

Learning & Actions Paper

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Abstract

The idea of leadership has been around since the dawn of time and has been integral for our survival. This paper is designed to look at how the idea of leaderships and how different styles of leadership are incorporated into everyday life. By the end, you should have a better understanding of why leadership styles are used, along with which leadership style works the best with which scenario.

Introduction

The concept of leadership has been around for millions, if not billions of years, with animals following the strongest their groups to ensure their survival. Humans are no different and it has contributed to our ever-evolving growth and success as we continued to survive, thrive and innovate to new highs. However, while we understand what leadership is, it is not as simple as some people might think it is. Taking a step back, leadership is comprised of multiple different approaches, styles and executions that have different levels of impact, depending on where and how you might use them. This paper will go through the different leadership approaches and styles, to see how they are used to help us grow in the future.

Trait Approach

The trait approach takes on the mindset, that in order to be a great leader, you must possess a series of traits that contribute to your overall leadership approach. It considers, the leader's intelligence (IQ), their emotional intelligence (EQ) and other traits that people are born with to determine whether they will be great leaders. Instead of taking into consideration, the skills that the leader has gained with experience, the trait approach solely focuses on what the leader already possesses. The major leadership traits consist of intelligence, integrity, self-confidence, sociability and determination. Over time, researchers have come to the consensus that these traits are determined by a larger group known as the big five, which consist of:

Openness – Being very outgoing, intelligent and open to new ideas

Conscientiousness – Being organized, dependable and professional

Extraversion – Being extraverted and enjoying social situations

Agreeableness – Being kind, warm and tolerant

Neuroticism – Being rude, anxious and irritable

Trait approach would have its ups and downs throughout the years, with researchers in the 1940's beginning to "acknowledge other influences on leadership effectiveness besides personality traits, such as characteristics of the organization and its employees, and the broader environment." (Katie Shonk, 2023). However, during the 2000's it would come back to the forefront, when researchers argued that it could play a role in how the leadership is affected.

Behavioral Approach

Behavioral approach works a bit differently than trait approach, where instead of relying primarily on the different traits that leaders were born with to determine how well of a leader they will become, it instead looks at how a leader treats the employees around them to accomplish an overall goal for the company. For instance, there are two different types of behavioral leadership traits, task-oriented and people-oriented behavior, both with their strengths and weaknesses. Task-oriented, focuses on how the manager can micromanage the employees as best as they can to run the company in the most efficient way they can. However, people-oriented leadership takes into consideration the emotions and feelings of the employees, which will lead to lower productivity, but employees will feel more satisfied with their work and be less likely to suffer from burnout. Behavioral approach also leads to leader decision making, where the leader can settle within different types of leadership ideologies, that reflects their behaviors, these being authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire decisions making.

Action Plans for Leader Approach

When it comes to the leadership approach it is interesting to see how both leaderships approached have their strength and weaknesses in how they operate. Both approaches focus on the personality of the leader themselves but doesn't take into consideration of how it would work in a work setting. They are a good start off point in understanding how certain leadership approach can work within a work environment, but leaders cannot solely rely on trait and behavioral approaches. For these approaches to be effective, they must be combined with other styles and outlooks for them to be effective. As well as being incorporated within a real-world work environment to test its effectiveness.

Looking at the trait approaches, I can say that I currently possess a mixture of openness and conscientiousness. I realize that I prefer to be very open to new ideas while also being organized and punctual. As for the behavioral approach, I would say that I take more of a democratic approach while also being more people oriented. These approaches have been very useful for me to operate in terms of being a leader. However, I should work on my task oriented traits, along with having a democratic approach, so that in the future I can take peoples ideas for how the work should be done into consideration, while also being focused more so on the task at hand so that production can run smoother.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership incorporates the idea of the leader connecting with their employees on a more personal level. Instead of being stand offish and closing themselves off from the rest

of the company, they instead are very open and tries to show others their true selves. This theory focuses more on the ethics/integrity of the leader and how this is a driving point to the decisions they make for the company. This leadership style is usually highlighted by connections made with the employees and the leaders and how the leader uses “their inner compasses to guide their daily actions, which enables them to earn the trust of their employees, peers, and shareholders.” (Matt Gavin, 2019). This leadership theory is designed to improve overall company moral, while also increasing productivity.

Transformational Leadership

Transformation leadership is designed to take into consideration the voices of others (employees) to help make decisions within the company. It is meant to “encourage, inspire and motivate employees to perform in ways that create meaningful change.” (University of Massachusetts global). The interesting thing about this leadership style is that, in the face of failure, the leader does not see this as a setback, but instead sees this as an opportunity to continue growing and devolving new concepts.

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership theory is the most flexible leadership theory out there, as it revolves around adapting to the shifting work environment and adjusting your leadership accordingly. It is said that out of every other leadership style, situational leadership “recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach” (the center for leadership studies, 2024), this allows for other leadership styles to be incorporated in the most appropriate times. The leaders are said

to be very adaptable learners that have great communication skills, while being very thoughtful of the work environment around. This is because, in order to make the best decisions for the company, they must understand how the leadership style switch up will affect the company's overall performance.

Path-Goal Leadership

Path-goal leadership is designed to increase company production, by increasing employee performance. By “establishing a supportive plan for employee success based upon specific goal achievements.” (Kevin Toole, 2023). The idea of this is to set goals of higher pay (for the most part) in which people who wants the higher pay has the opportunity to get it, but the need to put in more time and effort for it. But they also have an option to not put in as much effort or time into their work for less pay. It gives employees a sense of choice for higher rewards. This can lead to better productivity within the company while also leaving the employees more satisfied in the process.

Servant Leadership

Just as the name suggest, the servant leadership theory revolves around the practice of serving the employees before themselves. In other words, the “servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.” (Center for servant leadership, 2021). This can involve, including employees into the decision-making process of the company, so that they feel as though they have a deeper connection to the place in which they work at. They can demonstrate a sense of punctuality, as they are the overarching

model for the company that everyone puts their trust into. Also, servant leaders are empathetic to the feelings and ideas of other employees and will they and fix internal problems within the company before moving to another goal.

Action Plans for Leadership theory

With each of these leadership theories, they can be applied within different circumstances and unlike the leadership approaches, these work independently from one another. I would say that out of all of these leadership theories, the one that applies to me the most would be authentic, a close second would be the situational leadership. When I work within a groups setting, I like to be a truthful as I can with the other teammates, so that they know the type of person they are working with and with some occasions, when I take on a more situational leadership role, I like to be flexible with the work that we are given, so that if anything changes, we can quickly change our approach to achieve said goal. But with these theories, there are setbacks that can hamper our workflow. For instance, with authentic leadership, you run the risk of being too transparent and people seeing you as being weak or if your personality is not that great, then its on full display for everyone to see. On the other hand, issues with situational leadership comes into play, with the constant shifting of different leadership styles, as it can be stressful for the employees and ask a lot from the leaders. Asides form these short comings, I believe that these two leadership styles work fine for the most part, if I'm able to take a little from each, without incorporating the entire theory it should work even better.

When thinking about the other leadership styles, like servant and transformational leadership they have a few key aspects in common, like taking other employee's ideas into

consideration. Incorporating these leadership styles, with the styles that I already possess, will lead to employees having a deeper connection with the work that they do, which can lead to higher productivity. If path-goal leadership was brought in, then goals can be brought in for the employees to achieve for the more complex work that they do. This can lead them to finding great fulfillment for the work that they do for the company. Overall, in the future I can combine different aspects from different leadership theories to better lead people in situations without losing productivity, while keeping my employees happy and motivated.

Conclusion

Different forms for leadership have been around since the beginning of time, evolving that's to new ideas and concepts. The type of leadership style, approach and the situation, in which you implement it in will determine the success of your company. During my time in this class I have learned that not every leadership theory and approach works for every situation and it's not expected too. But that doesn't mean that it should stop evolving, as the landscape shifts to new forms for operations, there will be new and better forms for leaderships waiting to be used.

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