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Achieve Leadership Genius

How you lead depends on who, what, where, and when you lead



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■ The Big Idea

This book helps you better understand the meaning of leadership. It opens your eyes that leadership skills can be developed. All you need is make conscious efforts into becoming a leader both to yourself and to the people you lead. Also, you need to know the five practices discussed in this book on how to become an effective leader. There are cases given that can enlighten you more on the importance of the development of your skills, abilities, energies and personalities in becoming an effective leader.

This book also aids in understanding yourself and your subordinates. It reinforces that your personality plays a vital role on how you are as a leader. To become a good leader, you must first start with yourself.

Contextual Leadership

Contextual leadership aids in better understanding the most important leadership point of view in an all-encompassing structure. Its foundation is the awareness of how, who, what, where and when you lead. It starts with knowing the five contexts.

The Self Context

The first step in leadership must happen within yourself. Practicing self leadership will help you to have a good outlook in your daily work life and will assist you to achieve your goals in the future.

Empowerment without self-leaders is worthless. For empowerment to work, self-leaders must conquer their victims mentality and be in charge of their future. They must be assertive with their needs and, if needed, ask for trainings for the development of their skills. To lead in the self context, you must acquire the skill set and mindset to achieve your goals and at the same time, fulfill what the organization requires from you.

Sooner or later, you will have to make a choice on whether you will do things your way, you will follow what your organization tells you to do or you will do it in such a way that will improve your organization eventually. True enough that as a self leader, you will be accountable to the result of whatever action you do, but think about the rewards and fulfillment you will gain from the experience. It promises a more meaningful and fulfilling career life. Keep in mind that to be a good leader, you should start with yourself.

The One-to-One Context

In One-to-One Context, you will have a direct report as your responsibility. Your task is to cultivate that person's abilities and see that that person develops and becomes successful in his or her work-related role. Initially, your relationship is that of a student-teacher. As a teacher, you need to establish the six conditions that make up your direct report's adult learning experience.

- Encourage the need to know.
- Build self-confidence for learning.
- Tap prior experience.
- Increase the readiness to learn.
- Generate a life-centered orientation to learning.
- Sustain a motivation to learn.

After cultivating your direct report's abilities and making the most of his or her energy levels, he or she will perform outstandingly. That is your reward.

The Team Context

A team composes of three or more people working in a unified manner to accomplish interdependent objectives which cannot be realized without collaboration. Your role as a team leader is to nurture and cultivate the team's abilities and energies and lead them towards goal accomplishment. You also need to help them maintain their excellent performance. You need to have the skill to motivate the team and the people in the team, then, eventually let them go to let them prove their own potentials.

The Organizational Context

Organizational Leadership is making sure that the individual and team efforts are aligned to the organization's goals. As a leader in an organizational context, you can make values, vision, norms, initiatives, systems, processes and practices that utilize employees and please clients and customers which will eventually lead to maintained good performances.

Many leaders do not succeed because they fail to understand the primary purpose of their organization which is attending to their customers and employees' needs. They thought that making money is the main focus for their organization's existence. They fail to see that once the employees are satisfied, the more committed they will be to their work. This will be manifested in giving their customers good services. Then, morale will be boosted and profitability will increase.

Bear in mind that a good organizational leader must know how to answer the organization's requirements. Everyone within the organization must know the role they are playing and how it fits the bigger picture.

The Alliance Context

In the Alliance Context, a third entity is formed when different organizations unite to achieve a common goal that will benefit all members of the alliance. The core competencies of each organization will be a leverage to achieve their common goals. In this context, obstacles are greater. The Alliance Leadership Team (ALT) needs to make it clear how decisions, problems and authority issues will be addressed.

Five Practices of Contextual Leadership

To better understand the different leadership contexts, you should know the five practices of contextual leadership.

Prepare: The first leadership practice

The first leadership practice is to prepare. Your actions as a leader are reflections of your personality. It is imperative to know the four components of your personality for these components make you the person that you are.

The first personality is your subconscious self. It manifests through your dreams and fantasies. It is the core of your being. It has a big influence on what you are as a leader and a person.

The second is your disposition – your natural energy. It is your instinctive and recurring response to conditions and situations. To alter your behavior, you must examine yourself and be open to the options of responding not with your usual ways. Recognizing both your natural responses and your unusual responses permits you to think about how you should react in a given situation. This gives you flexibility when the circumstance requires it.

The third is your values. It is your belief of what is good and bad. When you investigate the core of your beliefs that led you to your values, you will find out that some values are programmed while others are developed.

Programmed values are values that are taken for granted. It can change when confronted. Developed values, on the other hand, are created if it meets these five criteria:

- A developed value is freely chosen
- A developed value is chosen from alternatives
- A developed value is chosen with an understanding of the consequences of the alternatives
- A developed value is acted on over time
- A developed value is prized or publicly owned

The last personality is your persona. It is what you show to the world. It is continually evolving because of your capability to change your future. Your persona is like a façade you present to the world but behind that disguise is a set of multiple selves: the person you think you are, the person you want to be and the person you think others expect you to be. When you go from where you think you are at a place that will please both the person you want to be and the person others expect you to be. There's a bigger driving force for you to conquer your limitations and revolutionize your behavior.

Envision: The second leadership practice

In Self Context, envisioning your work-related role presents a means to connect and align your vision with that of your manager and organization. It will benefit you (the self leader), your manager, and your organization because expectations can be met more easily when you know the vision and how to achieve it. There are four good reasons to envision your role.

One is to manage your manager. When you formulate your vision and compare others' vision for your role, differences will be less between what you perceive as your main role and what your manager and organization requires from you. Second is the shift from disposition-driven to values-driven behavior. One way to initiate a behavioral change is through a vision that makes you conscious of the inconsistency between what you say and what you do. Third is to establish a workplace covenant, and last is to empower yourself.

The next step is to envision your role in the self context. The first thing to do is to visualize your role as if it is ideal. Dream! It is how you will motivate your vision, and when the need arises, your vision will motivate you and others. Next, craft a statement purpose for your role. It outlines four steps:

- Take inventory of your best characteristics
- Identify what you do well
- Describe your perfect workplace
- Integrate your responses into a one-sentence purpose statement

The synergy of your personal and work-related visions will produce energy and passion required for you to succeed. Third, proclaim the values you choose to demonstrate in your role. Clearly identify your values and decide on how you will make them operational. Last is to align your vision. It is imperative that you know your role in the big picture.

In One-to-One Context, the leader should guide his or her direct report to create a persuasive vision that will build meaning and bring existence to the organization's vision. There are four steps in envisioning in the One-to-One Context.

First is to visualize your direct report's role as if it is ideal. Permit yourself to visualize the ideal role for your direct report. Keep in mind that the vision should be a piece of a puzzle where the puzzle stands for what you want your department to be. Second is to craft a statement of purpose for your direct report. It will better express the span of your direct report's role. Next is to proclaim how the values of your direct report's role embody the organization's values. The values you instituted will command the future behavior of your direct report and it will mirror the values of the organization. Last is to align the vision of your direct report's role with the organization's vision. Agree with your direct report on the final vision which is aligned to the department and organization's vision.

Next is to envision in the Team Context. The process or steps are the same as that of the One-to-One Context. The difference lies on the intricacy of leading a team. It escalates exponentially and demands a higher level of skills. Your role is as a sponsor wherein you initially perform the steps in envisioning the team context. In the end, it will be the team's leader and members who will decide to accept and implement what you have created. You are the one who is going to set up a foundation from which the team will start its goals and generate results that make a difference.

Envisioning in the Organizational Context is creating a vision that will ultimately direct people's behavior and decision making. The enormity is way bigger than in any other contexts. Though the steps are similar to the other contexts, the process is more complex. The vision should motivate the members to give their best to realize the organization's focus.

Last is to envision in the Alliance Context. The values of the different organizations won't match fully but they should be aligned and the differences should be stated clearly. The worth of the business deal for both companies should be clearly understood. Once clear, you should create an Alliance Leadership Team (ALT). The envisioning should involve leaders in the highest level for both companies. Once a broad vision is made, the ALT commences the alliance by creating a charter.

Initiate: The third leadership practice

In Self Context, initiating means taking the lead in creating expectations wherein you will be judged and properly recognized. Goals should be set to clearly understand where you should be going. Better performance is a result of clearly understood and consented goals and expectations. They serve as measures for your conduct and accomplishments. You develop your personality in achieving the difficult goals that are set before you. That is why goal setting is imperative. To be a good self leader, you should conquer your hang-ups about goal setting. Below are the different hang-ups that a self leader should overcome:

- Hang-up: I was delegated a goal I'm not sure I can achieve
- Hang-up: Goals are outdated as soon as they are written
- Hang-up: Unclear objectives
- Hang-up: Unrealistic organizational goals
- Hang-up: Lack of manager involvement
- Hang-up: I still don't see the value of goal setting
- Hang-up: I don't know how

Initiating in a One-to-One Context, your task as a leader is to control and guide your direct report's energy. Here is an outline on how to initiate your direct report.

First, identify key responsibility areas (KRA) for a role. Creating a KRA helps explain your direct report's role and in the process, aids in making him or her value the role he or she plays. Next is to set goals. Setting goals directly affects people's thinking and actions, permits them to control their energy and be more determined in pursuing difficult goals. Last is to generate tasks. They are clear procedures that when joined together, formulates an action plan for the goal to be attained.

Initiating in Team Context requires creating a charter. It will direct the team in its' daily activities. It consists of six components.

First is the team vision. Use the sponsor's vision as a guide to remind the team that their vision should be aligned to that of the organization. The second is team outcomes. Create the team's goals and make all the team members understand the goals and the role they will play in achieving them. Then, establish operating guidelines to ensure that the team knows how to go about in doing his or her role. Then, set up norms and ground rules to ultimately convey the values of team. Next, the team and its members should know clearly their roles and responsibilities both as a team and as individuals in a team. Last is the charter endorsement. It is the declaration of the team's vision and goals to the community it serves. This is the signal for the actual work to start.

Next, initiating in the Organizational Context means building initiatives to bring the organization to its' full potential. Your final goal is to have a strategic agenda to eradicate the known problems permanently. You will strategically solve the problems and help in the decision-making to initiate the goals that will guarantee the life of your organization over time.

Last is to initiate in the Alliance Context. Since an alliance is an exceptional being, initiating in this context is the most sensational one. A charter should also be created which should clearly specify the vision, values, outcomes and deliverables, operating guidelines, ground rules and roles and responsibilities. Keep in mind that its vision and strategic plan should benefit both the organizations in it.

Assess: The fourth leadership practice

To assess is to recognize how to find the current reality relative to your goal. Current reality is the mixture of your current ability and energy to reach your goal. There are five phases of performances that you need to assess in each context. They are:

- Curious Phase – your ability is low but your energy is high
- Confronting Phase – your ability only slightly increased, but your energy dropped

- Cautious Phase – your ability is moderately high but your energy fluctuates
- Achieving Phase – your energy and ability are both high
- Discerning Phase – you are questioning if it is worth the effort to be a high achiever on a certain goal

Assessing your phase of performance helps you understand the reason behind your failures and how you can succeed in future endeavors. You need to assess your level of ability and energy to know what you should do in order to attain your goals. Ability is your knowledge and skills while energy is your enthusiasm in achieving your goals. In self context, there are caveats or warnings to help you better in assessing yourself.

First is the honesty factor. You need to admit your current reality for you to have the drive to develop your ability to progress. Next caveat is your manager's perception. If your manager is oblivious to your phase of performance, there is a tendency that he won't be able to assist you in meeting your needs. You have to let him know your level of ability, energy and what your needs are. Next is the big goal syndrome. You have to break your focus into tasks and assess their parts. Then, there are outside influences that affect your output. Last is the curse of confronting phase. Here is where you learn about your character.

Assessing in a one-to-one context, team context, organization context and alliance context is important for this gauges the ability and energy the people or group of people you are leading. This will better make you understand their needs and respond accordingly to help them in achieving their goals and ultimately, the goals of the organization. Be careful though in your assessment. You have to be aware that like in self context, caveats exist. You have to be aware of their existence and how to respond to them. It may be lack of energy, ability, change in motivation or change of focus. Keep in mind that people have ever-changing needs. You need to be involved and be able to observe what is happening.

Respond: The fifth leadership practice

As a leader, you have to know the appropriate responses to situations or phases of performance of the people you lead. It may be more inclined on focus or to inspire, or both. To focus is to guide and give detailed instructions that will assist in the development of a person's ability. To inspire is to focus in escalating the energy level.

You have to know your options and cultivate your skills needed in responding to the different contexts and phases of performance. In self context, you are required to fully comprehend what you need and provide means to give you focus and inspiration in what you do. For the other contexts, support and lead your

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subordinates to give them focus and inspire them to accomplish the goals as individuals and as part of the bigger picture, which is your organization.