

# FC4658: HR & Leadership

## Learning Diary

CS18BTECH11042

Shreyas Jayant Havaladar

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### What does being a leader or leadership mean?

Starting with this vague question made me rethink several small instances throughout my 20-year existence where a leader was prominent; it seemed that every major decision or defining move that I witnessed was, in a way, influenced by someone. Being a member of the student council at my school, I remembered an instance where our Head took a risky stand in reforming the election protocol at our school. His being a good friend of mine inspired confidence in his decision. The charisma helped convert members on the border to be convinced and be ready to sacrifice our position to raise our voice against something unfair. That was perhaps my first explicit recognition of how a great leader could influence and inspire. I think this example fits the definition we discussed perfectly.

Being the **first one** in the **line of fire**, **exuding confidence** and helping people exude confidence by building trust, **listening patiently to criticism** and trying to overcome it, creating a **clear vision** for everyone to understand form the four cornerstones of good leadership. It also stands out how leaders need to be extremely patient because once a leader loses his/her calm, the team gets lost, very evident from how the Indian Cricket Team relied heavily on Dhoni's cool and relaxed mind to bail us out of messy situations when the team was losing its patience.

Being a leader and possessing leadership skills are also two non-identical qualities. An individual who has the skills to lead can employ and propagate those skills wherever the expertise is required, but a leader might not necessarily be a complete package possessing all attributes to face any situation. So a group of individuals employing disjoint sets of skills might be a better bet in most cases.

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"Dilbert" by Scott Adams – Being a Good Leader.

This Dilbert comic perfectly showcases how a leader needs to be able to withstand fire being spewed onto him/her without retaliating too harshly; leaders need to weave their way out of the negative spaces of their teams into positive.

### Levels of Leadership:



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Our discussion of the 5 level hierarchy made me introspect a bit on how we could classify leaders in non-formal environments, or how individuals grow from the bottom to the top of the pyramid—again highlighting how difficult it is to juggle all the different facets listed above and become a Level 5 leader. Only by mastering these aspects can you earn the respect and attentive ear of the people you wish to lead, including people of leadership levels below them in the pyramid shown above. **Level 5 Leaders create great leaders** and render themselves obsolete; this establishes an environment where everyone can achieve the maximum of their potential.

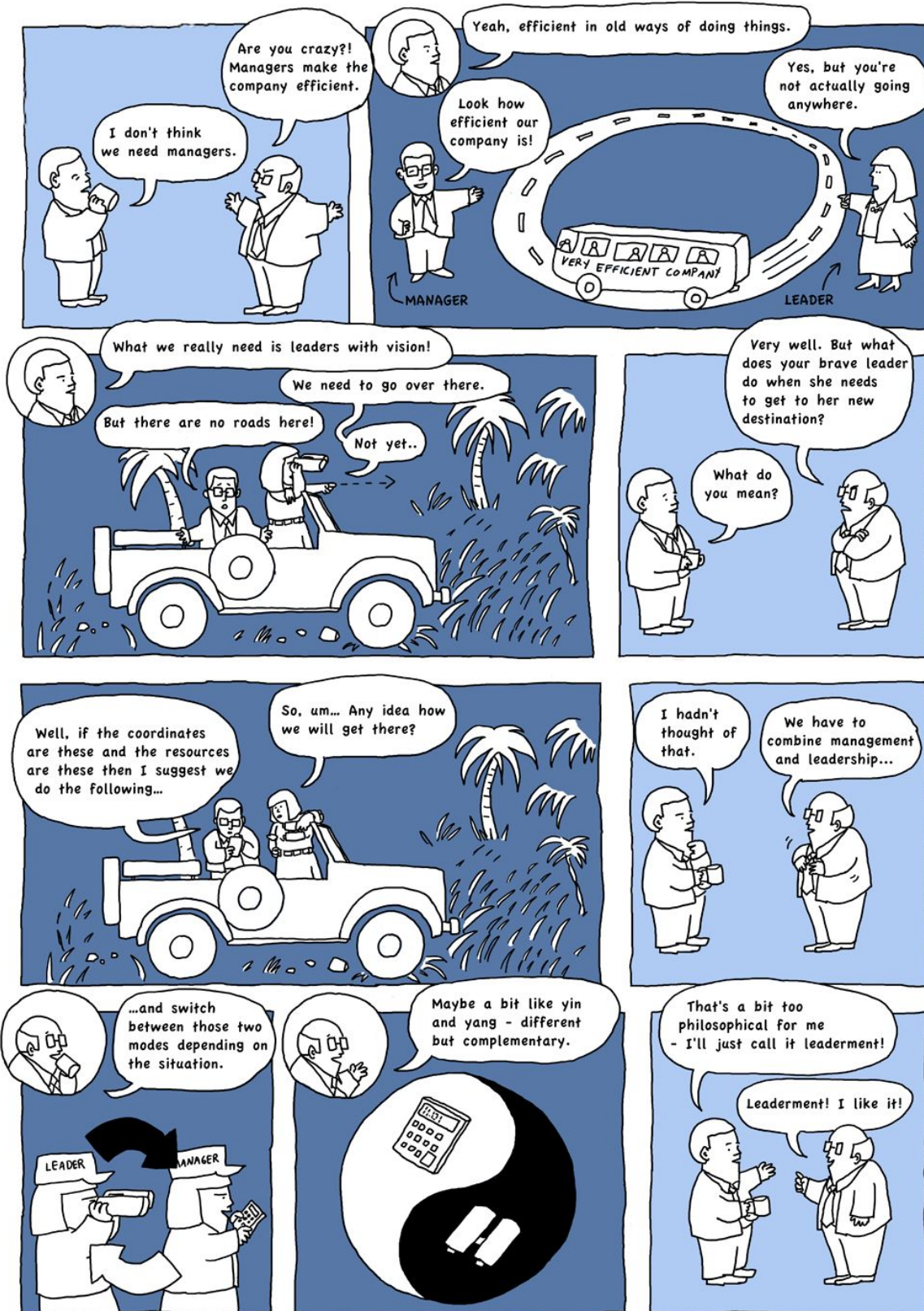
### **Leaders vs. Managers:**

It seemed weird to me to discuss leadership as a different entity from managers as the entire corporate world is filled with high profile managerial positions but never is someone formally called a leader in an organization. It then became more evident as to why such a situation exists; becoming a leader and a manager requires different skills.

This image demonstrates how a **leader has the freedom to break out of the mold**, bend the protocol to try and achieve bigger and better goals. Whereas a **Manager is a maximizer**, he/she has to achieve the organizational goals and objectives while maintaining certain protocols and, at the same time, administrating and overseeing individuals ensure they fulfill their duties. Both are important in their own ways; managers bring about a machine like an efficiency while trying to focus on individuals, whereas leaders might let few individuals get overshadowed or neglected at the expense of achieving lofty goals. A balance and intricate combination of both is necessary for the smooth functioning of the organization while allowing scope for innovation and risks.

Thus “leaderment” as illustrated in the comic on the next page sums up the discussion perfectly; it is the need of the hour to hone employees to adapt to different roles as and when required. Fluidity in the position can help the organization survive crises of varying types.

WWW.BUSINESSILLUSTRATOR.COM PRESENTS: LEADERMENT



BY VIRPI OINONEN



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## Self-Leadership

This seemed like a pretty interesting topic to me as it seems fundamental that a person cannot lead others until and unless he/she is capable of leading himself/herself. Only when one is **aware of one's flaws and strengths** can one work on them and, in this process, improve their teams by utilizing everyone's strengths and, at the same time, working on the weaknesses by working on constructive criticism. By working on our weaknesses, we can create belief in our teams that we are equal and thus prevent any sort of dissonance, thus paving the growth of the entire organization. By leading ourselves, we can also hone our motivation and cognitive skills to exercise them in tense situations involving our organization.

## Followership and Empowerment

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**“The key to successful leadership is knowing how to make people follow you. Leave a trail of doughnuts.”**

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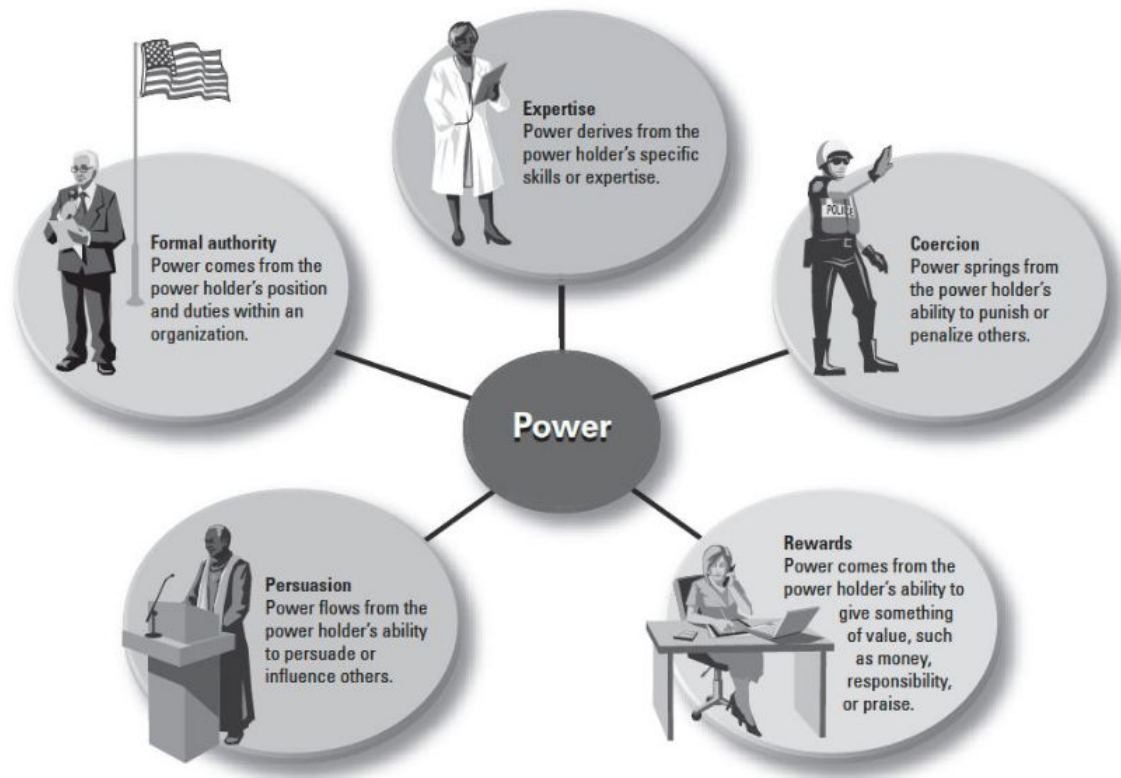
Now, as we cannot leave a trail of doughnuts to make people follow us, we need distinct traits that attract people towards us.

A leader isn't called a leader without any people following him/her. Thus making people **trust and believe** in our vision as a leader is the first step towards becoming one. I did discuss my insights on the importance of the first follower in the class assignment, and it goes to show how building a network of people who have faith in you is crucial.

Followership and empowerment go hand in hand as a follower needs to feel that he/she has a say in the operations and thus needs to be empowered to contribute. Power is most stable when it is shared by the followers who then develop confidence in themselves, to create a sustainable cycle of growth for the organization, that is detached from any single particular individual. **"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus."**

## Power Dynamics

### Sources of Power



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**Power begets more power.** More power begets even more power. So it becomes of paramount importance to ensure the power dynamics are stable and in the right hands. The ability to influence others can be catastrophic as seen in the case of **Hitler's** God-like charisma, commanding **referent and coercive power** like no one else, thus instilling new ideologies into entire nations. The sources of power we discussed were pretty insightful about how unique every situation is. The example of a **new-born** baby exercising **referent** power was so critical, it shows how little is needed to command the attention of people. **Legitimate** power might seem important for **stability**, but **expert** power is perhaps most **decisive** in shaping the organization. **Reward and Coercive** power seem to be an integral part of the **non-organizational** power struggle, existing at every home. **Expert** power might thus often be **disruptive** and cause ripples across the entire existing hierarchy.

This is very evident in how when if a younger member of a family is perhaps more informed of a particular situation, the severity and seriousness of COVID-19 right now, and tries to convince an elder of the family against some decision of theirs, say a walk to the temple, it challenges the status quo, causing issues in the power distribution. Thus a **balance** and understanding are necessary. The example of how a **security** guard had the power to **deny** entry to an **Associate Professor** was intriguing, as it may seem that formally a professor ranks much higher in the hierarchy, but due to the nature of the situation, the guard had the highest level of power in that sphere and goes to show how liquid power dynamics are, in one sphere you might be at the top of the hierarchy but otherwise you might not even be acknowledged.

## Theories

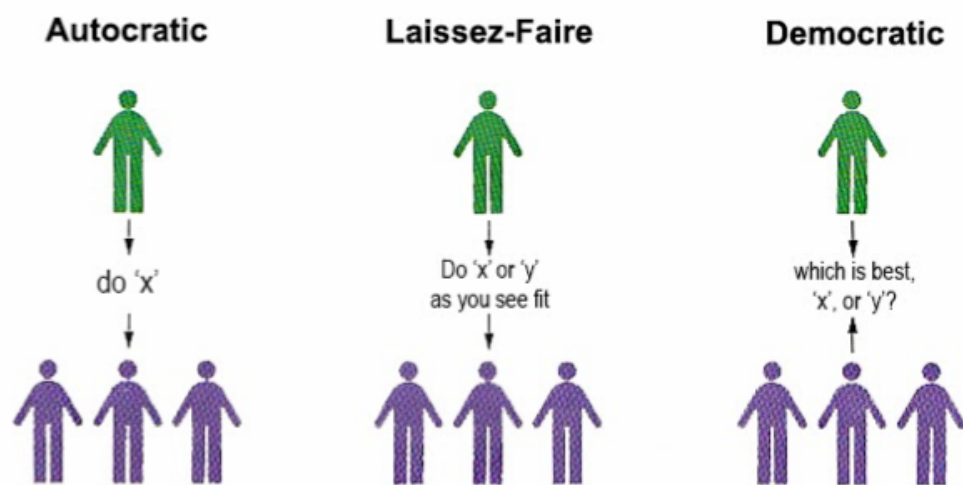
### Trait Theory

I was of the very strong opinion that being a leader is in the DNA of a person, and great leaders are born and not created. But listening to arguments from my classmates made me rethink that it is very rare that someone ticks all boxes innately, a good leader is the one who **learns along his/her journey**. A "great person" still needs the **right direction** to develop into a great leader. Even introverted people can perhaps become leaders with the **right support system** around them. It is important to understand the need to instill leadership qualities throughout the organization and thus help create a natural succession

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from level 1 to level 2 leadership and so on up the pyramid. This seems like an important point to me because organizations tend to be **over-reliant** on individuals to lead the entire organization and the loss of the individual causes crisis in the organization, which can also be seen in large organizations like Apple Inc. whose innovation has been critically questioned after the death of Steve Jobs. When top leaders are no more part of the organization, it is important to have people ready to step in their shoes and thus developing **leaders at every level** is of paramount importance.

#### Behavioral Approaches

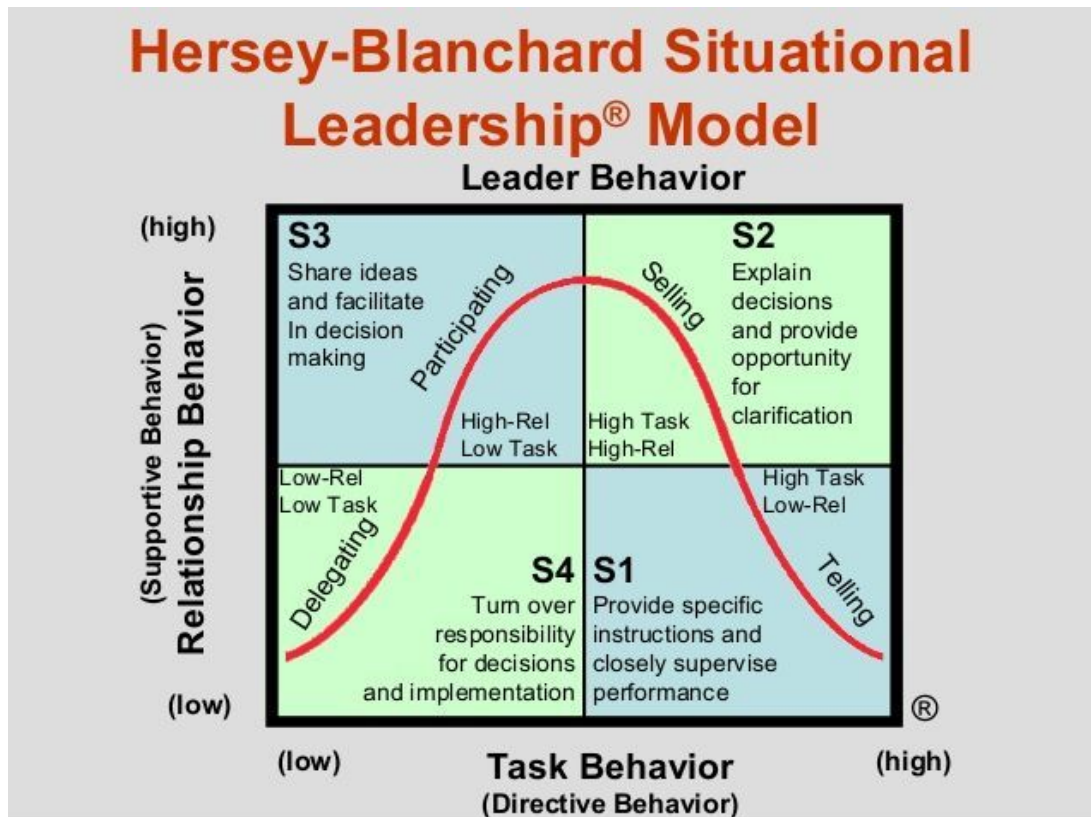


Each leader has his/her own distinct style of leadership, and this is developed via a lot of factors. Which style of leadership fits where is a difficult question to answer because each situation has different sets of individuals and thus different requirements. Even in the same organization at different stages of its life cycle, different styles might be required, **Democratic** might fit for the most **stable** part of its life, in times of crisis **Autocratic** style might sound risky but might be the only option to rescue the organization from **turmoil**, **Laissez-Faire** leadership might be important when the organization is in its **nascent** stages. I did not think before the discussion that a Laissez-Faire leader would make sense in a real-world situation, but the example of Tesla Auto-pilot provided an interesting perspective where a Laissez-Faire leader might actually be the best one in a well oiled smoothly functioning organization, where only certain emergencies or for being the face of the organization you need a leader. A **mature group** of individuals might actually progress



better **without any concrete leadership** as well. So I understood how I might as a leader, need to adapt to different styles to match the situation.

### Hersey And Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory



This was the perfect follow up to the previous discussion. It was pretty interesting to see how a leader might have to decide between the **trade-off** of achieving goals or retaining skilled individuals, potential vs. performance, and how at the same time, different goals might require different types of leadership, a highly skill-dependent research project might require the leader to adapt S3, where the task might take the back seat over the individuals who possess the skills to achieve it. Even different sets of people require different styles and thus it was helpful for me to evaluate the situations I might encounter as a leader and have a rough formulaic sketch of how I should approach that situation. The idea of life cycle from the course Fundamentals of Organizational Structure was a nice throwback, which helped me connect how with the life cycle of an organization, the life cycle of a leader is also intricately connected.

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## Leadership Pipeline and Managing Self



This was one of the most important topics I believe as we are just about to start our journeys as leaders and being aware of the pitfalls helps us prevent falling into them. The importance of **commitment** to the cause and progress by morphing into different roles as we grow is imperative. **Cooperation** and **collaboration** need to be ensured while maintaining healthy competition to achieve greater goals as a functional manager. With the scale of the businesses growing, developing synergy between different groups is important. And by going on this journey, we eventually want to reach the position of an icon, to invoke aura and awe from the public itself, seeing the **larger purpose** of the entire organization. The driving force behind the organization should be achieving the organization's vision, which arises from having **clarity** in the leader's vision itself. Therefore having a **mission statement** for ourselves is a big bonus to install a mission statement for every individual and thus the organization as a whole.

## Organizational Culture

As a leader the **defining characteristics** of the organization are shaped by the leaders, thus it becomes vital to **determine the appropriate approach** for the culture. As evident

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from our American vs Japanese styles of employee handling, as an entrepreneur I must also understand what fits my employees as well as the organization the best.

### Organizational Politics

If I am unable to establish stable power dynamics in my organization, it would lead to a collapse, and the idea of college friends starting-up was apt, as that is the situation most of us are in. As a captain of the ship, the power may not reside with me at all times, but it should reside with a person with the **right intentions** at all costs. If an individual misuses their power for their self-interest it is detrimental to the organization's health, as it might become a recurring theme and the organization's interest loses steam. It is a very thin line between what is ethical and what is not, and might vary from person to person, but it is to ensure any action is not damaging the organization. Understanding the possible sources of organizational politics and unethical political behavior was helpful as I can in the future take steps to prevent such situations. In today's age where data is gold, ensuring my employees are loyal to the organization is imperative.

### Building Trust and Positive Work Culture

Discussion on developing a **positive atmosphere** in the organization was a natural extension to follow, as an organization where people **trust** each other would never suffer from politics. So generating trust to facilitate risk and intra-organization information sharing is essential for a new organization. These pointers seemed insightful for every relationship in general and it makes sense to establish an environment where there is no gap between peoples across the organization. **Trusting employees** establishes trust and confidence in both directions and helps create ethical power use, and eventually positive work culture.

It is important to maintain both physical and psychological safety to ensure the well-being of the employees. Basic measures help employees **feel valued and cared for**, making them care about the organization in reciprocity. Words of appreciation irrespective of results or personal identity establish a **communication climate** conducive to both employee and the organization. When your thought and actions are valued you invariably work harder. It is also important to take into account different factors to make the workplace fair for **heterogeneous** groups without any bias. Equity over equality is the

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motto as every person might have different needs. Different forms of justice were discussed which seems important from the perspective of an employee and thus must be considered important as a leader.



"Dilbert" by Scott Adams

Unlike Dilbert's office, it is imperative to maintain transparency across all fronts possible.

### **TED Talk: Everyday Leadership**

Drew's **"lollipop"** theory was ingenious, yet at the same time very relatable. We lament not being influential or not having power, but there are many incidents that we inherently forget but leave a lasting mark on the lives of individuals we might not even be in touch with! His story of reforming the entire life path of a freshman girl, made me rethink all such "lollipop" instances in my life, whether good or bad, and realize the **gravity of my minor decisions**. It was indeed one of the best TED Talks I've watched in how complex the thought was yet how every single one of us invariably affected by it and continues to impact even more people. The simple illustration made it ever so clear how every decision we take is influential in a way or another, and we are leaders in our own right. So it is high time we take **cognizance** of the fact and live our lives **embracing ourselves as a leader**.

### **TED Talk: What it takes to be a great leader**

This talk was a succinct yet clear introduction to the idea of a great leader.

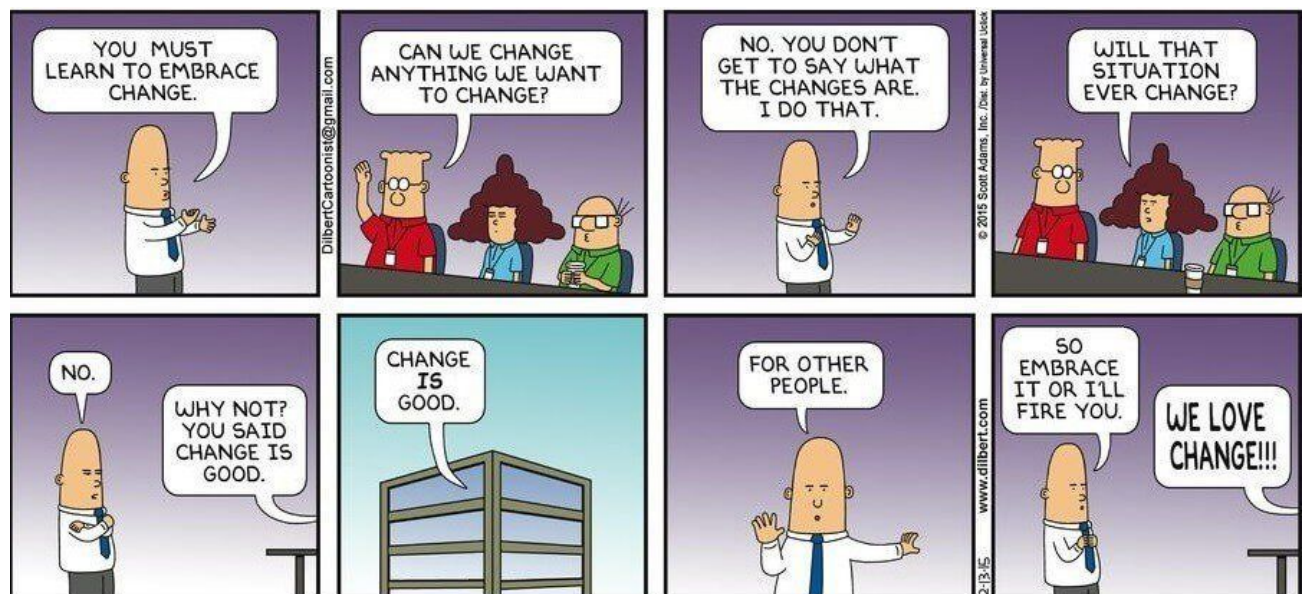
A great leader is **not an all-powerful superhuman**, just but just a normal human being who has developed himself/herself to but a visionary, who looks ahead **anticipating the**

**change** and not reacting to it; a **malleable thought machine** with the focus to not dwell on the comfort of past but rather explore the unknown by **risking** it all; a diverse **network** of connection which is always ready to listen and grow.

Hearing examples cited from real-world failures point out how a great leader in a particular situation might crumble when faced with adversity, thus **adapting and evolving** is the only way ahead as young leaders for us.

### **TED Talk: Eric Liu: How to understand power**

Power is a very **abstract** concept without any concrete uniform physical representation and this video provided a lens through which we could view the origins and movement of power in various contexts. A nice overview of different types of power was intriguing as a power holder in the form of a leader I must be aware of the ways power might be challenged and at the same time allow for legitimate issues to be expressed and vest in all my followers; power to **critique** and **question** the status quo. I must also be ready to **embrace change** and as illustrated in the video, aware of the **fluidity** of power. Being vigilant about where I stand in this web of power struggle is essential as an individual and organization to be watchful of who exerts power on me and how that power could affect me. Likewise, I should also have the freedom to exercise my power as an individual against injustice.



"Dilbert" by Scott Adams



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I also realized it is important to not become drunk with power as change is the only constant and it would not be long before a collective power overthrows me if I ever misuse my position. Thus I'll try to not be like Dilbert's boss and listen to genuine suggestions :P

### **80th Birthday - A Video From The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**

This was perhaps a few of the most **introspective** minutes of my life where I was already imagining how people from different phases of my life would remember me. 80th seems like an optimistic age for our generation given the stress we unnecessarily burden ourselves with, but the essence of the video touched quite a few heartstrings. We have **one life to live**, but the **ability to shape so many more**. I was quite humbled by how one action of a great leader might have widespread ripples across the world and affect so many souls. It helped me realize the responsibility of the leader beyond the organization and towards each and every individual associated with me. I would like to be remembered as a **genuine** person above anything else, someone who cared about his people and did everything in his power to help them. I want to be remembered as a visionary who challenged the norms and took a stand against injustice. I want to be remembered as me, beyond all the superficialities, a good person through and through.

### **TED Talk: Why you should know how much your coworkers get paid David Burkus**

It was a nice peek into the cruel corporate world where employees have been forced to believe in certain ideas that make no sense. The idea of the **free flow of information** seems so unnatural that we've been brainwashed to believe against it now, but imagining a situation where it is the reality seems so pleasant. No spite or gossiping, no back-stabbing are few of the first changes that the organization will notice when every employee knows and believes in the fact that they are treated **fairly**. This is the first step towards complete **transparency**. This would thus lead to positive work culture and a **harmonious** collaboration across all employees. If adopted publicly as well, this would also help us prevent corporate leeching where employees are underpaid for their skills. Every company would under public pressure succumb to payment of appropriate wages and in the long term future help establish equity in the world across wages. I would definitely promote

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salary transparency as a leader and an individual and try to encourage my peers to do the same.

### Remember the Titans

This is a movie about **overcoming superficial societal barriers** and embracing what one collectively loves and lives for, in this case, American football. It is about unique leaders facing unique challenges and overcoming them by putting their personal achievements behind for the good of the entire team. Coach Yoast lets go of the Hall of Fame induction to ensure the match proceeds fairly by confronting the match official. Coach Boone brings together warring factions of people by uniting them with a common goal of victory, purposely pairing opposite race players and helping the entire team build genuine relationships. The team captain, Gerry Bertier fairly removes a teammate who is also his best friend for being discriminative against a black teammate.

There are various minor leadership traits I observed that helped my broaden my understanding of the topic through a **real-world and very plausible example**:

- **Adapting** different styles of leadership, depending on the situation, being a strict autocrat to prevent a breakdown in crisis, to being a friend while celebrating victories by dancing.
- Making people **believe in themselves** and each other, which is indispensable towards the success of the entire team.
- **Being fair and just** and keeping personal relationships at a bay while working, in this case playing and building genuine **professional relationships**.

### 12 Angry Men

This is a movie about **life**, and how it takes a singular decision to make or break it, and amusingly the decision about one's life might not actually be in one's hands! It is one of the most poignant portrayals of human character and the varied facets of it. One interesting observation I made was that all the Jurors are referred **merely by their numbers** throughout the movie until its very end, where only Juror 8 and Juror 9 as identified because they were the ones who challenged the status quo and went against the flow. Even when each juror was starkly different in their background, un-identified Jurors are a very

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stark allusion to the idea of each juror being a different entity and not a different person, meaning how their own personal life ideally holds no value or bearing on the events in the courtroom. Ironically the jurors were prejudiced at the offset and tried to decide the case in a hurry just due to the background of the boy and personal motives. This was a nice extension of the “**lollipop**” theory by Drew in his everyday leadership talk, but the repercussions of a single “not guilty” were profound. The boy **lived**.

- It made me realize that every **decision** I make with my power leaves **permanent marks** on the lives of many individuals and thus weigh and ponder sufficiently.
- It also instilled in me the principle of **not jumping to conclusions** and studying the information I possess to make **educated decisions**, even if I have to go against the majority of what is perceived as truth
- Possessing the **skill to convince people**. As a leader, having outstanding ideas without people to help me implement it is useless. An idea is only as good as its implementation. So I must develop the ability to communicate my vision to my team without being condescending and making them believe in my goal as theirs. Juror 8 alone voting not guilty was not going to free the boy, but the communication of the careful and detailed reasoning behind his thoughts is what helped free the boy.
- **First Follower:** The flipping of Juror 9 was the first step towards Juror 8 laying bare his thoughts and thus the importance of the first follower was demonstrated.

### Conclusion

Overall this course was an **insightful** and **introspective journey** which helped me gauge my own faults as a leader and helped plan how to overcome them. It was a free-flowing stream of knowledge gathering experiences from people across the world, from different perspectives via talks or movies or even discussions during the lectures. It was intriguing to study the various aspects of a skill that has existed since time immemorial and has shaped our society to what it is today. **Human resource** is the most valuable resource one could ever possess, as it equips an individual to **propagate his ideas and bring them to life**. And an individual who does this is truly a great leader.

I hope I can take away some ideas from this course to implement in my life now and in the future as I learn and grow as a leader!