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Adding to *Reignition* Through the Study of Differences in Team Leadership

The way a leader chooses to present him or herself to a team of people directly impacts how successful (or not) that team becomes by the end of its term. The two accepted forms of leadership tend to be task-focused and people-focused leadership. Sometimes we refer to this as “emotional” and “intellectual” types of leadership; usually emotional leaders are thought of as the “social butterflies,” while intellectual leaders are the “go-getters,” wanting to complete and perfect the team’s to-do list. In an article entitled “When Team Members’ Values Differ: The Moderating Role of Team Leadership,” collectively written by Klein, Knight, Ziegert, Lim, and Saltz, the effects of both task-oriented and people-oriented leadership are put to the test. These authors chose two widely accepted moral values, work ethic and traditionalism, to study, as well as team conflict and team effectiveness. (For clarification, the category “team conflict” includes task conflict, procedural conflict and relationship conflict.) The researchers’ ten month long research period included having team members work both together and independently on projects such as clearing nature trails, tutoring elementary school students, restoring communities following a disaster, and community service projects such as volunteering with organizations like Habitat for Humanity and the American Red Cross. These team members were together for around forty hours per week, identical to a usual work week, and were studied in order for the authors to decipher the impact of the type of teamwork and team leadership on the areas the previously chose. The conclusions of their research were the following:

1. Task-focused leadership weakened the effects of values diversity (specifically, work ethic diversity) on team conflict.
2. Person-focused leadership worsened the effects of values diversity (specifically, traditionalism diversity) on team conflict.
3. Team conflict mediated effects of these interactions on team effectiveness.
4. Leaders and their behaviors either strengthen or weaken the relationship between values and conflict, and shape the effects of team demographics and of values diversity.
5. Both task-focused and person-focused leadership have positive and negative aspects in certain situations.
6. There is evidence that leaders can and will switch between task-focused and person-focused leadership.

The preceding conclusions give the idea of *Reignition* purpose and direction. Because of these findings, there is a goal in sight; something to work towards making better on our campus. If we implemented these findings at *Reignition*, students would be better prepared to understand 1) the positive and negative aspects of task-focused and person-focused leadership, 2) the effects their behaviors as a leader may have on their team, and 3) when to volley each type of leadership depending on the goal at hand as well as the composition of their team.

The overarching goal of *Reignition* is to strengthen the campus leadership at The University of Tennessee throughout organizations funded by the University. By incorporating the study of teamwork and group dynamics, our ability to lead in an efficient and effective way would skyrocket. The idea of *Reignition* and the incorporation of the study of team leadership would be successfully accomplished if campus leaders were able to realize and recognize the impact of their behaviors on the members of their organization. By bringing awareness to the impact of leader behaviors on the effectiveness and efficiency of their team, there would be an almost-immediate increase of strength in leadership across campus. Organization leaders that tend to lean towards either task-focused or person-focused leadership would not only be able to learn more about their leadership style and its effects, but the positives (and negatives) of the opposite leadership style. While task-focused leadership is typically defined as the leader who tends to schedule events, make to-do lists, hold people accountable, and coordinate team activities, person-focused leadership is typically the person known as the “social butterfly,” someone who goes with the flow and doesn’t make waves within the organization. Each type of leadership style has positive and negative aspects, which would be important to a campus leader (and really, any leader in general). If the leader of an organization knew both sides to their natural leadership style, they would be able to recognize the affects they have on their team members.

The “personality” of an organization can either be positively or negatively impacted by the behaviors of the leader(s). It would be important that during the *Reignition* retreat, there is an emphasis on being able to self-reflect in a way that would accomplish the recognition of these behavior driven impacts. If a leader knows how to introspectively reflect on their own actions and reactions and then connect these to attitudes or actions of group members, they would find the link between themselves and the members of the organization. Whether it was a positive or negative link would be the key to finding a positive relationship balance between the leader and member. Studying the results of this research would open doors for opportunities to grow within an organization, which would greatly benefit the strength of our leadership on campus.

Lastly, learning how to volley the two leadership styles would serve any organizational leader well. Knowing the results of the previously described study would enable a leader to realize when task-focused leadership will be more effective than person-focused leadership, and vice versa. When the organization needs structure and strict organization, the obvious leadership path to take would be task-focused; however, not all leadership decisions are this easy, and by preparing our campus leaders to be able to make these kinds of decisions will improve campus leadership immensely.

Through the research of Klein, Knight, Ziegert, Lim, and Saltz, *Reignition* will have the resources it needs in order to better prepare our campus leaders. A retreat such as this would allow leaders across campus to grow in their ability to lead their respective organizations, giving members of these organizations a better environment and experience throughout the duration of their time at UT. If we were to organize and execute a retreat for on campus leaders similar to *Reignition*, our strength in leadership as a campus would see much improvement.

Works Cited

Klein, Katherine J., Knight, Andrew P., Ziegert, Jonathan C., Lim, Beng Chong, and Saltz, Jessica L. "When Team Members’ Values Differ: The Moderating Role of Team Leadership." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 114.1 (2011): 25-36. Web.