

Chapter 3

Examining the Evolution of Creating Sustainable Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Evolution is inevitable. In examining leadership theories over several decades, the evolution of leadership principles in terms of definition and application help shape the business industry on a domestic and global scale. Throughout the continued evolutionary period, the concept of leadership continues to encounter challenges from its practical use within organizational environments, thus presenting continuous opportunities for additional research. Such evolution is apparent in business model transitions addressing sustainability. This chapter examines the concepts of sustainability and proposed future directions calling for increased educational opportunities as the term “sustainability” grows within the business lexicon. Such educational opportunities include trainings, educational courses, and programs focused on developing collaborative relationships within the team. Developing sustainable business models are important during transformational leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of examining leadership, ideological perspectives changed. Leadership continues to evolve. The composition of a business organization becomes more complex and dynamic from the original design of most organizations. The methods change and vary based on the structure of an organization.

As different theories apply based on the leader's preferred style, a relatively new theory of leadership continues to emerge: sustainability. The concept of sustainability began in the late 1980's and even from the original definition, the concept of sustainability continues to evolve. Examining the business triple-bottom line and creating a balance of social, environmental, and employee actions is vital in integrating external and internal stakeholders to an organization's complex model.

Leadership is critical for the success of the organization's vision and mission. The evolution of leadership continues to remain necessary in order to provide sustainable outcomes, establish new beliefs, and convey new attitudes inside the organizational structure. The intent of this project is to examine sustainable leadership as a valuable style of leadership in comparison to two well-known theories: transactional and transformational leadership.

BACKGROUND

Sustainability is, in a variety of ways, relative to topics of narrow and vast perspectives. For this chapter, sustainability will concentrate on the larger context of business. According to Buchanan et al. (2005, p. 190):

Sustainability is when new ways of working and improved outcomes become the norm. Not only have the process and outcome changed, but the thinking and attitudes behind them are fundamentally altered and the systems surrounding them are transformed in support.

Business strategies in today's market include the triple-bottom line module fostering an organization's success on profitability, sustainability, and performance. Such success is a balance of social, environmental, and employee actions working in concert with the goal of adding value to multiple stakeholders.

The leadership role is essential to establishing successful sustainability for an organization while minimally impacting the environment while maximizing value to the community. Establishing sustainability is a complex task as inputs, outputs, processes, and outcomes must be supported by intentional strategic thinking. According to Crews (2010, p. 17):

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