The Importance of Leadership Communication and Trust

Leo S. Primero III

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Introduction

Leadership plays a vital role in the achievement of goals and objectives of any organization. The effectiveness of leadership depends on the kind of organization led. Trust on leadership is vital to the achievement of any business goal; respect is not far behind. It is the purpose of this paper to elaborate on the effects of trust and respect on leadership to the efficacy of employee performance using technology-mediated interaction. This paper will also touch on the global cross-cultural and intercultural communications between leadership and organizational elements. Finally, this will address the specific challenges of trust and communication in my business environment.

Trust And E-Leadership

There are many definitions of trust that float in the business realm. To assist in conceptualizing trust, here are the three traditional perspectives of trust vis-à-vis leadership: as a trait, as an emergent state, and as a process (Burke et al, 2007). Trust as a state is the innate personality of an individual to believe in. Within an individual is the nature to trust one is willing to tender to someone perceived to have a positive intent. Trust as an emergent state refers to the dynamic and unique attributes that challenge the cognitive, emotional and reactive states based of a subordinate on a leader's actions. Trust as a process denotes an intervening attribute of the individual where other behaviors of the leader can influence or weaken a behavior (Burke et al, 2007).

For the non-traditional organization which spans the globe, these still hold true plus more. Global-spanning organizations do not rely on just traditional leaders but more so to E-Leaders (Savolainen, 2014). E-Leadership has been around since the millennial era but studies on it are still far behind. E-Leadership has a key feature that requires culmination: interaction with the team through the leader's influence. E-Leaders do this using IT-mediated communication equipment with members of the organization spanning multiple time zones or

global in the network. The challenge of communicating is real and not even the most advanced communication tools can simply solve it.

In the advent of more and more global marketing, many organizations have resorted to hiring workers offshore for more production and cheaper costs. These have inundated the business network with global workers that would need instructions and directives from onshore leaders (as called, E-Leaders). The challenge now for these e-Leaders is how best to communicate with their teams offshore. Added complications are cultural barriers that need more facilitation and collaboration which results in the use of more communication (Savolainen, 2014).

Savolainen (2014) reported that physical workplaces becoming more virtual workplaces have become the norm. The global situation has required more face-to-face and remote video communication. The lack of physical face-to-face interactions has affected the leader-follower interaction. As a result, work has become more technology dependent. This technology dependency on communication with very little physical interaction has an adverse effect on trust. It has eroded. Since trust is the primary ingredient of the leader-follower bond, it also affects employee performance. They also lose faith in the leader. They see the leader's capacity to get the job done diminished. They lose respect on their leader. Just like trust, leaders cannot demand respect from subordinates as it is earned. What happens next is that they see that their work and goals are no longer achievable. Their commitment to the organization suffers. More often than not, this results in employees leaving (Savolainen, 2014).

Global Trust-Building

Trust-building has recently come to the forefront on many global organizations. It requires careful implementation of the remote interaction considering the following: distance between the leader and employee, diverse cultural matters, and different time zones. Leaders

must be conscious to speed up the flow of communication especially when the time difference is great (Savolainen, 2014).

The implementation also involves the following leadership skills: have excellent writing and social networking abilities, possess a multi-cultural knowledge and sensitivity to different cultural traits, and have a good sense of orientation equal to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It should include regular face to face meetings (these meetings have a natural effect of ironing out any miscommunication which could result in avoiding misunderstanding). Communications sent towards employees should be well coordinated and information leaving the computer managed. This includes storage, the sending, and receiving (Savolainen, 2014).

Another way to build trust is through knowledge sharing. As knowledge transfers from one end to the other, the interrelationship between participants develops for the better. Trust is then firmed up. If all these are supported by advanced technology, it will guarantee success in gaining the trust of remote employees. The quality of the means of communication is vital (Savolainen, 2014).

Traditional Leader VS. E-Leader Skills

E-Leadership uses the same problem solving skills as the traditional leaders. They share similar professional background and knowledge and even hiring. But where they differ most is in the communication. Traditional leaders has more accessible face to face meetings with employees. Communication can be done by just walking across the hallways and walls.

For E-Leaders it is different. They have to use video conferencing equipment to project their presence. Unlike traditional leaders, the body language of E-Leaders are not obvious. In writing they also differ. E-Leaders need to be skillful not only in writing but also in social networking. The primary means of communication for E-Leaders similar to social networking chats. It is mandatory that E-Leaders must be comfortable to that messaging means of

communication. Some other specific skills of the E-Leaders sans traditional leaders have been listed above in the global trust-building (Savolainen, 2014).

Effective Leadership Messaging

On a given day, the corporate leadership talks about how the company should operate. This involves giving out directions on the process of making sure that the message of a well-organized and effective operation be done by the end of the day. An accurate way of communicating to the staff is vital and strategies outlined properly on how to give out instructions.

Sarros (2014) revealed that because there is an inherent interest in dealing with change, both the way leadership gives out the direction and clear messaging must be accurate. Giving precise guidelines was most used by leaders in local and international markets who demand accurate articulation of the leaders' goals and objectives. Other strategies deal with creating true meaning messages (the scope includes an explanation the story of the existence of the company, the latest news, its culture and how to become a part of it), and the use of empathetic language (this involves recognizing employees and rewarding them for their efforts).

It is then proposed that to clearly articulate messages to motivate employees including stakeholders to listen in, are to (1) send clear operational directions; (2) create true meaning messages; and (3) use of empathetic messaging. The messaging results that leaders need to meet are through motivational messages.

Challenges At Work

The company I work for is Cognizant. We are a large medical software company that caters for the Blue's of America (Blue Cross Blue Shield across U.S.A.). Our primary product assists clients with online medical billing. Cognizant is a global company with the bulk of the workforce in India. Everything written above is true in Cognizant. The challenges listed above like deteriorating trust and respect, people leaving the company because of miscommunication

and misunderstanding, cultural and behavioral disagreements I have encountered in one form or another. I once performed scrum master duties. As a scrum master, I am responsible for making sure that the team understands all tasks assigned and to make sure that they function independently without anyone bothering them within a given timeline. The challenge of communication is real. The time zone (nine and a half hours difference) makes email response and daily scrum meetings hard for both members of the team in the U.S. and India. The team has to agree on the best available time for all to attend the daily meetings.

Now that I am equipped with the knowledge on how best to improve trust by leadership to include knowledge that delivery of the message is important in minimizing misunderstanding, I will make the following recommendations to management: (1) teams have regular Face to Face video conferencing incorporated in scrum agile activities; (2) other scrum masters to be more sensitive to behaviors shown by off-shore team members, that they be honest, walk the talk, and become good example for others to see and follow.

Conclusion

In the Films Media Group (2015) video, HR consultant Peter Wallberg mentioned that great leaders have the propensity to engage people and foster a positive culture. He added three characteristics all great leaders possess: caring (looks after the health and welfare of the organization as a whole), decisive (people looks at them to make critical decisions), and an ambassador (should know well key customers to be able to get feedback directly from them). Rock star leaders are going to be judged ultimately on the results. It depends on their strategy and how well they execute them (Films Media Group, 2015).

Since this paper is about leadership, I will add that there are many different types of leadership. Depending upon the kind of organization, a particular type of leadership may become successful than others. For example, a leadership with command and military training can formulate plans and direct subordinates to obey them. The collaborative style of leadership will

allow formulation of plans with the help of employees in the organization. Facilitative leadership may entrust accomplishment of tasks to lesser management but ensure all needed requirements to succeed (Ingram, 2017). It is important that there should be emphasis on training to become leaders and customized as needed as organizations differ from the other and correct leadership must adjust to the organizational goals to achieve them.

Lastly, trust and respect on leadership are vital elements to improving employee performance. Once trust with respect is gained, leadership has a responsibility to maintain it even with the challenge of using technology-mediated interaction. Leaders should walk the talk and be good examples for employees to see and emulate.

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