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My Personal Plan for Leadership

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My Current Style

In order to assess current style, many factors need to be addressed. In terms of organizing this reflection it seems best to focus on locus of control. In the case of this leader's general style, it can best be expressed by first looking externally at the relationships that are nurtured and maintained. Secondly, consideration of the types and kinds of decisions made will help to reveal the orientation of the leader in regards to predominance of focus. Finally, a look internally at the leader will yield insight into values and beliefs that drive the first two aspects.

In examining relationship qualities, the subject is seen as an approachable and collaborative individual. In more than 20 years of his career he has demonstrated a clear belief in cooperation. This behavior dynamic can be described from multiple viewpoints. In terms of the Style Approach, this behavior would be consistent with a Concern for People scale score of 9 (Blake & Mouton, 1985). A high level of empathy for employees is consistently demonstrated to the point that no request goes unattended. This leader values a high level of commitment to the organization and relies on high degrees of interpersonal trust. More intimate understanding of this is found when considering it under the light of the Leader-Member Exchange theory (Northouse, 2007). Since this leader has a strong focus on individual relationships, the "in group" is easily accessed by anyone willing to establish the prerequisite trust relationship. There are exceptions to this general rule. In some instances, the initial connection between leader and subordinate is not adequately developed. Thus, the relationship never moves past the acquaintance phase. In this situation, this leader develops tremendous concern over nurturing and developing the relationship to resolve this perceived inadequacy. This attention confirms this leader's predisposition to a strong relationship with subordinates that seeks true partnership.

In order to adequately understand this leader's paradigms, it is necessary to assure that the actions of the leader are consistent with the assumptions proposed above. To that end, it is important to see examples in the leader's background where the example is being set in both a credible and consistent fashion. These actions also speak volumes with regards to the alignment with values and beliefs (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). In this instance, this leader has demonstrated by actions over time that he is closely aligned with the Path-Goal theory of leadership. Many decisions are couched in a focus on removing obstacles from the path of subordinates to enable better task accomplishment. This type of behavior is both consistent with the relationships noted above and is also consistent with a concern for results when considered under the Leadership Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1985). This leader has demonstrated through actions, especially in regards to a willingness to work hard and commit to helping others achieve their goals, that he combines the best possible balance of directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented behaviors. The result is subordinates that identify this leader as both holding high expectations while maintaining a high level of fairness.

The most critical area to address in assessing this leader's current style and capabilities is to look inward at the leader and the emotional aspects of his leadership. Consistent with the Psychodynamic Approach, this leader has a certain set of personality traits that are effectively aligned with leadership roles in which this leader performs. Although argument can be made for a predominance of creative thinking that is carefully balanced with high levels of empathy, there is still a mix of perception and judgment linked to planning and accomplishment (Northouse, 2007). The creative and empathic aspects of these personality traits mediate the task association to the point of dominance without fully extinguishing the task orientation. This balance seems consistent with the style elements noted above. One area of concern is a tendency of this leader

to be more introvert rather than extrovert. This can come across to subordinates as lacking confidence which can also engender concerns about credibility. This issue will emerge more fully in the prescriptive actions noted in the following section.

Personal Change Plan

In developing a personal plan for change, the leader that is the subject of this paper must first assess the elements described above and the degree to which these elements are either out of balance or lack other intervening skills to enhance leadership performance. During the course of reflecting on the available literature, two coordinated approaches to self reflection were analyzed in this regard. First, the 5 practices and 10 commitments of leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) were applied. Secondly, the Quinn and Spreitzer (2006) framework for moving from normal to fundamental state of leadership was integrated to provide for a new method for assessing methods for improving leadership consistent with Kouzes and Posner (2002)'s belief that leadership is both learnable and attainable.

The parallels between these two points of view provide specific relief to the question of "What next?" In planning the emergence of this author's leadership rebirth, the first query posed by Quinn and Spreitzer (2006) is "What result do I want to create?" For Kouzes and Posner (2002) this revolves around the first two areas of leadership practices which include "Modeling the way" and "Inspiring a shared vision." This leader has long been caught up in the minutia of daily crisis to spend time truly responding to the core commitments of leadership in this area. For a leader to move from a more transactional approach to one that is considered more transformational, a commitment is needed to clarified personal values. As an early educator, this leader has demonstrated strong commitment to lifelong learning and the core belief that everyone has untapped, accessible potential. That belief has been clouded by a private school mentality

that has decayed purpose and meaning that was once universally applied, but now is applied only to the fortunate or accepted. Thus, goal one must be to consider whether the original vision of these beliefs can be molded to a satisfying model of linkage between organizational and internal goals that seek to work toward common good goals while maintaining a focus on organizational success. Quinn and Spreitzer (2006) would confirm that this is the only path to deep commitment and the best way to provide for access to inspiration and vision that enriches the meaning of work.

A second goal revolves around the second question that revolves around accessing the Fundamental State of Leadership (Quinn & Spreitzer, 2006). “Am I internally directed?” speaks to the issue of personal values. Overlapping with the first of the five practices of leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2002), this area also launches into the question of the necessary level of confidence to take risks and taking actions that are targeted at clarifying personal values to a finer degree. In essence, at the core of modeling confidence is the willingness to make the hard decisions that are risky, but still aligned with the personal beliefs described above. Thus, goal two is to better assess the degree to which this leader can find a comfort level that will allow making key decisions and taking the necessary risks that will generate the small wins that move the organization forward. In essence, there is a need for moving past conventional wisdom and existing paradigms to the unconventional thereby bringing conflict to the surface so that it can be addressed. As noted above, this leader survives in his current role where leaders above take a more management-by-exception approach. In this environment, high risk is present as this leader takes positions that may be in conflict with management, but consistent with personal beliefs and values. Goal two is the risky in that it puts this leader on the path to new challenges if not effectively managed to the betterment of both the organization and the greater good.

Goal three revolves around the question of “Am I other focused?”, or more specifically, am I focused on enabling others to act and encouraging the heart. This is the area that may be the strength of this leader as we develop a leadership plan. Building on this area is simply a matter of expanding the relationship development tools that are critical to encouraging a collaborative team. This third goal requires rigorous attention to the degree with which collaboration, delegation, and recognition are effectively maximized and enhanced in daily activities. By being deliberate about enhancing the frequency of behaviors consistent with these key concepts, the leader is prone to greater success in creating a spirit of community and a professional learning community that is deliberate about building a sense of mutual trust and an atmosphere that encourages self-sacrifice.

The fourth goal revolves around the question of “Am I externally open?” In this regard, the leader is looking at all dimensions and commitments of leadership. In a global sense, this exercise of assessing and planning is consistent with this concept of finding openness to insight and adaptation. As noted above, the situational elements of the current position held by this leader is challenging in many respects. This makes this dimension more critical than the previous three goals. In this regard, the goal revolves around an ability to transcend everything written here and find new strategies to address the next level of accomplishment. This quest is about looking back in order to look forward (Obama, 2006). This provides the best opportunity to find new pathways to success and to formally look at how the transformation of the leader results in transformational leadership. This leader must find comfort with a high degree of vulnerability to achieve that next level of enlightenment that could include bringing the current organization to new levels of accomplishment, but could also include a new pathway for the leader that leads to new challenges.

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