

**HUMAN
RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT &
DEVELOPMENT
HANDBOOK**

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Chapter 22

Leadership

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Leadership is much more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed, ultimately, in its practice.

—Max De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art*¹

As a human resources or organization development professional, you will likely be asked at some point, "How can we identify and develop leaders?" The cry for leadership is no more evident than when organizations, buffeted by sweeping and unforeseen winds of change, are forced to confront uncharted waters. Businesses, communities, and countries today are facing a changing and demanding environment in which growth and competitive advantage—maybe even sur-

vival—are dependent upon the quality of their leadership.

It is no longer enough to control the status quo or adapt incrementally to slowly changing conditions. Succeeding in today's competitive and global marketplace requires organizations that are fleet-footed, creative, and able to shift gears and develop partnerships with employees, customers, and suppliers. We can no longer live with the mentality that counsels, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Our paradigm must shift to, "If it ain't broke, fix (and improve) it." The former implies a reactionary problem-solving approach to managing our organizations; the latter reflects a proactive and visionary approach to creating worlds of work that are

heroes, ready to rescue us from crises. This search for leader-saviors reinforced the notion that there were *individuals*, typically in military, religious, or political settings, who could scan the chaotic horizon and single-handedly develop the solutions and strategies needed to rescue the masses. This view of leadership positioned the nonleaders as victims of forces who passively waited for direction, orders, and help. Because these great-men or personal-traits theories of leadership assumed that genetic or psychological traits differentiated those people capable of doing great things, much time was spent seeking examples of heroic efforts and attempting to generalize the background or traits of these people, who were usually men. It certainly would have simplified the process of selecting and developing leaders had we been able to devise such a magic formula for leadership.

Our reluctance to let go of the notion that organizational leadership is dependent upon one individual was supported by the research of Tom Peters and Bob Waterman who wrote in 1982 in *Search of Excellence*² about the leadership of successful organizations. They found that those companies began with the visions and drive of one individual, like Thomas Watson of IBM, J. Willard Marriott of Marriott Corporation, or Ray Kroc of McDonald's. These companies' success was attributed to one individual leader's beliefs which permeated the organization.

However, almost a decade later, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard professor and editor of the *Harvard Business Review*, referred to a disturbing trend in corporations toward this individualistic leadership style, which she termed "cowboy management." The prevailing aspect of cowboy management is that managers are rivals looking out for themselves rather than collaborating with others for the good of the overall organization. Kanter describes the phenomenon in her book, *When Giants Learn to Dance*.

In the every-man-for-himself world of cowboy management (the male designation applies), cooperation is seen as something soft, for sissies. The rough-and-tumble, survival-of-the-fittest rules of the frontier prevail. Law and order is maintained by performance shoot-outs at the OK Corral, in which the best

gunslinger wins. Regular rodeos (they may be called operational reviews, but all the participants know they're involved in a rodeo) publicly test the strength of managers under difficult conditions. Participants are judged on how well they handle the difficult trials set before them—defending numbers, making strategic leaps forward, answering unexpected questions, grappling with their fellow contestants—and their performance in the arena is compared with that of their peers. At companies where this management style prevails, the cowboy is seen as the ultimate entrepreneur, and the frontier metaphor is frequently invoked.³

This notion of leadership as the sole responsibility of one individual is unrealistic and unworkable in today's environment.

Situational Leadership

Most of the leadership research over the last forty years has moved us beyond the search for the ultimate leaders capable of succeeding in every situation. Instead, it has been focused on leadership style, that is, sets of predominant and backup behaviors that leaders should selectively use and adapt to match the capabilities and motivations of their people to perform organizational tasks. This situational-leadership model has done much to advance the notion that there is no one best leadership style and that to be successful, an effective leader needs to understand the capabilities, willingness, and confidence of his or her followers and adjust his or her behaviors accordingly. Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard are credited with popularizing situational leadership, although the concept that a leader should select different combinations of task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors, depending on the forces operating among the leader, follower, and situation was put forth as early as 1957 by Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt in a *Harvard Business Review* article, "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern."⁴

Hersey and Blanchard further developed these concepts by describing four basic leadership styles that should be used, depending

that reason, managers tend to be more short-term and incremental in their focus than leaders, who seek a better future and both expect and create change.

Outlined below is a comparison of the elements of management and leadership. It is generally consistent with the research on leaders in modern, complex organizations by writers such as Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus,⁹ Tom Peters and Nancy Austin,⁹ and John Kotter.¹⁰

Management Role	Leadership Role
Plan and budget	Create a vision
Organize and staff	Align people
Control and problem solve	Motivate and inspire
Evaluate	Share power and coach
Supervise and persuade	Use influence and build commitment
Manage behavior	Focus on results
Be reactive	Be proactive

Leadership and management, however, must not be thought of as either-or polarities. Management complements leadership and vice versa; one without the other renders an organization ineffective. In fact, if one believes that both effectiveness and efficiency are requisites of success, then leadership and management are needed. Having a vision without the capability of "making it happen" renders leaders impotent. The key challenge is to combine and balance effective leadership with efficient management.

What Do Leaders Really Do?

Now that our leadership search has moved beyond looking for the perfect leader toward acknowledging that leadership is more complex than just analyzing what competencies and motivations your followers have, there are nearly as many definitions of leadership as there are writers or theorists ready to offer their views. An old Sufi tale makes the point: Three blind men happen along an elephant in the road, and each touches it to see what it is. The first man feels an ear and decides it is broad, like a rug. The second man holds the trunk and decides it is a straight and hollow pipe. The third man touches the front leg and decides it is mighty and firm, like a pillar.

Although definitions of leadership abound, most would agree that *leadership* is the dynamic process of influencing the attitudes and behaviors of an individual or group toward the achievement of mutual goals. Leadership results in a series of activities designed to mobilize the resources of an organization to make progress on the difficult problems or challenging opportunities it faces.

Companies are moving from the hierarchical and bureaucratic model of organizational structure and process to what we call the task-driven organization—where what has to be done governs who works with whom and who leads. Unlike the three blind men feeling the different parts of the elephant, we are recognizing that in today's organizations we need to knock down the turf-oriented boundaries to form teams of people (across, outside, and throughout the organization) who together can view the big picture and can contribute significantly more to organizational success than any one single individual.

What do people do who are providing the leadership required by their people and who move their organizations toward higher levels of achievement? There is no cookie-cutter leadership formula, despite the myriads of books, articles, research reports, or leadership assessment and development programs. However, a review of the research and literature suggests that leaders engage in the following behaviors, or leadership practices:

- *Leaders create a vision.* They establish a strategic direction for the future that will create a better organization.
- *Leaders enroll others and inspire personal and organizational performance.* They communicate with people about the purpose of the vision and set high standards of performance. They motivate others to join them in the leadership effort through what's-in-it-for-them strategies that tie directly into their needs, values, and emotions.
- *Leaders develop strategies for bridging the gap between vision and current reality.* They cultivate goals and action plans for moving the organization in the direction of the vision and for overcoming the forces or barriers to progress.
- *Leaders empower others to take personal accountability for results.* They provide a culture that allows people the freedom to

before it is communicated to others who will be stakeholders in its achievement, it should measure up to the following criteria:

- *It clearly supports the mission and strategic directions.* What is created should support the overall strategic directions of both people and their organization. It should be aligned with what stakeholders expect.
- *It is achievable.* As Walt Disney said, "If you can dream it, you can do it." It may be difficult and a stretch, but is it realistic?
- *It is worth the commitment.* People will have to work hard to accomplish the vision. Are they willing to do whatever it takes to achieve it?
- *It projects a view of what is possible.* The vision assumes that the future is different from today. In setting a vision, we must acknowledge that barriers will need to be overcome and boundaries and practicalities will have to be dealt with, but that in doing so there will be a better organization in the future.
- *It is a clear and motivating message.* A vision statement should be specific and challenging so others can understand it and are inspired to help turn it into a reality.

By establishing a vision for their organizations, leaders can begin to assess where the organization is operating today in terms of its current reality. How far away from the vision is it? What is it going to take to reduce the gap? This will identify what parts of the organization are out of alignment with the vision and which key strategies and goals need attention.

Why Do Visions Fail and How Do You Keep Them Alive?

It is one thing to develop a clear and compelling message about a vision for the future. It is another kind of challenge to keep people focused on the vision when they are "putting out the fires."

According to Peter Senge, in his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*,¹² there are several reasons why visions fail to be achieved:

- During the process of enrolling others to develop and work toward a vision, there is often a wide diversity of opinions about the desirable future state, which results in disagreement and conflicts that may be unresolvable.
- The gap between vision and current reality may appear too wide to bridge.
- The vision is lost sight of because too much time and energy gets focused on fighting daily crises and reacting to the different external forces of current reality.
- The energy and power that brought people together in creating the vision get misplaced into individual goal efforts.

There are several strategies for keeping the vision alive:

- Talk about the vision with others as often as possible. Let enthusiasm and belief in its achievability be a motivation for others.
- Seek out the stakeholders who can influence this vision, and enroll them with what's-in-it-for-them strategies.
- Implement specific plans. Share accountability for their achievement with others.
- Review progress on a regular basis, and celebrate the small successes that when taken all together show progress toward the vision.

Ultimately, it is this commitment and ability to enroll others that will bring energy and excitement into achieving the vision.

Defining the Strategic Context for Effective Leadership

We have attempted to provide a framework for understanding the major functions and roles that a leader performs. But what differentiates those who are effective leaders from those who are ineffective? Even the answer to that question is in dispute. What is becoming evident, however, from the research and our own experience with client organizations is that the strategic context is what defines the critical leadership requirements and indicates the parameters of appropriate leadership practices. Leaders do not lead in a vacuum.

son as a human being, which begins to nurture the trust and respect that bonds leaders to followers and which can only be earned over time.

As we noted earlier, once the leader understands who the followers are, it is critical that a leader vary his or her style or leadership practices to fit not only the demands of the organization but also the capacity and commitment of the supporters. This ability to adapt flexibly is a powerful key that distinguishes truly effective leaders. Many leaders mistakenly believe that once they achieve a position of power and tell people what their goals are, people will automatically and willingly follow and adapt themselves to the wishes and whims of the leader. As many of us have observed or experienced, this leadership approach rarely succeeds. We have witnessed tightly controlled businesses and countries crumble because of the inability of their leaders to adapt to the strong forces of globally shared information and cries for a stronger voice from their people.

As Max De Pree in *Leadership Is an Art* observes, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must be a servant and a debtor."¹³

Are There Differences between How Women and Men Lead?

In recent years more women have moved into middle- and senior-management positions, and this has raised a debate as to whether there are differences in how men and women approach the leadership role:

- Are women's leadership styles different from men's?
- Are the leadership styles of participation and consensus building, which are largely attributed to women, more effective in today's organizations than the traditional command-and-control models of leadership, which have been primarily demonstrated by men?
- If women's leadership styles are more suited to today's organizations, should we be promoting more women to leadership positions or teaching men how to emulate the leadership skills of women?

As we have noted earlier, our self-appointed or designated leaders have historically been men who were action-oriented and take-charge kinds of people and who were further characterized as being tough and individualistic. However, because organizations are becoming more complex as a result of such forces as technology, a diverse work force, and global markets, it is becoming more difficult for one person to direct and control the actions of an entire organization through top-down, formal power. It is now much more critical that leaders develop the power that is derived from influencing and coordinating relationships with people.

Judith B. Rosener,¹⁴ in an article "Ways Women Lead," found that women in a study she conducted self-reported that they were more likely than men to use interactive (that is, relationship-focused) methods of leadership and less likely than men to use a command-and-control style. If we want to generalize from gender stereotypes, we might conclude that the female leadership style is best suited for today's and future organizations.

However, I would argue that labeling men as command-and-control macho leaders and women as nurturing, participatory, and interactive leaders merely exacerbates the gender stereotyping (and potential discrimination for both males and females) that has gone on for years since women entered the work force and began moving up the corporate ladder. Once again, we find ourselves trying to define the ideal leader without taking the context into consideration. The underlying assumption in these gender-based leadership discussions is that there is one best organizational structure and a related best-suited leadership style. What about the type of leadership required in turnaround situations, where the ostensible leadership requirements are for someone who can be cold-blooded and make the hard decisions in order to save the company? Are men the only source of leadership talent in these difficult situations? Should we conclude that women are appropriate as leaders only during profitable and secure conditions but must be moved aside when times are tough?

The absurdity of the gender leadership debate becomes obvious as we generalize from the assumption that women (or men for that

Figure 22-1. Sample agenda for a leadership development program.

Leadership Development Program	
Day One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of Organization Renewal and Model for Organizational Effectiveness • Our Company's Mission, Management Philosophy, and Values • The Leader's Role and Key Leadership Practices/Competencies • Creating a Strategic Vision for Our Organization
Day Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Effectiveness: Assessing Assets and Liabilities • Empowering Change with a High-Performance Team • Building Strategic Alliances
Day Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a Values-Driven Culture • Managing Change • The Leader as Change Agent • Developing a Strategic Blueprint for Change

chance (and before sending their managers through companywide leadership training programs), senior management systematically identified (through the use of interviews and assessment instruments) the leadership practices that they believed were absolutely critical for their company's success. These leadership practices were used to identify high-potential managers and also served as the basis for a customized leadership development program.

As this company and other organizations are recognizing, if they are to succeed they must develop a culture of shared leadership, particularly among those people who occupy positions in the middle of their organizations. These are the managers who are supposed to translate senior executives' visions into plans and actions, who are supposed to empower their people to carry out the plans and do what's right for their customers, who are supposed to work as a team with their peers in the middle to develop synergistic strategies and erase the undeserving specter of middle-management mediocrity.

When developing leaders, we should focus not only on defining leadership expectations but also on assessing and developing the

capabilities of our people to perform the leadership role through such interventions as assessments, simulations, coaching, and reviewing of on-the-job performance. Figure 22-1 provides a sample outline of a leadership development program used to develop middle managers as leaders. It includes assessment tools, simulations, and peer feedback, and it results in a specific action plan for further on-the-job development. It is but one example of the types of leadership development interventions available.

Summary

Accepting the mantle of leadership is a large responsibility. What leaders commit to is living up to their fullest potential and influencing and encouraging others to bring out the best in themselves as well. Successful organizations recognize that leadership can be initiated and demonstrated anywhere in the organization; they have developed a leadership culture that permeates the entire fabric of the organization.

Human resources managers can play a pivotal role in the development of this leadership culture. People are the key to competitive