

Brief summary of

Turn the Ship Around – A true story of turning Followers into Leaders

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- The Naval Academy leadership book defines Leadership as “Leadership is the art, science or gift by which a person is enabled and privileged to direct the thoughts, plans and actions of others in such a manner as to obtain and command their obedience their confidence, their respect and their loyal cooperation”. Leadership here is about controlling people. It divides the world into two groups of people – Leaders and Followers. This model was developed at a time when mankind’s primary work was physical and consequently, it was optimised for extracting physical work from humans.
- In our modern world, when the most important work we do is cognitive, this Leader-Follower structure is suboptimal for intellectual work.
- The Leader-Leader structure is fundamentally different from the Leader-Follower structure. At its core is the belief that we can all be leaders and in fact it is best when we are all leaders. The Leader-Leader model not only achieves great improvements in its effectiveness and morale but also makes the organizations stronger. They are also significantly more resilient and they do not rely on the designated leader always being right.
- Achieve excellence – don’t just avoid errors is a mechanism for clarity
- Don’t move information to authority., move authority to the information
- The Leader-Leader practices fall into 3 areas – Control, competence and clarity.

Control

- Control is about making decisions concerning not only *how we are going to work* but also *towards what end*.
 - Find the genetic code for control and rewrite it
 - Delegating control or decision making as much as is comfortable
 - It is not an empowerment program – it is changing the way the organization controls decisions in an enduring, personal way
 - Act your way to new thinking
 - Create a work environment that would give men respect and dignity, a place they were happy to go each day. This would lead to change in behaviour and improving the morale.
 - The Three Name rule – greet a visitor with the visitor’s name, his own name, and the Ship’s name
 - When you are trying to change employee’s behaviours, you have basically two approaches to choose from – change your own thinking and hope this leads to new behaviour or change your behaviour and hope this leads to new thinking.
 - Short, early conversations make efficient work
 - Short conversations are opportunities for the crew to get early feedback on how they were tackling problems. This allowed them to retain control of the solution.
 - These early quick discussions also provided clarity to the crew about what they wanted to accomplish.

- Use “*I intend to ..*” to turn passive followers into active leaders
 - “I intend to” is a powerful mechanism for control. It profoundly shifts the ownership of the plan to the officers.
 - Some of the empowered phrases that active doers use include – I intend to, I plan on, I will, We will etc – unlike phrases like, request permission to, I would like to, do you think we should etc..
- Resist the urge to provide solutions
 - When you follow the Leader-leader model, you must take time to let others react to the situation. You need to create a space for open decision by the entire team.
- Eliminate top down monitoring systems
 - The idea is that everyone is responsible for their own performance and the performance of their departments and no one was going to spend effort in telling people what to do.
- Think out loud (both supervisors and subordinates)
 - Thinking out loud is a mechanism for organizational clarity. It made the leader to let the officers execute their plans. Thinking out loud is essential for making the leap from Leader-Follower to Leader-Leader.
 - When I as a captain would “think out loud” I was imparting important context and experience to my subordinates. I was also modelling that lack of certainty is strength and certainty is arrogance.
- Embrace the inspectors
 - Utilize inspectors to disseminate ideas throughout the squadron, to learn from others, and to document issues to improve the ship. This mechanism sends the signal that we are in charge of our destiny not controlled by some force.
 - Embrace the inspectors can be viewed as a mechanism to embrace competence – it helped us to maintain control of our destiny.

Competence

- Competence means that people are technically competent to make the decisions they make. The emphasis is on pushing decision making and control to lower and lower levels in the organization.
- The mechanisms that were employed to strengthen technical competence are
 - Take deliberate action
 - This meant prior to any action, the operator paused and vocalized and gestured towards what he was about to do and then only after taking a deliberate pause, would he execute the action.
 - The intent was to eliminate those “automatic” mistakes.
 - Deliberate actions were not performed for the benefit of an observer or an inspector – they weren’t for show
 - We learn (everywhere, all the time)
 - Training implies passivity. Learning is active, it is something we do. The purpose of training is to increase technical competence.

- The result of increased technical competence is the ability to delegate decision making to the employees – this would result in greater engagement, motivation and initiative.
- Don't brief, certify
 - A briefing is a passive activity for everyone except the briefer.
 - There is no responsibility for preparation or study. It is easy to just nod and say ready without full intellectual engagement.
 - Also the sole responsibility in participating in a brief is to show up.
 - A certification is different from a brief – that during certification the person in charge of his team ask them questions – they shift the onus of preparation to the participants. All participants are active.
- Continually and consistently repeat the message
 - Repeat the same message day after day, meeting after meeting. It may sound redundant, repetitive or boring – but there is no alternative
- Specify goals, not methods
 - Provide your people with the objective and let them figure out the method
 - The problem with specifying the method along with the goal is one of diminished control.

Clarity

- Clarity is the second supporting leg along with competence that is needed in order to distribute control.
- Clarity means people at all levels of an organization clearly and completely understand what the organization is about.
- If clarity of purpose is misunderstood, then the criteria by which a decision is made will be skewed and suboptimal decisions will be made.
- Here are some of the mechanisms devised to implement leader-leader practices by stressing clarity
 - Achieve excellence, don't just avoid errors
 - Build trust and take care of your people
 - Taking care of people does not mean protecting them from the consequences of their own behaviour. What it does mean is giving them every available tool and advantage to achieve their aims in life. , beyond the specifics of their job.
 - Use your legacy for inspiration
 - Tap into the sense of purpose and urgency during early days or during a crisis and embed them in your guiding principles.
 - Use guiding principles for decision criteria
 - Initiative – take action without direction from above or improve our knowledge
 - Innovation – looking at new ways of doing the same thing, having the courage to change and embrace failures.
 - Intimate technical knowledge – each of us is responsible for learning our area of responsibility and make decisions on technical reasons, not hope
 - Courage – choose to do the right thing – even if it may be uncomfortable and admitting mistakes even if ugly

- Commitment – we are present when we come to work. We give it our best always.
- Continuous improvement – how we get better. We continually seek ways to learn from processes and improve them and ourselves
- Integrity – we tell the truth to each other and to ourselves
- Empowerment – encourage those below to take action and support them, even if they make mistakes
- Team work – we work as a team, not undercutting each other.
- Openness – freedom to speak one’s mind, challenge our own thinking and avoid the trap of listening to refute
- Timeliness – we do things on time. Accomplishing most things faster is better and that working to reduce inherent delays and time lags results in more efficient organization.
- Use immediate recognition to reinforce desired behaviours
 - Reward instantaneously
- Begin with the end in mind
 - Establish specific measurable goals which would help individuals realise their ambitions.
 - As a mentor, you have to establish that you are sincerely interested in the problems of the person and take actions to support the individual by working in their best interests.
- Encourage a questioning attitude over blind obedience
- Examples of Leader-Follower and a Leader-Leader model

Don't do this	Do this
Leader-Follower	Leader-Leader
Take control	Give control
Give orders	Avoid giving orders
When you give orders, be confident, unambiguous and resolute	When you give orders, leave room for questioning
Brief	Certify
Have meetings	Have conversations
Have a mentor-mentee program	Have a mentor-mentor program
Focus on technology	Focus on people
Think short term	Think long term
Want to be missed after you depart	Want not to be missed after you depart
Have high repetition, low quality training	Have low repetition, high quality training
Limit communication to terse, succinct formal orders	Augment orders with rich contextual informal communicators
Be questioning	Be curious
Make inefficient processes efficient	Eliminate entire steps and processes that don't add value
Increase monitoring and inspection points	Reduce monitoring and inspection points
Protect information	Pass information
