

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP APPROACH IN ORGANISATIONS -ITS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

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Introduction

Leadership has been described as “a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task”. Leadership is "organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal". The leader may or may not have any formal authority. Students of leadership have produced theories involving traits, situational interaction, function, behavior, power, vision and values, charisma, and intelligence, among others. Somebody whom people follow: somebody who guides or directs others. The role every manager must fill in the workplace is leadership. Managers often make the mistake of assuming that because they are the managers, they are also the leaders and that their associates will automatically follow. In reality, position only denotes title, not leadership. Peter Northouse (2001) defines leadership as a process whereby one individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. To be an effective leader, the manager must influence his associates in a positive way to reach the goals of the organization. There are three types of leadership approaches. They are

- 1) Transactional Leadership: It focuses on the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers.
- 2) Transformational Leadership: Process of engaging with others to create a connection that increases motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. Leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their fullest potential.
- 3) Pseudo transformational Leadership: It focuses on the leader’s own interests rather than the interests of their followers.

Of the above three the transformational leadership approach can help managers become exceptional leaders. This paper will explain the transformational leadership approach by discussing its components, factors, strengths, weaknesses, and steps for application. Transformational leadership is a process of transforming the organizational behavior, the culture and the individuals; simultaneously transforming the leader himself. Transactional Leadership, also known as managerial leadership, focuses on the role of supervision, organization, and group

performance; transactional leadership is a style of leadership in which the leader promotes compliance of his followers through both rewards and punishments.

Transformational leaders constantly articulate new visions to motivate the organization, they exhibit high passion and confidence in their beliefs, they give importance to ethics and values while setting accountable standards in the organization. Transformational leaders are often charismatic who are able to have an exceptional influence on their followers, compelling them to share the leader's vision and to take actions beyond their specified responsibilities. Transformational leader's exhibit good organizational abilities, they are able to align the individual aspirations and motivations to that of organization's vision.

Components of Transformational Leadership

Two major components of transformational leadership are (1) Charismatic leadership (2) Stewardship and servant leadership

Charismatic Leaders

Traditionally, charisma is defined as "perception of divine, exceptionally gifted qualities" of a leader. It is this perception of extraordinary that compels the followers to believe in their leader's radical vision rather than any rational judgment. Charismatic leaders have exceptional abilities to influence their followers, they are strong role models and the followers want to emulate their behavior. They are very well respected and deeply trusted by their subordinates. Charismatic leaders by nature have high capacity to transform the organization and its environment, though some contend that it's not essential component of transformational leadership. It's true that transformations can also be accomplished by following a more ethical code, more consideration of subordinate interests and development, however without charisma, it would be a mere inanimate process without any human touch. Some of the key characteristics of Charismatic leadership are

- **Vision:** Charismatic leaders have natural inclination to be dissatisfied with status-quo and always search for a radically different vision. Learn more about vision in [-leadership purpose](#).
- **Strong leadership traits:** Charismatic leader develop all the necessary traits of leadership, ability to inspire, establish credibility and are very strong in their communication skills.
- **Strong Self-Belief:** Charismatic leader have strong inner conviction about their vision and strategies. They have gone through the phases of inner turmoil and have successfully overcome their inner conflicts to realize their full potential. The completion of self discovery results in exceptional confidence, an attribute that only makes them more compelling and dominant.
- **Activist Mindset:** Their inner conviction and desperation for change makes them self-promoting for their cause and belief. They are willing to pursue risky endeavors, their courageousness is a great influence on the followers, and people expect and admire leaders who are courageous.

- Exemplary: Charismatic leaders practice high moral values, they are very ethical in their actions and follow a code of conduct at the expense of self.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is employee-oriented process that aims to empower subordinates with greater ownership and responsibilities while the leader acts as self-sacrificing facilitator. However this doesn't imply that leader is less concerned with the business or other objectives of the organization, but rather formulates a collective vision that serves both employees and the organization's stakeholders. Some of the key characteristics of servant leadership are:-

- Create atmosphere of partnership: Servant leaders consciously desist from using their positional power unless really required. They try to lead at the ground level, considerably eliminating the perception of organizational hierarchy.
- Active Listener: Servant leaders are more like negotiators rather than commanders; they listen carefully to the problems of others and then engage in range of satisfying solutions.
- Subordinate development: Servant leaders view continual development of subordinates as vital to health of the organization. This implies establishing a fair process of performance evaluation and making sure it is effective and well received by he subordinates.

Factors influenced on Transformational Leadership Approach

There are four factors to transformational leadership, (also known as the "four I's"): idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Each factor will be discussed to help managers use this approach in the workplace.

1. *Idealized influence* describes managers who are exemplary role models for associates. Managers with idealized influence can be trusted and respected by associates to make good decisions for the organization. Leader's have high standards of ethical and moral conduct.

2. *Inspirational motivation* describes managers who motivate associates to commit to the vision of the organization. Managers with inspirational motivation encourage team spirit to reach goals of increased revenue and market growth for the organization. Leaders who communicate high expectations to followers, inspiring followers through motivation to commitment and engagement in shared vision of the organization

3. *Intellectual Stimulation* describes managers who encourage innovation and creativity through challenging the normal beliefs or views of a group. Managers with intellectual stimulation promote critical thinking and problem solving to make the organization better.

4. *Individual consideration* describes managers who act as coaches and advisors to the associates. Managers with individual consideration encourage associates to reach goals that help both the associates and the organization. Effective transformational leadership results in performances that exceed organizational expectations.

Each of the four factors describes characteristics that are valuable to the “transformation” process. When managers are strong role models, encouragers, innovators, and coaches, they are utilizing the “four I’s” to help “transform” their associates into better, more productive and successful individuals. Northouse (2001) states that in 39 studies of transformational literature, individuals who exhibited transformational leadership were more effective leaders with better work outcomes. This was true for both high- and low-level leaders in the public and private sectors (Northouse, 2001). Therefore, it can be very advantageous for managers to apply the transformational approach in the workplace.

Strengths of Transformational Leadership

Strengths are widely researched (using well-known leaders), effectively influence associates on all levels (from one-on-one to the whole organization), and strongly emphasize associates’ needs and values.

- *Broadly researched.* TL has been widely researched, including a large body of qualitative research centering on prominent leaders and CEOs in major firms.
- *Intuitive appeal.* People are attracted to TL because it makes sense to them.
- *Process-focused.* TL treats leadership as a process occurring between followers and leaders.
- *Expansive leadership view.* TL provides a broader view of leadership that augments other leadership models.
- *Emphasizes follower.* TL emphasizes followers’ needs, values, and morals.
- *Effectiveness.* Evidence supports that TL is an effective form of leadership.
- *Most Popular:* Transformational leadership is most intuitive and easily recognized by people; it fits the popular notion of a leader. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Adolf Hitler, Obama are all examples of transformational leaders.

Weaknesses of Transformational Leadership

Weaknesses have many components that seem too broad, treat leadership more as a personality trait than as a learned behavior, and have the potential for abusing power.

- *Too Complicated:* Transformational leadership is an amalgamation of various leadership theories, making it unreasonable to be trained or taught.
- *Potential to be abused:* Transformational leadership’s high effectiveness in leader’s vision makes it undemocratic; the leader’s purpose is largely unchallenged, thus liable to be misused by the leader. There is plenty of historical evidence supporting its misuse, Adolf Hitler being one of the most prominent one.
- *Lacks conceptual clarity*

- Dimensions are not clearly delimited
- Parameters of TL overlap with similar conceptualizations of leadership
- *Measurement* questioned
 - Validity of MLQ not fully established
 - Some transformational factors are not unique solely to the transformational model
- TL treats leadership more as a personality trait or predisposition than a *behavior* that can be taught
- TL is *elitist* and *antidemocratic*
- Suffers from *heroic leadership* bias
- TL is based primarily on *qualitative* data
- Has the potential to be *abused*

Applying Transformational Leadership

Because transformational leadership covers a wide range of aspects within leadership, there are no specific steps for a manager to follow. Becoming an effective transformational leader is a process. This means that conscious effort must be made to adopt a transformational style. Understanding the basics of transformational leadership and the four I's can help a manager apply this approach.

According to Northouse (2001), a transformational leader has the following qualities:

- a. Empowers followers to do what is best for the organization;
- b. Is a strong role model with high values;
- c. Listens to all viewpoints to develop a spirit of cooperation;
- d. Creates a vision, using people in the organization;
- e. Acts as a change agent within the organization by setting an example of how to initiate and implement change;
- f. Helps the organization by helping others contribute to the organization.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership is a vital role for effective managers because leader effectiveness determines the success level of the organization. This type of leadership is effective in crisis and emergency situations, as well as when projects need to be carried out in a specific fashion. Transactional leaders are willing to work within existing systems and negotiate to attain goals of the organization. They tend to think inside the box when solving problems. According to

Hesselbein and Cohen (1999, p. 263), organizations that take the time to teach leadership are far ahead of the competition. By becoming familiar with the transformational leadership approach and combining the four I's, managers can become effective leaders in the business world. Transformational leadership can be applied in one-on-one or group situations. Using this approach, the manager (leader) and the associates (followers) are "transformed" to enhance job performance and help the organization be more productive and successful.

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