Leadership Development

What type of leader do I want to be?

After studying leadership for the last few weeks, we have covered many theories and styles of leadership. This post will look at some of the theories from my previous posts and will compare them to personal experiences.

Transformational vs transactional leadership address two main styles of leadership during changes, with transformational leadership engaging more with followers and transactional leadership focusing on the goals of a change (Mullins 2016: 326).

When considered with Adair’s action-centred leadership, we see the need to balance our focus on the task, people, and team requirements (Mullins 2016: 316). Which would suggest that during change it would be important to balance between transformational and transactional change leadership.

(Adobe 2016)

To do this, we can look at the three main leadership styles linked with Tannenbaum and Schmidt’s four main styles of leadership, authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire (Mullins 2016: 318). When focused on a goal, a leader could tell in an authoritarian way, consult in a democratic way, or join when required in a laissez-faire style (Mullins 2016: 318).
Over the last few weeks I have been working to develop my own leadership styles in my team, during the High Flyers program, and with external activities like my Toastmaster’s club, while thinking about these theories. It seems to me, that though we can discuss and understand situations in terms of theories there are always those pesky grey areas.

Using my Howard Schultz and Starbucks example, we now question the ethics of the company because we don’t really know the motivation behind it, is it just a sales tactic or are they really trying to be ethical? Looking at Howard’s change management style after he returned as CEO, did he knowing use Lewin’s three stage model for change, using a large gathering to unfreeze the organisation. Did he feel that the best way to develop employee commitment was to clearly communicate required changes? Maybe, we don’t know because we don’t know his true intentions were at the time.

For myself, I can say that I want to be a democratic leader. However, what happens if my follower just wants to be told what to do or don’t have an opinion? Can I let people self-manage if they are not sure of the goal of my style? What about having a task that needs to be done, but your teammates don’t want to be told what to do, yet they are unwilling to read the assignment brief and are relying upon off information from a friend — that is incorrect.

During the High Flyers program, we have several talks on leadership, from how to develop our style and story to being aware of our presence. From these talks the same topic came up, to be yourself as when we are not authentic people can see through that. Not to say that you can’t develop your style, but that we are naturally one way or another. Some may feel more comfortable being autocratic where others may feel more comfortable letting things happen and fixing them when they need to.
Twice over the last term, I received very personal feedback about myself and my leadership style that was the same. First, that I was too nice and secondly that I’m too outgoing.

I had to really think about this, one of my greatest skills is to say what everyone is thinking but no one wants to say and I am honestly a happy person and like to be nice, it’s just who I am. I started to realise, that there are a lot of critics out there, and though I can change my style of leadership from telling to selling and even consults, my personality will always be there. Yet, I continuously receive feedback about my personality.