Improving Staff Performance through Visionary and Transparent Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Organizational growth and development is hinged on a number of factors, vital among them are staff performance and leadership impact. This review examines how visionary and transparent leadership can influence staff performance in a positive direction. The study whose major aim is to evaluate the relationship between visionary and transparent leadership and staff performance reveals that Visionary and Transparent leadership are therefore required to reconcile and utilize constructive abilities, views, points, attitudes and ideas in performance of group task and achievement of organizational goals in continuous and sustained ways. The study concludes that leaders establish direction by developing a vision of the future, and then align people by communicating the vision and inspiring them to overcome hurdles. Sequel to the above, the study recommends among others that leaders are to be visionary and the vision must be revealed to followers to ensure that they are carried along in the mission of the organization.
Keywords: *leadership, visionary, transparent, staff and performance.*

INTRODUCTION

There is hardly any organization that ever exists without a leader. Leaders are needed in all fields and at all levels of life to give direction for teamwork, set examples, share dangers, and hardship on equal footing with the workers to accomplish set objectives of the organization in an effective and efficient ways. Leadership is a personality trait but one that manages is increasingly required to demonstrate. To be a successful leader, you must also be an entrepreneur. Leadership is synonymous

with entrepreneurship in that both must seek opportunities; initiates project, gather the physical, financial and human resources needed to carry out the projects. Leaders have a set of innate traits though there are authoritarian, laissez-faire and democratic leaders. Leaders tend to be distant and work-oriented or sociable and interaction-oriented. Leaders initiate and promote an inspiring vision of change. There are transactional leaders who make only incremental changes and transformational leaders who make revolutionary ones. Visionary leaders are the builders of a new down, working with imagination, insight and boldness. They present a challenge that calls forth the best in people and brings them together around a shared sense of purpose. Their eyes are on the horizon, not just on the near at hand. They are social innovator and challenge agents, seeing the big picture and thinking strategically. There is a profound interconnectivity between the leaders and other componets of the organisation, and true visionary leaders serve the good of the whole. They recognize that there is some truth on both sides of the most polarized issues in our society. They search for solution that transcend the usual advertorial approaches and address the causal level of problems. They find a higher synthesis of the best of both sides of an issue and address the systemic root cause of problems to create real breakthroughs. However, most often, we are treated to the distinguished portraits of corporate visionaries on the covers of the glossy business magazines – CEO of the year and we read laudatory articles about their clever deals and astronomical bonuses. Then five years later their companies have suffered a reversal of fortunes, and are different in receivership and the leaders are nowhere to be found.

Visionary and Transparent Leadership
"Vision" is one of these overworked buzz words that does not precisely capture what is intended. Vision is simply the faculty to see and it does not specify whether what is seen is close at hand or far away or is to be pursued or is to be avoided (Senge, 1990). The leader with vision is generally thought to see far into the future with remarkable clarity. What this means is that the leader provides clear goals and direction to which others can orient. Successful organizations have one major attribute that set it apart from unsuccessful organizations – Dynamic and effective leadership who make things happen and not just watch things happen by chance.

Drucker (1954) points out that leaders are the basic and scarcest resources of any organization hence, organization continues to search for effective leaders and they are not easy to come by. This shortage of effective leadership is not confined to business but is evident in the lack of able administrators in Government, Education, Foundations, Religious settings and every other forms of organization. Thus, when we decry the scarcity of leadership talent in our society, we are not talking about lack of people to fill administrative positions, what we are agonizing over is a scarcity of people who are willing to assume significant leadership roles in our society and who can get the job done effectively. An overview of the Nigeria problem can be

attributed to leadership problem in the religious and government settings. When a round peg is fixed in a square hole, there is no way that the functionality can be perfect. The vision of a leader will determine the motion through which he drives and direction he goes coupled with his destination. Nwachukwu (1988) defines leadership as a social influencing process for attainment of goals. A leader ought to be the most influential person within the organization, leaders are meant to provide directions, guide group activities and ensure that such group activities are result oriented. They are to enthusiastically persuade others (followers) towards the achievement of group goals.

Attah and Gambori (2003) say leadership is a process where one person exerts social influence over members of a group. A leader then is a person with power over others, who exercise the power for the purpose of influencing their behaviour. Leadership is a process by which a person exerts influence over other people and inspires, motivates, and directs their activities to help achieve group or organizational goals (Gareth et al, 2006). The person who exerts such influence is a leader and when leaders are effective, the influence they exert over others helps a group or organization achieve its performance goals. When leaders are ineffective, their influence does not contribute to, and often detracts from goal attainment.

Heinz and Harold (2005) define leadership as influences, that is, the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically toward the achievement of group goals. Ideally, people should be encouraged to develop willingness to work above that, willingness to work must be coupled with zeal and confidence. Zeal is ardor, earnestness and intensity in the execution of work. Khanka (2009) defines leadership as a process of influencing group activities towards the achievement of certain goals. People working in organizations need to be led to work on a definite direction to accomplish the organizational goals successfully. Without leadership, an organization or Nation would be only a confusion of machines and people.

Visionary and transparent leadership is the ability to create and articulate a realistic and attractive vision for the future of an organization. A visionary and transparent leader must be one with long range perspective, who can conquer the context – volatile, turbulent, ambiguous surroundings that sometimes seems to conspire against his wish. Such leaders are innovators and originals. They develop and inspire trust fixing their eyes on the horizon, challenging status quo and ensure that the right things are done. It is often said that leaders sin is leading sin and when the leader is visionless, there will be no direction for the led and such organization may lost their focus and goals. Some people felt that leaders are born while some argue that they are made and this has perplexed researcher for decades and this has implication on this painstaking work. If leaders are born, why spend time reading and developing skills?, leadership success or failure can be determined. If leaders are made, then everyone can become a leader and there is hope for us all.

These perspectives are quite different, and their implications for the training and development of leaders are profoundly different. If leadership ability is genetically determined, training could hardly play a role in its development. But if leadership is learned through experience, training might as well be used to develop new skills and to help synthesize past experiences into useful insight (Conger, 1992). We have seen people who just show up in leadership but success required more than just showing up, it requires the knowledge and application of tested behavioural science concept plus the "timing" skills to get things done. This work is to postulate the knowledge that will develop the skills necessary to be high performing leader.

Leaders as Vision Creators

Leadership is making what you believe to happen. Every country's legacy has many examples of courageous men and women who have made what they believed to happen under extremely challenging conditions. These were people who saw the need for action, believed in what they were doing, inspired others and in spite of incredible odds, changed the world. This is the essence of leadership. These men and women sought leadership roles and accepted the responsibilities that were part of these roles. Doing this is a leader's duty – to make what you believe to happen, something that flows out of your core values, and you make it happen. Vision is a core part of a person or organization, the inner being that reveals itself in thoughts, concepts, and dreams. Vision is conceiving of impossible things.

It creates the potentials for success and turns potentials into results. Vision at times is called by different names such as will, purpose, charter, or goals, whatever the name, there remains a picture of the future painted by the organization's core value and desire. The single defining quality of leaders is their ability to create and realize a vision (Bennis, 1995). Hence, leaders should be visionary. Loeb (1994) says that all the leaders have a strongly defined sense of purpose, when you have an organization where the people are aligned behind a clearly defined vision or purpose, you get a powerful organization and reliable results.

An effective leader leads through a vision, a shared set of values, and shared objectives. It is the responsibility and duty of top leaders to create a vision for the organization and to articulate this vision into concrete strategies, solid management systems, and informed resource allocations that enable an organization to accomplish results. Vision is a statement of mission and you will agree with me that mission will determine your motion. The speed at which an organization grows will be determined by the vision of the organizational leadership. Staff, who are at the operational level can only operate and discharge their responsibilities based on actualization of the leadership vision.

Leadership Styles and Their Impact on Staff Performance

Researchers such as Blake and Jane (1984) have argued that there is one best style of leadership which is a style that maximizes productivity and satisfaction, growth

and development in all situations. However, further researches in the last several decades have clearly supported the contention that there is no one best leadership style. Successful and effective leaders are able to adopt their style to fit the requirements of the situation. Nwachukwu (1988) sees leadership styles from the perspective of empirical research conducted by Leland Bradford and Ronald Lippit of the University of Jowa who identified three major leadership styles namely. Democratic style, Autocratic style and laissez faire style

Democratic Style of Leadership and it Influence on Staff Performance: This leadership style otherwise called participation leadership style is the one who consults with their subordinate on proposed actions and decision and encourages their participation. This style of leadership allows decision making to be central and encourages subordinate participation in group action. This style gives the follower a sense of belonging and feels that they are part of the organization. From the studies conducted by Leland Bradford and Ronald Lippit, a summary of this leadership influence on followers is summarized as follows (Nwachukwu, 1988).

(i)   Decision making is shared among the leaders and followers, which improves innovation and generation of ideas from the followers.
(ii)   Criticisms and praises are objectively given and this imbibes perfection and spirit of do it well in the followers.
(iii)   The followers develop a feeling of responsibility
(iv)   Productivity is always high as the followers believe that success of the organization is a corporate success and not individual or leadership success.
(V)   New ideas and changes are welcome from the subordinates which generally make them to feel successful.

Autocratic Style of Leadership and its Influence on Followers: This is the leader who gets work done through others but always conscious of his position, he has little trust and faith in his subordinate. He gives order and expects that such orders are carried out without question. There is no room for explanation from the subordinate, under this leadership style, followers assume no responsibility for performance and mainly do what they are told to do. Progress is made when he is present otherwise, no progress. Decision making is centralized in the hand of the leader himself, who does not encourage participation by subordinate. Based on the researches of Leland Bradford and Ronald Lippit, these leaders influence their subordinate in the following ways (Nwachukwu, 1988).

(i)   The leader is very conscious of his position hence, their subordinate are always given to eye service.
(ii)   The leader has little faith in his subordinate and the subordinates are not willing to give their best since their leader do not believe in their ability.
(iii)   He feels that pay is the only reward for the workers and that is the only thing that will motivate them hence, the workers only work for their pay

and that is what matters to them and not the progress or development of the organization.

(iv) Workers are not interested in work hence productivity is always very low since they are giving to eye service as they only work when the leader is around and stop work when he leaves.

(v) Moral and team work are generally low since the leaders do not consult their subordinate in decision making.

Laissez-faire Style of Leadership and its Influence on Staff Performance: This style of leadership permits the members of the group to do whatever they want to do. There are no established policies or procedures; everyone is left alone as no one attempts to influence anyone since there is no leadership impact been felt. In reality, a laissez-faire atmosphere represents an absence of formal leadership, as the formal leadership role has been abdicated and, therefore, any leadership that is being exhibited is informal and emergent. The leader has no virtue to impact on the follower hence his impact is not felt. The followers at times become dull and lost sense of belonging.

What Makes a Leader: Studies of successful and unsuccessful organizational transactions have emphasized the decisive role of leadership and have given rise to the concept of transformational leadership which is also termed visionary leadership; strategic leadership or charismatic leadership possesses behaviours, actions, and strategies that are required to bring about organizational transformation. The concept of transformational leadership does not alter the basic definition of leadership as the process of influencing the activities of an individual or group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation. However, there are specific actions and qualities that make a leader which are highlighted below (Beck, 1994).

(i) ***Personal commitment to transformation:*** The leadership of the organization must be fully committed to the transformation and the commitment must be visible to other organizational members and external stakeholder who are key players. Such commitment must bring a noticeable transformation to the organization which is quite noticeable by all and sundry. It is quite absurd and an aberration for a leader to assume a position and leave the position either worse than it was before assumption. Leaders are to transform and not to deform.

(ii) ***Firm, Relentless, and Indisputable Communication of the impossibility of maintaining the status quo:*** the leadership must forcefully communicate the failure of the status quo. This must be done in such a way that a critical mass of members will want to change. The leader must emphasize the important of increasing and decreasing the anxieties of change. He is to make the followers to recognize the need for revitalization, create a new vision and institutionalized change.

(iii) *Clear and Enthusiastic Communication of an Inspiring Vision of what the organization could become:* The leadership must persistently communicate a clear picture of the future state of the organization in a way that this vision is shared and supported by the members of the organization, individually and collectively. This communication requires a clear and vivid value – base vision created by an appropriate mix of rational analysis, intuition and emotional involvement. He must repeatedly communicate the vision, beliefs, and values to the members of the organization in a way that inspires and excites them and touches their hearts and minds with a sense of urgency.

(iv) *Timely establishment of a critical mass of support for the transformation:* The leadership must identify the key players and power holders in the organization and in its operating environment and obtain their support for the change. Obtaining such support requires acknowledging the power that key players in and outside the organization have, discussing with them the status quo, presenting them with the vision of the future and the value of accompanying it, convincing them of the need to change and showing personal and organizational benefits to be achieved and involving them in decision and implementation.

(v) *Acknowledging, Honouring and Dealing with resistance to the transformation:* The leadership must acknowledge resistance to change and deal with it as necessary but not being biased. He should not victimize and intimidate his followers based on the power bestowed on him but rather be fair and just in his dealing. He should honour those that deserve honorary award as reward for their effort and bring to book those that resist his leadership. He must be willing to listen and be tolerable coupled with patient in order to clarify matters.

(vi) *Decisiveness:* In an emergency, decisions must be made quickly and extra ordinary measures must be quickly initiated. A leader should be able to take meaningful actions and not primarily a thinker but should be able to what makes them heroes to followers. He should be able to respond to crisis met head-on in a decisive manner. He must have a demonstrable consistence with their announced aims and apparently congruent with their intentions.

(vii) *Courageous:* Leaders who lead from the front demonstrate courage. They lead by example. They take personal risks and are willing to stand out and this prominence make them a lightening rod. Leaders draw energy from others both positive and negative, to a good leader, standing out is exciting. The courage of a leader has a positive influence on the follower as it imbibes in them the spirit of positivity even in the face of negativity.

THE COMPETENCIES OF LEADERSHIP

Leading or influencing requires three general skills or competencies which includes the following (Paul et al, 1998).

1. *Diagnosing:* This has to do with the situation you are trying to influence. It is a cognitive or cerebral competency. The leader has to understand what the situation is now and know what he can reasonably expect to make it in the future.

2. *Adapting:* It is altering ones behaviour and other resources available to meet the contingencies of the situation. This is a behavioural competency of leadership. It involves adapting behaviours and other resources in a way that helps close the gap between the current situation and what to be achieved.

3. *Communicating:* This is interacting with others in a way that people can easily understand and accept. Communication is a process competency in leadership, if one is able to understand the situation (diagnosing), and able to adapt behaviour and resources to meet the situation (adapting), the leader needs to communicate effectively. If a leader cannot communicate in a way that people can understand and accept, it will be unlikely to meet his goals. Leaders must create and communicate a very strong meaning that triggers energy and commitment to strive for peak performance. For action and commitment to be gotten, the leader needs to create a strong emotional vision or desire to be part of the organization. Leaders establish direction by developing a vision of the future, and then they align people by communicating the vision and inspiring them to overcome hurdles.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaders' vision will determine the motion which the organization runs in order to achieve their set goals and objectives. To turn vision unto results, the leader needs assistance from others (subordinate). The vision has to be anticipated so that others see in it the possibility of realizing their own hopes and dreams. Images or inner pictures must be created in the follower's mind that is similar to the images in the leaders, but at the same time, there may be a little difference and this difference arises because of individual perceptions. The leader has to share his vision with the followers as it compel them enough to acquire the support of more than one person which makes the vision not to be an abstract but rather a force in people's heart, a force of impressive power. Few, if any, force in human affairs are as powerful as a shared vision. At its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question, "what do we want to create?" Just as personal visions is pictures or images people carry in their heads and hearts, so too are shared visions pictures that people

throughout an organization carry. Shared visions emerge from personal visions. If many people are having personal visions that partly overlap other's visions, a commonly shared vision will develop that which attract and excites them as a lot of energy will be put to work to achieve their desired future results. It is therefore recommended that:

i.   Democratic style of leadership should be best practice since it has a positive influence on staff performance.

ii.   Leaders are to be visionary and the vision must be revealed to followers to ensure they are carried along in the mission of the organization.

iii.   Effective communication must be encouraged both downward and upward within the organizational settings.

iv.   The leader must be at the fore front of pursuing the vision to encourage the followers' commitment and dedication to cause of action towards goals actualization.

v.   Decision making must be based on consultation to create a sense of belonging in each worker though the prerogative to conclude is on the leader.

vi.   There should be delegation of authority to the followers in order for their morale to be boosted as this will improve their performance.

vii.   Leaders should always reward their subordinate for wonderful performance to serve as encouragement for them to put in their best towards the achievement of the organizational goals.

viii. Leaders should not see themselves as boss but rather first among equals as this will go a long way in strengthening human relations aspect of the organization.

ix.   Transparency should be the watchwords of the leader in order to instill confidence and trustworthiness in the followers.

x.   The criteria for an individual's or group's performance should be mutually divided in advance.

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