

PART 1 INTRODUCTION TO LEADERSHIP

Leader Right: Think of a specific situation in which you were working with someone who was in a leadership position over you and that person was doing something that was *right* for you. This person might have been a coach, teacher, team leader, employer, immediate boss, family member, or anyone who had a leadership position over you. “Right for you” means that person’s behavior made you or your coworkers more productive, highly motivated you or others, and removed barriers to make you more successful. *Write a few words below that describe what the leader was doing that was right for you.*

Think of a second situation in which someone in a leadership position did something right for you. *Write a few words below that describe what the leader was doing that was right for you.*

The previous answers are data points that can help you understand the impact of leader behaviors. Analyze your four incidents—what are the underlying qualities of leadership that enable you to be an effective performer? Discuss your answers with another student. What leadership themes are present in the eight combined incidents? What do these responses tell you about the qualities you want and don’t want in your leaders?

In Class: An interesting way to use this exercise in class is to have students write (five words maximum) their leader “rights” on one board and their leader “wrongs” on another board. The instructor can ask small groups to identify underlying themes in the collective set of leader data points on the boards to specify what makes an effective leader. After students establish four or five key themes, they can be challenged to identify the one key theme that distinguishes leaders who are effective from those who are not.

Source: Based on Melvin R. McKnight, “Organizational Behavior as a Phenomenological, Free-Will Centered Science,” Working Paper, College of Business Administration, Northern Arizona University, 1997.



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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: CASES FOR ANALYSIS

Sales Engineering Division

When DGL International, a manufacturer of refinery equipment, brought in John Terrill to manage its Sales Engineering division, company executives informed him of the urgent situation. Sales Engineering, with 20 engineers, was the highest-paid, best-educated, and least-productive division in the company. The instructions to Terrill: Turn it around. Terrill called a meeting of the engineers. He showed great concern for their personal welfare and asked point blank: “What’s the problem? Why can’t we produce? Why does this division have such turnover?”

Without hesitation, employees launched a hail of complaints. “I was hired as an engineer, not a pencil pusher.” “We spend over half of our time writing asinine reports in triplicate for top management, and no one reads the reports.” “We have to account for every penny, which doesn’t give us time to work with customers or new developments.”

After a two-hour discussion, Terrill began to envision a future in which engineers were free to work with customers and join self-directed teams for product improvement. Terrill concluded he had to get top management off the engineers’ backs. He promised the

engineers, “My job is to stay out of your way so you can do your work, and I’ll try to keep top management off your backs, too.” He called for the day’s reports and issued an order effective immediately that the originals be turned in daily to his office rather than mailed to headquarters. For three weeks, technical reports piled up on his desk. By month’s end, the stack was nearly three feet high. During that time no one called for the reports. When other managers entered his office and saw the stack, they usually asked, “What’s all this?” Terrill answered, “Technical reports.” No one asked to read them.

Finally, at month’s end, a secretary from finance called and asked for the monthly travel and expense report. Terrill responded, “Meet me in the president’s office tomorrow morning.”

The next morning the engineers cheered as Terrill walked through the department pushing a cart loaded with the enormous stack of reports. They knew the showdown had come.

Terrill entered the president’s office and placed the stack of reports on his desk. The president and the other senior executives looked bewildered.

“This,” Terrill announced, “is the reason for the lack of productivity in the Sales Engineering division. These are the reports your people require every month. The fact that they sat on my desk all month shows that no one reads this material. I suggest that the engineers’ time could be used in a more productive manner, and that one brief monthly report from my office will satisfy the needs of the other departments.”

QUESTIONS

1. Does John Terrill’s leadership style fit the definition of leadership in Exhibit 1.1? Is it part of a leader’s job to manage upward? Explain.
2. With respect to Exhibit 1.4, in what leadership era is Terrill? In what era is headquarters? Explain.
3. What approach would you have taken in this situation? What do you think the response of the senior executives will be to Terrill’s action?

The Marshall Plan

Marshall Gordon was recognized by associates and competitors as *a man on a mission*. One of four members of the design team for a large chair manufacturing corporation, Marshall’s obsession with the creation of comfortable seating dated to a childhood back injury and a lifetime of pain. He recognized, more than most in the industry, the importance of designing chairs that offered some relief to those suffering from debilitating back, hip, and neck pain as well as helping people of all ages to avoid problems with proper posture. In his early days with the company the staff jokingly called his approach the Marshall Plan, after America’s 1947 initiative (named for Secretary of State George Marshall) to rebuild European economies after the war. Like someone fighting to save the world, Marshall Gordon brought passion and a creative intensity to design meetings as if each drawing, each design tweak would change civilization as we knew it.

Single and with no apparent family or friendship ties, Marshall was married to his work. He seemed to thrive on 70-hour work weeks, although as a salaried manager, he received no overtime pay. Even his “down time” at meals or on weekends was spent sketching, studying the latest in ergonomics, or reconnoitering each design adjustment by competitors.

“When you visit a furniture store, you fully expect to see Marshall, skulking about in trench coat and hat, checking to see what the competition is offering,” says fellow team member John Craddock. “We all laugh about it. The guy brings—actually brings—chairs to meetings and tears them apart to show us some miniscule *discovery*.”

This obsession with chairs, pain and gravity, and one-upping the competition has made Marshall a valuable employee and earned him a reputation in the industry for creative design. Not since Peter Opsvik’s Gravity Balans ergonomic chair of the 1970s has anyone made such an impact on the industry. The effect of Marshall’s work on company profits is undeniable. The fact that competitors are chomping at the bit to lure him away is also undeniable.

But the Marshall Plan comes at a price. Over the 15 years he has worked with the company, five as leader of the design group, there has been a constant turnover within the design group as frustrated workers leave the company to “get away from Marshall.”

“Anything you could learn from this brilliant and dedicated man is destroyed by his cold, calculating attitude,” Craddock complains. “I came to this company excited about the chance to work with him. But any knowledge he possesses is carefully guarded. His design ideas are perfect, while ours are picked apart. We all swear he has listening devices scattered around everywhere, because if the rest of the team huddles in some corner of the world to discuss a design idea, *voilà!* He walks into the next meeting with *our* idea. Once when he was a few minutes late to a meeting, we thought we had beaten him and quickly presented our idea. Just then, he walks in, and announces, ‘Ideas must be in the air. I have something very similar,’ and throws his completed design on screen. Guess who won.”

Marshall presents a continuing challenge to company management, having both incredible positive and negative influence on the culture. While his contributions to design and profits far exceed those of other employees, his negative effect on the culture and his team’s creativity and morale results in the loss of talented people and a climate of suspicion and discontent. His threat, “I can take my talents elsewhere,” hangs over top management like a sledge hammer.

Now, Craddock and Leslie Warren, other talented members of the design team, have approached management with their own ultimatum: *Do something about Marshall or we resign.*

QUESTIONS

1. If you were a top leader, how would you respond to the ultimatum? Be specific. Explain why.
2. What is Marshall missing with respect to his leadership abilities? How do you explain his poor leadership behavior?
3. If you were Marshall’s manager, how might you increase Marshall’s awareness of the negative impact he is having on his team? How would you guide him toward better team leadership, sharing his knowledge with others, and mentoring his team members?

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