

Chapter 2

E-Leadership in the New Century

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that e-leadership emerged out of technological development among all other major developments in our society. In the virtual environment, leaders are required to lead followers by using totally different approaches. This is not to say that traditional leadership has no place in the new virtual environment characterized by the constant use of technology. Rather, traditional leadership and leadership style studied and conceptualized by researchers and scholars enhance e-leadership supported by Rogers' facilitative leadership (1951, 1961, 1969, 1980). Leadership theories are meant to be applied to practice. Further, leadership theories can be applied in part or in whole. They are not ideologies that must be followed to the letter.

INTRODUCTION

About 40 percent of the workforce in the United States telecommute from home to their workplaces (Chafkin, 2010), slightly more than 2% of the U.S. employee workforce (2.8 million people, not including the self employed or unpaid volunteers) considers home their primary place of work (Lister, 2010) and roughly one in six students enrolled in higher education — about 3.2 million people — took at least one online course last fall of 2005,

a sharp increase defying predictions that online learning growth is leveling off (Pope, 2006). What are the implications of these numbers? They make e-leadership important and necessary in the new century. They prompt researchers and scholars reexamine leadership and leadership styles in relation to e-leadership.

The literature about leadership and leadership styles has not changed much in the 21st century. Researchers and scholars have studied leadership and leadership styles for years. Leadership theories have been tested in varying situations in different countries. For example, leadership theories by

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Karl Marx have been applied to countries such as the former Soviet Union, China, North Korea, and Cuba. Have these leadership theories worked for these countries? The answer is to a certain degree, yes. The answer can also be leadership theories are not ideologies that must be applied to the letter. Leadership theories can be applied in part or in whole, or they can be modified based on differing situations. Speaking of situations and circumstances, major economic developments from newly emerged nations and technological break-throughs coupled with the most recent wars in West Asia and in the Middle East have reshaped the world. They have changed the way people work, think, and, above all, react to leadership theories.

The situations and circumstances surrounding leadership and leadership styles have drastically changed in recent years. The business world has become more competitive and volatile, influenced by such factors as faster technology change, greater international competition, the deregulation of markets, overcapacity in capital-intensive industries, an unstable oil cartel, raiders with junk bonds, and the changing demographics of the work force (Kotter, 1998, p. 40). Due to the changes in situations and circumstances, nowadays, there is downsizing, merging, restructuring and even more laying off of current employees if their leaders consider the skills of the employees as being obsolete. Most job descriptions for leaders specify that leaders must possess skills in the use of technology. Without the skills in the use of technology, leaders are not hired, or employees are not promoted to leadership positions.

Without a doubt, among all those other developments in the new century, technology has played a major role in reshaping the world. Technology has permeated society in general, and major government and economic stakeholders have recognized the importance of incorporating technology throughout education in order to prepare a competitive workforce in a global economy (Farmer, 2011, p. 230). The United States used

to have the largest number of Internet users. To date, the number of Internet users (179.7 million) in China has surpassed that of the United States (163.3 million) now (Schonfeld, 2009). What are the implications for the leadership and leadership styles? Should leaders change the way they see themselves, others, and everything (Cramer & Wasiak, 2006)? Leaders in the past did not depend on technology. Their secretaries may have done everything related to the use of technology. Now leaders are required to do everything themselves related to the use of technology. Does this shift require further changes in leadership and leadership styles? Although the basic tenets of leadership and leadership styles remain the same, regardless of the changes through the ages, our changing environment requires further examination of today's leadership and leadership styles. Nowadays, the term e-leadership has emerged in both business world and in higher education. In K-12 education, e-leadership has also emerged. The purpose of this article is to discuss what constitutes e-leadership in the new century and to reveal its far reaching implications in this fast changing environment.

BACKGROUND

There are many studies associated with leadership style. Most people are familiar with the Ohio State University study on leadership style (Northouse, 2007). Less attention has been paid to a class study by Lippit and White (1958) who examined the leadership styles of youth leaders. According to Jarvis (2002), Lippit and White (1958) highlighted a threefold typology: authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic. They found the following:

- Authoritarian leaders create a sense of group dependence on the leader. Their presence holds the group together, and no work was done in their absence;
- Laissez-faire leaders achieve little work whether they were present or absent;

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