

Types of Leadership and Their Characteristics

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an attribution that people make about other individuals. People tend to characterize leaders as having the following traits: intelligence, outgoing personality, verbal skills, aggressiveness, consistency, determination. They are expected to have the capacity to motivate others to action. The manner in which leaders accomplish this varies as leaders and their styles vary greatly. Successful leadership is correlated to the compliance of followers. In a reflection on leadership, Winblad (1999) states that leaders are decisive. They are forced to make a lot of decisions quickly, and they learn the fine distinction between decisive and authoritarian—a skill in which the relative inexperience of the leader is most obvious.

Leaders should create an environment where there is honesty, inspiration and realistic goal setting. Communication and clarification of goals should be continuous. Some leaders develop their team and foster loyalty by making members feel that all the accomplishments realized are a result of a collective effort.

Some leaders are adept at allowing followers to come to their own decisions and develop on their own. They may provide very little direction and exercise little authority over the group. There are other types of leaders, who may be referred to as democratic, who provide directions, allow the group to arrive at their own decisions, offer suggestions and reinforce team members' ideas. More specifically, "the leader encourages members to develop goals and procedures, and stimulates members' self-direction and actualization" (Devito, 1999, p. 276). There is also the type of leader who sets the pace, makes all the decisions for the group without their input, and seeks little approval from team members. This type of leader

exhibits an authoritative style in which the leader takes full responsibility for the team member's progress and accepts few suggestions from the team members.

The Charismatic Leader

Weber (1968), describes charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional qualities" (p 329).

Charismatic leaders can achieve admirable feats such as turning around ailing corporations, revitalizing aging bureaucracies, or launching new enterprises. (Howell & Avolio, 1995). They can accomplish these feats by powerfully communicating a compelling vision of the future, passionately believing in their vision, promoting their belief with energy, and advocating creative ideas. Charismatics can inspire others by offering expressions of confidence in follower's abilities to achieve high standards. They have a remarkable ability to convert complex ideas into simple messages ("I have a dream"). As a result, they are easily understood. They relish risk and feel empty without it; they are great optimists, they are rebels who fight convention and they may seem idiosyncratic. Charismatic leaders sense opportunities and formulate visions: they seem to sense their followers needs as well as see the inefficiency of an existing situation. They are adept in unearthing untapped opportunities. These leaders also seem to have a great sense of strategic vision and a capacity to convey the essence of that to a broad group of people. They build trust in themselves through personal risk taking and self-sacrifice. They use personal examples and role modeling.

In summary, charismatic leaders: have a compelling vision or sense of purpose, communicate that vision effectively, demonstrate consistency and focus, know their own strengths and capitalize on them.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACT OF CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP

Charismatic leaders who exhibit high expectations in addition to exhibiting confidence in their subordinates, boost self-esteem and can in turn, set or accept a higher goal for themselves and have greater confidence in themselves. This in turn, can lead to more accomplishments and an increase in subordinates' sense of worth. They may provide their followers with a positive identity. Further support of this is reflected in the following statement by Robert J. House (1976):

Leaders who communicate high performance expectations for subordinates and exhibit confidence in their abilities to meet these expectations tend to enhance subordinates self-esteem and affect the goals that subordinates set for themselves (p. 17).

Charismatic leaders align their vision to their followers, are realists when it comes to evaluating their abilities, encourage independent thinking and learn from the criticism of their subordinates and embrace their input. They enjoy sharing the limelight with their followers, by providing 'ownership' of a project to them by ensuring that they contribute to it and as a result may share in its success. The following observation made by Howell & Avolio (1995), provide a concise summary of the charismatic leaders positive attributes: "charismatic leaders achieve these heroic feats by powerfully communicating a compelling vision of the future, passionately believing in their vision, relentlessly promoting their beliefs with

boundless energy, propounding creative ideas and expressing confidence in their followers' abilities to achieve high standards." (p 63)

Conversely, charismatic leaders tend toward obsessiveness in relation to their vision and resistance to the vision occasionally surfaces. The charismatic individual occasionally struggles to transfer his or her expertise and vision from one situation to another. They may use the awe and reverence they inspire in others to get what they want regardless of the views of others; this can create a problematic situation. Bryman (1992), describes the charismatic leader as someone who has the capacity to be self-serving, obsessive, masters of illusion, and ultimately destructive of others. This is further reflected in the statement made by Bass & Stogdill (1990), "such leaders tend to be self-aggrandizing and maintain psychological distance from their followers, which increases their magical, supernatural charismatic image" (p 188).

Certain personal attributes of charismatic leaders may lead to negative impacts on an organization. In a study on charismatic junior executives conducted by McCall and Lombardo (Bass, 1985), the following trends were uncovered: a lack of negotiation skills, excessive self-determination and stubbornness or insensitivity to those around them. Other flaws that were mentioned included lack of team-building skills, coldness, arrogance and failure to delegate responsibility.

If leaders exhibit high performance expectations but show little confidence in their subordinates actually meeting their expectations this can actually lead to fear of failure, avoidance of accountability and strong feelings of dissatisfaction (House, 1976).

House (1976) contends that the effects of charismatic leadership are more emotional and the follower may be inspired to enthusiastically give unquestioned obedience, loyalty, commitment and devotion to the leader and to the cause that the leader represents. A leader who has that sort of appealing, forceful and inspiring personality and instills unquestioning loyalty can have a negative impact on organizations or society on followers who, without regard for their own well-being, are inspired in the absolute sense. Organizations that are developed around a strong person tend to be as strong and as stable as that person. Berthal (1969) found that as a leader's charisma erodes "a struggle for survival and succession develops. Organizational limitations may be limited to the leader" (p 1).

CHARISMA IN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS AND TRANSACTIONAL LEADERS

According to Bass & Steidlmeier(1998), the best leaders are both transformational and transactional and these styles may be displayed by the same leaders at different times and in varying intensities.

Transformational leaders have charisma, provide intellectual stimulation, inspirational leadership and individualized consideration to their followers. Followers who identify with a leader at times may transform their behavior and become committed to the leader. Charismatic leaders can bring about substantial changes, or transform their subordinates, organization or society on a whole. Transforming leaders may encourage their followers to consider their goals or needs on a long-term basis rather than fulfill their immediate needs. In other words, they recognize the needs of their followers, and also seek to satisfy those needs on a higher level. Transformational leaders tend to be more developers of leaders and teams and encourage their followers to put aside their own interests for the good of

the group or society (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). They encourage dialogue within a group or organization so that team members may learn from each other and gain insights that may not have been attained without dialogue. Through successful collaboration, a feeling of empowerment can emerge. Empowerment, collaboration and shared decision making are the cornerstones of transformational leadership. Devito (1990) claims that the transformational leader has the charisma to transform or to energize a group. The leader is viewed as a role model for the group, and examples cited included Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi.

Transactional leaders guide or motivate their followers in the direction of established goals by clarifying role and task requirements. The transactional leader “pursues a cost-benefit, economic exchange to meet subordinates’ current material and psychic needs in return for contracted services” (Bass, 1985, p 14).

The main relationship between transactional leaders and followers is an exchange of between leader and follower – such as contracts for votes or promises for rewards. In other words, transactional leaders provide rewards to followers for accomplishing a task or for progress towards accomplishing a goal. They may also engage in negative feedback or aversive contingent reinforcement for a follower’s failure to achieve a goal or perform a task. The positive reinforcement serves to reinforce the effort made on the part of the followers so that they continue to perform in the manner they have engaged in.

Transactional leaders may also be guilty of engaging in management by exception. Management-by-exception refers to the management style that calls for an intervention by the leader only when a problem occurs.(Bass, 1990). Leaders

who engage in this management style may meet with subordinates once every two months to get updates or status reports or only if there is a problem. Otherwise, they have very little contact, do not encourage frequent updates from their followers and provide attention only if a substantial difficulty arises.

CONCLUSION

Leaders may often be defined by their decisiveness and ability to motivate and steer others into the achievement of a vision. They may also be thought of as individuals with the capacity to inspire, maneuver, guide, direct or manage others. A successful leader may be defined, therefore, not only by their performance, but by their achievement of goals or realization of a vision established. This vision should be a view of the future that should be shared with team members. By having a focus on the future and moving in a progressive direction, an aim is established. In defining leadership, Kroeger & Thuesen (2002), states that although leadership is difficult to define, it needs an aim. They also claim that just as leadership cannot exist without people, it cannot exist without a direction or goal. Candor, honesty and integrity are all important personal attributes that can lead to becoming a competent, respected, and successful leader.

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