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Developing Transformational Leadership Skills to Impact Organizational Performance in the Post-Pandemic Era

Mostafa Sayyadi

Abstract

The knowledge economy is going through an unprecedented level of disruption. The surprise result of a pandemic increased uncertainty over safety and security, and fears about a downturn have left many business leaders concerned about how best they can improve organizational performance. One possibility is to embrace the transformational leadership style. This article has been written for management consultants to enhance the value of their clients' learning experience of transformational leadership across the globe. They can make use of this article to build their clients' mastery of transformational leadership as they engage themselves and others for business success.

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance: How Are They Linked?

Four dimensions have been determined for transformational leadership including: idealized influence; individualized consideration; inspirational motivation; and intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1999; Jensen, et al., 2019; Ghuzayyi, 2021). Transformational leaders who show idealized influence are role models for their followers because they engage in high standards of honest and ethical behavior. Individual consideration is the extent to which a transformational leader attends to each follower's needs and is a mentor, coach, or guide to the follower. Inspirational motivation is the degree to which a transformational leader articulates an appealing vision that inspires and motivates others to perform beyond expectations. Intellectual stimulation is the extent to which transformational leaders challenge assumptions, take risks and solicit followers' ideas.

Prior studies have indicated that these four dimensions of transformational leadership enhance various financial and non-financial indicators of organizational performance (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987; Garvin, 1988; Hancott, 2005; Zhu, Chew, and Spangler, 2005; García-Morales, Matías-Reche, and Hurtado-Torres, 2008; Bertsch, 2009; Flemming, 2009; Patiar and Mia, 2009; Cho, 2011). In particular, these studies have illustrated that these financial and non-financial indicators include improving the price of stock, improving response to environmental changes, improving the quality of products, customer satisfaction, and developing opportunities for learning and growth. Therefore, it can be argued that performance at the organizational level is a product of transformational leadership.

Findings of a Research in the MENA Region

This section of the article summarizes the findings of a research within medium-sized manufacturing organizations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In a random sample, the population of this study is comprised of medium-sized manufacturing organizations across the MENA Region. This research was designed to ask participants to provide their perceptions on two latent variables (i.e. transformational leadership and organizational performance). The researchers collected data from both leaders and followers. Previous studies have indicated that followers and line managers may have a wider perspective of organizational processes (MacNeil, 2003). Apart from the critical role of senior leaders as strategic decision-makers, middle managers may also have a wider perspective of the effectiveness of organizational processes (Girard, 2006; Jain and Jeppesen, 2013). Senior leaders, middle managers, line managers, and employees, therefore, were all qualified to provide their perceptions on the research variables of this research.

The research design included an online survey sent to informants which was conducted to acquire empirical data on a large scale. Company size was also a crucial criterion for this research and the researchers used a random sample which they felt was sufficient to represent the selected population. Accordingly, medium-sized manufacturing companies were defined as companies with 50 to 100 employees. The participants

were selected randomly in this study and were solicited from a large pool of both followers and leaders in medium-sized manufacturing companies.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was adopted to measure four dimensions of transformational leadership. This questionnaire was designed and validated by Bass and Avolio (2004). The sample items included:

- In our company, leaders enable others to think about old problems in new ways.
- In our company, leaders help others to develop.

The measurement items for organizational performance relied upon financial and non-financial performance. The sample items included:

- Our company has been excellent in meeting its goals over the past five years.
- Our company has been able to acquire the financial resources it needs over the past five years.

Of the surveys sent out to the participants, a total of 842 questionnaires were returned, representing an overall response rate of 50.79 percent. The sample characteristics have been presented in the following tables:

Table 1: Average Age

Average Age	Frequency
Age range 20 and 25 years old	126
Age range 26 and 30 years old	142
Age range 31 and 35 years old	181
Age range 36 and 40 years old	173
Age range 41 and 45 years old	156
Older than 45 years old	64

* N = 842

Table 2: Job Rank

Job Rank	Frequency
Employees	368
Managers	474

* N = 842

Table 3: Gender

Gender	Frequency
Female	411
Male	431

* N = 842

Table 4: Years of Service

Years of Service	Frequency
Less than 1 year	203
Between 1and 10 years	347
Between 11 and 20 years	169
More than 20 years	123

* N = 842

Consistent with predictions, results also showed that transformational leadership had a sizable and positive impact on organizational performance in medium-sized manufacturing companies in the MENA region.

The Role of Consultants in Developing Transformational Leadership Skills

First, consultants need to help their clients come to grips with their own transactional leadership before they can use their transformational leadership competencies to motivate others. Executives must answer yes or no to the following questions to determine their transformational and transactional leadership:

- Do you provide contingent rewards that are personal or tacitly communicated contracts in exchange for rewards or effort put forth from you or your followers?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Do you promise yourself or your follower's rewards for good performance?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Do you only recognize accomplishments, or do you consider the amount of effort you or your followers put into the task?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Do you use what is called "Management by exception", by watching and searching for deviations from your rules and standards?
  Yes ___ No ___

- When you take corrective action for yourself or followers, are you passive about it or reactive?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Do you intervene for yourself or your followers only when standards are not met?
  Yes ___ No ___

- What makes you happy on the job, in the office, or at the university? Is it because of your Transformational Leadership?
  Yes ___ No___

- Transformational leaders use charisma, Instill pride in work that is done by themselves or their followers, and gain respect and trust in leadership ability for themselves or their follower's ability. Is this you?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Transformational Leaders direct their influence toward the positive things that they or their followers complete. Is this you?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Transformational Leaders project self-confidence and success, articulate goals, and arouse emotions in both themselves and their followers. Is this you?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Transformational Leaders inspire themselves and their followers. They communicate high expectations for themselves and their followers. They thrive on intellectual stimulation for both themselves and their followers. They promote intelligence and when they or their followers fail, they use careful and concise problem solving. Is this you?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Most importantly, Transformational Leaders look at themselves as authentic leaders and consider the individual consideration of their own abilities and those of their followers. Is this you?
  Yes ___ No ___

- Finally, Transformational leaders give personal attention to themselves by personally coaching and advising based on past performance for themselves and their followers. Is this you?
  Yes ___ No ___

Next, consultants must take some time to combine their knowledge of themselves from the above ideas. Based upon the above questions, are clients more transactional versus transformational? Can they empower themselves to become more transformational and less transactional? If yes, great, if no, consultants need to do the next step.

As executives identify what they need to move up the corporate ladder, and become a government transformational executive, consultants can help them to identify the possible obstacles that they may face. Once clients have identified their possible obstacles, then they are ready to write a goal affirmation for themselves. Now that clients have written their goal affirmation, consultants can help them to place what they need to do to accomplish this goal or objective on their To-do-List.

Then, consultants can help clients use imagination and creativity to take risks and tap into what motivated them to become great transformational leaders. Consultants must also help clients focus on their strengths first, then their opportunities, next, if possible. Consultants can also write down what clients value most and this will be their own personal motivating system.

In Conclusion

This article suggests new insights to identify transformational leadership as a primary driver, which influences organizational performance. The post-pandemic recovery is still vibrant, and consultants can help their clients improve firm performance with the viable development of transformational leadership skills. Leaders now need to continue to foster effective transformational leadership. Consultants must help them embrace the post-pandemic recovery and build solid transformational leadership to keep employees satisfied, equitable, and engage.

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