

Contingency, Charismatic and Transformational Theories

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This paper briefly explores the application of contingency, charismatic and transformational theories to the leadership of a health care organization. Theories that explain leadership effectiveness while facing situational variables that either enhance or nullify the leader's traits are called contingency theories (Yukl, 2006c). Charismatic theory refers to the followers' perception of a leader. The leader arises during a social crisis and offers a radical vision that solves the crisis. Followers who believe, and experience some success in the vision are attracted to the leader (Yukl, 2006a). Transformational theory refers to the appeal to ethical and moral values in order to motivate followers to reform institutions (Yukl, 2006a).

Strategies for Incorporating Contingency, Charismatic, and Transformational Principles of Leadership in Leading the Organization

Contingency Theory

Yukl (2006) outlined eight strategies to apply Contingency Theory to increase subordinate satisfaction and performance during situational leadership. After each strategy, a brief description is provided:

1. Maintain situational awareness. Understand the external trends that effect performance.
2. Use more planning for a long, complex task. Break the tasks down to components and sequence them for optimal performance.
3. Consult more with people who have relevant knowledge. The leader should tap the resources of others in order to achieve the best performance.
4. Provide more direction to people with interdependent roles. Strive for more coordinated actions between interdependent team members.

5. Provide more direction and briefings when a crisis occurs. Remain calm and deal with the crisis in a systematic and decisive manner
6. Monitor a critical task or unreliable person more closely. Detect and correct performance problems in a constructive, non-punitive way.
7. Provide more coaching to an inexperienced subordinate. Encourage the inexperienced worker to vocalize his/her areas for improvement.
8. Be more supportive to someone with a highly stressful task. The leader should reduce, rather than increase stress.

(Yukl, 2006d)

Charismatic Leadership

Because charismatic leadership often relies upon exceptional skills to move a group of people during a crisis, it rarely is sustainable (Yukl, 2006a), I do not recommend this method of leadership for health care institutions. A structured style identified under *Contingency Theory*, above, is a more plausible method of leadership.

If, however, an organization finds it is under the influence of a charismatic leader, it would be wise to routinize the charisma. Routinization of charisma involves assuring that the principles of the charismatic leader carry on after the leader has gone. This can be done by anointing a successor, create an administrative structure that continues the leader's vision, or embed the leader's vision into the culture of the organization (Yukl, 2006b). All this work seems unproductive.

Transformational Leadership

Yukl (2006) articulated six guidelines for transformational leaders to inspire followers and enhance their dedication to the company's mission:

1. Articulate a clear and appealing vision. A clear vision can give the work meaning and provide a common purpose.
2. Explain how the vision can be attained. There must be a convincing link between the vision and the attainment of the vision.
3. Act confident and optimistic. Demonstrate self-confidence about the attainment of the vision.
4. Express confidence in followers.
5. Use dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values.
6. Lead by example. Actions speak louder than words. Be a role model.

Detailed Examples Measuring the Success/Failure of the Implemented Strategies

A transactional leadership style works very well. An example pulled from my life involves my daughter's cancer. We lived at the Ronald McDonald House for nine months. For a fundraiser, the CEO of Ronald McDonald house asked us to do a video. The video was presented at the fundraiser, but it has been shown at many meetings. Most who watch the video become teary-eyed. It uses dramatic, but necessary pictures of my daughter during her treatment. It showed her flowing beautiful hair while she danced eloquently, shortly followed by her bald head and chemo-ravaged body, suffering through treatment. It was an effective reminder of the Ronald McDonald house mission. Employees told us that it helped inspire them to know that what they are doing is vitally important. They knew that if they did their job, many children would have more hope and lives could be saved. There was a bright and clear link between their

work and creating happiness. The video, which swept the Philly Awards in its category, can be viewed at <http://rmhckc.org/ready/lzzysStory.htm> or

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vw8eOOUagvs>.

It is hard to think of something more rewarding than saving a child's life. That goal is effective for so many purposes. It unifies and promotes excellence.

References

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