motivated, and responsive to challenges. According to Peter Drucker (1998), “ Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; leadership is defined by results, not attributes” (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2008, p. 109). Lewis's team tripled direct product profitability (DPP) and invigorated sales of under-performing stores. All these and much more were demonstrated time and time again throughout Lewis's career at Staples.

The Leadership Behaviors that Lewis Used with Her Employees

Lewis engaged in different types of leadership behaviors depending on the situation at hand. Her approach to situations and the type of behavior she used further supports Marian Anderson's statement that “ Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it” (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2008, p. 108). Shortly after Lewis assumed the position of the marketing manager at Staples, she assessed the situation regarding low performance of the stores, and she quickly came to the conclusion that strong leadership was lacking. As a result, she substituted 25 store associates over a 12-month period, which turned around the stores performance for better. Achievement-oriented leadership behavior was what Lewis utilized to achieve this result. Secondly, the tripling of the direct product profitability (DPP) by Lewis's team was

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another area where Lewis demonstrated a different type of leadership behavior-participative. Lewis's direct reports and peers appreciated her thoroughness when it came to getting her to support their position. The fact that her team members understood this much about her indicated she carried her team along while making decisions. Another way Lewis demonstrated a different type of leadership behavior was during the time she tried to foster relationships between the marketing organization and the in-house advertising agency. Her bimonthly meeting was met with stiff resistance. Realizing this was not a good strategy, Lewis changed the meeting to a one-on-one type that yielded results. Here, Lewis demonstrated a supportive type of leadership behavior, since this is what appeared to be desirable to the team members at this point. Also, Lewis used a directive leadership style when she warned her staff she would want to "ride shotgun" with them. She made it clear to the team what her expectations were. This leadership behavior typically results in improved satisfaction and performance. The director of marketing administration was satisfied with Lewis's strategy to such an extent that she set up one-on-one meetings between her team members and Lewis.

Lewis's Leadership Behavior as it Relates to the Characteristics of Path-Goal Theory

Path-Goal theory was premised not only on explaining which leadership style was effective, but why the leadership style was effective. House and Mitchell (2008) described path-goal theory as how a leader influences a follower's perceived work goals, personal goals, and path to goal achievement. House and Dessler (1974), described path-goal theory as the effective leadership behavior needed in any instance which depends on the characteristics of the

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situation and the follower's characteristics. The result Lewis's team was able to achieve as a result of her strategy change could have influenced her team members' work goal, thus prompting them to perform well. Secondly, the tripling of the direct product profitability (DPP) by Lewis's team was another area that showcased path-goal theory. Lewis's team members and peers appreciated her thoroughness when it came to getting her to support their position. The fact that her team members had this level of understanding about her clarified the path to their goal, which then showed on the DPP result. Another way Lewis demonstrated characteristics of the path-goal theory occurred during her initial days as the vice president of retail marketing, where she set up several one-on-one meetings with her direct reports so that she could understand what part of the marketing puzzle each of them constituted. The marketing administration director saw something in this strategy, which led her to make a move to set up one-on-one meetings between Lewis and each of her own team members. This could have been as a result of the fact that Lewis's behavior was motivating to the extent that this director saw it could influence the attainment of her goal. Furthermore, the productivity that ensued after Lewis changed her strategy to be having a one-on-one status meeting with her team members after her initial bimonthly meeting approach flopped exemplified path-goal theory in that her team members could have gotten their work done due to the fact that they saw a clear path to them achieving their goal.

The Behavior of Employees in Relation to Lewis's Leadership Style

Several of Lewis's direct reports commented on her behaviors. One of them said: " Jeanne's charm could be disarming. She worked really hard, and her

personality motivated you. She tended to manage tightly at first, then loosened the reins. She challenged us a lot, and invited us to challenge each other”(Suesse & Hill, 2005, p. 86). The directive leadership behavior Lewis used when she warned her staff she would want to “ ride shotgun” with them was well accepted-as shown by the reaction of the marketing administration director. She was so satisfied with Lewis’s strategy that she setup one-on-one meeting between her team members and Lewis.

Employeeswarmlywelcomed Lewis’s supportive leadership style as depicted with her change in strategy after the time she tried to foster a relationship between the marketing organization and the in-house advertising agency. Even though her bimonthly meeting was met with stiff resistance, her one-on-one meetings yielded good results. Thirdly, the participative leadership style used by Lewis during the tripling of the direct product profitability (DPP) was received well by employees. Initially they had mixed feelings about Lewis’s leadership behavior, which one of them first felt was micro-managing before realizing that Lewis was just someone who liked to promote dialogue and debate to ensure that the best decision was arrived at. The fact that Lewis and her team in marketing while she was a manager there were able to invigorate sales performance within a 12-month period was an indication that she carried them along well and they were pleased with the things that they were able to archive together. This is consistent with achievement-oriented leadership behavior.

Aspects of the Relationship of Employee Behavior as it Relates to the Characteristics of the Path-Goal Theory

Path-Goal theory explains leaders’ effectiveness and the impact that leaders have on the followers’ motivation. The framework of instrumentality theory <https://assignbuster.com/use-of-the-path-goal-theoryuse-of-the-path-goal-theory/>

and path-goal theory suggest that the effectiveness of any leader at any given point depends on the characteristics of the situation and the characteristics of the follower. Several instances of this were observed throughout Lewis's career at Staples. It was repeated time and time again that Lewis had a personality that many may have misconstrued because of its confrontational nature. During her early days at Staples, Lewis herself acknowledged that she might not be able to work across the organization. At this point, she had barely been appointed a leader. One could then infer that all the zeal and the willingness to get things done was as a result of the belief that her hard work would someday get her into a management position, which she highly valued.

The rejection that Lewis received when she started a bimonthly meeting was not a result of the ineffectiveness of the new structure she was trying to put in place; it was due to the fact that this did not influence her team members' expectations, and their work and personal goal perhaps did not hinge on this. The same structure when changed to a one-on-one status meeting yielded the desired results. According to the observation made by one of the managers about the one-on-one status meetings, " She asks the kind of questions that provoked real interaction, so it really is a joint discussion" (Suesse & Hill, 2005, p. 86).

The South Africa studies around participation, individual differences, and job satisfaction among black and white employees results are better explained by the path-goal theory. Contrary to the expected conclusion that participative leadership is positively related to the individual differences, the theory concluded that participative leadership actually depends on the <https://assignbuster.com/use-of-the-path-goal-theoryuse-of-the-path-goal-theory/>

attributes of the task regardless of the predispositions of the subordinates. In the same vein, a study of the subordinates' achievement (NACH) and affiliation (NAFF) needs as moderators of leader path-goal relationship conducted in Pennsylvania State University, drawn several interesting conclusions. One of the findings is that high NACH individuals prefer leaders with good strategies, policies, and rules who clarify paths to achievement (Orpen & Ndlovu, 1977).