

Leadership through Creativity: Skills that Leads to Change

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Abstract—

"In times of changes learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with the world that no longer exist."

—Eric Hoffer

The purpose of this article is to present the nature of creativity in the context of leadership and change along with a question why creativity is a core leadership competence? It is natural for change and leadership to be linked because leadership efforts are often the catalyst for change, and it is effective leadership that helps teams, organizations, and community responds to change. Leaders help the individuals and organizations they influence grow by deliberately facilitating productive change. Leadership is obviously a critical factor when it comes to managing and inspiring the change. A most important ingredient or a factor we refer to creativity, without it there would be much less change in our world. Creativity is a process that leads to change. Creative thinking is a fuel that makes leadership work. Change originates in creative thought, and the ability to engage in creative thinking, or foster it in others, is a skill that separates those who lead from those who follow. Effective leaders embody the spirit of creativity. As a result, they use flexible and adaptive thinking to proactively introduce change and to productively respond to external sources of change.

1. INTRODUCTION

Change. Leadership. Creativity. How much thought have you given to these three words, particularly as they influence success in your life? All three have a great impact on your personal and professional success. More than 2000 year ago, Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed, "There is nothing permanent except change." This paper shows the relationship between Leadership, Creativity and Change.

2. CREATIVITY

Creativity is defined as the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual or a group of individuals working together and is believed to fundamentally contribute to organizational innovation, effectiveness, and survival

(Amabile, 1983; Madjar, Oldham & Pratt, 2002; Shalley, Gilson & Blum, 2000; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). The pace of change and the increasing integration of viable knowledge in work processes and outcomes, all require creativity for success and competitive advantage. Creativity is a skill that is valuable at all levels of the organisation and in all functions. Within organisation, creativity is the starting point for innovation, and without innovation, organisations can not survive in times of rampant change.

3. LEADERSHIP

Leadership is —the process of influencing an organized group toward accomplishing its goals. —Roach & Behling, 1984

"Leadership is both a process and a property. As a process, leadership involves the use of non-coercive influence. As a property, leadership is the set of characteristics attributed to someone who is perceived to use influence successfully." (Moorhead and Griffin, 1998:352)

Leadership in political, economical, cultural, artistic, social, scientific and educational dimensions has its own characteristics that leader should have necessary abilities based on structural dimension and goals and natural features. Leadership paradigm has changed over the last decades: it has transited from the traditional leadership to the new perspectives. Schermerhorn et al. and Hoy and Miskel (2001) categorize trait, behavioural and situational or contingency theories under traditional leadership perspectives, and charismatic and transformational leadership theories under the new leadership perspectives. The focus of all theories of leadership is to determine organizational effectiveness.

4. CHANGE

Change refers to the introduction of something new, which can fall anywhere along the continuum from continuous (i.e. incremental improvement) to discontinuous change. A change can take place when an existing item is replace by another already established and known item.

There are two kinds of changes, first that exist naturally and is ongoing or cyclic and the second is change that people make either on purpose or in response to what is happening around them. The kind of change that is made on purpose engages your thinking process and thus required your thinking skill.

5. THE EMERGENCE OF CREATIVITY AS A CORE COMPETENCE: EVOLVING VIEW OF LEADERSHIP

What makes a leader great? The answer today is quite different than 100 years ago when researcher began to seriously study leadership. More than a century ago, it was widely believed that leadership was an innate quality-a set of traits possessed by a rare few since birth that predisposed these individual to achieve greatness. These innate personal characteristics included masculinity, self-confidence, and dominance. Thus, find an individual with these qualities, and it was believed that you had a great leader. In this manner, leadership was a primarily concerned with identification and selection rather than development. For obvious reasons, this approach has been referred to the trait or Great Man theory of leadership.

In this view, it is easy to see the shortcomings associated with this view of leadership. Indeed, the belief that leaders are born with a set of innate characteristics now falls into the category of leadership myths. Among the chief limitations of this approach is the fact that it ignores the interplay between an individual and the situation. Different situations are likely to require different qualities, thus making it difficult to identify a universal set of leadership traits that are applicable to all situations. And, even if a person had a requisite set of characteristics, he or she must find a situation that would allow this leadership potential to emerge.

The myth that leader's entre the world with a predetermined set of traits leads to a closely aligned misconception about leadership, that is, the belief that leadership cannot be taught or developed. In his popular leadership book, Maxwell (2007) concluded, "Although it's true that some people are born with greater natural gifts than others, the ability to lead is really a collection of skills, nearly all of which can be learned and improve" (p.25). To further reinforce this point, in their classic study of senior organization leaders, Bennis and Nanus (1985) found engagement in ongoing learning and development to be one of the most galvanizing qualities among the disparate group of leaders they studied. They found that the top leaders they interviewed were perpetual learners who had an insatiable appetite to develop new insides, explore new ideas, and entertain new challenges, as well as continuously push the boundaries of their own self-knowledge.

One final misconception about leadership worth nothing is the belief that leadership is about position. This view holds that only those in positions of power and authority in organization and communities can be great leaders. Simply having a title, For example, President, Director, Principal, Manager, or

Department chair, is no assurance that the person in that position is leader. Leadership is about what people do, not the title they hold. Furthermore this is an elitist view that assumes there are distinct roles-Leaders and followers. Reality is much more complex. Any member of an organization or community can exert leadership; one does not need a title or permission to demonstrate a capacity to bring about change.

6. CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF LEADERSHIP: IMPLICIT LINKS TO CREATIVITY

Contemporary leadership theories, when contrasted with the Great Man approach of century ago, have demonstrated a tendency to include creativity concept, traits, and ability. For the most part these connections to the field of creativity have been implicit. By implicit it means that leadership scholars, who are generally unfamiliar with the field of creativity, have unknowingly unearthed well established creativity characteristics as they have delineated the attributes of highly effective leaders. The fact that these connections are implicit is profoundly important and insightful. Why? It would be easy to conceive that researchers and leadership experts who are familiar with the field of creativity might have a biased view of leaders and thus may be more likely to see creative qualities in the leaders they studied. Leadership scholars have dedicated themselves to the study of leaders and not to the field of creativity and, thus, do not possess in-depth knowledge about creativity. Therefore it could be argued that their results have not been biased by their knowledge of creativity research and, thus, truly reflect the fact that successful leadership today relies, in part, on a person's ability to be creative.

The beginning of the new millennium served as a catalyst for a number of projects focused on describing the qualities leaders would need to be successful in the 21st century. Peter Drucker and Warren Bennis, provide clear example of description of leaders that highlight characteristics often associated with creative people.

7. HOW LEADERS DELIBERATELY USE AND PROMOTE CREATIVITY

An approach to leadership that dominates much of the recent and current literature is known as transformational leadership. Indeed, an analysis of the articles published in the first decade of the leadership quarterly reveled that one-third of the general content was dedicated to transformational leadership (Lowe and Gardner, 2000).

At the heart of transformational leadership is change. In fact, the very root of this form of leadership, the word transform, means to make considerable change in form, appearance, or character. Not surprisingly, with its explicit focus on facilitating change, description of transformational leadership makes direct connection to creativity. Though the term transformational leadership originated in early 1970s (Downton, 1973), much elaboration has occurred since then from a variety of sources (See Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1985,

1998; Tichy and Devanna, 1990; Yammarino, 1993). The fundamental focus of transformational leadership is to engage in a process that serves to change and transform others. Transformational leaders commit themselves to developing others to their fullest potential. Through the influence of transformational leadership, followers are able to elevate themselves beyond self interest and to achieve extraordinary accomplishments that serve some greater good. The transformational leadership process is not a one way relationship. It is a connection between the leader and his or her constituents that generally result in all parties reaching a higher level of motivation and morality. Northouse 2010 Underscore the connection between transformational leadership and change, as well as the partnership between leaders and followers, when he stated, "Although the transformational leader plays a pivotal role in precipitating change, followers and leaders are inextricably bound together in the transformation process. (P. 172) the transformational leader recognizes the inherent value and benefit in promoting individual creativity. To that end, those engage in this form of leadership deliberately nurture, challenge and promote the creative thinking others. Through their behavior, they create a work climate that supports others creativity, encouraging followers to pursue their own solution to problems, to explore complex challenges by reframing problems, and to question decisions and practices. The qualities and behavior associated with transformational leadership are rife with connections to creativity, and this relationship positions creativity as a core leadership competency. Inspirational motivation, for instance, addresses the need to tap into individuals intrinsic interests, and intrinsic motivation has been well documented as a main stimulant to creative achievement (Amabile, 1998). Inspirational motivation underscores the importance of a vision as a compelling force towards change. In the field of creativity, the ability to work toward a vision has been considered one of the primary personal characteristics of highly creative individuals (Davis, 1986; MacKinnon, 1978). One must first be able to imagine what is possible in order to then create. Finally, intellectual stimulation speaks directly to the importance of applying imaginative thought to solve organizational, community and societal problems. In this regard, leaders deliberately engage others in the creative process so that change and innovation can be brought about. Hence from this it is clear that transformational leadership theory has forged a clear bond to creativity. As Gumusluoglu and Ilseve 2009 so aptly observed, "Transformational leadership behaviors closely match the determinant of innovation and creativity. At the work place, some of which include vision, support for innovation, autonomy, encouragement, recognition and challenge (p.462).

8. LEADERSHIP: A PROCESS OF MUTUAL INFLUENCE

What is becoming increasingly clear is that the key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority

(Hesselbein, Goldsmith et al., 1996) Leadership is defined not by what a single leader does but as the ability to collaborate, motivate and to manage networks. Where there is constant change, where organization needs to operate globally, where technology is transforming the ways in which people interact, the focus of our understanding of leaders has shifted towards a process of influence between a leader and followers to attain group, organizational, or societal goals. Today's, hierarchy is out and influencing skills are in. Contemporary leaders don't force people to follow—they invite people on a journey. Moreover, contemporary leaders recognize that organizations are communities in their own right, where people develop a sense of belonging and find ways to develop their full potential.

In order to have an empowering influence on their people, a new set of qualities, going beyond traditional managerial skills and knowledge, is indeed. 21st century leadership requires a deep understanding of the nature of influence processes, and understanding of the forces of cooperation, and the ability to build collaborative culture (Block, 1993). These leaders must also lead by pathos through the creation of shared understanding, engaging and inspiring their people, and paying attention to their professional and personal growth.

9. WHAT DO WE GENERALLY THINK ABOUT CREATIVE LEADERS?

We do know some facts about creative leaders. They can be summed up as follows:

9.1 Creative Leaders possess Modest Intelligence

In summarizing the personal characteristics of creative thinkers, Arieti concluded that they must be intelligent. The paradox is that they generally are not too intelligent. Excessive intelligence cripples creativity by imposing an examination of self and ideas that is too strict, too "logical."

9.2 Creative Leaders are well up-to-date with knowledge

A profound knowledge of a problem area is needed in order to understand the limits of current dogma and to identify those areas where creative thought will be most fruitful. However, too much knowledge impedes the creative process, producing that thinking-process disease known as "hardening of the categories." This becomes a special problem when the knowledge is focused in a small specialty area because the breadth of alternative information that could be used in creative synthesis is missing.

9.3 Creative Leaders Are Logical Thinkers

Logical thinking is not the same as creativity but is obviously a prerequisite for creative thought. Originality requires an active search for the different. This may involve deliberate attempts to conjure contrasts, opposites, bizarre associations, and symbolic thinking. Logical thinking is sometimes no more

than mere recognition that what is accepted by everybody else has flaws, is not adequate, or needs to be done differently.

To complete the creative process, however, requires more than originality. Logical thoughts that are not examined critically cannot be refined into useful and correct concepts; less creative people tend to be too quick to judge or reject ideas. Creative people think out carefully what they are looking for, and they clarify the reasons for their reactions to emerging ideas. They tend to search longer for original thoughts that can improve upon or even replace the emerging ideas.

9.4 Creative Leaders Ask (the Right) Questions

A question calls forth an answer; a problem, its solution.

The trick is not only to ask questions, but to ask questions or pose problems in the most effective ways. A question can easily limit creative thinking if it restricts the space of potential answers. It therefore is important to pose questions in open-ended ways and ways that do not make too many assumptions about an acceptable answer. A major part of the creativity task is proper formulation of the problem itself.

10. CREATIVITY: THE NECESSARY FUEL FOR CHANGE

Creativity is not simply about the Arts but it is a crucial workplace skill, a skill need in all organizations, whether it be government or industry, public or private, for profit or non profit. Among the applied skills necessary in today's workplace, the skill with the largest gap between employer need and level of preparation among worker is creativity and innovation. Sternberg and Lubart (1999) put it, notions of creativity has been steeped in mystical beliefs. To the Greeks, it was the muse or some other external force that allowed individuals to create. Davis (1986) indicated that some people believe creativity is a "Mysterious mental happening" p.20. In today's era when we asked peoples about the description of creativity than we generally receives responses like "Imagination", "Problem Solving", "Risk taking", "Being innovative", "and Thinking out of the box ", " Fun and Growth". From here it clear that there is a greater appreciation for the importance of creativity in all aspect of life. This observation is further supported by the work of Florida (2002), who provided the following explanation as to the force behind the accelerated, pace of change that has occurred over the last half century:

The driving force is the rise of human creativity as the key factor in our economy and society. Both at work and in other spheres of our lives, we value creativity more highly than ever and cultivate it more intensely. The creative impulse-The attribute that distinguishes us, as humans, from other species-Is now being let loose on an unprecedented scale. (p.4).

11. CONCLUSION

Stability is temporary at best or, at worst, is an illusion. Therefore, successful leadership relies heavily on an individual ability to effectively respond to change and to proactively drive change- In short, to be creative. And, since one change in so quickly replaced by another, leaders need to be continuously creative. Creative thinking is no longer an afterthought in terms of those skills deemed important to leadership effectiveness; instead, many contemporary leadership experts now see creativity as a core leadership skill that always lead to change. The pace of change has increased towards dizzying rate, which brings both challenges and opportunities. To successfully address the challenges and to seize opportunities, leaders must employ their creative imagination and since leaders cannot have all the answers, they must also be adept at drawing out the creativity of others.

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