

Delegating work works
provided the one delegating
works, too.

– Robert Half

It is being observed that the concept of leadership is undergoing a rapid metamorphosis. This is bringing about a major change in the way the leaders function. The leaders are classified on the basis and style of their functioning, their core areas of expertise and their functional flexibility. Top-down leadership was one of the celebrated styles of the leadership for a long time, which is gradually losing its luster. It is now getting replaced with much better alternatives. Unlike earlier times, the present subordinates are inquisitive to know the nitty gritty of the senior management's functions. A mere passing instruction by the senior management and the workers' nodding to it is not the story of the day. Gone are the days when the leader used to be visualized as loner-in-command and a group of people following him/her—which is the typical design of a top-down leadership. Most organizations today are phenomenally complex than the simple hierarchies of yesteryears. The evolutionary changes brought about by the forces like globalization and technology have made the erstwhile management styles obsolete.

The real life picture of leadership these days is entirely different. It

High Performance Leadership: The Need of the Hour

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demands a synchronized organizational mobilization of information and knowledge about the state of affairs. Instead of being led by one leader and blindly banking on the performance of that leader, the need of the hour is total organizational performance. The quest for total organizational performance gives rise to a new domain in the arena of leadership i.e., performance leadership.

High Performance Leadership

Warren Bennis, the doyen of leadership and the author of around 25 books on the subject, feels that the top-down leadership is no longer effective in producing business results. The perfect tool to fill the void is the high performance leadership. High performance leadership may be defined as the process of transforming the existing performance management process of a company so as to more fully engage the talents and energies of everyone in the organization. The workplace environment has assumed a sea change since the past decade. Today, the workers want information on the vision and mission of the company and its strategy to achieve the same. They

want to run their own show without over-regulation of the senior management. Hence a leader, to be successful has to assume the role of a performance leader instead of being an authoritative or a top-down leader. He should act as a catalyst—more of listening and less of talking.

The secret of evolving as a successful performance leader is to imbibe the concept of shared leadership i.e., equipping every employee with the ability to lead while being led.

Why Strategies Fail?

In a survey conducted by *Fortune* in 1998 only 10% of organizations execute their strategies successfully. Why does this happen? A performance leader must understand that without a robust, high performance, indigenous strategy, all of the efforts at performance improvement will likely to be scattered, conflict with each other and go nowhere. A survey by the Malcolm Baldrige says that 72% of CEOs believe that executing their chosen strategy is more difficult than developing a good strategy. Thus, the leader must concentrate on developing the indigenous strategy that suits to the employees and the conditions prevailing in the

organization. He must ensure that the strategy chosen must invigorate the drive, passion and motivation from within the employees. In order to make that happen one has to give up the loner-led formula and be one among all. The sharing of learning must take place among all the people alike. The propagation of information should be adequate and as per the requirement of the employees. The top-down delegation of the tasks must be given up. The involvement of employees must be encouraged to the extent possible. The following matrix suggests few do's and don'ts of the high performance leader with reference to his interface with the employees.

Performance Leadership Matrix

The performance leadership matrix suggests that the performance leaders vary in their habits and frequencies of meeting with the people and entertaining their views. As such everyone does not excel as a high performance leader. The first quadrant of the matrix suggests those leaders who ignore other's viewpoint and put forth their own viewpoint. This is typical case of top-down leadership, or loner-led leadership. He exhibits certain unsought characteristics like dictatorial and dominant. He shows least interest in listening to others. He believes only in his saying. This blocks the way for all those ideas, which could have been contributed by his followers. The results would depend only on the success of one person. The aspect of team dynamics is absent in this case. Which in turn raises the chances of failure.

The second quadrant includes those performance leaders who neither put forth their viewpoint nor

Ignoring another's viewpoint	Dictatorial, dominant, no listening, little ownership Q1	Isolated, little communication, low trust, no shared learning Q2
	Performance conversations, challenging, vibrant debate, joint problem solving Q3	Confronting, transfer of ownership, explores understanding, increase learning Q4
	Putting a viewpoint	No viewpoint

they entertain others'. This creates a barrier of communication and a block to the idea generation. This includes the isolated and aloof leaders who have low trust in their employees and do not prefer shared learning.

The fourth quadrant leaders are those who have no viewpoint from their side but they probe into another's viewpoint. This indicates the leader's nature of being confronting and a habit of shifting responsibility and his quest to explore understanding of various ideas of his employees. This is a healthy way of developing a learning culture in the organization and making the staff feel their responsibility in the decision-making process. Still, this is far from the high performance leadership.

The third and the much-wanted quadrant in this context is the one, which is reserved for the high performance leader. One may be said to be on the right track to become a successful high performance leader when he has a curiosity from within to probe another's viewpoint as well as the tendency to put forth his own viewpoint. This gesture shows that the organization is witnessing

conversations that add value to the cumulative performance of the firm. It creates a challenging and dynamic environment within the organization. It gives rise to vibrant debates and develops a culture of joint problem solving. This facilitates in synchronized organizational increment.

It is essential on the part of the high performance leaders to stay away from the top-down style of leadership and adopt the high performance leadership style to succeed in today's scenario. In order to be one, he requires following set of rules:

Empower the led

A leader can be identified by virtue of two kinds of powers.

- Positional power
- Personal power

Positional power, as the name suggests, is by virtue of the position or the designation that one enjoys in an organization. Whereas personal power is the power that one has to develop by working upon it. It is a skill that one has to hone in order to influence the led. The positional power highlights the aspect of compliance to certain set of rules, whereas personal power

emphasizes on the cooperation aspect by the employees towards the organizational improvement. The attitude of cooperation can be generated among the employees only if they are empowered within their territories of job. This is only possible by virtue of personal power.

Positional power is often observed in case of the first, second and fourth quadrant of the performance leadership matrix. The high performance leaders (third quadrant) make more use of the personal power than positional power. They emphasize on cooperation than compliance.

Show Empathy Towards the Led

The high performance leaders should develop a habit of listening

to others empathetically—thus validating others’ input. This helps in building consensus among the team. This promotes the idea of “being listened to’ among the staff and hence creates a culture of inclusiveness in the organization.

Stick to the Expectation

After the democratic gestures of empowering the led and being empathetic towards their suggestions and complaints, the time comes for the leader to link the facilities provided by him with the expectations that he has from them. A high performance leader must have a propensity of staying connected with the team members till he gets the output that he expects out of him.

With competition becoming fierce the business focuses have been changing significantly. There has been a shift of focus from individual performance to execution of the business strategy, from fixing weaknesses to leveraging strengths, from compliance to commitment and from setting goals to achieving goals. In order to make the shift materialize in an organization one must assume the role of a high performance leader. ■

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Change Your Thinking a Few Degrees

One Sunday morning, I was running in the Marina District of San Francisco with a psychiatrist friend of mine, David Leaf. We jogged along the bay from the Marina Green to the Golden Gate Bridge and back again.

Afterward, we were walking to cool down. The sky was clear and full of seagulls, the water was blue and full of boats, and the bridge arched over the entrance to the harbor. As we turned back toward our car, the picture changed completely, now a vista of greenery, kites, joggers stretching, and rows of neat Spanish-style houses.

David said, “You see what we’ve just done, Patricia? We have just turned around a few degrees, and it’s like we’re looking at two totally different cities. The good thing about my practice is that people only have to change their thinking a few degrees to have totally different lives.”

We’ve all heard people say, “Well, it’s not working where I am. I think I’m going to move to another state, divorce my spouse, go into a different line of business, lose 50 pounds, or bleach my hair blonde, and then my life will work.” When it comes to good mental health, sometimes what we really need to do is realize what we already have to be grateful for. Just change your thinking a few degrees. The next time you feel stale or frustrated, look at where you are and what you have from a slightly different angle.

Very often people get bogged down with their everyday trials and tribulations. On the tough days, try David’s advice. Change your thinking a few degrees. Stop for just 60 seconds and focus on the things that make you proud and happy. It can be more uplifting than a week’s vacation!

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