

Leader Development in an Unpredictable World: Transferable Skills and Organizational Development

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INTRODUCTION

Leaders in the 21st century recognize that building their organization's leadership potential is going to be a major differentiator for future success. For them, the development of a leadership pipeline in their organization will be a top priority. These leaders know that they must venture into new waters for concepts, processes and practices to enable their people to develop the qualities necessary for success today and in the future (Kets de Vries, & Korotov, 2010, p. 6)

When describing and discussing leadership requirements that are necessary to lead an effective organization, it is imperative to look at leadership competencies. Leadership competencies are leadership talents and activities that give to greater performance (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2015). This is crafting a distinctive leadership brand via leadership competencies that yield results to stakeholders and allows organizations to gain a competitive advantage (SHRM, 2015). Investigators at the Center for Creative Leadership have documented a couple of vital leadership competencies that are constant among organizations. Table 1 shows the split of the total structure into competencies for leading the organization, leading the self, and leading others in the organization (SHRM, 2015).

Table 1.

Leading the Organization	Leading the Self	Leading Others
Managing change	Demonstrating ethics and integrity	Communicating effectively
Solving problems and making decisions	Displaying drive and purpose	Developing others
Managing politics and influencing others	Exhibiting leadership stature	Valuing diversity and difference
Taking risks and innovating	Increasing your capacity to learn	Building and maintaining relationships
Setting vision and strategy	Managing yourself	Managing effective teams and work groups
Managing the work	Increasing self-awareness	
Enhancing business skills and knowledge	Developing adaptability	
Understanding and navigating the organization		

Adapted from McCauley (2006). *Developmental assignments: Creating learning experiences without changing jobs*. Greensboro, N.C.: Center for Creative Leadership Press.

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There are not many individuals that are born leaders. However, everyone can develop leadership skills and everyone can benefit from using these skills. Leadership has traditionally been seen as a conspicuously interactive phenomenon demonstrated in the interactions between leaders and subordinates. Studies of skill acquisition have evolved along two distinct lines. One line of research has focused on the structure of skill acquisition as individuals practice certain tasks (Fleishman, 1972). The second line of research has concentrated on the methods involved as individuals acquire knowledge and skills in different realms of experience (Hoy & Woolfork, 2013).

To some degree, these lines of research have a common theme when it comes to being in a subordinate role and being influenced by a person in a leadership position. These encounters have left an enormous impact on the subordinates, whether it is a good or bad impact. These influences may have developed or molded the leadership skills that an individual gained after one or some of these encounters (Sheikh, Newman, & Azzeh, 2013). Leaders must be able to separate management and moral character, influence, authority, managerial ability, power, and charisma. Organizations are encouraged to invest in leadership and management education with the aim of creating professionally managed organizations (Sheikh, Newman, & Azzeh, 2013).

BACKGROUND

Leadership theories have been the source of numerous studies. In reality, as well as in practice, many have tried to define what allows leaders to stand apart from the others. This chapter will discuss the theory groups of trait, behavior, contingency, and power and influence.

Traits

Trait theories contend that effective leaders share a number of collective personality characteristics, or traits. The trait theory helps us recognize traits and talents that are helpful when leading others. The trait approach is leader-centric, thus it is helpful in identifying certain traits of leaders that make them successful in leadership positions. One of the disadvantages of studying leadership in this vein is that there is not one agreed upon set of traits for a leader. “This research has emphasized the identification of traits, but has not addressed how leadership traits affect group members and their work” (Northouse, 2016, p.31). Traits are exterior actions that arise from the things going on within our minds (Mind Tools Ltd., 2016a). Internal principles and procedures are important for effective leadership and organizations have learned to develop leadership qualities within others (Mind Tools Ltd., 2016a).

Behaviors

Behavioral theories emphasize leader’s behavior. For example, does the leader dictate what requirements need to be completed, and anticipate cooperation? Or does the leader involve their teams in decision-making to inspire approval and support?

The behavioral approach focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act. In shifting the study of leadership to leader behaviors, the behavioral approach expanded the research of leadership to include the actions of leaders toward followers in various contexts. (Northouse, 2016, p. 71)

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