Personal Leadership Evaluation

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Personal Leadership Evaluation

**Clifton Strengths Assessment**

**Deliberative**

My first Clifton Strength is deliberative, which in basic terms means to create a plan to avoid risks. This is fitting as I tend to think about potential risks before I begin a task. At my last job working at a shipping logistics company, I led a project for a new solar field that received on average twelve trucks daily. The site could only unload one truck at a time and would take about 30 minutes each. This presented potential issues of trucks being backed up if any of the trucks were late or anything went wrong. To avoid delays I set in place a schedule for the trucks to arrive an hour early to their time slot and kept in constant contact with the drivers. This allowed the warehouse to always be unloading a truck even if one was late because they could just start on the next truck in line. This is an example of deliberative leadership because I identified a potential issue, set in place a plan to avoid that issue, and ensured the plan was communicated to all parties involved.

**Consistency**

My next strength is consistency, which is an important leadership quality to have. It means that I apply the rules to everyone equally and no one receives special treatment. This allows people to know what to expect from me, creating a fair environment. To continue off the previous example of scheduling the truck drivers, I was also consistent in their scheduling. Once the schedule was made, I would refuse to change the schedule unless it was necessary due to something like a breakdown for example. Many trucks would arrive early and try to get an earlier delivery appointment so they could pick up another load sooner. I would not favor them for a better time slot if changes needed to be made, instead I would offer the time slot to the drivers that would make it easiest for the warehouse to receive the loads. This was a fair way of going about scheduling the trucks rather than playing favorites. Doing this created an environment where the drivers knew what to expect from me when requesting a new delivery appointment.

**Relator**

My third Clifton Strength is relator, meaning I make deep meaningful relationships with people. These types of relationships mean I share my feelings, goals, and fears with other people putting myself at risk of being taken advantage of. While there are risks there are also upsides, for example, if people know what I want then they may be more likely to help me achieve that goal. When you are a leader that people can relate to and feel comfortable with, it allows them to come to you with problems more easily since they can trust you. I was a content creator for a couple of years, during which I built strong relationships with some of my viewers. Recently one of them reached out to me with family problems, which allowed me to help him work through them. If I had not built a deep relationship with him, then he may not have felt comfortable sharing such personal details about his life. However, since I did it allowed me to help him through a tough time. This goes to show that the relator trait can greatly benefit me and those around me.

**Adaptability**

One of my Clifton Strengths is Adaptability. This means that I can adjust my plans when unexpected problems arise. Although I excel at planning, I understand that not everything will always go according to plan. An instance where I was adaptable was a group project during my undergrad. One of our group members had a family emergency. While we already had a plan of what each person would do for the project, instead of just sticking to that, I suggested she and I swap roles in the project. I was previously going to be writing the introduction and conclusion of the project, and she was going to write part of the body. Since the introduction and conclusion of a paper are easier to write after the body of a paper is done, this allowed her to deal with the emergency and then finish the project after.

**Intellection**

My last strength is intellection, I like to think through things before I act on them as well as think over things I’ve done in the past. This means that my actions are more thought out and less likely to have unintended consequences. However, it also means that my responses can sometimes be slower and cause me to spend time pondering on things that no longer matter. I do this constantly, often at night making it hard to fall asleep. Although, second-guessing myself has been beneficial in the past. When I would have a presentation during my undergrad, I would go over the presentation repeatedly in my head. This made me feel more comfortable when the real thing came up because I was already familiar with the content. This trait is beneficial to a leader because it decreases the chance that I say or do anything that I may regret later, as well as recognizing mistakes I made in the past to change my future responses.

**Transactional Leadership Strengths**

**Relator**

Relator is a strength for transactional leaders in more than one way. First, you must know what a follower wants or needs to incentivize them via contractually agreed-upon factors. Secondly and more importantly it allows for the exchange of emotional resources. This includes things like trust or camaraderie which can push people to be more likely to go above and beyond to help. This exchange of emotional resources was found to make followers less likely to leave an organization than ones simply incentivized by contractually agreed-upon elements (Graen, Liden, and Hoel, 1982, as cited in Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). I believe making these deep connections with people is a powerful tool for transactional leaders because it makes the followers see the relationship more like a friendship. This is important because people are much more likely to help a friend or someone they enjoy being around as opposed to someone they see as a boss.

I have used this strength in the past when I was a content creator. During my live streams, I would make emotional connections with my audience and share personal stories with them. This would make them more invested to continue to watch and engage with my content as they felt there was more of an emotional connection with me. This emotional connection could get so strong with some of them that they would voluntarily take time out of their day to help me. This could include things like creating funny images or videos of me, helping compile clips of the live stream to make videos, or even making emotes for me to use on my channel. This shows that being a relator can allow a transactional leader to get value (work) in return for an emotional connection rather than something like payment.

**Consistency**

Consistency is another important strength for a transactional leader to possess. It is an important attribute because it allows followers to know what to expect in return services or what punishment will be made for mistakes. There are five steps to “the attainment of mutual goals and contribute to the adequacy of … subordinates” (Bass, 1990b, as cited in Aalateeg, 2017). These steps include clarifying what is expected and what the objective is, how to meet the expectations, how performance will be evaluated, providing feedback on whether the objectives were met, and allocating rewards based on whether the objective was achieved (Bass, 1990b, as cited in Aalateeg, 2017). To summarize, the five steps are saying to be consistent in communicating what is expected and what the reward is for achieving the objective.

I try to be as consistent as possible in all the things I do. This not only helps people I interact with to know what to expect but also allows me to simply follow the rules I set in place for how I should react to certain events. An example of me being consistent is how I would schedule the trucks for the solar field project. Finding twelve trucks a day to deliver from Georgia to Texas could sometimes be difficult. To incentivize more trucks to do the delivery, I made it so the companies that did dozens of loads every week would get the first pick on their pickup and delivery times. This was a clear incentive that I communicated with all the companies I was working with, and it benefited both parties. I was able to schedule more trucks more consistently, and the companies that helped me more were able to get better time slots to allow their trucks to have less downtime between loads.

**Adaptability**

Adaptability is another good asset to have for transactional leaders. This allows you to have the ability to adjust to any changes in circumstances so that you can provide the proper motivation for a follower to achieve the task. “The relationship between leaders and followers [is] a series of exchanges of gratification designed to maximize organizational and individual gains.” (Burns, 1978, as cited in McCleskey, 2014). For a leader to maximize organizational gain they must also maximize the follower’s gain; this exchange incentivizes the followers to do the best work they can do. An example of me using this strength was when I worked as a trainer at a gym. When training people, I had to adapt my motivation strategy based on the person I was working with. Some were motivated by explaining to them how doing better at a certain lift would help them be better at their main sport, others would respond purely to me yelling something like “You got this!”, while some needed me to threaten to tell their parents that they were slacking off. Me adjusting my strategy based on the athlete would bring the best out of them, which in turn would make the gym look good, which would bring in more people for me to train.

**Transactional Leadership Weaknesses**

**Inexorable**

One of my biggest weaknesses is that I am resistant to change. Once I have a method that works well enough, I prefer not to change it unless necessary. When I was working at the shipping company one of my jobs was tracking the truck drivers. I had a system that I had been doing for months and it worked well for me. It took some time but was extremely accurate in getting delivery and pick-up times. One of my bosses attempted to implement new software to help with tracking the loads. The software had the potential to make it faster, but it also had some issues that would make it much less accurate than my previous process. Instead of trying to find a way to combine the two to potentially improve the process I just continued in my old ways since it was working well for me. This resistance to innovation was something that Liu et al. predicted was common for transactional leadership to cause (Liu et al., as cited in McCleskey, 2014).

**Reluctant to Ask for Help**

Another weakness of mine is that I will only ask for help as a last resort. I will work on something for hours trying to figure it out before I will reach out to someone for help. I do this because I do not want to burden others with my problems unless they have something to gain from it. This is one of the weaknesses of transactional leadership as well since it “utilizes a one-size-fits-all universal approach to leadership” so if there is not a benefit to both parties then there is no point in helping (Beyer, 1999; Yukl, 1999; 2011; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010., as cited in McCleskey, 2014). When I worked as a delivery driver at Round Table, I would rarely ask others to help make deliveries when things were backed up. This was for two reasons, the first is that it would not be along their route causing them to not be able to make as many deliveries (they make less money). The second reason was that I would make fewer tips as well since I would not be taking as many deliveries. As a result, asking for help would have negatively impacted both of us as drivers but would have helped the customer get their pizza faster. So, my transactional approach to things prevented us from providing a better service to the customer.

**Shy to New People**

My third weakness is that I am shy when interacting with new people. While I am a relator that forms deep connections with people it can take me a while to get there, and I do not form that strong relationship with everyone. With people that I do not become close with, the relationships are very transactional. As in we only really help each other if the other person gets something out of it. “Burns (1978) argued that transactional leadership practices lead followers to short-term relationships of exchange with the leader. These relationships tend toward shallow, temporary exchanges of gratification and often create resentments between the participants” (Burns 1978, as cited in McCleskey, 2014). This is something that happened in my team at the shipping company since I did not work with them long enough to build a strong relationship. I worked with a team of three other people, and sometimes one of us would get backed up with our part of the job. Whenever this would happen it would affect all of us since our jobs were connected. Then we would have to help each other try to catch up in the area that was slacking. When this happened you could feel the tension that people were annoyed with the person that was backed up and needed to ask for help. I believe this was due to the transactional nature of our relationship because I never formed a deeper more meaningful relationship with them since I did not work with them for that long.

**Transactional Leadership Recommendations**

**Try New Things**

One important role for a leader is to come up with new more effective ways of doing things for their team. However, as Liu et al. pointed out transactional leaders have a resistance to innovation (Liu et al., as cited in McCleskey, 2014).So, this is an important weakness to address with an actionable recommendation to improve my openness to innovation. Since my focus at the moment is working on my master’s, I will try to find new more effective study strategies. I studied the same way throughout my bachelor’s degree because it worked well for me. However, this does not mean there are no better ways for me to be studying. I think this recommendation will help build my innovative leadership because it will prove to me that things can always be improved, even in a system that has worked well for years.

**Ask for Help**

Since one of my biggest weaknesses is not asking for help when I need it. Next time I run into a problem that I struggle with during one of my courses at WGU, I will reach out to the course instructor for help. Even though asking for help is seen as a thing that followers do, it can also be a trait of a good leader. “Those who want to lead are well served by first endeavoring to follow” (Peters & Haslam, 2018). This will also break down my idea about every interaction with someone needs to have a benefit to both parties involved. Sometimes people are willing to help others for no personal gain.

**Ask Personal Questions**

My third major weakness is being shy with new people. To address this, I will try to ask personal questions the next time I meet a new person. If I get to know someone on a more personal level, then I will be more likely to interact well with them and we would work more effectively as a team. This way I use my strength as a relator with more than just a few people. As Graen et al. put it in their paper, this would lead to more high-quality transactions that are based on interpersonal bonds, rather than low-quality transactions based on the exchange of goods (Graen et al. 1982, as cited in Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

**Smart Goals**

My first specific goal is the build at least two strong relationships at my new job. I will measure my progress by determining how comfortable I am around those people I build a relationship with and how much of my personal life I am willing to share with them. This goal is attainable because I will be meeting and working with many new people whom I can connect with if I am willing to put myself out there. The goal is relevant to becoming a better leader because having strong relationships with people makes them have more trust in you as a leader. I will accomplish this goal within the next two months.

My second specific goal is to learn and use at least one new study method. I will measure this by determining if I use the new study method. This goal is attainable because I will be studying extensively over the next six months. The goal is relevant to becoming a better leader because a leader needs to be open to changing things for the better. I will accomplish this goal within the next two months so that I can use the strategy for the rest of my time at WGU.

**Specific Actions**

To help achieve my first smart goal of building strong new relationships I will talk to my coworkers during downtime rather than do my normal behavior of going on my phone. This will help me achieve my goal because it will make me seem more open to getting to know them rather than being withdrawn. A second specific action I will make is that I will try to spend time with them during lunch break or after work. In the past, I will typically eat alone and watch something on my phone, and I do not usually spend time with coworkers outside of work hours. Doing this will make me more likely to build a strong relationship with one of my coworkers. If I can get better at building strong relationships with more of my coworkers, then it will also make me a better leader in the long run.

To help achieve my second smart goal of using at least one new study method I will begin to research what works for other people. This will enable me to discover new ways of studying that I have never thought of or tried to use before. A second specific action I will do is to test out some of the new study methods I find to see if they work for me. Doing this will help me realize that there are always better ways to do things even if my method has worked for years. This will help me improve as a leader because it will make me more open to innovation.

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