

Leadership Handbook

Engineering Leadership Program

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The Great Man Theory:

By Matthew Gregory and Vanika Hans

Since ancient times great men and women have surpassed the challenges of their society to become great leaders. These natural leaders are born with all the necessary skills of leadership to thrive and to succeed in their various roles. Similar to divine right and other justifications for hereditary rule, this theory assumes that only leaders will be born with these skills and that no one else can work to obtain them.

In the 1840's this theory was officially formalized by Thomas Carlyle. Basically, the theory implies that leaders are born and will instinctively rise to the challenges that society is facing. Leaders are not created; consequently, no one can simply learn to become a leader. The theory also states that great leaders will have intuition, courage, charisma, intelligence, a drive for action, and a commanding personality or presence. Because the leader possesses these traits, he will gain trust, respect, and any other qualities required of a great leader.

The main advantage of this theory is that because these leaders are predestined, they will instantly have respect and confidence in their leadership. This becomes highly relevant in times when leaders are needed most and immediately. Further, since the born leader has certain qualities that allowed us to consider them "the born leader," it becomes very simple to judge their leadership potential while they are in power. Some great examples of leaders that exemplified this theory were Julius Caesar, Martin Luther King, and Abraham Lincoln, as each leader changed history greatly from the start of their leadership until the end.

However, a great contradiction to this theory is Emperor Henry Puyi. Puyi, born in 1906, was instated emperor of China at a very young age. Shortly after he was put in power, the Xinhai Revolution took a turn, where China's last imperial dynasty was overthrown. Puyi was abdicated at the age of six, and given power once again in 1917, but that was short lived as well as he was eventually chosen as the "Chief Executive" of Manchuria. The biggest question to consider is that if leaders are in fact born with all the qualities they need, why was Puyi's leadership so unsuccessful?

Thus, this theory has significant limitations. Since "born-leaders" are defined by certain qualities, sometimes their skillset does not qualify them for the situation. Different kind of leadership is needed for different organizations, and it can be disadvantageous to quantify these traits beforehand. Further, this theory is based more on traditional views; and it does not necessary determine who would be a good leader. Bonzo from Ender's Game would also be considered a failed great leader who rose up to the challenges society faced. Although Bonzo had courage, intelligence, and courage, he didn't have other leadership skills that would have let him prosper.

The Great Man theory is straightforward and simple. These leaders will contain the direction and vision to take charge and guide society through any problems it faces. The theory is as old as time and lead to the formation of many other leadership theories. Although great man leadership is limited it was vital in paving the way for future leaders and leadership studies.

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The Trait Theory:

By Matthew Gregory and Vanika Hans

Each leader is unique with different leadership characteristics and skill that make them good leaders. The trait theory of leadership is based on the premise that certain characteristics or traits will make an individual a good leader.

Formalized in 1974 by Ralph M. Stogdill, the trait theory states that leaders will share certain characteristics. These characteristics range from intelligence to integrity, responsibility to decisiveness, and many others. Each leader is unique and may not have many of these traits; however, each trait or characteristic can be learned or acquired throughout the leader's life. This allows the leader to grow and to develop.

Some of the greatest leaders have demonstrated this theory throughout all their pursuits; to specify, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Ulysses S. Grant, George S. Patton, and John F. Kennedy have all individually demonstrated a large range of qualities specific to their position. This brings us to the main advantages of this theory: there are no defined characteristics that define a leader as a good leader, but rather shared characteristics that allow a leader for creativity given their organization. Further, contrary to the Great Man theory, anyone can obtain these traits and become a leader.

However, as for limitations, since each leader has unique traits, it is very general for the public and thus there is no predictability of a leader's leadership potential. This can be harmful in the sense a leader won't be given opportunity even if have true potential, and on the other hand it cannot be predicted whether a leader in power will truly benefit an organization. Further, several characteristics of leaders in this category can overshadow flaws in leadership; i.e. fatal virtues.

Trait theory is seen more commonly with modern leaders; for as a society, we have recently begun to value one's individuality and unique contribution over their position as a successor.

Chand, Smriti. "Great Man Theory and Trait Theory of Leadership." YourArticleLibrary.com. 2015.

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Behavioral, Transactional, and Functional Theory:

By Jonathan Peterson

Behavioral theory was developed by B.F Skinner. It was developed in response to, and in criticism of, the trait theory. Behavioral theory proposes that successful leadership is attained through a the behaviors a leader displays, rather than what traits they have. Behavioral leaders must constantly ask themselves “what do successful leaders do?” Some behaviors that strong leaders show include encouragement for the team, constructive feedback, and decisiveness, among others. In behavioral theory, leaders use an element of reward and of punishment in order to produce a desired behavior from members.

Transactional leadership theory is like managerial leadership. One leader supervises a group to make sure that tasks are completed efficiently. Transactional theory is essentially goal oriented. Because it is goal oriented, transactional leaders employ straight-forward approaches and known-to-work methods to complete the tasks. Additionally, rewards and punishments are commonly used to motivate members to complete their delegated tasks. Transactional theory focuses on lower level needs, so there is a stress on completing specific tasks and on the management of individual portions.

Functional Theory is result oriented. Functional leaders constantly ask, “is the job getting done?” With functional leadership theory, if the task, team, and individual needs are met, the goals are met. Functional theory places a particular emphasis on controlling what exactly happens with the team and its resources: functional theory leaders are very organized. Additionally, these leaders lead by example. They give constructive feedback and guidance to the team. Also, with functional leadership theory, the role of the leader is fluid in the group. Depending on the circumstances, different members of the group can become the “leader” if needed.

Although behavioral, transactional, and functional theories have their own nuances, they relate in a few ways. All these theories are goal oriented: i.e. each one asks the question, “at the end of the day, are the goals being met?” Another similarity between them all is that they focus on how a leader behaves and acts with the group, rather than what kinds of traits they have. Finally, at least between behavioral and transactional leadership, there is a degree of reward and punishment from the leader in order to motivate the group.

These leadership theories are evidenced in the dynamics of a restaurant. Behavioral theory can be seen in a manager in the way they treat their employees. They may reward and encourage their employees with affirmation and may incite a better work ethic with punishment. This also displays the transactional leadership theory. Functional leadership can also be displayed if the manager has to leave and delegate the leader role to another employee. This delegation shows the fluidity of the leadership role with this theory.

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Contingency Theory:

By Nicole Dobson

Contingency theory is the idea that leadership and the function of organizations depends various on factors. The theory was primarily developed by Fred Fiedler in the 1980's and was additionally modified by Gareth Morgan and by William Richard Scott. Gareth Morgan wrote the book *Images of Organization* which describes how organizations depend on contingencies and their environment. William Richard Scott described contingency theory saying, "the best way to organize depends on the nature of the environment to which the organization must relate."

Fred Fiedler created a contingency model that revolved around three main contingencies: leader-member relations, degree of task structure, and the leader's positional power. These categories encompass the contingencies a corporation might face: i.e. technology, suppliers and distributors, consumer interest groups, customers and competition, government, and unions. He also developed the Least Preferred Coworker scale which assesses whether a person is a more task-oriented leader or a more relation-oriented leader. Task oriented leaders tend to care more about the task at hand rather than whether or not they are respected and loved as a leader. Relation-oriented leaders focus more on being empathetic to those they are leading and value the relationships they have with those they are leading.

Examples of contingent leadership can be found in the books *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow*. In *Ender's Game*, we see the character of Ender Wiggin understand how the situation is stacked against him when Battle School schedules unfair battles for his army. Ender understands the factors limiting him and makes wise decisions based on those contingencies and his environment. In *Ender's Shadow*, we see the character of Poke understand how her leadership depends on the situation of handling Bean's suggestion of getting a bully. Poke realizes that in order to maintain the respect from her crew if she is to try Bean's suggestion, she must show empathy to Bean by giving him some beans to eat. Poke recognized the contingencies of her leadership; she must be empathetic and make intelligent decisions for the benefit of her crew. These examples show how the leader recognized the limitations put on them and acted according to the power they held in their leadership position.

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Situational Theory:

By Nicole Dobson

Situational leadership theory is based around the idea that the style of leadership depends on the maturity of the group and the environment. The theory was developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard in the late 1960's. The theory was originally called "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership" but was renamed to "Situational Leadership theory" in the 1970's. The central idea of this leadership theory is that there is no one "best" style of leadership. Leadership varies with the maturity of the group as well as the task.

The theory has two main parts that relate to one another: there are four styles of leadership that depend on the four levels of maturity of the group you are leading. The four styles of leadership are directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Directing is primarily one way communication, telling the group what to get done and how. Coaching opens up to two way communication. Supporting is centered around shared decision making and focuses on the relations between the leader and the group. Delegating is where the leader removes himself and serves only to monitor the situation.

These four levels of leadership styles coincide with the four levels of maturity of a group. The first level of maturity, M1, is when the group lacks the skills to perform the task and is not willing to work on the task. The second level, M2, is when the group is willing to work towards the task but lacks the skills required. M3, the third level, is when the group has the skill to perform the task but is unmotivated to do so. The last level of maturity, M4, is when the group is capable of completing the task and is motivated and willing to work towards it.

The theory suggests that each maturity level can be directly paired to a leadership style: M1 is paired with directing, M2 with coaching, M3 with supporting, and M4 with delegating. Although this pairing seems logical, it has gained some criticism from Vecchio in 1987. Vecchio claims that it is obvious M1 should be paired with a directing style of leadership, but it is not obvious that the other pairs are the only correct combination of maturity levels and leadership styles. To support his claim, he conducted an experiment with over 300 high school teachers. He found that newly hired teachers performed better under a strict principle, but that experienced teachers did not care what style of principle they worked under. This criticism puts supports his claim that any theory of leadership is not perfect and should be followed as vague guidelines.

An example of situational leadership can be found in the difference between an elementary teacher and a college professor. Both teachers have the task of teaching students; however, the elementary teacher is dealing with a low level of maturity whereas the college professor is dealing with a high level of maturity. Working directly with students, the elementary teacher is directing the students in how to write letters and how to do math problems. Letting the students work and learn on their own, the college professor is delegating the content of the course in a lecture style. Even though both leaders are given a similar task, they must adapt their leadership to best fit the two maturity levels of their group. This theory prides itself in declaring that leadership depends on the group and environment in which they must lead.

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Transformative:

By Carl Cortright and Catherine Witt

Transformational leaders are defined by their ability to define a collective organizational conscience. They are more than figurehead. Transformational leaders serve to inspire people to be better versions of themselves, lifting people to standards higher than what they thought they could accomplish. One of the main objectives of a transformational leader is to proactively entertain new ideas in order to uplift and revitalize the organization. Because they are usually the hardest working member on the team, they allow their vision and their work ethic to drive their organization further. These leaders are willing to make sometimes difficult decisions for the good of the whole organization. Being both the vision and the driving force of the organization, transformational leaders are the glue that holds everything together.

Historically, there are a multitude of great examples of transformational leaders, including people like Steve Jobs, Martin Luther King, and John F. Kennedy. Steve Jobs, known historically as the man who brought us the personal computer, was known for constantly challenging the ideas of his engineers and pushing them to build better computers and interfaces. Among his employees, he was known to walk into their office, look at what someone was building, and simply say, "this is shit." After his employees were offended a significant number of times, they learned to take Steve's proclamation as a question: is this the best way and can we do it better? Steve's passion for the technology extended to the people building it, causing him to raise their standards for themselves. Martin Luther King Jr. was a transformational leader who led with vision. He had a dream. That dream became a phrase to remember for generations to come. John F. Kennedy led with similar vision when he said, "we choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to moon. We choose to go to the moon in this day and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard." This vision not only translated into the moonshots he asked our country to embark on, but also into how he was forced to make difficult decisions during the cold war.

Another great example of a transformational leader is Ender from *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card. When Ender is given control of Dragon army, he exerts his vision, overhauls the strategies that had been used for years, builds consolidated teams of genius, and completes an incredible winning streak that is unparalleled in school history. He is all about his people; leading from a distance, he makes sure that his troops stay in line and that the individuals are ready to perform their best.

Transformational leadership is a more effective way for figurehead leaders to interact with their organization internally and to get more out of each individual they work with. Transformation leaders in our society are generals, CEOs, presidents, and those who know how important it is to interact with their people. These leaders are figureheads turned *on their head* and focused on inspiring the people they work with on a daily basis to work with more vision and build a better world.

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Servant:

By Carl Cortright and Catherine Witt

Servant leadership is more than just a leadership style; it is a lifestyle that enriches individuals, builds organizations, and creates a more caring world. Service is a timeless concept originating with the beginning of families and of communities; however, the idea of servant leaders is much more modern. In 1970 Robert Greenleaf first coined the term “servant-leader” in his book *The Servant as Leader* where we wrote, “the servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.” Greenleaf suggests that true leaders prioritize the needs of others above their own needs and aspirations; consequently, they are called servant leaders.

Servant leaders officially have ten prominent characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and the desire to build community. Basically, true servant leaders have a deep commitment to listening intently and to being aware of the needs of others. By humbling fulfilling those needs, the servant leader gains the loyalty of his followers. The servant leader then uses persuasion instead of traditional authority to motivate his followers. Additionally, servant leaders must conceptualize their future goals and avoid being distracted by short-term operational goals. They acknowledge the importance and the motivational potential of the end goal.

Because servant leaders have earned the trust, respect, and dedication of their followers, becoming a servant leader takes time and dedication. Moreover, servant leaders do not provide much structure for an organization. Servant leaders, therefore, should not be used to fix immediate, chaotic problems. Conversely, servant leaders encourage exceptional loyalty and dedication from their organization. They are not only well-respected, but they are also cherished. If given the appropriate amount of time to develop, servant leaders are the best type of leaders.

Throughout history, there have been numerous, vastly successful servant leaders: Jesus, Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela, among others. As a well-known leader amongst his peers, Jesus led his followers by serving them. For example, he humbled himself and made himself lower than his disciples when he washed their feet. He said, “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all” (Mark 10:43-44). Additionally, Gandhi greatly exemplified the characteristic of active listening and of empathy. During his Salt March of 1930, Gandhi walked ten miles through villages listening to complaints and to suggestions of all villagers. Because Gandhi cared so much about each person in the villages, they became more dedicated to him. Finally, Nelson Mandela, a political and social leader in South Africa, was willing to sacrifice himself and his goals for the benefit of the South African population. The value of his leadership is measured by his impact on others and by his influence in democracy. These three well-known leaders greatly portray servant leadership.

As described by Nelson Mandela, a servant leader “is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.”

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