

14

EVOLVING LEADERSHIP STYLES IN NEW AGE ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

New age Organizations are gearing up towards finding the new model of leadership model which suits the demand of this technological era. The leader decides the course of the organization and determine its goals. The modern day dynamic leader should be extremely good in soft skills and should exhibit great deal of understanding and maturity.

We have moved from the “Command, Control, Compartmentalization” way of leading organizations to a more interactive, informative, and Innovation-oriented model. To be truly effective, today’s organizations need to have leaders who have the emotional intelligence to create meaning, and have the capability to inspire and empower their people to get things done. This becomes especially difficult when the members of an organization are spread across different continents. After all, you can’t email a smile or a handshake. You need to create places of work where people feel comfortable in a network structure; you need to create organizations where people can have courageous conversations - organizations with people that are adaptable, self-aware, collaborative, resilient, and have a systemic orientation. To create these agile organizations we need people that practice true knowledge exchange and will go beyond solo thinking.

Keywords: Soft skills, command, control, compartmentalization, adaptable, self awareness

Introduction

The basic definition of leadership is guiding a group of people toward a common goal. Defining your individual leadership style, however, may not be as easy. There are many distinct leadership styles that have evolved over the last 80 years of study, each embodying a different set of traits and skills. Yet for all of them, one fact holds true: An effective, successful leader is one who has the ability to inspire.

Early leadership style research

Leadership styles were first defined in 1939 by a group of researchers led by psychologist Kurt Lewin. His team studied youth leaders in activity groups. They grouped behaviors together and concluded there were three different and predominant leadership styles.

The autocratic style is one in which a single person takes control and makes decisions, directing others in his or her chosen course of action. Lewin’s team found that this was the most unsatisfactory leadership style with the youth groups.

In a democratic leadership style, one person

takes control but is open to group input, often allowing the group to make decisions and collectively assign tasks. This leader guides rather than directs. This was the most popular leadership style in the youth groups and garnered the greatest positive response.

With the laissez-faire approach, the person in charge stepped back and did nothing. He or she provided no direction or guidance. The group was disorganized and unproductive.

Litearture Review

Lewin’s research introduced the idea that leadership and its associated skills could be taught and learned — that leaders were not just born but could be made. It also recognized the influence that the team members had on a person’s leadership style as well, prompting further research over the years. From the 1940s to the 1970s, leadership research focused on the traits of leaders, such as responsibility, intelligence, status, situation, achievement and capacity. Nearly every study came to a similar conclusion: Such a characterization was insufficient to isolate specific traits of leaders based solely on

possession of the characteristic, but knowing what traits great leaders have in common has a strong influence as leaders try to learn new skills and become better supervisors and managers. In the 1970s and ‘80s, leadership experts Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard introduced the concept of situational leadership, meaning that a leader adapts his or her style to the situation. In short, suspenseful situations, an autocratic approach may be more effective, but in situations with time to plan and respond, group participation may yield the best results. Leadership approaches can be influenced by personnel involved as well. A strong team member may need little or no guidance from the leader — the leader simply provides direction and allows the team member to determine his or her own methodology to obtain the objective. But another team member may require a more authoritative method to get the same job done.

Modern leadership traits and skills

Since the advancement of situational

leadership, a number of other leadership styles have been identified. Peter Economy, also known as “The Leadership Guy,” recently listed the qualities of today’s best leadership in an Inc.com article. He encourages embodiment of these merits at all times to achieve phenomenal results. They are- Decisiveness, Awareness, Focus, Accountability, Empathy, Confidence, Optimism, Honesty, Inspiration

Research Methodology-

The Tools for this research paper are based on secondary data. In research published in the Harvard Business Review in 2000, author and psychologist Daniel Goleman uncovered six different leadership styles, which he argues spring from different components of emotional intelligence:

Commanding: Leaders demand immediate compliance.

Visionary: Leaders mobilize people toward a vision.

Affiliative: Leaders create emotional bonds and harmony.

Democratic: Leaders build consensus through participation.

Pacesetter: Leaders expect excellence and self-direction.

Coaching: Leaders develop people for the future.

According to Mind Tools, a number of other styles exist beyond those definitions, including:

Bureaucratic leadership, whose leaders focus on following every rule.

Charismatic leadership, in which leaders inspire enthusiasm in their teams and are energetic in motivating others to move forward.

Task-oriented leadership, whose leaders focus only on getting the job done.

People-oriented leadership, in which leaders are tuned into organizing, supporting and developing people on their teams.

Transformational leadership, whose leaders inspire by expecting the best from everyone and themselves.

Recognizing your dominant leadership style is a good place to start in understanding what kind of leader you are. Knowing about other leadership styles, and using them when necessary, is the next step in your leadership evolution. Current theology promotes the idea of using more than one leadership style in the workplace to develop your staff and draw out their very best efforts. In so doing, you will find they draw out the very best in you, too.

The evolution of leadership style

When we think of leaders, we have traditionally considered the heroic leader, who is associated with the military model, with its hierarchical structure and command-and-control ethos. This model has come under challenge as we move to a complex 21st century people-centric environment, where group and team performance are critical to success.

FINDINGS-

The drawbacks of top-down change

Research shows that change from the top to meet today’s circumstances rarely works. Top-down change programmes characteristically become stalled somewhere down the line. We need to ask why this should be so? It is often not a reflection on the abilities of those in the lead, but rather a question of style and approach. There is often a lack of sensitivity to the need to engage others, to co-consult and to provide a forum where stakeholders can express their views, aspirations and fears.

Top management in change initiatives has historically focused more on allocating resources and making strategic decisions than on changing the behaviours (and often, therefore, the skills) and attitudes of large numbers of people. The emphasis was always on smart decisions at the top, not on broad-based people initiatives at the bottom. The people agenda was often missed.

Maybe it’s a question of capturing the hearts and emotions as well as the minds of those who can turn a change initiative into a new reality.

These ideas are not new and have their origins a number of decades ago in the work of people such as Peter Drucker, Edwards Deming and Mary Parker Follett. Today’s change leaders are rediscovering the principles of these thinkers: namely, that a successful business is both a social and an economic entity and must be led as such.

Left-brain thinking

It seems to me that business leaders have much more in common with artists, scientists, and other creative thinkers than they do with managers.

Many traditional top executives who are quoted as success stories in a variety of sectors of organisational life are typically what could be called left-brain focused. What does this mean? Well, logical, linear, analytical, sequential and quantitative are words that come to mind; they used cognitive skills to deliver ‘expert’ solutions.

Many of these leaders reached their positions by serving in a series of management roles. They moved up within the organisational world by delivering cost revenue and earnings results. They operated from positional power; the pace of life and the psychological contract provided the space for command and control.

The shift from an IQ to an EQ model

We need to ask if this type of career path and set of capabilities is fit for purpose today. Research shows that a large number of really ‘brainy’ people somehow fail to make a success of their lives. Today, in a world of increased complexity, where everything is too complex for the individual to succeed alone, and where multiple stakeholder environments are the norm, IQ is not enough. We need to consider intelligence beyond the traditional IQ model to find some of the answers.

The CARE model

The CARE Model sums up what is required to succeed at a high level:

Cognitive skills

Action skills

Relationship skills

Expert skills

- Cognitive skills – the capacity to think clearly and analyse problems
- Action skills – the ability to get things done, to motivate, to communicate and to transfer ownership to other contributor
- Relationship skills – social skills, building trust, developing others, engaging people at an emotional level
- Expert skills – technical skills; job-related knowledge.

In the leadership model of an industrial economy – the rational, problem-solving, knowledge-based, top-down leadership model, discussed above – perhaps it is the R that is missing.

The Real Change Leader

“Each knew his role

Each knew his reward

Together they made music

They moved harmonious mountains”

Egyptian text, 2007 BC

The 21st century model of the effective leader who can make things happen has

been referred to as an RCL, a Real Change Leader – someone who believes in ‘the gospel of getting the most out of everyone.’ Jon Katzenbach, in his book, *Real Change Leaders* (publishers Times Business, New York 1995), proposes that the right brain of an RCL is continually working alongside the left, as they put huge emphasis on emotions, feelings and passion, as well as analysis of the facts.

In days gone by, leadership might have been about conducting a symphony orchestra. Each player had a role and played when called upon to do so by the leader.

Today, leadership effectiveness is more about jazz than symphonies; we might say it is about improvisation, flexibility and responding appropriately ‘in the moment’. Players come in and contribute as and when required. The lead musician needs to engage players to offer their energy and skills to optimum collective effect.

Command and control is by far the most common change leadership style. Most of today’s leaders were mentored themselves by command and control managers, and the culture of most organizations is still based on command and control norms. It is hard to escape this leadership style’s historic influence and dominance. But as a change leader, you must. Here’s why.

Command and control as a change leadership style destroys virtually any chance of success in nine out of ten transformational change efforts. For starters, command and control:

Limits the engagement and commitment you must develop in your employees, and often actually promotes resistance

Lessens your chances of creating a change process that will lead to success

Keeps you from being able to make the real-time course corrections during

implementation that are necessary for optimal results

Minimizes attention to necessary people issues like consistent communications and emotional reactions to change.

There are limitations of command and control as a change leadership style, and introduce “co-creating” as an alternate way of leading transformation that delivers higher quality change results AND simultaneously establishes a foundation for a high performing culture.

As you read, recall the unique features of transformational change:

- The process of transformation usually begins long before a clear future state can be identified
- The sheer magnitude of transformational change demands a major shift in the leaders’ and employees’ mind set and behaviour and the organization’s culture
- The ultimate success of the transformational change process depends on how well the change leaders make real-time adjustments to their outcomes and process as new circumstances occur

Command and Control is based on a number of Erroneous

Assumptions

Command and control is based on establishing and maintaining power over, and control of, people and organizational processes. On the surface, this sounds like a good idea: you certainly don’t want people’s behavior or steps in your change process to be “out of control.” However, this notion of being able to command and control people and processes only goes so far.

A number of usually unspoken assumptions drive the use of command and control. As you read them, imagine the behavior of change leaders you know who believe in these assumptions:

- Leaders know best
- Leaders should know where they are going (goals, outcomes) and must predetermine the plan for how to get there (process)
- Controlling human behavior and action during implementation—so there is minimal variance from the predetermined plan—is a requirement of success
- The environment/marketplace won't change enough to be a factor during implementation, and if it does, leaders can and must control its influence
- If leaders encounter unplanned variables, they must quickly control the negative impacts on the change effort through problem solving and then return to the implementation of their current plan
- Employees won't naturally contribute positively to the change effort, so leaders must "help" them by commanding and controlling their behavior and involvement. Leaders must force people's cooperation.
- Needing to alter change plans connotes leadership failure and means that the change leaders did not plan thoroughly enough

You can argue that these assumptions are somewhat applicable for two types of organizational change—developmental and transitional change. However, they are completely false and inappropriate for transformational changes.

(See *Beyond Change Management: How to Achieve Breakthrough Results through Conscious Change Leadership*, Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson, pages 51–79, for a complete discussion of the different types of change.)

In projects that can be isolated from their environment (e.g., protected from outside influences) and for changes that do not require people to change beyond learning new technical or operational skills,

command and control can work. In these cases, a predetermined outcome and project plan can be established and executed through a relatively stable set of circumstances. Employees won't have to change much and won't need to be fully committed to the effort to enable success. Keep in mind, however, that making command and control work in such developmental or transitional change projects is a far cry from making the projects extremely successful. Command and control seldom leads to optimal results in any type of change.

The above assumptions are erroneous regarding transformational changes for a number of reasons. First, transformation is usually catalysed by major changes occurring in the environment/marketplace. These changes are not isolated events, but in this day and age, continuous. Consequently, change leaders can never be sure of their destination when they begin their change efforts. More often than not, circumstances are likely to arise that demand a change in direction. Since change leaders cannot protect their change efforts from the significant influences of the environment, they cannot create a plan and expect to control all of the dynamics that may impact its execution. They will need to continuously alter or course correct both their plan and their destination throughout the change.

Consequently, to have any level of success, change leaders need many eyes and ears tuned to the change effort, marketplace, and customer dynamics, as well as internal organizational forces. Whose eyes and ears do they need? Employees!

Employees frequently receive critical data for course correction long before leaders because employees are closer to the action. They are key to the early warning system for needed adjustments to both the goals of the transformation and the plans for getting there. Therefore, employees need to participate as full players, not coerced

victims. They must emotionally "own" the change and understand its intent as much as the leaders do so they can contribute to moving it forward in a positive direction.

Furthermore, in transformation, the nature of the change is so profound that the organization's culture and employees' mind-sets and behavior must change to succeed.

Both leaders and employees must evolve their mind-sets about how work gets done, their role in the work, and the way the organization functions. For instance, they might need to embrace new business models, develop partnership relationships with previously adversarial departments, design radically new work processes, take on more responsibility, etc. Leaders can command and control employees to learn new technical skills, but they cannot coerce this level of personal change. That can only be accomplished by willing participants—willing because they see the value and necessity for both themselves and the organization. Therefore, a change leader's mind-set, style, and behaviour, and the change process they design as a result of their orientation, must catalyse employees to want to participate, to choose to contribute, rather than force them to do so.

The Key is to Co-Create with Employees and Circumstances, Not Exercise Power or Control over Them

Co-creating implies working with. It means operating as a team, aligned across hierarchical and functional boundaries in pursuit of what is best for the overall organization. A change leader operating in a co-creative style views employees as strategic partners in the change, not just "targets" of it. Pragmatically, this means:

- Providing employees all the marketplace information about why the change is necessary (the case for change)
- Asking for and using employee input about the vision or direction of the

change (its intended outcomes)

- Involving employees in the design of what needs to change (the content of the change)

Putting employees on teams critical to making the change happen, such as the communication team, the design team, even the change leadership team itself
Giving employees decision authority about the change as it pertains to their “local” environment

Providing employees with a clear structure and process for reporting information and issues pertinent to the success of the change, including potential course corrections to it

Regarding the actual change process, working with (co-creating) means not trying to stamp out problems—those “negative” outside influences that were not planned for, but instead, letting those forces influence your plan and direction. Where a command and control leader will try to eradicate problems so his or her rigid plan can continue, a co-creative leader will “listen to the messages” embedded in problems to discover if course corrections are necessary. A co-creative leader assumes variance will occur and perceives problems as “gifts” revealing needed course correction so they can achieve the best result. Where change leaders operating in a command and control orientation often miss wake-up calls for alteration and march down paths doomed for failure, co-creative change leaders hear these wake-up calls and engage with employees to figure out how to handle them successfully (i.e., they co-create solutions.)

Transformational Change Success Requires Change Leaders to Transform Themselves to Embrace and Model a Co-Creative Style

In the late 1980’s and early 90’s, Being First, Inc. found out the hard way that an organization that attempts to design and implement transformation without addressing personal transformation in its

leaders is doomed for failure. Back then, we accepted, albeit reluctantly, clients who wanted our cutting-edge change methodology but were unwilling to engage in the critical personal transformation work of the leaders. These clients loved The Change Leader’s Roadmap, but would consistently run into predictable problems we could help them see, but not overcome. The reason, ALWAYS, was a lack of insight caused by the blinders of their command and control orientation. From their worldview, these leaders could not see simple solutions to their people and process implementation problems, and would not accept our input about critical change strategies; they just did not think what we offered was necessary or valid. We learned then that the key to successful transformation was evolving leaders’ mind-sets about change. Over time, we decided as a firm to no longer engage in long-term consulting relationships unless the client, after some initial change education, agreed that co-creating was critical to their success, and that they would provide The Breakthrough to Change Leadership program to their leaders (CEO included). This program is our method for experientially introducing leaders to cocreating and demonstrating the profound benefits and tangible change results this orientation can deliver to their bottom line.

Case in Point

One of our early client “pioneers” in this regard was Daryl Sabin, the Vice President of Manufacturing for a large food company in San Francisco, California. Daryl knew that implementing change was critical to his organization’s success, but rather than ask us to simply teach our change methodology and tools to his change leaders, he instead insisted that we support their “breakthrough” to new ways of thinking and behaving. We devised a strategy for Daryl that included training, coaching, and numerous follow-up sessions doing real-time change strategy development with him and his team.

The net result was a substantial increase in performance and change leadership effectiveness for his team and organization. The leaders increased the pace and quality of their decision-making and collaboration, and were able to positively engage their employees in the needed changes in their organization as never before.

Since this time, we have experienced many client interventions where breakthroughs in change leadership style have catalysed significant increases in change results, even without the use of The Change Leader’s Roadmap and its resources. Our consistent findings over the past twenty years suggest:

1. The greatest determinant of a change initiative’s success is the mindset and style of the change leaders.
2. Using a comprehensive change process methodology in a command and control way limits the benefits the methodology would otherwise produce.
3. If you have to choose, put mindset and style first, methodology and tools second.
4. The best formula for success is combining the two; include the personal transformation and change leadership breakthrough work as an early part of the overall change plan.

Summary

Every day there are more decent change tools available on the market. Using these tools can be extremely helpful and can increase the chances of your organization implementing its change efforts successfully. However, no change tool or methodology, Being First’s included, is an adequate substitute for change leaders and consultants evolving their mind sets and style to embrace the required co-creative approach.

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