



LEADERSHIP STYLES

WHAT IS YOURS?

LEADERSHIP
SAT: Task 1

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Peter Drucker said, “Leadership is lifting a person’s vision to high sights, the raising of a person’s performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations” (Rainer, 2013). Strong leadership in businesses and communities can enable people and organizations to stretch beyond the normal and ordinary to achieve extraordinary results. To be strong leaders, people must first understand their style of leadership, its strengths and limitations, and how to work with others whose style differs from their own.

My Leadership Style

“Participatory leaders are typically post conventional leaders. Their action logic uses every organizational interaction to make meaning, live purpose, grow self and others, and transform organizations” (Blair, 2008). As I analyzed Lewin’s Leadership Styles, I found that I best fit the role of participative leader. Groups need a leader, guidance, and organization, but individual voices need to be heard. Participative leaders meet these needs by acting as a guiding hand while accepting the thoughts and ideas of group members. Once the ideas are submitted and the group works through them, the participative leader takes the responsibility of making final decisions when needed. The ideas and values of others are highly important to me. I see the power that comes from getting input from many sources at all levels of an organization, but also recognize that, ultimately, decisions must be made.

Strengths

An employee who feels like their voice is never heard is an unmotivated employee. Participatory leadership enables employees to know that they are valued, respected, and have a real stake in what the group/company is doing. When people feel valued, they tend to invest more into the company. Motivation increases, which causes people to stay longer at their jobs. Ultimately, more motivated employees with less turnover helps the company’s bottom line. Although the process may not be as fast as having one person make all the decisions, it should decrease costs overtime.

Quality of product also increases under participatory leadership. The old saying goes, “Two heads are better than one.” When multiple people are involved in decision-making and brainstorming processes, resulting usable ideas increase. When a problem arises, the minds of many work to fix it, best practices can be employed, and best end results achieved. When starting from scratch, more people create a larger pool of ideas, from which the best ideas can be pulled. Companies with the best products and practices go on to become powerhouses in their industries. Quality creates consumer trust and the highest quality can often be achieved with participatory leadership where creativity and participation from everyone is encouraged.

Weaknesses

The participative process, although overall more effective, can have its downsides. By virtue of the fact that the ideas of many are solicited, decisions take longer. This makes participative leadership a slower way to lead and get things accomplished. Generally, democratic leadership will involve having a few more meetings and taking a little longer

to ensure communication is complete and understood. A participative leader must be sensitive to deadlines and start projects earlier and/or follow a very strict schedule, making sure all members of the group are aware of and accountable to the deadlines.

If roles are not well defined in a group setting, “democratic leadership can lead to communication failures and uncompleted projects” (Cherry, 2013). Because of the time commitment involved with participatory leadership, productivity can decrease. If a participative leader does not include some role assignment in the structure of their group, employees can become confused, not know where they fit, and not know when they are responsible for making things happen. When the group meets, a participative leader must make sure everyone knows their opinions and ideas are valued, but also make them aware of what their responsibilities are. Accountability is key and the guiding hand must be present to ensure that a brainstorming session at the beginning of a project isn’t where the participation and responsibility end.

Other Leadership Styles

Participative leadership is not the only way to lead. It falls in the middle of the leadership spectrum - not extreme in one direction or the other. The two slightly more extreme styles of leadership are authoritarian and delegative.

Authoritarian

Authoritarian leadership leaves the decision making to one person: the leader. There is occasional input from group members, but it is generally very limited. Participative leadership compares to this style in that a participative leader still reserves final decision-making power for him/herself. However, participative leadership allows more freedom in processes, timelines, etc. An authoritarian leader will give direction on exactly how, what, where, and when things need to be done and not leave their directives open for discussion. Authoritarian leadership is highly effective in situations where timelines are tight and/or when other members of the group do not possess the expertise necessary to make correct decisions (Cherry, 2013).

Delegative

Delegative leadership leaves the decision making to everyone. The guiding hand present in participative and authoritarian leadership is absent in this style. Instead of keeping a schedule and helping the decision-making process along, the delegative leader simply turns individuals loose to make decisions. This often leads to missed deadlines and unmotivated employees. Delegative leadership can be effective in times when all members of the group are highly expert (Cherry, 2013). However, they must also be highly self-motivated. The combination of expertise and self-motivation can be hard to come by without a guiding hand to help the group see the vision of what they are to accomplish. Participative leadership incorporates a piece of this style in that decisions are partly turned over to the group, but the participative leader retains some control over final decision making power and requires more accountability from group members.

In short, the participatory leadership style incorporates parts of the other two styles, but avoids the excesses that can make the other two styles ineffective.

Understanding Leadership Styles

The fact that there are multiple leadership styles is crucial to understand when one is in a leadership position. Understanding your own leadership style helps you to better employ it, become aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and find the ways that best employ strengths and decrease effects of weaknesses in differing workplace situations. Knowing what is and isn't effective in other leadership styles also allows for flexibility and adaptation when necessary.

If a person is only familiar with his or her own leadership style, that person may overlook ineffective things they do that fall within the weaknesses of a different style. Conversely, they may also inadvertently disregard positive aspects of other styles that can apply and improve a situation. For example, if a person's general leadership style is participative, they may successfully use that style to complete many projects. However, they may be thrown into a situation in which the group they're called upon to lead is lower in expertise and/or organization. In this case, the leader would possibly need to adopt more aspects of the authoritarian leadership style to ensure that decisions being made fit with their knowledge of the field. As another example, a leader may be called upon to lead a team of highly-trained, highly-motivated professionals who are expert in their areas. A team like this would resent being overly supervised and may lose motivation as a result. In this case, adoption of some aspects of delegative leadership would allow experts freedom to do what they know and keep a less knowledgeable team leader out of progress's way. Awareness of the weaknesses of delegative leadership would alert a leader to the possible problems of missing deadlines and incomplete projects. They could then incorporate other leadership styles as needed to keep the team working smoothly.

Leadership Problems in the Workplace

Problem One - Changing Leadership

Humans are creatures of habit. In the workplace, employees get used to responding to and working with the "boss" or team leader to whom they are accustomed. Differing styles of leadership can be problematic when the leader or manager of a group changes. If a skilled team is used to working with someone with delegative leadership qualities and is suddenly thrust into working with an authoritarian leader, there will be issues. Group members will likely resent removal of their decision-making authority. They will become less motivated and creative as they feel that their input is not sought or valued as it previously was. This change in leadership style could be detrimental to the success of a creative team.

Solution 1a - Leadership Training

One way to solve the problem of leadership changes is leadership training. If a leader is entering a setting where a specific type of leadership will be most effective, that person needs to be taught how to lead in that way. Team leaders must be willing to step up and

do what is necessary for the success of the team. Training enables individuals in leadership positions to understand their leadership qualities, their weaknesses, and how they can incorporate change into their natural leadership style to accommodate situational needs. For example, the naturally authoritarian leader must learn to relinquish control of some decision-making power when working with a skilled team of professionals. By training this leader to make adjustments and make compromises on their natural leadership style for the good of the team, a company can turn a potentially disastrous transition into a successful one.

Solution 1b - Leadership Match

Another solution for the issue of management transition comes from analysis and careful placement. When team leaders, managers, etc. are being chosen, the company can do a little more work up front to analyze needs of a group. Leadership qualities can be analyzed amongst people who are possibilities for the job and the company can look for the best fit before ever moving a leader into position. If the company knows a certain division has been struggling with deadlines, making decisions, and follow through, obviously the selection of a delegative leader would be catastrophic. By taking time to look for specific needs, the company can make a more educated decision. A knowledgeable authoritarian leader could be chosen to help make decisions, keep a tight schedule, and get the division back on track. The company avoids employee relations issues, incompleteness of projects, etc. by putting the right person in the right position from the start. If the needs of the division change, reassessment can happen to ensure that leadership is meeting those needs.

Problem Two - Clash of Leadership Styles

Leaders must work together in a company to achieve results not just for their areas of responsibility, but for the company as a whole. If multiple divisions are called upon to work together on projects, differing leadership styles can create problems with scheduling, communication, completion of projects, and employee morale. Different leaders have different ways of doing things. A highly organized, highly scheduled leader may want to have more meetings with more hard-and-fast deadlines, whereas a more laid-back leader trusts his or her team to make correct decisions and complete projects without the consistent presence of a “taskmaster.” When two styles such as these collide, employees may not know how to respond and may become discouraged by a feeling of uncertain expectations. If two unit leaders become upset with each other and don’t work out their differences, communication can break down, making synergy impossible and halting progress in general.

Solution 2a - Higher Authority and Role Distinction

When a group of leaders is called upon to work together, they need to know what their roles are, where their authority begins and ends, and who they can go to if issues arise or they have questions. A “higher authority” individual needs to be monitoring groups and projects as leaders work together. It is important that this overseer assigns tasks, roles, and expectations that are specific to each group so leaders know what is expected of them and where their boundaries are. When a leader knows his or her role, they can take care of business without thinking they are responsible for decisions or management outside of

their assigned sphere. If there is an issue with one group not meeting deadlines that impede progress for another group, leaders have a place to go to report problems. By having an authority to handle issues and manage the project overall, unit leaders avoid scuffles amongst themselves and can continue their work regardless of how their style of leading may differ from someone else's.

Solution 2b - The Right Task for the Right Team

As projects are broken up and tasks divided amongst multiple units, consideration needs to be given to team strengths and leadership styles. Different parts of the project will be better accomplished by different teams. For example, one part of the project may involve a lot of brainstorming, but still requires that tasks are completed in a certain timeframe. The most effective and creative brainstorms are accomplished by teams led by participatory leaders. Because this leadership style looks for input from the whole team, but reserves final decision making power, a participatory leader could come up with creative solutions on a deadline. If another part of the project requires that many small tasks, already specifically outlined, be completed consistently on tight deadlines, a team with a more authoritarian leader would be an appropriate choice. As tasks and needed outcomes are analyzed, teams can be assigned those tasks in which they are best suited for success. As each section of the task comes together, leaders can see how their different style contributed to the success of the whole.

Advantages to Differing Leadership Styles

Different Leader, Different Response

Not everyone responds well to being told what to do. Conversely, not everyone thrives in an environment where they are given total freedom. Different leadership styles offer the opportunity to pair individuals with leaders who can help them grow, progress, and be the most successful they can be. If a person is not thriving in his or her area, a leader can attempt to identify if perhaps, with different management in a different area, the person's needs could be better met, taking a less effective, less satisfied employee and helping them to become more effective and more satisfied with his or her work situation.

Acknowledging that people work well under different management styles can help a company to reduce turnover by increasing employee satisfaction. Employee turnover is costly in any industry, so by finding ways to match individual employees with managers who allow them to succeed, a company can save in the long run. In addition, happy employees are more creative and motivated employees. People who are happy with their jobs are more likely to follow through on tasks, cultivate use of best practices, and work to keep their company at the forefront of an industry. Use of best practices can help minimize legal issues and maximize production and consistent striving for growth keeps a company turning out high-quality, state-of-the-art goods and services. All of these factors have a positive impact on the company's bottom line.

Diverse Tasks Require Diverse Leadership Skills

As discussed in the previous section, different tasks often require different types of leadership. Every company needs someone (or multiple people) who is attentive to logistics, scheduling, and other details. On the other hand, creativity is a necessary asset

that every company must cultivate in its employees. If a company operates solely with delegative leadership, there may be issues in cohesiveness to company guidelines and vision. A company where everyone sets their own schedule and has their own idea of what company goals are is almost certainly doomed for failure. If a company operates solely with authoritarian leadership, employees may feel like they have no voice, no motivation, and no chance to make things better where they see opportunities for change and growth. Having a mixture of leadership styles helps a company to find balance. Companies with a vision statement that is upheld by people in all levels of the company set goals, follow through with goals, and continue to set new goals to continually reach for the ideal set by the vision statement. For everyone in a company to follow one main path, someone needs to set guidelines. This is where people with authoritarian tendencies can come in handy. They help groups to understand rules and procedures and expect follow through with deadlines. As companies grow and change, policies, procedures, and vision statements need adjustment to keep things progressing. A participatory leader can spark synergetic processes by getting people to work together in helping the company progress beyond the level at which it currently operates. A delegative leader helps come up with new processes and ideas by giving people freedom to do what they think is best. A mixture of leadership across appropriate tasks helps the company's bottom line by keeping things organized, getting people to work together, and consistently coming up with new ideas for how things can be improved.

Different Leader, Different Results

Companies need to be productive, but they also need to make the best use of their human resources, which includes keeping people happy. The strengths of different leaders can boost a company's ability to meet many different needs all at once. Some leaders have a gift for creating community. These leaders create opportunities for individuals to feel like they are an important part of the whole, to make friends throughout the company, to be acknowledged in the good things they do, to feel like their company gives back to the community, and to feel safe. Leaders on this end of company success are human resource giants who bring out the full potential of employees while making sure they don't dig too deep or take too much from employees without giving back. Other leaders understand the need for employees to do their jobs and do them well. They recognize the need for consistently increased productivity and have a gift for seeing the processes that will make that happen. By combining these types of leaders together, the company achieves great results in all areas. Production is high, employee satisfaction is high, and quality of products and services is high. As a result, customer satisfaction is increased and consumers keep coming back for more. By looking at the needs of a company holistically and using multiple leadership styles to meet these needs, power brands are created and consumers recognize a company as being a place where they will get the best goods and services their money can buy.

By capitalizing on the strengths of different kinds of leaders, companies can do what is best for the company as a whole, for their communities, and for individual employees. Differences become strengths as we acknowledge that it takes all sorts of leaders to make a company the best it can possibly be.

Works Cited

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