

TIP #23 – JANUARY 2008
THREE ROLES OF LEADERSHIP: UNDERSTANDING LEADERS
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Goal

To experience and conceptualize three important leadership processes: envisioning; aligning others toward the vision; and ensuring execution or implementation

Group Size

15-30 participants

Time Required

Approximately 90 minutes

Materials

One copy of Three Roles of Leaders for each participant (page 4 of this document)
Flip chart and markers

Physical Setting

A room large enough for grouping participants in dyads and small groups comfortably. Chairs may be placed along the walls, keeping the central space open.

Process

1. Ask participants to form pairs, preferably with others they do not know well.
2. State that they are going to participate in an activity in which one person plays the role of a sculptor and the other the raw materials. The raw material, however, is living and can think and decide whether to respond or not to the instruction of the sculptor. Provide a few minutes time to the participants and answer their questions.
3. Ask the “sculptors” to visualize a pose or an object or an act that appears artistically impressive and that can be made by using the given “raw material,” that is, the other participant in the dyad. Tell them not to disclose any information verbally about what they want. If the sculptors want to use pencil and paper, they can do so without showing their envisioned object to their partners or to others. (5minutes.)
4. Announce that the sculptors will make or construct the object or pose that they have visualized using the raw material. Also announce that, during the creation process, neither the sculptor nor the raw material may speak. The sculptor should give his or her instructions nonverbally. Remind them that the material is free to respond or not respond; act or react; do whatever is preferred. Tell them they have five minutes. Observe the action. (5 minutes.)
5. Ask those who finish early to remain near their objects and ask the objects to remain in the same poses if possible.
6. Ask all the sculptors to observe each other’s creations in the room. After they have seen each other’s creations, ask them to sit down in their seats and allow

the objects to sit down also. Ask them about their feelings, and summarize on a flip chart. Urge them to share their experiences through answering the following questions.

- a. How did you feel when visualizing the pose or object?
 - b. How did the raw material feel when he or she was instructed by the sculptor? Did the raw material obey?
 - c. What did the sculptor do when the material did not respond positively?
 - d. How did the sculptors persuade or influence the materials to do what was wanted? How did the sculptors make the raw material understand the images that were visualized? (10 minutes.)
7. Add any observations or highlights you experienced during the activity.
 8. Ask the group to divide into groups of 5 or 6 people each. Ask each group to choose a sculptor again. This time, in every group there will be one sculptor and the remaining members will be the raw materials.
 9. After they have formed groups and chosen their sculptors, ask the sculptors to raise their hands so that they are identified. Announce, "This time every member of the group, not just the sculptor, will visualize a pose, object, or scenery that can be executed by all the members of the group together, again nonverbally. Please close your eyes and visualize a pose, object, or scenery that appeals to you." (5 minutes)
 10. After 5 minutes, ask them to open their eyes and verbally share their images/visions with their group members and try to select any one vision to enact by discussion and convincing, not by voting. As modifications are suggested, the members must agree or not. The agreed-on images/poses/vision may be explained to all members in the group. Allow 15 minutes for them to share, discuss, and decide on one image, pose, scenery, or vision for presentation. Groups may also go to different rooms for discussion if they desire. (15 minutes.)
 11. After 15 minutes, have all participants reconvene. Ask each group to make a 5-minute presentation of its vision to the large group by enacting/executing it nonverbally, as before, but with all members in the group as raw material and thus taking part in the presentation. Remind everyone that it is to be nonverbal.
 12. After each presentation, have others guess what they were trying to depict.
 13. After the presentations are over, have all members of the large group, including the sculptors, share their experiences.
 - a. What was different the second time around? Why do you think this was true?
 - b. What is the message you take from this activity? How will you act differently in the future as a result of your experience?
 14. Provide the Three Roles of Leaders handout to each person and ask them to read it silently. After a few minutes, conclude by giving a brief presentation based on the handout. Ask participants how this activity was related to each of the three leadership roles described. Ask how each type of relationship transfers to the real world. Again ask participants what they might do differently in the future if they were creating another vision. (15 minutes.)

15. Summarize with a reminder of the three leadership roles.

Variation

In the first round, instead of only one raw material (model), the sculptor may use two or three at a time and visualize accordingly.

This exercise was originally published in The 2005 Pfeiffer Annual: Consulting, edited by Elaine Biech.

Three Roles of Leaders

Leaders have to do different things depending on their areas of activity, roles, and responsibilities, as well as on their own desires and goals. The three tasks are common: envisioning, aligning followers to their vision, and ensuring execution. In all three roles, influencing remains the core skill.

Envisioning

The leader envisions the organization in the future, i.e., what will the organization be five years or ten years from now? This is the dream for the future organization: “the vision.” The vision may be made more specific by formulating a mission. Envisioning essentially is dreaming, and dreaming requires imagination. A leader who is highly imaginative, intuitive, and creative envisions spontaneously. But many are strong analytical thinkers, and for them dreaming may be difficult. They have to depend on others—insiders and outsiders—to translate their dreams.

Aligning People Toward the Vision

For implementation, the leader’s vision has to become the vision of followers—a shared vision. For this, the leader has to involve others and also involve them in the mission. The leader influences top management and key people of the organization through his or her skills and charisma. These key people, after internalizing the vision and mission, start converting others and aligning them toward the vision and mission.

When influencing people, four types of strategies are frequently used:

- *Rewards*: This strategy uses some rewards, tangible or intangible, for making people agree or do what the leader wants them to agree to or do.
- *Reason*: The leader tries to convince others or accomplish tasks by using rationale, logic, facts, and figures. Leaders explain the reasons for accomplishing the task or reaching an agreement.
- *Relationships*: A leader using this strategy focuses on the interpersonal needs, specifically the emotional needs of followers. The leader remains in the position of follower and tries to feel or experience the same feelings, reactions, and responses. Using the interpersonal needs (inclusion, control, and affection) (Schutz, 1967), the leader wants to gain the acceptance of the followers. These leaders use emotional intelligence and empathy extensively.
- *Group Appeal*: This is a very powerful strategy used by visionary leaders. They identify a powerful super-ordinate goal and try to convince and invite followers to accept and align themselves with it. The charisma of the leader, as well as his or her visibility and credibility, help a lot.

Ensuring Execution

This leadership task is essential for actualizing the dreams. The leader specifies tasks, activities, and targets that must be carried out for achieving the vision and mission at different levels and by different groups. Agencies that will carry out the tasks are defined and spelled out clearly, as is a time frame. Once the activities are assigned to the appropriate people by the leader, he or she uses various strategies and styles to be sure the tasks are completed.

Reference

Schutz, W.C. (1967). *FIRO B*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

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