Leadership Assessment Reflection

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Philosophy of Leadership

The definition of leadership, in essence, is a subjective perspective of an individual which is directly influenced by an individual's values, beliefs, principles, and behaviors. Leadership qualities can be possessed by anyone and are shaped by an individual's beliefs and the experiences and influences of that individual's environment. The essence of leadership from my perspective is elegantly stated by Rosa Carter: "A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be" (Thomas-Aguilar, 2014). In essence, leadership is about eliciting the greatness in others; leaders inspire, build trust, and collaborate with others while simultaneously focus on developing an individuals' capacities rather than their limitations.

Positions of power and authority do not necessarily foster a leader. In order to be a leader, one must be able to embody courage in order to put their passions into a vision and that vision into action (Kezar and Lester, 2011). It starts with a vision and the motivation behind one person who is innovative and inspires others while facilitating an environment of teamwork in order to foster a recipe for growth and success (Kezar and Lester, 2011). A leader is also more than just an innovator who implements change; a leader fosters an environment of growth by inspiring others to achieve their goals by challenging others perspectives and empowering individuals to think outside of the box. Leaders accept responsibility for his or her results and mistakes, have the ability to be resilient, act as a team player, and have the desire to continuously learn and grow within his or her environment (Kezar and Lester, 2011).

Reflection of Assessment and Leadership Style

Awareness of strengths, preferences, values, and beliefs allows an individual to foster a sense of self. Strengths and values also define an individual's leadership style. Understanding

one's leadership style creates an advantage that will allow an individual to become more proactive and effective as a leader by having the ability to strategically use strengths and counteracting weaknesses. Awareness of one's leadership style and strengths also allows an individual to be able to be to identify a work environment that is compatible with his or her personality. Personality compatibility prevents burnout and enhances individual's effectiveness in their chosen institution. Awareness of one's leadership style also allows an individual to not only become an asset but also fosters continuous personal growth in oneself and others. Self-assessments are a useful tool for an individual to further conceptualize and make meaning their own strengths, preferences, and leadership style.

Clifton Strengths Finder

Clifton Strengths Finder is a great comprehensive tool that gives an individual insight on his or her personal top five strengths. This assessment allows me to reflect on who I am, and how I can use my sense of self-actualization towards fostering my own unique sense of personal leadership style. My top five themes, to my surprise, were a very accurate portrayal of myself. My strengths which include: positivity, woo, learner, arranger, and input, are things that I see myself synthesizing into every leadership role I have obtained.

Enthusiasm is my greatest strength as it embodies everything that I do, especially because I strive to learn, engage in new challenges, and meet new people. Enthusiasm, as stated in Strengths Finders, is contagious and can help others become excited about their tasks. Positivity is always looking out for the positive in every situation and also helps to pinpoint individual's unique traits and see the good in each individual which can ultimately lead to effectively motivating each individual.

Positivity can also be correlated with also having a strengths as a woo. I truly enjoy the challenge of meeting new people, it makes me feel energized and also helps me learn and gain new perspectives. I have the ability to strike up a conversation with just about anyone and in return I find that many strangers randomly strike up a conversation with me. Instinctively, I like to assist and motivate others to overcome their own obstacles. As a woo, I am very open-minded, and automatically share information about myself without thinking twice. Positivity about life and also being a woo is very much driven from my passion as a learner; I have a great desire to learn and always want to continue to grow and improve. Learning happens through interactions with others as well as within myself through experiences. I dedicate a lot of time to acquire knowledge and implementing this knowledge into action. I find myself continuously looking for new opportunities to be exposed to in order meet new people and to gain different perspectives. I am constantly observing my environment, and accumulating facts and knowledge which in return provides insight on individual's behaviors and motivations.

As an arranger, I infuse my positivity, and learned knowledge in order to manage all the variables in the most productive way. I strive to find the best way to get things accomplished and this can be directly related to using my strengths as a woo and my positive attitude. Since I am constantly seeking new knowledge from my environment, I am integrating these experiences into figuring out new solutions. An arranger as explained in Strength Finders has the ability to keep many things in their head at once. This statement resonates with me because I am constantly thinking, learning, and processing, and analyzing myself and my environment in order to be ready to hit the ground running. I tend to jump into any situation, and instantly figure out how to solve the problem at hand and constantly searching for a better way.

My strength as an input comes directly from my nature of a learner. Since I learn from my environment, I am constantly listening to others conversations. I strive to absorb as much information as I possibly can and tend to store this information in case it may be useful in constructing future solutions. My positive attitude along with desire to meet new people fuels my integration of learned knowledge and the constant state of unraveling life's complexities.

Leadership Legacy

Leadership Legacy's results allow me to reflect on my personal characteristics of my leadership style. Understanding my natural role as a leader can help conceptualize my own strengths as a leader and the ways I would facilitate leadership. This is particularly important because it can help me to identify how I approach situations and how others behave as a result of my leadership characteristic in order to become a more effective leader. My characteristics of a leader in the order of most predominant are as follows: Experienced guide, creative builder, people mover, truth-Seeker, Advocate, and Ambassador. Overall, I was relatively surprised by some of these results. I always saw myself as an experienced guide, people mover and at times a creative builder. This assessment really brought to my attention that I have strengths in being a truth-seeker, an advocator and an ambassador. As I further reflect on these characteristics, I came to the realization that I do foster these traits; however, I did not realize they are actually some of my main strengths. I tend to question my strengths a lot and do not always give myself enough credit, therefore, this assessment particularly spoke to me and helps me better conceptualize myself as a leader.

As an experienced guide, I have the ability to listen to others and also see their own thoughts and feelings from his or her perspective. Since I have the ability to put myself in another person' shoes, I have a way of guiding others to solve their own problems. I tend to see

myself as a resource for others; many individuals come to me for guidance and respect my ability to empathize and strength in conflict-management. Although I was really surprised to have creative builder ranked as my second strongest strength, most of the descriptions resonates with me. Creative builders as explained in Leadership Legacy are always the happiest and driven at the start of things. This is especially true because I strive on the thrill of new endeavors and I am very fascinated with the implementation of new things. I do not always necessarily see myself as constantly seeing new opportunities and ideas; however, this might also be due to not being fully aware of my strengths in this area. I am always striving on learning new knowledge and I believe this is an area where I can strive on in the future because of my new awareness of this particular strength.

People mover is something that I am very aware of as strength. I have a very strong ability to spot talent and motivate others. I tend to always take the lead when it comes to team building and as a result, many individuals also view me as a mentor and continuously keep in contact with me. Truth-seeker thinks fair and uses good judgment and always seeks high standards. Truth seekers help others to understand the rules and regulations. Advocators are the spokesperson in the group, and are the ones who articulate and persuade others. Advocators help navigate during tough times and tend to need ambassadors to help others buy into their decision since advocators tend to see only black and white. I found this very interesting because I equally received the same score on both advocator and ambassador which I find to be very unique. I am not a black and white thinker; therefore, I can use both these traits to my advantage since both traits tend to need each other to balance each other out. An ambassador knows how to handle situations with grace and know how to efficiently implement conflict resolution. Ambassadors

can also be both persuasive and respectful at the same time and overall I tend to see myself reflect this in leadership roles.

Integration of Self-Assessment and Experiences

In reflection of my past leadership experiences, I can see how the results of these assessments correlate with my previous experiences and well how it can be implemented in future endeavors. Over the past few years I have been in many leadership roles, particularly during my time as a manager in retail. My leadership experiences, in my opinion, have shaped my strengths as well as my preference of leadership style. My positive outlook, along with my ability to connect with others, desire to learn, and ability to collect and implement knowledge has allowed me to succeed in my previous roles. As a store manager, I had the ability to motivate and drive others because I took the time to get to know my employees and played off their strengths. I learned by observing my peers and supervisors and implemented my learned knowledge into what I believed would be the best way to run the business. However, at the same time I was constantly seeking out new knowledge and ideas to promote growth within my store.

During my time as a manager, I focused on improving and seeking new talent. My strength in training and ability to identify talent gave me an advantage to continuously help my co-workers strive towards growth and embracing change. My employees saw me as their mentor and not just their manager. Over the years, I have been provided with the same feedback from both my sales associates and direct supervisor; the way I train and coach others makes them feel a part of a team who wants to strive to learn more and I have a natural instinct to see different perspectives by putting myself in others' shoes. This has led to fostering a lot of professional relationships and contacts that I still keep in touch with.

Although before this assessment I did not identity myself as an ambassador and advocator, I can see how my strengths and other leadership styles influence these strengths. Since I have worked in retail in an environment that is constantly changing from day to day, I have become very strong in handling a variety of situations with grace. As a store manager, I had to handle many conflicts with not only my associates but also with customers.

Furthermore, I have also advocated for professional promotions for many team members. Even during tough times and when my team mates were struggling to make personal sales for the day, I continued to readjust our goals and lead the team with constant grace and positivity. I saw this having direct effect in others, and witnessed personal sales goals increase due to the constant motivation, positivity, and sense of continuous growth instilled in all my associates.

Application of Leadership: From a Grass Roots Perspective

My past leadership experiences, strengths, and preferred leadership style directly apply to the field of higher education. Understanding one's philosophy of leadership and the strengths and preferences will allow an individual to step into leadership roles seamlessly. Awareness of my strengths and leadership style and its correlations to my past experience has allowed me to reflect on my past and how I can learn and grow from this information for the future. Utilizing my strengths to their fullest capacity will make me an effective leader which will result in my ability to implement change. Since I have a desire to learn new things and the ability to motivate others with my various perspectives and positivity, these traits will help with the implementation of grass roots change within my department. For example, I am very interested in working with transfer students; I resonate with this population because I was a transfer student who faced issues in transitioning to a new institution. If I was working in advising with transfer students and continuously witnessing transfer students at my institution experience "transfer shock" and a

decrease in transfer students' grades I can implement change from the bottom up. If there was not a living and learning community already in place for these students I can start to advocating change for these students.

In order to advocate change, I would need to have a strong sense of my philosophy as a leader as well as awareness of my strengths. In relation to Kezar and Lester (2011) grassroots leadership model; challenges and obstacles, after identifying my motivation and identity I would then have to come up with a strategy that would be resilient. I would utilize my strengths as a woo and a people mover to build networks and relationships with others in the functional areas I would need in order to create change such as residence life. I would be able to create the power dynamics and conditions within my group through my ability to motivate, remain positive, and also foster growth in others along the way. I would do this by delegating roles and allowing others to be able to accomplish these goals while also mentoring, supporting and challenging him or her along the way.

Since I am a truth-seeker I would formulate the organizational structure by allowing others to understand the policies and implement fairness and good judgment when making decisions. I would also use my strengths in woo and people mover by raising consciousness and motivating students to want to be a part of the live and learn community. I would garner resources by honing my ability to learn, arrange and input knowledge while utilizing members within my networks (Kezar and Lester, 2011).

There are many student development theories that can be implemented throughout this process of change. Kolb's theory of experiential learning can be helpful in the creation of the program. This theory would help to gain insight on how to effectively respond to different learning styles in order to provide challenging and supportive environments for these students.

Self-authorship can also be implemented not only with the students in the live and learn community but also with staff and faculty members. My ability to foster growth in others through reflection and motivation can facilitate others to reflect and make meaning of their own experiences. Through my leadership style I would allow individuals to author their own narrative by developing competence in decision making and ability to integrate new information. This can be accomplished by allowing students, faculty and staff by making their own decision's and work with them by allowing them to understand how and why they made that decision (Evans et al., 2010).

References

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