Leadership Philosophy and Action Plan

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Abstract

To be a great leader one must first understand themselves and take an in-depth look at what being a great leader means to them. Every style of leadership is different depending on the leader, the followers and the situation. However, the time and place to adjust that style is a very personal choice. Leaders in higher education are no different; sometimes the ability and knowhow to adjust to any given situation is what makes a great leader.
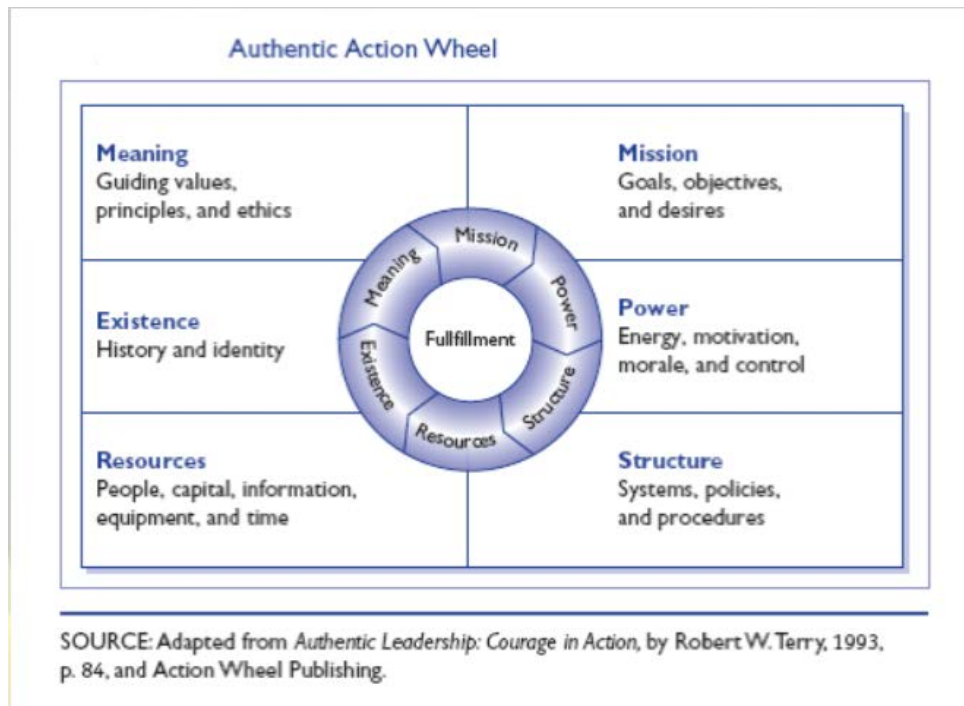
Leadership Philosophy

There are three main leadership styles that really resonate with me when I think about the type of leader I wish to become in the higher education setting: Transformational, Authentic and Servant. With each of these theories, there lies good if carried out properly and bad if not executed correctly. By taking some small bits of each of these theories and constructing my own style or philosophy of leadership, I just might be the leader I set out to be.

In our reading we learn that Northouse defines *Transformational Leadership*: "leadership is concerned with improving the performance of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential" (Northouse, 2014). What this means is this style of leadership is more centered on the emotional state of the follower rather than just wanting to get the end result. Northouse has outlined many different strengths or pros to *Transformational Leadership*, including the extensive research done on the application of this style to the effects it has on the followers. Another one of the pros to this style its focus on motivating followers, not for their own interests, but for the good of the institution, something not easily accomplished. It promotes higher self-esteem for employees within a company. But unlike *Transactional Leadership* behavior, Transformational Leadership is not reward based behavior, rather a moral boaster.

Where there are pros to any theory, there must also be cons to the same theory. One of the biggest cons for this leadership style is how vague it is. With leaving a lot of the interpretation to the individual or the institution, *Transformational Leadership* can be misleading with its application. Another thing about this leadership style is the possibility to go overboard or it being abused by the leader because it is so geared towards moving follower's values or morals to a new direction.

Although this behavior has accomplished many great ventures, it also has the potential to be detrimental to society in the long run. With the building up of the morals and self-esteem of

employees, companies need to be careful not to go too far with this concept. If we are all walking

around with an inflated sense of self and our accomplishments, do we ever feel the need for

improvement? Our society has transformed over the last century into a self-serving society, with

no real care for our fellow man as a whole. This is where *Transformational Leadership* can help

us. We need to learn to motivate each other for the greater good, and this leadership style gives

us guidelines to do so. *Transformational Leadership* is a great model if conducted properly. The

results in the research are outstanding as far as turn-around goes, once this behavior is applied.

But again I have to clarify, everything is good in moderation and if it is being used correctly.

Given that, learning to use this style for the good is something I believe I possess.

Another theory that I would like to think I can correctly implement is the *Authentic*

Leadership style. Authentic Leadership theory focuses on whether or not a leader is genuine or

real by examining the characteristic traits within a leader. One of the tools used for this theory

was introduced by Robert Terry and it is referred to as the Authentic Action Wheel. This Wheel

is intended to "diagnose and address underlying problems in organizations" (Northouse, 2014).

Authentic Action Wheel

Meaning
Guiding values, principles, and ethics

Mission
Goals, objectives, and desires

Existence
History and identity

Power
Energy, motivation, morale, and control

Resources
People, capital, information, equipment, and time

Structure
Systems, policies, and procedures

SOURCE: Adapted from *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action*, by Robert W. Terry, 1993, p. 84, and Action Wheel Publishing.

Within any institution there is going to be a power struggle, it is up to the leaders of the institution, in our case the college Deans and Administrators, to identify the conflict and resolve it. Robert Terry's theory suggests that once the leader has identified the problem, to take a look one step back on his Wheel and the underlying problem with come from that step back. If the staff or the student service employees are arguing about power, or perhaps not taking directive from the administration, one step back on the Action Wheel takes the leader to the Structure (systems, policies and procedures). By looking at the policies when staff step out of line and the behavior is not coinciding with the procedures set in place, the answer to the problem should be found there. To my knowledge this theory does not get used often in college settings because *Authentic Leadership* is a relatively new theory. Terry's Action Wheel is a tool that most can apply to many different dynamics in institution; from the way support staff handles changes within the institution, helping students identify effective study habits, to being an effective instructor in the classroom. A student who is not getting the grades they want, should take a look at the Wheel and decide if they are not meeting the goals (Mission) they set for themselves, they can go back one to Power and maybe change their motivation to do better. An administrator encountering resistance from staff could possibly move one or even two back and identify what the real problem is.

All this theory really means is being true to oneself. For the Student with grade/motivation issues, the administrator with communication problems and the organization with power struggles and hurdles to overcome, Robert Terry introduced a tool to help each one. Being true to oneself is a major key in determining the type of leader you are to become.

The last and final leadership style I would like to add to my philosophy is something that was touched on briefly in our course content this semester, but it is a leadership style that I feel very strongly about, the *Servant Leadership* style. Robert Greenleaf recognized that institutions

as well as individuals could be servant-leaders. The *Servant Leadership* theory and practices have been expressed in many ways and applied in many contexts. Many well-known scholars have recognized this theory and put into practice in the Christianity religion, as they believe this is the type of leader Jesus Christ was. One thing I have always found to be true is that if a leader will take care of and support their followers, the leader will get that back tenfold. We as leaders must help those that help us and one of the greatest things any leader can ask their followers is "how can I help?" It is the belief of many that humans are born with the natural sense of serving others. Later in life, we may become jaded as our selfish-based society takes over, but in the beginning serving comes as a second nature to us all. We want to help and/or please our loved ones and those around us by serving them.

With that being said I also believe there are individuals that are incapable of displaying this type of leadership behaviors. As I stated previously, society and the need for power takes hold of some people and leading others by putting the follower's needs first simply won't happen. Their ego will get the best of them. One of the key characteristics of a *Servant Leader* is valuing diverse opinions, most leaders at the top of their game like to think that their opinion is the only one that matters. This is also true for college presidents. As we learned in our case study 4.2 about the Waterleaf Restaurant and President Breuder, sometimes people with the best of intentions can lose sight of what they set out to accomplish. There lies a very fine line between helping and hurting, and sometimes those lines get blurred. Another idea that Greenleaf presented was that *Servant Leaders* like to make other leaders. They lead by example and want their followers to thrive, not just in a business sense, but in life. This type of leadership promotes positive change in the world and that is something we could use more of. *Servant Leadership* is something we all have the ability and the talents to accomplish. Whether or not we allow ourselves to do it is another matter.

Action Plan

My first step to implementing my action plan for becoming the leader I wish to be is to take a step back and let all of the information I have learned in this course and other learning occasions sink in. I need to first understand what changes in my life are going to be required if I want to exhibit characteristics from the three different leadership styles I strive to practice.

One of the most important steps I can take on my journey to become a great leader is to take advantage of the opportunities that are offered to me. As part of the continuous improvement plan at Eastern Arizona College, the college holds a series of *Leadershops* for all employees to attend at no cost to the employee. Each semester the topics of the shops change, for instance the Fall 2018 semester consisted of these *Leadershops*: *Customer Service from the Inside Out*, *Best Practices in Academic Advising, Serving Students with Disabilities* and *Accreditation: Connecting the Dots.* Each *Leadershop* is presented by an administrator at Eastern Arizona College. As an employee of EAC, I have the unique opportunity to observe and learn from each of our leaders/administrators on campus, each bringing their own personal experiences, trials and successes with them to the platform. An important step in my action plan is to attend as many of these *Leadershops* as possible each semester, to gain knowledge not just of the many facets of EAC, but each presenter. Grasping at every chance to listen and learn from so many leaders at the higher education level is the greatest tool these *Leadershops* offer to the employees of the college.

Furthering my plan of becoming a great leader, I will also have the opportunity to continue to serve on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee at EAC. This committee is comprised of many senior administrators that have, over the years, served in many different dimensions of a higher education institution. One of those administrators that I admire on that

committee is Vice President Jeanne Bryce. Not only because she is an authentic leader, but because of the sheer knowledge she holds of the inter-workings of different colleges that she has worked for and with. It has been my experience that great leaders strive to make others into great leaders. VP Bryce is just such a leader. Her ambitions for Eastern Arizona College, our students and the staff at EAC, are beyond measure. Learning from Bryce as well as the many other outstanding administrators on our campus is going to become another great tool in my leadership belt.

One more step in my plan is to set goals for myself. Not just set them, but write them down. I have found that writing my goals on a piece of paper makes them tangible to me, makes them achievable. For instance, the CCHE program with NAU is one of the goals on that list. Working through each and every goal on the list, maybe not in the exact order they have been written, but nonetheless working and achieving them is my greatest motivation.

Learning from and about myself and the life lessons I have experienced is going to be one of the factors of my plan. Another is watching the leaders around me and how they operate in the higher education setting. Being an employee of a community college, I might possibly have more access and opportunity to learn from administrators at this level than most. My hope is to someday soon become a department director. However, until that time comes, I am going to take advantage of my current surroundings and learn from each of the leaders that have come before me.

References

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