

Transformational Leadership and Team contentment

A case of two teams in a Sri Lanka based Multinational Organization

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Abstract

The concept of leadership is a widely discussed phenomenon today at various forums. Globalization and the boundary free business environment that exist today have led the way to rigorous competition and difficulty in survival for every organization, whether large or small scale, private or government, multinational or national. These changes and challenges have brought about the need for new trends in leadership, which encompasses goal orientation, employee motivation, development, with employee contentment. Among the various styles of leadership that are being discussed and practiced, transformational leadership has become an important leadership style due to its potential to accommodate the complexities found in a technologically advanced, dynamic, and multinational work environments of today. Although the idea of transformational leadership has gained access to management discussions in the 80's with personalities such as Bass (1985) and Burns (1978), it has become more valid today, especially in the context of multinational organizations. The essence of transformational leadership is to build commitment on the part of followers to achieve organizational objectives, empowering them to accomplish theirs with satisfaction. This research endeavours to ascertain the leadership styles employed by two group leaders of a multinational organization in Sri Lanka and to ascertain whether such leadership styles have similarities to that of transformational leadership. In addition to these core objectives the study also tries to determine the impact of such leadership styles on team contentment and how the background of the leaders affects the leadership styles.

In addressing these numerous objectives, the study has used a qualitative research methodology. A triangulation of methods such as questionnaires, interviews and observations have been used to gather data, to enable the researcher to validate the findings more

effectively. The findings herein indicated that the two leadership styles employed have distinct differences. Leader A was found to have a leadership style that is predisposed to be transformational with characteristics similar to transformational leadership being present. Further, the findings indicated that the leadership style of leader A to have a positive impact, making followers more productive as a team with greater contentment. The leader's background, which had had a collective sense of being, has also influenced his style of leadership. In contrast, the leader B appears to be more individualistic in his approach and inclined to encourage empowerment among his followers. The study has also indicated the leader to be somewhat strong in depicting certain characteristics similar to a transformational leader while other characteristics indicate lesser degree of transformational style. The leadership style of leader B has had a mixed impact on the team as it has produced a part positive and part negative outcomes. Leader's background, which had had a self-centered outlook, is observed to have a correlation to the style of leadership employed by the leader. Overall, it was apparent that both leaders had characteristics of transformational leadership to varying degree making it rather difficult to directly identify a pure transformational leader. Nevertheless, it was also apparent that the leader (leader A) who had more characteristics of a transformational leader to be more successful in terms of team contentment and subordinates positive perception.

