

Leadership Forward

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Abstract

This article discusses the emerging factors of leadership expectations for continued forward thinking research in the field of leadership and what organizations can expect for emerging global leaders of the future. Both, the existing and emerging factors assist organizations in preparing for the future in operating with forward thinking leaders with the important factors of strategic thinking, networking, teamwork, superior communications and moving forward organizations in today's global business environment.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, teamwork, networking, superior communications, forward thinking.

Leadership Forward

Most executives today rose through the ranks at a time when leadership was defined as the ability to take charge, solve problems, rally the troops and ride off into the sunset, which means acquiring your next higher job. For the most part, you were expected to act like the lone ranger. However, for the 21st century, we can no longer think this way. The world has become too complex for anyone to know it all. Our most significant problems, which are the ones facing our organizations as it confronts change management to change leadership, and to face significant challenges in order to provide the leadership that is necessary to run an organization, whether business, government, or educational, we must change our leadership style – we are now living in a global society and must think Leadership Forward. The leader who expects to discover the Holy Grail that will save their company is on the wrong quest. If the problems leaders face could be

easily addressed, it is likely that someone lower in the organization would have already done so (Cook, 2019).

Control is only possible with machinery, whereas, control is not possible with human subjects. Leading now is more critical than ever and we must think to lead forward. If you were on the Lone Ranger Leadership myth, the fact that we have been rewarded earlier on in our careers for controlling events and outcomes, which has enticed us to think that we can do the impossible. However, after much study and research in the field of change management and change leadership, etc., when executives accept that they can neither singularly solve, nor control the most critical issues and problems facing organizations of the 21st century, we make a transition from change management to change leadership and we start to think lead forward.

While very similar to that of our “thinking/learning system capacity range” wisdom, insight, common sense, perspective, analysis, processing and memory the demand of leadership changes as one rises to the executive level within an organization, the demand of leadership at the executive levels are dramatically different than what it takes to lead earlier in one’s career, as I have experienced first-hand. Most people get their first supervisory job based on their level of technical expertise (that of memory, analysis, technical know-how, and processing). They are given problems to solve and do so quite well. Table 1 depicts that the leadership of the 21st century must go beyond those skills; they must think leadership forward (Nahavandi, 2015).

Table 1*Leadership skills at the Executive, Middle, and Lower Level*

Higher level	Strategic leadership	Executives	Wisdom	Insight
Middle level	Team management	Middle managers	Common sense	Perspective
Lower level	Technical skills (leadership)	Supervisors	Memory	Processing

Cook, B., 2019

As we rise through the leadership ranks, whether business, education, or government, rising up the functional hierarchy, other skills become much more critical. At the midlevel the ability to build teams and to manage systems gain importance. At the most critical senior level, the strategic level, technical and internal team leadership is still necessary, but is far from sufficient. Understanding the external environment, thinking strategically, crafting both a short and long-term vision, being political savvy, and influencing others are paramount for your leadership career success as you think of Leadership Forward.

As leaders, if we over focus on our technical expertise and build only internal teams at this level, it can create organizational failure, personal failure, and derail a promising career. Success at the strategic leadership level requires us to draw on the skills that got us there. This means acquiring a new set of strengths and leaving some “old skills” behind as we think leadership forward (Bennis, Sample, & Asghar, 2015).

Throughout the leadership journey, it is with emphasis that you are expected to achieve such goals as becoming more personally effective, try various learning methods, increase personal effectiveness, sharpen presentation skills, put people at ease, engage your active listening skills, learn listening and interpersonal skills, become more comfortable with coaching, mentoring,

delegating skills, learning how to involve the whole person, motivating others and self, well defined and clear articulation, become more effective with executive competencies, improve our ability to be a member of a team of equals, and to learn how to stretch yourself in learning how not to be a leader of the past. These skills for leadership may be challenging, but become more critical for the global leader, the leader forward. Most executives have a difficult time achieving the ultimate success of each of the skills. Some leaders have a daily struggle with some, if not all these skills at any given time. It is very important to critically achieve all these skills as soon as possible in order to sustain your leadership career over time.

Leadership Occurs Throughout Relationships

There is no leader if there is no follower, therefore leadership is a social act. As such, it requires a strong set of social skills. This is true in relation to those below the leaders in any organizational hierarchy. It is perhaps even truer as pointed out earlier, where I am demonstrating that leaders can only succeed if they can build lasting strong relationships with peers and superiors both inside and outside their organization. It is common wisdom that executives derail more often because of poor relationships than that of poor technical skills (Hoey, J. Kelly 2017).

In a research study, executives were surveyed to identify what they thought are critical leadership skills, Table 2, for the future. It is a global phenomenon that organizations are experiencing shortages in forward thinking leaders. Many forward-thinking leaders are now beginning to identify leaders to move their organizations to the future. The survey revealed that relationship skills predominated; comprising of the many skills leaders prefer themselves (Hoey, J. Kelly 2017).

Table 2: *Important skills for leaders*

SKILL	RANK
Adaptability	1
Building a successful team	2
Communications	3
Decision making	4
Building positive relationships	5
Managing the job	6
Problem solving	7
Building trust	8
Coaching	9
Maintaining a positive disposition	10

Cook, B., 2019

Building effective relationships requires emotional stability, self-awareness of one's own needs, to empathize with another, and to demonstrate compassion and sensitivity in the face of obstacles. Both good and great leaders face obstacles and overcome challenges daily. To many leaders these factors sound like “touchy-feely,” factors, and not hardnosed, research-based skills that top business schools have taught for generations to top executives. However, over the last century, the significant importance for anyone to succeed as a dynamic, global leader in organizations for both business and educational leaders must be forward thinking (Rioux, & Bernthal, 1999).

As indicated relationships are now paramount for leadership of the future; followers are seeking trust in their leaders in today's global economy where followers are seeking transparent, open and inclusive communications. So, the organizations of tomorrow are seeking outstanding communication – both verbal and written; a leader that can speak with ease, build trust, leverage their teams and improve business outcomes. Forward thinking leaders are seeking employees with

superior communication skills – both orally and in writing, build trust among the team quickly, the ability to develop their employees, emotional intelligence and a leader driven to excel.

Conclusion

The emerging factors of leadership expectations for continued forward thinking leaders in the field of research leadership and what organizations can expect for emerging leaders of the future is significantly complex and dynamic. Both, the existing and emerging factors assist organization prepare for the future in an effort to operate efficient and efficient with forward thinking leaders with the important factors of strategic thinking, networking, adaptability, building successful teams, communications, decision making, building positive relationships, managing the job, problem solving, building trust, coaching, maintaining a positive disposition, teamwork, superior communications and moving forward organizations in today's global business environment.

References

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