

MANAGING LEADERSHIP

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MANAGING LEADERSHIP

TOWARD A NEW AND USABLE UNDERSTANDING OF
WHAT LEADERSHIP REALLY IS
— *AND HOW TO MANAGE IT*

JIM STROUP

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*This book is dedicated to my wife, Emel,
my brother, Michael,
and my friend,
Chuck Martenson*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the result of years of learning from others. It is, of course, impossible to thank them all by name. I would like, nevertheless, to express my gratitude for the examples of command, management, and leadership I've learned from colleagues and associates in the U.S. Marine Corps, all of the other military services of the United States, and those of many other countries around the world. There has been plenty of study of examples of individual military leadership, but not enough of military organizations and their members. I am honored to have had the opportunity to serve in and observe such organizations at all levels.

Additionally, I have had the pleasure to work with numerous employees and managers of many international commercial, non-profit, and governmental organizations. I thank them all for their insights and enlightening discussions. These have immeasurably integrated and enriched my appreciation of organizational leadership.

It is necessary, as well, to acknowledge my debt to those who have studied and written in the past about leadership of, or in, organizations, and those who continue to do so. Our insights, opinions, and ideas are never formed in isolation, and the vigor of the dialectic by means of which we discuss them is as at least as important to their vitality as is whatever humble contribution we make ourselves. This field has attracted some of the finest minds working anywhere, and it is with the greatest humility that I offer this modest contribution to the leadership debate.

Finally, I must express my thanks to three individuals without whom this project would never have become a reality. First is Colonel James L. Williams, USMC (Ret.), who is referred to in this book, and with whom I have had the great fortune to serve. His example, teaching, and continued support have been fundamental contributions to the development of the concepts expressed in this book. Next is Turkish business manager and writer Hakan Yaman, whose agile thought process, expansive knowledge and experience, and intense conversation helped crystallize the awareness that this project should be undertaken. I must thank, as well, my wife, Dr. Emel Stroup, for her contributions from the field of clinical psychology and cognitive therapy, for her insightful and valuable editorial and structural reviews, and of course, for her enduring and indispensable faith and support.

PREFACE

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man. Those organizations that accept this as referring to the senior executive's personal leadership skills will eventually find themselves to be in deep trouble. Even if the current leader is of exceptional talent and possessed of inspired insight, these abilities will often prove to be essentially time- and situation-based, and will ultimately be overcome by events. Or, his successor will not possess these abilities at the right time, and will destroy an organization that is accustomed to depending on him to provide them.

On the other hand, there is a military dictum that a unit's success or failure is wholly the responsibility of its commander. If that commander chooses to arrogate to himself personally the performance of all the unit's leadership functions, he is as likely, in the end, to prove responsible for its failures, as he is for its achievements. If, however, he is content to use his command authority to marshal and deploy the expression of these leadership functions from all available sources, he greatly increases the likelihood of his organization's, and incidentally his own, success. This does not require superhuman vision or charisma. A manager of quite ordinary technical ability who takes this approach leverages and focuses skills that are widespread throughout the organization. Such a manager demonstrates his superiority through his deference to, and intelligent use of, a powerful organizational asset.

Unfortunately, this approach is not common. Our leaders generally aspire to some form of "great man" status. Yet, this is a concept that we often both celebrate and condemn. For each of those who argue for the great man theory of history or organizational leadership, there are those who counter that our organizations and we are driven by deep and inscrutable trends that surface to give themselves expression through this or that unwitting mouthpiece. Great men are thus more accidents of history than shapers of it. Perhaps it is more accurate to argue, however, that there are indeed great men who can identify and organize these internal forces and turn them to desired purposes, thereby converting us from flotsam carried in their path to channels shaping their direction and power. Among these forces are the natural leadership environment and phenomenon arising from and interacting within human societies. The masters of these forces are those who discern, cultivate, and direct them. The truly great men, then, are not leaders at all.

They are those managers, of perhaps quite ordinary skills, who have nevertheless attained this extraordinary insight, and who use it to elevate not themselves, but their organizations.

Why this book was written

For well over thirty years, I have had the good fortune to participate at all levels in organizations of all types throughout the world. During this time, I have also been able to observe and consult with many of these organizations. In the course of this, I have typically detected in them an inconsistent, or even harmful, approach to organizational leadership. Often, this was expressed by a failure to acknowledge, at all, the importance of the influence of leadership in the organization. On other occasions, it was represented by a formulaic and no-exceptions application of a personal general philosophy on the subject to all particular individual and institutional leadership issues. (In truth, that approach, rather than reflecting an actual philosophy of the topic, exposed the leader's discomfort with it, and should more properly be seen as a device for avoiding having to even struggle with the subject of leadership.) Somewhat more promisingly, experiential or academically derived theories of leadership sometimes were found to have been consciously developed and applied. Unfortunately, they consistently fell short of the mark, operated in a peculiarly irrelevant fashion within the organization, or were actively harmful to the organization's effectiveness and ability to pursue its aim. Graduate, postgraduate, and focused professional study of the topic has not alleviated my concern. Rather, most of this study has exacerbated that concern, and led to a conviction that much of what has been done in the field has not only led us off the mark, but has contributed to the leadership crises we are experiencing today.

This book will argue that the modern school of individual leadership has failed to grasp the true nature of organizational leadership. In turn, this leadership movement has led astray the leaders it purports to coach, as well as their organizations and all of those who depend upon them. In some cases, the results have been not only unfortunate, but spectacularly so. In all cases, however, I believe that the focus on the individual leader at the top creates unsustainable burdens and pressures on that person. These erode the ability to maintain perspective and safeguard the proper relationships between the modern senior executive and the organization. The result, at a minimum, is inconsistent and generally inferior levels of productivity in virtually every plane of organizational functioning.

The argument will be made that leadership in an organization is in no wise an individual characteristic, and certainly not a characteristic of any particular individual. While it is expressed through individuals, it is itself an innate quality of the joining together of numbers of people in a collaborative effort in an organizational setting. It arises from, communicates itself among, and is expressed through all members of the organization in varying degrees according to the general level of group cohesion in the organization, and the abilities and circumstances at any given time of the individuals concerned. Thus, it is potentially more comprehensive and powerful an asset for the organization than the leadership generated by any individual leader, however capable such a person might be.

The management of this organizational leadership thus serves a number of purposes. It relieves the senior executive of the untenable burdens and expectations of individual leadership that he has assumed, or that have been placed upon him. It obviates and reverses the erosion of the integrity of the organization that arises when its focus is misdirected from its purpose to that

of its leader. In addition, it makes available to the intelligently managed organization a source of leadership that is potentially far more powerful. The key is in recognizing what it is, and learning how to bring it into the service of the organization.

This book, then, aims to present a new view of what organizational leadership really is, and how to manage it. In so doing, it is hoped that management will reclaim its natural supremacy over leadership in an organizational setting. Further, the book is a call to raise our organizations out of the thrall to individual leadership into which they have fallen, and to restore them to intelligent, responsible, owner-focused management.

Who this book was written for

The intended audience of this book is not merely the practicing manager. I certainly do hope that managers will learn much from the book and be encouraged to use it to help them manage more effectively and efficiently. However, it is targeted at a larger audience. It is hoped that corporate and other organizational boards will learn to use the book to help them regain control over their organizations. The quasi-cult of the modern charismatic leader has led to various mechanisms that have shifted the balance in the management-ownership relationship out of equilibrium. This has further led to an erosion of organizational integrity and of the usefulness of both management and owners to their organizations. One of the aims of this book is to redraw the profile of the senior executive from singular leader to effective manager, and thus to help restore that equilibrium.

I hope, as well, that the book will receive critical attention in business schools and the large leadership consulting industry. I believe that it is important for this topic to be debated vigorously, and to be opened to the healthy and robust reexamination of assumptions that have gone unchallenged for far too long. There have been suggestions, some quite broad, in the literature since at least the early 20th century, that point in the direction of the argument taken in this book. I think it would be useful for professional practitioners, scholars, and observers to turn their attention to a reassessment of that line of leadership commentary.

Organization of the book

The introductory Part I contains three chapters that present the case for the need for this book. The first chapter challenges the nature of the contributions of the modern leadership movement and provides an overview of the movement's lack of cohesiveness, suggesting that this may indicate a measure of questionable verisimilitude. Chapter 2 provides a closer look at some of the more dominant and rising influences in the modern leadership movement – and how they might be contributing to the problem. Finally, Chapter 3 goes a little deeper into the recent and more distant history of the literature to find and discuss those hints buried within it that offer glimmers of promise pointing in the direction of the argument of this book.

Part II consists of four chapters that lay out the argument for the existence of organizational leadership, and for the ability and importance of intelligently managing it. Chapter 4 builds upon observations, made in another context, of the behavior of soldiers in combat units. These are then used as a basis upon which to draw our own more general observations about organizational behavior and leadership. The discussion here builds the basis for what follows. The next chapter extends those observations to begin building the case for the existence of

organizational leadership. It does this principally by showing how leadership can occur at various times and points throughout an organization. Chapter 6 then presents the full case for organizational leadership – what it is and how it operates in an organization. Chapter 7 closes the main part of the book with a discussion of how to manage organizational leadership.

The concluding Part III consists of two chapters, beginning with the presentation of possible critiques of the book's arguments. Certainly, the ideas proposed herein about leadership are not in the commonly adhered-to tradition of the topic. These ideas may be difficult to absorb, and will likely attract resistance for disturbing what have been apparently satisfactory habits of thought. Accordingly, I have attempted, in this chapter, to anticipate several of these critiques made from several perspectives, and to persuasively address them. The final chapter offers a concise review of the argument of the book, although the reader should be cautioned that it is not a self-contained substitute for the broader argumentation made in Part II. It then concludes with some thoughts about how to proceed with implementation of the concepts presented.

A note on usage

It should be useful here to discuss how some vocabulary and general usage have been employed in this book. To begin with, I have consciously chosen to use the male gender as a general stand-in for third-party references to people or human society. I should like to note here that while I have found that there are indeed differences in the general tendencies and approaches of men and women to management, the topic is a complex one that can only be very tangentially addressed here. First, these differences admit of numerous exceptions that, while not compromising their validity as generalizations, do make it rather impractical to thoughtlessly project them onto particular individuals or situations. Second, I have found that the differing natural strengths of women and men are complementary and are in fact quite powerful in combination. In fact, while it is not common, neither is it unheard of to see people, male and female, who have developed and unified these strengths within themselves, with results for managerial effectiveness that generally leave others in a state of baffled admiration. Third, while a discussion of these issues is not appropriate here and will not be attempted, I should say that I do not believe that the natural strengths of one sex are necessarily or inherently superior to the other. Still, if pressed, I would have to say that, all other factors being equal, the average organization would be best served not by an individual male or female (unless one is a unifier of the strengths of both sexes), nor even by a male/female team, but rather by a female executive with key male subordinates. Again, this is not intended as a reflection of the superiority of one set of strengths over the other, but merely of where those natural strengths are best placed to provide the greatest combined service to the organization. Further, it admits of as many validating exceptions as does the basic generalization. Nevertheless, regarding third party references in this book, I ask your forbearance for my use of the male gender in a general sense, to avoid the inelegant and distracting circumlocutions that are sometimes used to mollify rather than to enlighten.

I often refer to owners in this book, which is about all types of organizations, and not just corporations or other business units. The term *owner* refers to any person or legal entity that has owner-level authority and responsibility for the creation and direction of the organization. In addition to shareholders, this can refer to foundations and governmental institutions that take a similar originating and fundamental interest role. Similarly, I use the terms *boards*, *boards of*

directors, and *directors* to refer to intermediary persons or bodies legitimately delegated owner-level authority and responsibility comparable to that of a corporate board.

The heart of this book is the discussion of leaders and leadership. However, these words themselves admit of a wide range of usage that can lead to confusion. As a general rule, I will use the term *leader* as a quasi-technical reference to the sort of individual promoted by the modern leadership movement as uniquely suited by natural character, character training, leadership training, or any combination of these, for leadership of an organization. *Leadership* is generally used together with *individual* or *charismatic* to refer to what such individuals do. When used together with *organizational*, however, it refers to the concept of leadership propounded in this book.

Furthermore, *leaders* and *leadership* are used herein with reference to organizations and their activities. They are not to be confused with the use of these words in describing historical trends, market positions, technological innovation, or the like. As used in this book, the terms refer to professional executives employed to run an organization. When they are used to refer to owners, explorers, adventurers in various endeavors, or to refer to the relative standing of entities compared to others at a given point in time, they take on meanings that, while perfectly legitimate in those contexts, are not relevant to their use in this book.

It is my intent to describe in this book what I believe to be a perfectly ordinary, comprehensible, and manageable organizational asset. Mindful of Samuel Clemens's comment that if he had had more time, he would have written a shorter book, I have attempted to be respectfully concise and succinct. I hope nevertheless that you will have been provided sufficient argumentation of my case to take away from your reading of it ideas that will be of meaningful use to you in your endeavors, whatever they may be. I further hope that whatever views you form of the ideas presented in this book, you will be encouraged to promote additional discussion of them by others. Such a debate will make more robust and usefully enduring our understanding and application of whatever ideas emerge from it. Finally, I will be very pleased to find that you have enjoyed and benefited from the time you spend with this book.

I

INTRODUCTION

When I began to talk with him,
I could not help thinking that he was not really wise,
although he was thought wise by many,
and still wiser by himself;

...

I am better off than he is – for he knows nothing and thinks that he knows.

I neither know nor think that I know.

In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him.

...

After this I went to one man after another

...

I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish;
and that some inferior men were really wiser and better.

Plato's Socrates, in *The Apology*

1

WHAT'S HAPPENED

“The people cannot see him enough. They delight in a man.
Here is a head and a trunk! What a front! What eyes!
Atlantean shoulders, and the whole carriage heroic,
with equal inward force to guide the great machine!”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The last few decades of the 20th century witnessed an explosion of interest in the subject of leadership. Academic and general-interest writing on the topic became widely popular. New ideas were insufficient to the need, and old sources, from Sun-Tzu through Attila the Hun to Machiavelli, were pressed back into service to close the breach. Alongside cults and apocalyptic groups warning of the dangers at hand with the close of the old millennium, there arose a plethora of leadership centers and gurus heralding the exciting possibilities appearing with the dawn of the new one. We learned that a special sort of ill-understood being was needed to confront the dizzying changes and challenges befalling us at every turn – only these “leaders” were capable of guiding us through such perilous and confusing times.

However, before long, as always, our democratic instincts rebelled against this elitist view of the leader. We began to have explained to us that leadership derives not from nature, but from nurture. It is a learned set of skills. As this particular nature versus nurture debate progressed, we came to understand that alongside the child within each of us is a leader as well. The issue is how to give expression to that aspect of our character.

Through this device, the elitists and democrats, the advocates of nature and of nurture, could all claim some portion of victory. Leadership is both special and within the reach of all of us. It is both inherent and learned.

The result has been a bewildering array of theories of leadership, all promising to offer the vital insight that will unlock the secrets of this remarkable skill and make it accessible to all of us. These have been developed from grave and ponderously scientific academic studies, or from interviews of present-day leaders. Some have been built up from surveys of “great men” throughout history. Still others are derived from studies of organizations that have shown some quantifiable measures of success.

But the question bears asking: If we have called up this frenzied discussion of leadership in order to produce leaders to guide us through these presumed historically unique times of change, how are they doing? Whether these leaders are a result of all the activity and theorizing in the field, or whether all of that theorizing is a result of studies of these leaders, where have

they led us? And what has happened to us in the meanwhile?

It is not necessary here to provide a detailed accounting of the scandals that have rocked the business world in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Industries have been broken, wealth destroyed, dreams shattered. Many presumably revolutionary new industries turned out to be exaggerated adaptations of traditional ones. The market swelled with the entry of millions of small investors, either directly or indirectly, through mutual funds or company retirement plans. When the bubble burst, a staggering amount of their money simply vanished. People had believed what they were told by the leaders of this business revolution, leaders who were advertised as able to see what others could not, who were guiding us through dangerous times to a grand new world beyond. These people invested their retirement contributions in these visions. Millions of them were then left unable to retire: they were told by these leaders to have faith, and they did.

In many cases these workers not only can't retire, but they are left holding the bag, struggling to keep their crippled, ill-conceived businesses afloat. At the same time, it appears that those leaders, evidently less sanguine about the veracity of their own leadership skills than they encouraged their followers to be, were able to jump to safety with carefully pre-packed golden parachutes. Many of these businesses will not make it. However, those leaders, who promised they would make it, are well protected both legally and financially. Perhaps they did have pretty good foresight, after all.

Similar stories can be told about the condition of leadership in governments across the United States: scandal, bankruptcy, failing infrastructure, whole jurisdictions seemingly drifting helplessly toward disaster. Why do Americans spend so much and provide such poor education to their children? Why are some states approaching financial collapse? What will America's political leaders do to the promises made to the country's social security beneficiaries, many of whom have little else to rely on in old age, having lost their retirement plans to the empty promises of their business leaders?

As it happens, leaders, while enjoying the rewards of their successes, rarely suffer the consequences of their failures. The moral jeopardy that results lays the basis for further scandal and failure. Governments then step in to attempt to regulate accountability into the system. How did this result from such an intense period of leadership studies and promotion of styles and models for addressing just such times as these?

It is difficult to avoid the observation that the striking increase in leadership studies and education in the 1980s and 1990s corresponded with – or culminated in – spectacular leadership failures. To what extent is the one a result of the other? How and why did this happen? What is to be done about it?

This book will argue that the inflated promises of the leadership movement are indeed culpable in the disastrous leadership failures that have occurred in both business and government, both in the US and around the world. By identifying leadership as an individual characteristic, the movement distorted and diminished the proper managerial functions of the executive. By placing exaggerated promise in the vision and inspirational duties of the individual leader, the movement gave undue power and license to that individual. Further, it encouraged the “followers” to place their faith in and abandon their judgment to this momentous personage. All the associated commentary about morality and “knowing the self” could not relieve the resulting burdens thus placed on the leader – rather, it exacerbated them. All the heroic expectations

currently placed on the leadership abilities of senior executives often lead to distorted and grandiose perceptions of them by themselves and others. This, in turn, can lead to an oracular administration emitting cryptic messages from the sheltered leader, which are then interpreted and transmitted to the benighted masses by an elite priesthood of senior executives. The results can vary from rather unpredictable successes to rather more predictable failures – although, in either event, they tend to be reliably spectacular and epic. Curiously, it can become difficult to fix accountability in such circumstances. In addition, that can produce great pressures and temptations for the taking of great and unwarranted risks – legal or otherwise.

What can be done about it? Actually, it is a quite manageable problem, as will be seen. First, however, we will take a closer look at why it is necessary.

Definitions

Leadership as a separate discipline has proved notoriously difficult to distinguish, and there is no consensus for a single definition. Each new theory or model is generally accompanied by its own description of what leadership is. Over time, this has resulted in a multitude of mutually irreconcilable definitions that have badly fragmented the subject area and rendered it difficult to navigate. In virtually every new discussion of leadership, it is necessary first to establish and agree to the intellectual framework to be used, and then to the associated definitions of terms. The disputes arising from this process fruitlessly expend much energy of the sort that produces more heat than light. Little agreement is reached among the disputants, and even less clarity is provided the observers.

Moreover, when the dust settles, one finds by the side of the road, the definition of management, badly mugged. Its pockets have been picked of any elements of value relating to leadership. It has been so badly abused that it no longer represents a particularly inspiring or worthwhile human endeavor. The manager has been reduced to a mere maintenance technician. However, the attempt to break out the role of leadership from the duties of management has weakened the latter institution without successfully establishing the former. As in so many such precipitous hit and run fads, the victim is indeed damaged, but the pickpocket is unable to convert the stolen goods into anything of real value.

Instead, we are left with intriguing sounding slogans about what grand things leaders do in contrast to what mundane things managers do. On closer examination, however, these slogans bear no sustainably positive message about leadership; they merely blame – or at least belittle – the victimized manager. Thus, we eagerly greet each new definition, each new model, until the bubble bursts. In the end, we are left with precious little of the promised leadership, and with a badly weakened managerial discipline.

How did this come about?

For the better part of the modern period, the affairs of industrial-age societies were directed largely by a command and control style of management. This was sufficient to meet the challenges and innovations that were developed through most of this period.

However, in the 20th century in the US, the pace of change began to pick up speed. More large, complex, and consumer-oriented – or at least consumer-aware – organizations appeared. For example, Ford Motor Company created a manufacturing process, and associated management techniques, in order to provide inexpensive automobiles to a previously unserved

market. Later, General Motors organized itself, and its management systems, in order to serve the segments appearing in the broader market, as well as their changing tastes.

After World War II, large numbers of men, who had learned to manage and participate in great and large-scale enterprises, returned from military duty and received university educations under the GI Bill. Partly due to the powerful stimulus of their reentry, the economy grew, the supply and demand sides of the markets both became more sophisticated, and innovations multiplied to meet increasing demands for quality and specialization. Concern grew that traditional methods of organizing enterprises were no longer sufficient to the need. As time progressed, the perceived shock grew of the future seeming to arrive in unexpected ways with increasing frequency and velocity. Even the newly professionalized discipline of management was deemed too shortsighted to deal with this dizzying pace of change. Great new companies, and even industries, were being created. Traditional organizations seemed to be foundering like dinosaurs bewildered by the changing of the epochs. We could no longer manage our progress into, and our engagement with, the future. We needed leaders who could somehow see further down the road, who could develop a vision of what we needed to be or do to meet that future, and who could teach and inspire us to develop the flexibility and agility needed to come to grips with it.

Initially, models of this different sort of executive were found in the military. Military engagements are famously befogged with frictions of all sorts. It is widely acknowledged that it can take a special kind of genius – of inspired and exalted individual leadership – to produce clear victory from such formidably destructive confusion. Business leaders were compared with such leaders, and business and military history were scoured to produce and analyze such examples. The growing field of leadership studies and training attracted great interest, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s. Adjustments of traditional ideas and new insights and concepts were developed to attract attention, disciples, and business for a growing number of leadership consultants, training centers, and writers.

The only source of authority for the new role of the executive leader, however, was in the traditional executive manager's job description. As a result, it was simply taken away, leaving the manager to putter around the machinery and handle the organization's hygiene functions. It became the role of the new executive leader to breathe the spark of life into the organization's body, to invest it with faith, and to lead it into the promised land of the future.

As the leadership movement attracted interest from the business world, various contenders for the resulting business laid claim to the secrets of that spark of life. Yet, none of their definitions have proven decisively authentic; they, and ever increasing new ones, continue to jostle for supremacy. Thus, as mentioned, there are numerous definitions that are difficult to unify.

Even general definitions are difficult to agree upon. Some limit the **basic definition of leadership** to setting direction and communicating it. Others add wording that implies certain organizational tasks; one even supposes that it does not exist unless the followers are held responsible for their actions – a most unpromising development for the movement.

Definitions that are more specific can be grouped by the general approach that they take to the topic. For example, the general view of the so-called traditional directive style of leadership is often referred to as the **authority model**. In this view, the leaders are followed because they have been given the legitimate authority to lead. According to the sociologist Max

Weber, this can take the following forms: 1) **rational-legal** – this accrues to the occupant of an office which holds the actual authority; 2) **traditional** – this arises simply from habit or customary practice; and 3) **charismatic** – this type of leadership authority is drawn to those with special characteristics.

The latter has led to various types of theory, which are built on special features of the individual leader. Examples of these theories are **charismatic authority**, **great man theory**, and **trait theory**. All of these define leadership as the expression of special characteristics or traits that are possessed by particular people, who thus command rare abilities to inspire others and to attract broad followings. While no distinct set of such peculiar traits or characteristics has been shown to actually exist among putative leaders, the theories continue to attract attention.

A quite different view was developed from the 1950s to the 1970s. **Contingency theory** – sometimes referred to as **situational theory** – proposed the notion that leadership is a fluid concept that should be adapted to each situation in which it takes place. For example, a Detroit automobile manufacturing plant should be led differently than a Hollywood film-production company. The psychologist Rensis Likert developed a well-known approach in which he identified four systems which he felt described how leaders led in varying situations: 1) **exploitative/authoritative**, 2) **benevolent/authoritative**, 3) **consultative**, and 4) **participative**.

In the midst of this period, in 1960, Douglas McGregor presented **Theory X** and **Theory Y**. Theory X described a leadership model built on the assumption that people are naturally lazy and must be disciplined and closely supervised in order to get any work out of them. It is what is often imagined as the typical authoritarian leadership style. Theory Y is a model based on the opposite assumption, arguing that adults have a natural desire to seek fulfillment through productive work. It builds on this to describe a system that integrates the interests and motivations of the organization and the workers. While many organizations took either of these theories to be applicable according to the maturity or level of development of the work team or organizational culture, McGregor himself believed Theory X to be wholly inappropriate in any circumstance; he strongly encouraged adoption of the Theory Y philosophy. It should be noted that, in an effort to address criticisms of his previous work, McGregor later began work on a **Theory Z**, but died before it was completed. William Ouchi wrote a book by that title, expanding on and further promoting McGregor's Theory Y organizational philosophy.

The academic approach of viewing human behavior specifically from actions and behavior, rather than personality, is referred to as behaviorism. Thinkers from this discipline reacted to what they believed to be an impractical and fruitless focus on the individual leader's characteristics. These writers began to develop their ideas in the 1970s, well before the modern leadership movement really took off. In the early 1970s, a British theorist named John Adair proposed a behaviorist model of leadership, which he called **Action-Centered Leadership**. It is based on three principal activities he identified as performed by leaders: 1) build and maintain teams, 2) accomplish the task, and 3) develop individuals. However, others in the behaviorist movement criticized this model as too simplistic.

Eager to qualify as properly less accessible to the rest of us, many such complex theories were developed. However, even within the same discipline, a good number of them conflicted with each other. One of the better-known examples from this school is referred to as the **managerial grid**, a product of the consulting industry. This measures a leader against two scales – concern for task and concern for people. It defines the resulting leadership style based on

where the measures of these two scales intersect in a matrix.

In the late 1970s, James MacGregor Burns developed the **transactional theory of leadership** and the **transformational theory of leadership**. They both suggest that there is an exchange of value between leaders and followers. However, in transactional leadership the exchange is of tangible things – measurable production for salary, for example. In transformational leadership, the exchange is in moral values – the leaders and followers raise each other to higher levels of motivation and morality. Certain of the new breed of organizational psychologists are clearer about who is being transformed – it is the follower. A recent study of transformational leadership as exhibited in US Army units claims that the leader's orders are not designed merely to take soldiers from point A to point B, but to have produced an improved soldier in the course of the journey.

The **power and influence theory** suggests that leadership is built upon the interrelationships of people in an organization. These interrelationships are formed around the structure provided by the power and influence generated by the leader. The generation of these is the leader's more or less direct contribution. The particular form of leadership and followership employed in the organization arises from the nature of those interrelationships, and thus are a secondary influence of the individual leader.

Another theory from psychology argues that leaders observe their followers and attempt to ascertain what causes their behavior under various circumstances. Having determined to what they can attribute their followers' behavior, the leaders then form specific approaches to exploit that discovery in ways that produce desired behavior. This is known as the **attribution theory of leadership**.

These are the some of the principal precursors and important influences on the modern leadership movement's views of leadership. While such approaches will be critiqued in the next chapter, it is useful to say here that they at least have the virtue of attempting, generally, to be descriptive. They are based on observations, studies, and surveys. They try to explain what exists. Their prescriptive content, while present (a notable example is the management grid), is secondary. The modern movement of the latter 20th century and early years of the 21st is marked by prescriptive and exhortative approaches to leadership. As such, they do not so much have definitions, in the ordinary sense of the word, of leadership; they have aspirations for it. Moreover, as they have proliferated, they have provided a great and diverse field of leadership terms. A review of these will serve to lay the groundwork for the next chapter.

Terms

The principal leadership theories and studies have generated a special language with its own terminology. Many of these terms gain currency through coverage of the main models in university course work, and are widely used in the general business-related press. For example, *Theory X*, *Theory Y*, and the *Great Man Theory* are commonly understood and even self-evident references to the appropriate theories. Of course, this common category of terms includes *leaders*, *natural leaders*, *transactional leaders*, *transformational leaders*, and *followers*.

There are related terms such as *groups*, *Great Groups*, and *teams* – even *membership organizations*. As a complement to leadership, followers have attracted efforts to develop a model of *followership*. In the shouldering and bustling for preeminence in the burgeoning leadership movement, however, the real prize is in innovative insights into what leadership really

is - or what it ought to be. Accordingly, many ingenious versions of the term now litter the field.

For example, it seems that even real leaders should not be complacent, but should aspire to the next level of excellence, which is the *agent of change*. If you prefer, there is the noble *servant leader*, who works to improve the community and the workplace (not to increase profit). There is the *conscious leader*, who leads people toward themselves. For the more traditional-minded, there are *results-based leaders*. On the other hand, there are also *visionary*, *fulfillment*, and *integration leaders*. There are *coercive*, *authoritative*, *affiliative*, *democratic*, *pacesetting*, and *coaching leaders*. *Primal leaders* display what is known as emotional intelligence, which is intended to describe traits that seem to be better predictors of success than mere raw intelligence.

One of the more engagingly democratic concepts is that of an organization filled with *leaderful people*. However, perhaps the most disorientingly creative term describes those who lead us into future realities not discernible by we mere mortals; these are the *edgewalkers*.

Some psychologists are attempting to connect the concepts of creativity and leadership; developing a category they call *creative leadership*. Leaders, in this view, can be categorized in a variety of ways, according to how they use their creativity in their leadership roles. For example, *replicators* protect the status quo. *Redefiners*, on the other hand, add a new twist to an ordinary idea. *Forward incrementors* advance an organization a step forward in the direction it is already heading, and *advanced forward incrementors* make a daring leap forward. *Redirectors* take the organization in a wholly new direction. *Regressive redirectors* reinstitute an older concept into the present context. *Reinitiators* give new life to an organization that appears to have been losing its energy or innovativeness. Finally, *synthesizers* integrate concepts from various fields into a new idea. The people advancing these notions tend to confuse various meanings of the word *leader*. For example, they compare a composer who is not appreciated in his own time with organizational leaders. This is a common error. It equates the status or attainment of developmental, technical, market, artistic, or some such form of leadership, with the job of managing an organization. Leadership, in the former sense, merely denotes an advanced position in a particular field at a particular time; it does not reflect possession of the ability to lead a collaborative enterprise. Nevertheless, one of the lessons these theorists draw from such comparisons is that leaders should not be concerned with attracting approval; they should be willing to do what is unpopular – even condemned – if it is a pure expression of their creativity. It does not seem, however, to be a very practical idea to encourage modern organizational leaders to cultivate condemnation of their actions, or to measure the success of their methods by the degree to which they are rejected by the community or the board. Nevertheless, these thinkers go further, and recommend that boards or bosses actually select various of these types of leaders according to the needs of the moment. For example, a *redirector* is argued as the best choice for an organization that is stagnant and needs to be shaken up. Then, presumably, some form of *incrementor* should take over. Organizations are expected to switch out leaders as circumstances, and their directors' understanding of the organization's needs, change over time. We are to suppose that there is a bench of suitably categorized leaders who can be sent into the game, and then benched again, whenever the coach (whoever that is) deems that to be appropriate.

Peculiar examples such as that in the preceding paragraph certainly do little to clarify our understanding of organizational leadership. On the other hand, the more ordinary and general attempts to define leadership, discussed earlier in this chapter, have their own problems. Among

them is the unavoidable conclusion that the modern understanding of the field of leadership has been pilfered from the definition of management. Definitions from this more recent element of the leadership movement are only able to describe leadership as being “about” something. This is then contrasted with what management is (or is defined down to be). Alternatively, the description of individual leadership is comparative, such as when it is depicted as “more” proactive, or people-oriented, or the like, than is management.

Naturally, there are complex discussions, in this element of the leadership movement, of the characteristics of leaders and of the sorts of things they do. Such discussions actually get down to the central problems with this modern movement's prescriptions; they will be dealt with in the next chapter.

THANKS!

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