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The Leader Playing to His Strengths

Abstract

Those in positions of leadership know their strengths and how best to maximise their use for the betterment of all. This article focuses on three qualities of the leader who wants to maximise that which they are strong at for the betterment of all those that they come into contact with.

The three qualities explored in this article are:

1. The leader has a vision of a better future;
2. Having the ability to get people on board so as to see the vision become a reality and;
3. The willingness to take action in pursuit of achieving the vision.

The successful leader will use their strengths as they make best use of these three qualities.

Introduction

The Latin root of the word "motivation" means "to move"; hence, in this basic sense the study of motivation is the study of action in every human activity including, obviously, Business Management (Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield ; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (3).

From a psychobiological point of view the successful leader is fully aware of the role of motivation and being motivated. Different theories of motivation focus on the relation of beliefs, values, and goals with the taking of action (all attributes the successful leader knows that must be counted on if they are to achieve that which they have set out to do). Because expectancies refer to beliefs about how one will do on different tasks or activities, and values have to do with incentives or reasons for doing

the activity it could be useful determinate why leaders have a strong belief in their own ability and strengths to achieve that which they have set out to do (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (4). When the successful leader is observed under the psychobiological perspectives (Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (5), several new concepts emerge (like systems for recognition of emotions, stress management, ability for personal relationships and other such behaviors − all areas the successful leader must know about if they are to be successful). There are many types of leader (due to criteria of the article being written at this time it is not possible to go into them in any great detail) so for this reason, we have chosen to focus on the entrepreneurial leader for the writing of this article. With this in mind we would like to just put the question out there as to is it possible to determinate how somebody became an entrepreneurial leader and the relation between entrepreneurship and leadership (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (6). Furthermore for the purpose of this article it would be useful to view entrepreneurial leadership as simply a type of leadership that occurs in a specific setting. A type of leadership that is not beyond the reach or understanding of available theories in the areas of leadership and interpersonal influence (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (7), (like all successful leaders) to have that ability to change the world using new ideals to make the world a better place and how these ideas can become a reality.

1. The leader has a vision of a better future:

Leadership is often the act and art of being the one who undertakes innovations or introducing new things or ideas. The actions of a leader may result in entirely new organizations or revitalizing mature organizations in response to a perceived opportunity (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (8). Like setting out to do anything new or different risk-taking is all part of it. So the risk-taking propensity (i.e., a decision-making orientation toward accepting greater likelihood of loss in exchange for greater potential reward) can reasonably be expected to be included in any profile of what might make leaders distinctly different because they may tend to view some situations as opportunities, when others perceive similar circumstances as having low potential (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et

al. 2011) (9). This interpretation seems somewhat closer to an alternative dimension of optimism or confidence in the leaders vision for the future because those who led have to believe that they are highly competent at decision-making and perceive greater opportunities in a risky choice situation so are prepared to take more risks when setting out their vision as something they want to achieve. Unlike the leader those who believe they are less competent see greater threats and take fewer risks than that of the leader (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (10). Because leaders are visionaries, a leader has the potential to change the world for the better, but using the Harvard Professor John Kotter's formula discussed in his management classic Leading Change: "Leading change depends on a defined dissatisfaction with the present, a vision for how things should be, and a clear idea of the first steps that need to be taken". In essence this means that that the personality of the leader won't continue to do things the way they have always been done (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (11). Leaders are often more open to looking at different and new ways to make what it is they are involved in more efficient and effective. To do this, they have to start with their input from the senses and use their perspectives, beliefs, values and memories to generate an adequate behavior (Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (12) so as to set out their vision of a better future. Often leaders have a creative and knowing cognitive style, use intuition to make decisions, develop expert scripts, are self-efficient in the perception and development of opportunities, create an innovative environment, cope with unexpected challenges and are prone to innovation and risk taking (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) when setting out their vision of the future (13).

2. Having the ability to get people on board so as to see the vision become a reality:

In pursuit of achieving that which the leader has set out to do can if done right add to group social cohesion and coordinate group activities in the face of challenges (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (14) on the way to seeing their vision become a reality. Indeed, leadership is a process of social influence in which one individual can

enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal or in this case the vision. The leader is somebody whom people follow: somebody who guides or directs others (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (15). For most people looking for and having social support systems can often be at core of living a life of success and happiness regardless of how it is success and happiness are defined. With this in mind good leaders are always recruiting (talent, advisors, investors or customers) and using this knowledge so as to see their vision become a reality for the betterment of all. So form a physiological point of view this means having the ability to be a good communicator. This is important in terms of verbal communication but it is nearly more important in terms of non-verbal communication (Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield ; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (16). This is why leaders find it necessary to control their vocal communication including tone of voice, sighs, screams, vocal qualities, (loudness, pitch, and so on) and, non-vocal communication including gestures, movements, appearance, facial expressions, and so on as different brain areas are activated by a stimulated sense as neuroimaging studies have shown (Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield ; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (17). The informed leader knows that there are signals that the human brain recognizes for evaluating faces for trustworthiness so as to just to known who will or will not be a good person to get involved so as to see their vision become a reality and if necessary become part of the team if such a one is in place so as to realize the vision (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (18). The leader often too measures their own success based on the quantity and quality of their relationships. Even with knowing this it would make for a great area of research as there doesn't appear to be a whole lot done in this field. This research could involve exploring the evolving dynamic between leaders and followers, which in turn could offer a typology that both leaders and managers could use to determine and appreciate how their followers are different from one another. Leaders are very aware that in a team it is necessary to establish a positive group dynamic. To have the whole team working together based on a positive group process interacting with their leader. That the processes occurring within the group will have the leader influence the team as well as having the leader's actions being influenced by the team. If the leader is to successfully get people on board so as to see their vision become a reality then they will often have to rely on their personality. The nature and personality of a leader is related to the physiology

(Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (19). Indeed the study of the interaction between hormones and behavior with social and personality psychology show that several hormones are related to leadership behavior. Here are some examples: Cortisol is related with the stress response and testosterone increases aggression and dominance. Low levels of cortisol and high levels of testosterone are related with leadership behavior (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (20).

On the other hand, oxytocin, a hormone that promotes affiliate behavior, is related with the enhancement of cooperative behavior. The evolution of cooperation among unrelated individuals has received intense theoretical attention: an altruist should volunteer to benefit group members at some cost to itself, given that there might be a benefit of waiting until someone else volunteers (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (21). Good team functioning is a product of cooperative structures and the intelligent, responsible participation of the team's members. (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (22), all stuff a leader is aware of be that either consciously or unconsciously. The leader being aware of the need to have and maintain the support of others in achieving their vision will require both listening to and judging feedback from all those involved in the process. The good leader understands that no one should be arrogant enough to feel like they have all the answers and for this reason they are always open to looking for and receiving feedback (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (23). The good leader understands that they must keep on learning and adapting to the changing environments that they will find themselves operating in, in pursuit of their vision. Physiologically learning is acquiring new, or modifying existing, knowledge, behaviors, skills, values, or preferences and may involve synthesizing different types of information. The ability to learn is possessed by humans, animals and some machines and progress over time in a determinate context (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (24). That knowledge grows up and may be viewed as a process because learning produces changes in the brain and these changes produced are relatively permanent (Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield ; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (25).

3. The willingness to take action in pursuit of achieving the vision

The environment(s) in which the leader operates change and changes often and, soon or later, every one of them will find troubles and challenges to overcome, so it is very important to talk about how they are always prepared to take action in the face of these changes and challenges (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (26) in pursuit of their vision. This preparedness to always take action regardless of the circumstances that the leader may find them-selves in is related with the concept of psychological resilience. Leadership is about having the courage to come back from disappointments and setbacks when the rest of the people are only able to give in and give up. This resilience is about the leader's tendency to cope with stress and adversity (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (27) as they take the action necessary to see their vision become a reality. This coping often results in the leader "bouncing back" to a previous state of normal functioning, or simply not showing negative effects. In any case, resilience must be understood as a process, as a way of life for the leader. Nevertheless it has a physiological implication because it means a high self-control and to maintain it because it is necessary for the leader to keep taking action particularly in times of great stress (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (28).

It is useful to understand this concept and to point out that while total elimination of stress is unrealistic; the physiological management of stress is an attainable and realistic goal that can be achieved. For this reason it is also necessary to know that "out-of-control" stress can lead to having the burnout syndrome (Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield ; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (29) which has the potential to effect several parts of the body like cardiovascular diseases, asthma, chronic pain, depression, etc. and does effect the immune system (acute "short-term" stresses boost the body's immune response while chronic "long-term" stress has the effect of "wearing down" the immune system). In fact, successful leaders are confronted with high demands on their energy and personal skills (Becker et al., 2002; Eccles J.S. and Wigfield ; 2002; Northoff G. 2012) (30). Stress and potential impairment can be expected with excessive professional ambition, low resistance toward stress, and

limited emotional well-being. For example, very high scores in the dimensions of professional commitment (e.g., tendency to exert, striving for perfection, (in)ability to detach from work) have often been linked to high levels of stress and health problems. The inability to detach from work has been described as a major characteristic of the workaholic, which is a potent predictor for reduced health and well-being (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (31). Nevertheless it is possible to use some effective techniques to cope with stress (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (32). For example, looking for a physiological balance having healthy habits, doing exercise, using relaxation techniques and so on, but, in the context of the successful leader who is taking action in pursuit of their vision, the most interesting strategy is looking for social support systems (Becker et al., 2002; Carlson 2013) (33).

Conclusion

It conclusion it must be noted that successful leaders do not just suddenly think like successful leaders. The mind of the successful leader grows for years at varying levels of complexity; thinking like the successful leader does not just begin overnight (Sánchez et al 2011; Vecchio 2003; Voltmer et al. 2011) (34). So it is possible to look for and see how the successful leader thinks in relation to the three qualities as set out above.

With this in mind to succeed and be a successful leader then you must:

1. Have a vision of a better future:
2. Having the ability to get people on board so as to see this vision become a reality and:
3. The willingness to take action in pursuit of achieving the vision.

Achieving success as a leader is no easy feat, having the endurance to ''stay the course'' is crucial for energizing performance and enhancing sustainability. The successful leader must not only have this personal endurance but also be a person of

integrity, responsibility, compassion, and forgiveness if they are to garner the support from other as they take action in pursuit of their vision.

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