Comprehensive Report on Organizational Communication and Leadership

Swinton W. Hudson[1], Jr.

Abstract

Applied leadership concepts and theories has a direct impact on the type of communication used within an organization with the realization that humans are unique and different. As such approach and success are based upon individual personality, expectations, experience, culture, gender, and emotional intelligence. Thus, the question is posed as whether the leadership style has an impact upon the type and style of communication or is it the differentiation and uniqueness of individual employees. The power bases are also impactful upon both the type of leadership style used and the communication process. Understanding leadership styles, power bases, diversity of individuals, as well as the different styles of communication, better prepares leaders in effectively communicating. Managers, leaders, practitioners and students of management, leadership, human resource management and organization psychology must constantly review and study patterns and concepts of the different disciplines and understanding individuals they encounter to effectively communicate to ensure the managing and leading of people if effective and efficient. Employing suitable and available options and providing a foundation of effectiveness based on appropriate theories and best practices may improve organizational communication and leadership.

Keywords: Leadership styles, communication, power bases

Leadership principles and traits along with communication work in tandem. To effectively apply the leadership principles, adopting and practicing effective two-way communication is paramount. The task assigned is to research and write a comprehensive research-based report on organizational communication and leadership. The primary topics which are presented in this information report are the sources of power and types of power with a comparison and contrast between the different theories. In addition, other topics of interest are leadership styles and impact where three suitable styles will be presented. In the report an analysis and presentation of Fiedler's Contingency Theory will be shared, as well as techniques and strategies for improving organizational communication and a selection of four different types of communication patterns. The intent of this report is to present some of the suitable and available options and providing a foundation which may improve organizational communication and leadership.

Bases of Power

Although there are many articles written on the powerbases, there are times in leadership and management classes and training that the foundation of leadership or management discussions does not include the social impact of power or how managers and leaders gain the power. Whether one subscribes to the six basis of power or the five bases of power, power is a critical element of leadership. Some form of power is necessary for leaders to influence the obtainment of organization goals. Thus, motivation is used to influence others to attain goals or a desirable outcome. The possibilities discussed in the sub-topics of bases of power are French and Raven's five sources of power, Class Theory of Power, and Gender Theory of Power.

French and Raven

The most well-known basis of power in leadership and management is French and Raven's theory. In 1959 the two social psychologist describe the five basic forms of power (French & Raven, 1959). Six years later they added a sixth basis of power. The original five were legitimate, reward, expert, referent, and coercive power (Ozaslan, 2019; Kessler, 2010). The sixth one added years later was informational power. The original five are the primary ones' scholars and professionals generally refer to and which is the primary ones taught in management, leadership, industrial/organizational psychology, and Human Resources.

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[1] Walden University, College of Management & Human Potential, School of Management

The five powers are divided into positional and personal power. The powers of reward, legitimate and coercive are considered positional power, whereas expert and referent power are considered personal power. Reward power is the ability to grant some form of compensation for compliance to requests, or directives. The opposite to reward is the power of coercive. Coercive is the belief or ability to punish another for noncompliance. And legitimate power is derived from one's position in the hierarchical structure (Ozaslan, 2019).

The two remaining powers are expert and referent power. Expert power is gained by one's expertise, knowledge, and skills. Referent power is gained by respect or demonstrating characteristics which are pleasing to others such are charisma or personality (Chapman & Scouller, 2018). Personal power is not only seen in people who have formal assigned leadership positions but can be in non-leadership positions. They can be referred to as informal leader.

Class Theory of Power

The underlying premise of class theory of power is based on social power, social class, and one's psychological sense of power (Rucker & Galinski, 2017). The theory is based on the socioeconomical class of rich (haves) and the socioeconomical class of poor (have nots). The theory further states that the prevailing class can use a philosophy type persuasion or leadership structure, as well as or including knowledge power or integrity as a means of securing/gaining the consent of others for personal gains. This patterns (symbolically) the coercion and reward power. Although, in the United States there are more than two classes, the concept within federal, state, and local government is used, as well as within private and public businesses. Those which are considered economically weak and socially and politically without status are dominated by those who are classed as the "haves". Conceptually, those considered socially, economically, and politically without clout and connections" are even subjugated to further dominance even in education (Vandrick, 2014). The class power is very prevalent in the country of China.

Gender Theory of Power

The gender theory of power contends that the male gender dominates the female gender. The concept of glass ceiling is experienced where the group which has gained dominance maintains the other group in a servient state. Thus, decisions are made by the dominant group and input from the non-dominant group is neither solicited nor desired (Mohammed, 2015). Feminist scholars, women rights groups and women liberalization movements have a critical viewpoint and discard the exercise of power by the dominant acting male gender. The Gender Theory of Power holds that currently power in each society is exercised through a system of male domination which needs to be replaced by a system of real and effective social, economic, and political equality of men and women in each society. The two classes of men and women must be equal partners in the exercise of power in each society. Even with the laws which have been passed in the United States, there is yet a true equality which has emerged. In Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture this is outlined in Masculinity versus femininity: This dimension of the Hofstede model defines the cultural preference for masculine or feminine values. Societies that score high on masculinity demonstrate a preference for achievement, boldness, assertiveness as well as material rewards for success. Such societies are more competitive.

Leadership Styles and Impact

Managers at all levels within organizations have a specific style of leadership. A manager or otherwise a leader has specific approaches to influence other people. One of the functions of management is leading. The distinction of leader is interpreted and executed differently between those who are designated a manager (generally line or first-level manager) and transitions through mid-level and executive managers. Executives are viewed as leaders of the organization. Managers establish and implement procedures and processes for effective functioning of the organization and are accountable for accomplishing strategic goals. The leaders of the organization are futuristic visionaries who direct the course of the organization. They attract, retain, inspire, and develop relationships based on trust and respect for the greater purpose of achieving the leaders' goals and vision (Jones & George, 2015). There are several styles which will be discussed in this document. They are servant leadership, democratic, autocratic, transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and charismatic.

Servant Leadership

This type of leadership style focuses on the needs of employees and the customers. In a team environment, they instill team dynamics and focus on learning and growth with win-win outcomes (Greenleaf, 1991;Jones & George, 2015). Their goal is to create autonomy within employees and the teams and foster autonomous leaders at all levels. They ensure the organization is operated to fulfill the endeavors of the organization which align with the organization's values and ideals. Although, the positive outcomes are service,

creating leader-member following, teaching, caring, empowerment, personal and professional growth, they must take care to balance between serving others and taking care of themselves.

Burnout is not uncommon without the balance and the results of negative impact to the organization and the people they serve. Servant leaders do not become too fixated on job titles, organization charts, and rules of compliance. They try to use persuasion, not orders to get things completed. They tend to trust people to do the right thing and don't depend on useless bureaucracy. Knowledge is power and servant leaders share knowledge and expertise, thus creating an environment of empowerment.

Democratic Leadership

These types of leaders encourage participation and collaboration among employees and create a team culture (Lewin, 1948). They create an environment where employees feel valued and important (AlOqla, 2021). Employees feel a sense of engagement and maintain a high level of motivation. The positive attributes of this style of leadership encourage idea sharing, open communication, encouraging problem solving, collaboration and an environment of mutual respect (Yusuf & Fahrettin, 2021). As with any style, there are always weaknesses although democratic leadership is highly effective. However, in cases where time is of the essence and a quick decision is necessary, this style is not effective. This style can also result in tension between those with differing perspectives and opinions. Overall, the pros outweigh the cons. The democratic leader tends to apply a combination of personal and positional power.

Autocratic Leadership

This type of leader has been associated with a dictator. The autocratic leader requires explicit power over the organization and rarely involves others in the decision-making process (AlOqla, 2021; Lewin, 1948). Although these leaders are very decisive, the organization needs a system of checks and balances to sustain a viable workplace. The autocratic leader is efficient and decisive, but they are not open too other's thoughts, opinions, or ideas. They separate themselves from others, maintain strict control and expect compliance and respect. They create an environment which is not conducive to diversity or creativity (Yusuf & Fahrettin, 2021). They are precise in using reward and coercion which can be extreme and at times harsh.

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership style inspires people with visionary ideas. They are excellent communicators and instill commitment in employees. They motivate teams to be change makers and are purpose driven individuals who attempt to create positive outcomes in others' lives (Amanchukwu, 2015). With all the positive attributes and results in this approach, they have one major weakness. They can inspire change and are very proficient in communicating the big picture; however, they are not skilled at incorporating and implementing details and processes. They are a personality-based leader with a good big picture vision (Ozgenel & Karsantik, 2020).

The nature of transformational leadership implies that leadership involves **relationship, influence, and some notions of virtue or morality**. The argument is that the purposes of leaders and followers become fused, and their respective bases of power become the mutual support or foundation essential to their achievement of a common purpose (Ojo, 2015).

Transactional Leadership

Generally, this type of leadership style is seen in the upper level of the organizational leadership hierarchy. They have a results-driven approach which adheres to the organization's hierarchy. They are held accountable for their failures, as well as successes, and this type of leader is suitable for large-scale organizations (Ozgenel & Karsantik, 2020; Weber, 1946). The transactional leader will tend to form work settings which are inflexible. They put immense amounts of pressure on employees and the team suffers. They put too much expectation and weight in fixed and set measurements of success. They leave no room for growth and development (Zareen et al, 2015). Transactional power tends to be more individual than corporate. It tends to play best and reinforce individual participation and achievement, almost always because incentives are individual. Team building incentives can work if they are carefully designed to appeal to a small group. They feel employees are motivated by rewards and punishment.

Laissez-faire Leadership

The Laissez-faire leadership style is based on the French term meaning let it be or as known to English speaking people as "hands off". The style is also known as delegative form of leadership (Lewin, 1948). They give employees a high level of freedom, instills trust in the team, encourages problem-solving and decision-making; there is limited input and guidance, and they encourage the team to take responsibility for their actions or lack of action (Ozgenel & Karsantik, 2020). This style can be good for highly motivated and talented employees

and generally does not fit most business models (Zareen et al, 2015). Being such a hands off leader, the only power they may be using is legitimate which is derived from the position they assigned to.

Charismatic Leadership

This type of leader is very closely related (resemble) transformational leaders and motivate through emotions. This leader is driven by goals and their vision, as well as are influential and determined to see the goals through to fruition. They communicate the vision with power, they connect to the team when speaking, they are persuasive, create positive beliefs and keep employees engaged by asking questions (Jones & George, 2015). A major drawback to this leadership style is the message and motivation can burn out quickly with employees becoming disengaged. The overall likelihood of their energy matching employees is limited.

Fiedler's Contingency Theory

Fred Fiedler was a leading researcher of industrial and organization psychology of the twentieth century. He was the first to acknowledge that effective leadership is contingent on the characteristics of the leader and the situation (Jones & George, 2015; Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler, 1978). Fiedler identified and compared the leader's style to the characteristic approach to leadership. He stated there were two basic leader styles which consisted of relationship-oriented and task-oriented (Jones & George, 2015). The relationship-oriented leader is concerned with developing a good relationship with those they manage and lead and wish to be liked by them. This leader focuses on a high-quality relationships. This does not indicate that the job (tasks) will not be completed, nor does it indicate the leader is not concerned with task-oriented results. This is a prime concern (relationships) of the leader, and this is used to ensure tasks are effectively completed. The task-oriented leader is primarily concerned with task completion and may be concerned with good relationships, but it is not the prime leadership style trait.

Fiedler stated that a person's leadership style is constant, and they cannot change their style, nor can they adopt different styles in different situations. He identified three situational characteristics which were important in determining the effectiveness of leading. The first was leader-member relations which is the extent followers like, trust, and are loyal to the leader. The second is task structure whereas the work to be performed is clear and the subordinates know what needs to be done and how to do it. The third is position power. In this instance the amount of legitimate, reward, and coercive power a leader has based on their position in an organization and how it is used has a direct impact on task completion. Since leaders cannot change their style based on situational changes, then Fielder contends the situation can be changed, such as providing the leader with more power or by changing the task structure by clarifying the goals and instructions (Jones & George, 2015; Mitchell et al, 2017).

Improving Organizational Communication

Communication has progressed from face-to-face to digital, social, mobile, as well as written and verbal. Effective communication is based on collaboration, interpersonal communication, and proper business etiquette. The basic concept of communication has always been the message, the sender, the receiver, and barriers to effective communication. Two-way communication is based on transmitting meaning (message), negotiated meaning (feedback and exchange) and recreating meaning (Bovee & Thill, 2021). The entire process of effective communication is complex and takes practice. Two major areas to be concerned with are effective listening, soliciting feedback and removing barriers which impede the accurate reception and interpretation of the intended message. Leadership communication is part of the success or failure of any business (Shannon, 2018). The leadership can improve their overall communication with peer to peer, from leader to subordinates and from self to their leadership by ensuring the message is clear and complete, barriers of distraction are removed, effective listening, soliciting feedback, restating what you heard or read or ask for clarification where needed and proper use of tone (professional) and etiquette. Frequent and positive communication with employees will improve relationships and ensure tasks are completed effectively and on time (Shannon, 2018).

Communication Patterns

Whether communication is formal or informal or in the form of verbal, written or unwritten/non-verbal, the patterns used within an organizational structure is critical to effective and accurate information exchange. There are numerous communication patterns which are prevalent within organizations which include circle, wheel (star), Y, network, and chain. The four which are focused on for discussion are circle, wheel, Y and network (Leavett, 1951). Within these different patterns we may see vertical, horizonal, diagonal, and grapevine.

The circle pattern begins with the initiator of the communication, such as the management leader and the information (message) is passed from one member of the group to the next (Leavett, 1951; Maharjan, 2018). The weakness of this process is the members cannot ask questions of the initiator of the message, the message may become distorted or changed based on interpretation or misunderstanding and if the circle is broken, the message is completely lost. In addition, there can be a delay in delivery based on procrastination.

The wheel pattern, also known as the star pattern, is considered by professionals and practitioners as the most reliable and best communication pattern for organizations. The leader is the focal point and can pass the message to the other members directly within the wheel. All employees can be communicated with directly from the leader and the members can communicate directly with the leader (Leavett, 1951; Maharjan, 2018). Most barriers to communication are removed with feedback encouraged and received. Although, communication between members does not occur.

The Y pattern is a complicated process of communication with groups and sub-groups. In the center is a leader who manages these sub-groups. Leavitt (1951) contends this pattern consists of three subgroups being controlled by a single leader. Each sub-group consists of three members with a chain of command within the sub-group. The bottom level of individual sub-group communicates with the members in a higher hierarchy to them. They communicate with their next level who will communicate with the leader. Messages are communicated from the leader from top to bottom, but there is no communication between sub-groups (Maharjan, 2018; Lunenburg, 2012.

The network pattern works well in an organization which has a bureaucratic structure. The leader communicates with lower subordinate leaders who communicate with their subordinates (Leavett, 1951). The network allows anyone to communicate with anyone else as per their needs and requirements. In a network, communication changes are based on physical propinquity and organizational structures (Maharjan, 2018; Lunenburg, 2012).

Which is best will be dependent on the organizational structure and whether the leadership desires speed of delivery or effective communication. The network pattern works best for bureaucratic structures, but for autonomous and self-managed teams, the wheel pattern is best for communication.

Conclusion

The informational paper provided concepts and theories for discussion and decision-making of the best leadership approaches and communication for the chosen organization. Within this report the primary topics presented were the sources of power and types of power and a comparison and contrast between leadership styles. In addition, Fiedler's Contingency Theory was discussed and communication techniques and strategies to organization communication improvement and the different patterns of communication. Consequently, no single dimension of authority, power or style is likely to hold equally for all managers and employees in a multicultural domestic setting or in the multicultural milieu of the multinational corporation. The use of power, leadership styles, motivation, and communication strategies and approaches are based on the individual(s) we are leading and communicating with. As humans are different based on individual personality, expectations, experience, culture, gender, and emotional intelligence, although not all inclusive, the styles, tactics, approaches, and strategies must be just as diverse.

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