

Facets of Leadership

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Abstract: Leadership is one of the critical components of an organization. It decides the success of the organization. The achievement of business goals is of prime importance. A good leader dries the business towards attainment of these goals. From identifying and recruiting good talent, the leader's role is of high criticality. He keeps the force motivated to attain the goals, and also shows keen interest in their personal development. The leader is of prime importance in designing the career path of his subordinates. It would not be an exaggeration to mention that leaders also play a pivotal role in developing future leaders. This research is an attempt to investigate the different facets of leadership, touching upon its history from mythology, theories and activities to develop leadership.

Key words: Leadership, Development, Theories, Styles, Activities

1. Introduction

Leadership, most importantly effective leadership is one of the most important factors that decide the success of an organization [1]. It is a critical competency that is beneficial at both individual and organizational level.

Around the globe, the work force of any organization is the major contributing factor for success. They are the energy powerhouse that fuels the organization and its effective functioning. It becomes mandatory therefore to harness the key potentials of this workforce, for the timely attainment of business goals. Effective leadership paves way for the organization to sail smoothly towards the

accomplishment of these goals. Thus, it becomes mandatory to develop effective leadership behaviors for the successful running of organizations. Leadership development is also self-development. A thronging for becoming an effective leader begins with an introspection of which one is and discovering what is best in oneself, thereby improving self-awareness and boosting self-confidence. It brings, into the realm of knowledge, what one values most. It gives the power and competence to achieve and excel.

This paper is an attempt to trace the historical roots of leadership from mythologies to the modern theories, and tries

to bring out some important facets of leadership.

2. Discussion

2.1 Leadership in Mythology

The various historical events and myths believed across the world depict the importance of effective leadership, and its evolution. At the same time, it also throws light on what violates ethics of a leader through various situations the leader goes through. The Trojan war of Greek mythology is a good example. The Achilles suit of armor was to be given to the most befitting soldier. However, when there was a confusion on deciding the benefiter, the king delegates the decision-making authority to a less experienced group of tribal leaders. This led the king to create a false process, loss of credibility and thereby establishing his incompetency. Similar instances in Indian epics highlight the wrong decisions taken by leaders in their lives which later created commotion. Yudhishtra, in game of dice, pledges his brothers and wife as the game prize, which a leader cannot do. Mahabharata also throws insight into his behavior when he pledges his step brother, Nakula as a game prize first, in the game of dice. The same epic also depicts Yudhishtra being a just leader. This is proved in a situation when all his brothers are dead, and he strikes a deal with a demon to bring back Nakula, a weaker person, instead of the able bodied Bheema or the acclaimed warrior Arjuna. He reasons out later that Nakula is the only son of his step mother. When Nakula is back, both his mother and his step mother would have one son each. Ramayana portrays the developing of the leader by another leader, through motivation and introspection. The following instances depict them. When Hanuman was unable to

believe in himself to cross the sea and reach Lanka, he was given a hint about his strength, and he accomplishes the task. He is reprimanded for setting fire on Lanka. He is also triggered to become a proactive leader, and is then motivated to create more leaders. These instances depict Rama as a great leader with qualities of training and developing future leaders. These Indian epics help in differentiating between different styles of leadership and its consequences through simple situations.

2.2 Theories of Leadership

19 century was marked by the Great man theory of Leadership. The theory's main focus was on leader being a hero. Sometimes, it is also argued that the heroic leaders are a product of social systems like blood lineage, heredity or just passage of time. Though this theory can be traced back to 18-19 centuries, one cannot miss seeing it even today in life. Political, cinematic social and business figures are considered heroes.

Between 1910 and 1948, gradually came the trait theory, which was based on the tenet that character of a leader was in congruence with certain traits which were inborn. After much research by Stodgell in the year 1948, the focus of leadership turned towards a set of behaviors. However, the positive relationship between certain personality characteristics like extroversion, charisma, honesty and leaders are time and again proven by research. As the Behavioristic school of thought started taking the center stage, for about 20 years from 1950 onwards, researchers began to consider the external behaviors. The nature and nurture conflict seeped into leadership. Contingency theories predominantly used between the late 60's and early 90's developed primarily due to effect of contextual variables - the people,

environment, task that were required to be performed and the situations that was necessary to be experienced etc. Research conducted in this area found that there was no one single kind of leadership style which was universally appropriate. It also stressed the fact that a successful leader would be able to handle a totally critical situation as good as the usual one. Fiedler (1967, 1971), who is recognized as one of the trailblazers in this area, identified three managerial components: leader-member relations, task structure, and position power [2, 3].

Situational leadership, suggested by Hershey and Blanchard (1969) linked the developmental levels of leaders to their leadership styles depending upon the situations [4]. Servant leadership theory stressed on the importance of choice of leaders to serve the followers, which empowered the followers to work to their fullest potential. 1990 onwards saw the Leader-Follower Theory which was a natural extension of contingency theory. Leader-member exchange theory was characterized by the mutual trust and respect between the leader and the follower. High quality relations are empirically shown to produce better leader outcomes [5-6].

Transformational Leadership Theory (1985-2010), introduced the concept of transforming the followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents. Scholars have attempted to understand leadership and derive different styles of the same. The theories conceptualized to understand leadership has also helped in categorizing leaders based on their styles.

2.3 Styles of leadership

In the words of John Harvey Jones, "Each of us has to develop our own style and our own approach, using such skills and

personal qualities as we have inherited". Most of the work on leadership styles are based out of study conducted by White and Lippitt (1959) [7]. The different types include, but not limited to,

- i. the autocratic leader, who is the decision making authority and expects the followers to follow them,
- ii. The persuasive leader, who takes the decision by himself, but believes that people will be motivated to follow if they are persuaded that the decisions are good ones,
- iii. The consultative leader who consults the group before taking decisions and
- iv. The democratic leader who places the problem before the group and invites discussion in his group.

Characteristics of a good leader have always been the debatable topic for long. However, researches from all around the globe have identified the following as irrefutable characteristics of a good leader.

- Determination to succeed
- Interest and aptitude to innovate
- An ace in people skills
- An ability to learn from adverse situations and grasping the available chances
- High achievement motivation , with moderate risk taking ability
- Dedicated, organized honest , high integrity and has a good set of values

2.4 Activities that can be used to develop leadership

2.4.1. Quadrants

An exercise that uses introspection into the participant's potentials and highlight it to them. It creates awareness and opens up

discussion about them. The participant is handed over a sheet of paper, which is divided into four quadrants. He or she is instructed to write the one of the following in each quadrant, and the participants are urged to introspect and discuss about it.

- My recent success plan, that provided a big benefit to my company
- My pride situation in which I influenced others
- My Vision and creativity as a tool of leadership
- Two incidents that showed my values of inclusiveness and integrity

2.4.2 Metaphors and Analogies

Metaphors and analogies are used to aid learning and memory. Usage of metaphors and analogies make complex material very simple and easy to remember. It can be used as an effective tool in training. This activity is highly successful in group trainings. It is done in four levels. A closing debriefing session can also be added if necessary. In the first level each participant is given a random object, and is asked to write how the object “feels”, “looks”, “tastes” etc as a leader. In the second level, the objects are shuffled, and the same exercise is conducted again. At the third level of the activity, the participants relate both their good and bad qualities with the object. In the fourth level, the participants think about their leader and relate the objects to both bad and good qualities of their leaders. This activity aims at focusing on the myriad qualities of a leader which can be imbibed or let go to become successful.

2.4.3. Anecdotal Review

This activity resembles story telling. There is a narrator and the rest are the audience. The activity can be done one to one

or in groups. The trainer has to demonstrate an incident, as a story. The story should be an example of leadership skill in action. The participants are encouraged to share their stories.

2.4.4. Walk and talk

This activity should be done in pairs. A good time to do the activity in training would be right after lunch. To participants or a trainer and a participant walk together discussing on a list of specific themes. This activity need not be restricted to training. Rather it can be done in office spaces too. The participants can be a leader and immediate subordinate or a human resource consultant and leader /employee.

The following themes are discussed

- ❖ The most significant quality for becoming a leader
- ❖ The quality and its match with the participant /person
- ❖ Future target areas for skill development and learning

The discussed topics can be converted into journal entries. The pairs can be swapped too.

3. Conclusion

An important function of management, leadership helps in maximizing efficiency to achieve the organizations goals. It begins with initiating the plan by communicating the goals to the workforce, the leader keeps the work team motivated and provides guidance whenever necessary and channelizes the work force. By building a good morale, he creates confidence in the workforce and the management. The work environment is best managed for smart and peak performance.

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