

LS 710 PERSONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

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### **Theoretical Context**

Since the beginning of the semester, I have struggled with the idea of presenting my personal leadership model. Although I have, I believe, practiced leadership in several areas of my life, I have never previously studied leadership theory. In the last few days, I have tried to review multiple leadership theories and I have found that I have nearly been more successful in eliminating theories than selecting one most relative to me. I have determined that I am not a “great man” (or woman, for that matter) and I am not a hero. I believe that there is some truth to situational theory, but I do not believe that I am a leader because a situation beyond my control forced me to become one.

I would like to think that my practices mostly reflect servant leadership but, as a human, I am not capable of a selfless life devoted completely to service. I believe that service to others plays a huge role in my life, but I also think circumstances play a significant role. I have read and reread a few articles and I believe my practices most closely relate to Fiedler’s contingency theory. There are two aspects to this theory: relation-oriented and task-oriented.

Singh, Bohra & Dalal (1979) state that “the contingency hypothesis states that leaders with a task-oriented style will do better in situations that are either high or low on favourableness; leaders with an interpersonal relational style will, on the contrary, do better in situations that are intermediate in effectiveness.” I believe that I can be task-oriented when needed, but I am mostly relationship-oriented because I am not often involved in high stakes

situations. I am very organized and understand the importance of priorities and am more task-oriented in my personal life than in my leadership roles.

I believe that elements of servant leadership complement the role of the relationship-oriented leaders. Spears (2004) noted the following:

“In countless for-profit and nonprofit organizations today, we are seeing traditional, autocratic, and hierarchical models of leadership yielding to a different way of working—one based on teamwork and community, one that seeks to involve others in decision making, one strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and one that is attempting to enhance the personal growth of people while improving the caring and quality of our many institutions.”

In a previous paper for this class, I wrote that the best way to build a team is by utilizing everyone's strengths and meeting the needs of the team. The leader must assess the needs of the team by being empathetic, providing a listening ear and sometimes reading between the lines. By developing these relationships, the leaders knows the strengths and weaknesses of the team and cares enough utilize and develop strengths while providing resources, such as training, flexibility and other reasonable accommodations to enhance the growth of each member. In this way, the leader builds confidence and trust among the team members. By building relationships, the heart of a servant leader has everyone's best interests in mind, both individually and collectively. I believe that my personal model of leadership is most reflective of relationship-oriented contingency theory and servant leadership.

### **Personal Definition of Leadership**

Vroom & Jago (2007) state that “virtually all definitions of leadership share the view that leadership involves the process of influence.” I agree that influence is a part of leadership but it is the type and method of influence that defines the leader. I would define leadership in the following way: **Leadership is the opportunity and ability to bring together one or more followers in a collaborative effort to accomplish a common objective(s) in a manner that is moral, ethical, respectful, responsible, timely and mutually beneficial to the leader, follower(s) and any third party community serving as a recipient of the defined objective.** The defined objective(s) does not necessarily need to be tangible and the third party community could be any entity with which the leader is affiliated including a business, a social or non-profit organization, a school or family.

### **Word Portrait**

I think there are certain qualities that compliment leadership. I believe I am organized, responsible, dependable and generally ready to be challenged. In my leadership opportunities, I hope that I develop understanding relationships to collaboratively, morally, and ethically influence change and accept accountability with the heart of a servant.

## **Metaphor**

I have selected a jar of rocks as my metaphor for leadership. The jar represents the leader who encompasses, or comprehensively includes, the team. The jar is transparent and symbolizes the necessity for the leader to have objectives and agendas that are clear to team members. Leadership is fragile, just like the jar. One misguided step could shatter the effectiveness of the team.

In creating the team, the leader brings together the key members based on prior experiences and performances. Additional team members can be integrated into the team, perhaps based on reputation. Lastly, the supporting members must also be a part of the team. Too often, we forget the essential roles that support staff play in the success of our activities. Those who answer the phone, type the agendas, schedule the meeting rooms and open our mail are also team members without whom the team would be distracted and inefficient. Those roles cannot be neglected and must be acknowledged for the stability they add to the team.

In the end, the leader can evaluate the effectiveness of the team members and continue to the next task with the same team or reconfigure, as needed.

## **Leadership in Action**

Leadership goes beyond the role of a manager or a committee chair. In my opinion, leadership is something we exhibit in our everyday activities on the job, in the classroom, at home and anywhere we find ourselves. It is part of our daily routine, consciously making choices that reflect an attitude of service, morality and ethical behavior. Leadership is

establishing appropriate, understanding and considerate relationships with our co-workers, our committee members, fellow members of organizations or our spouse, children and parents. It is edifying relationships that help us determine and meet their needs. It's making the right choices to influence change on a daily basis.

Leadership can be leading the development of the Student Resource Center and developing one of the most comprehensive training programs on campus. Leadership can be coordinating a two-day event for new freshmen students. Leadership can also be helping a student find out what he needs to obtain testing accommodations for his learning disability in math. It can be encouraging a co-worker to participate on the classified staff council or complimenting your program assistant for a job well done. Leadership can be listening to the needs of a staff member and offering input and advice to resolve concerns and challenges.

### **Future Leadership Accomplishment**

One of the reasons I made the decision to begin the doctoral program was to have the opportunity to advance in my role as a university administrator. I must admit that in my current position, the long-term goals of the university have not been revealed to me, but the possibility of creating a freshman college on Marshall University's campus has been casually mentioned more than once, though not in great detail. Incorporating a freshman college into the University structure would unite all freshmen in one college where they would obtain consistent advising and constant intervention in an effort to increase freshman success.

I am making some assumptions, but in my current role as Director of University College, I would most likely have an opportunity to be involved in the development of such a college

should the University make that commitment. To have the opportunity to lead that challenge, I need to earn the appropriate credentials as well as exhibiting leadership abilities in my current role.

There are several steps that would need to be taken in the development of a freshman college. Briefly, some of those steps would include:

- In addition to anecdotal data, assessing the problems in the current advising and retention practices for freshmen students.
- Evaluating the need for a new advising structure for freshmen.
- Developing a plan to assess the staffing needs to successfully implement the college in complement to other University colleges.
- Obtaining the buy-in from current college deans and other administrators.
- Evaluating the available office space in current buildings and planned building projects.
- Obtaining sufficient and sustained funding.

### **Inspiration**

For several years, the brief story below has provided a great deal of inspiration for me. It has taught me that I must lead by example, sometimes taking the first step when it is uncomfortable or unpopular to do so. I have used this story multiple times in initiating new students to the John Marshall Emerging Leaders Institute (JMELI), a student group with whom I work on Marshall's campus. The words are moving, but maybe I've received more inspiration because I have seen students live these words.

*When I Was a Young Man*

When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world.

I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation.

When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town.

I couldn't change the town and, as an older man, I tried to change my family.

Now, as an old man, I realized the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realized that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family.

My family and I could have made an impact on our town.

Their impact could have changed the nation and I could have indeed changed the world.

--Rabbi Israel Salanter, 19<sup>th</sup> Century Professor

## References

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