

Transformational leadership and the new reality

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Notions of leadership and management have been discussed and employed in commercial enterprises and business schools for many years – there are very few postgraduate courses that do not cover the key associated issues. Most MBA programs provide significant focus – and many opt for two subjects – one on leadership and the other on management suggesting they are associated – but at the same time worthy of consideration independently.

Of course, whilst management is generally considered to concern the routine administrative function of running an enterprise, leadership is most often seen as transformative relationship interactions between a leader and staff- essential to encouraging, developing, and negotiating organisational change. Consequently, most effective leaders also need to be effective managers – or at least be able to fully understand the importance of managerial functions.

Not a new concept

Transformational leadership, though not a new concept is emerging as the mode of leadership best suited to the *new reality*. The new reality – emerging from the ashes of COVID-19 – calls for a refreshed approach to leadership (and management for that matter) that understands the importance of involving staff in decision making and at the same time develops a bold, new approach to succession planning and leadership training.

But what is transformational leadership?

A solid definition of transformational leadership is – ‘a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders.’

Essentially *the followers become the leaders*.

The ideal approach to change management is using a leadership approach that assists the change to take place and equally important to ensure that those involved have a high level of ‘buy in’ and feel that they are part of that change – and despite perhaps being uncomfortable with all the elements of the change (perfectly understandable) – are able to embrace the ‘new reality’ with their self-esteem and ownership intact. leadership that relies on the encouragement of a team to realize overall success.

Elements of transformational leadership

It is a commonly held view that there are four elements of transformational leadership. They are –

Idealized influence refers to modelling of exemplary behaviours that in turn are aligned with the goals of the organisation. In order to achieve this - leaders need to be aware of the goals; embrace these goals with high levels of enthusiasm and commitment; and encourage other staff to embrace the issues/ideals. Essentially, it is about providing a high-level role model so that others can emulate it.

Inspirational motivation is the degree to which a leader articulates an appealing vision that inspires and motivates others to perform beyond expectations. Leaders who use inspirational motivation have high standards and high expectations of their followers. They are able to clearly articulate the goals/objectives so that followers not only understand them – but actively embrace them.

Intellectual stimulation is best understood as encouraging innovation and creativity, as well as thinking critically and solving problems. Intellectual stimulation involves arousing the thoughts and imagination of followers, as well as stimulating their ability to identify and solve problems creatively.

Individual consideration is the extent to which a leader attends to each follower's needs and is a mentor, coach, or guide to the follower. The leader listens to the concerns and needs of each follower, provides support, and is empathic of each situation and background. This is about knowing what the various needs of the employment group are – individualising it carefully – and wherever possible supporting those needs and aspirations.

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