Leadership Success:
Behaviors, Competencies and Responsibilities That Produce Positive Results

Part 1 – Behaviors

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Introduction

"Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is wisdom; acting on intelligence and wisdom is leadership." **Lao Tzu**

One of the great strengths that defines a successful leader is the ability to build teams that can deliver products and services faster, better and more cost-effectively. Developing this strength, however, requires a successful balance of several factors. In 2005, my colleague David Williams and I designed and developed what we termed the Behaviors, Competencies and Responsibilities (BCR) approach to leadership to identify these very factors. As illustrated by the diagram below, when the three critical elements of behaviors, competencies, and responsibilities come together—as they do in the center purple area—you get effective, successful, productive, powerful, thoughtful, prudent, strong and wise leadership results.

I'll be exploring each of these aspects individually as they relate to successful team leadership in three successive White Papers. In this first Paper, Part 1, the focus is on **Behaviors**.
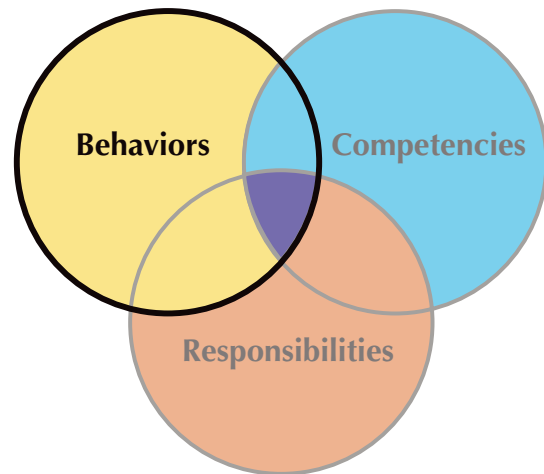
Behaviors

Because an individual's actions—and their subsequent results—define them, leaders can increase their effectiveness by adopting supportive behaviors, such as embracing integrity and building trust, showing consideration and caring, working with difference and adopting what is termed a "servant leadership" role.

Embracing Integrity and Building Trust

Stephen R. Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, surveyed over 54,000 people and asked them to identify the essential qualities of a leader. More than 15,000 respondents rated integrity as first on their list. Even more to the point, the celebrated management guru Peter F. Drucker said, "Leaders in an organization need to impose on themselves that congruence between deeds and words, between behavior and professed beliefs and values that we call 'personal integrity.'"[1]

Along similar lines, leaders who exemplify integrity will exhibit behaviors that are consistent with organizational core values and take actions to correct those behaviors that do not, no matter what it takes. They do what they feel is right and—perhaps more importantly—do as they say they will do. Rather than blaming others, they openly admit mistakes, live with the consequences and commit themselves to doing better by taking ownership of problems and correcting them. By doing so, they show others that mistakes should not be feared or covered up but are instead critical to an individual's learning and professional growth.

Leaders often have to make difficult choices to maintain an organization's values or achieve its goals, so they must utilize team members who do so as well. They will position individuals who have the courage to speak up in roles where this characteristic is critical.

It is essential in team settings to have people around who will be honest and tell the truth, regardless of how painful that may be. When Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, was asked to name the secret to success for the organization, without missing a beat he said, "Candor." It is a wise leader who teaches the team to tell the truth to each other—even when it is bad news—rather than just to share feelings and opinions. Ultimately, truth telling should be an organizational norm that delivers the following message: "It's safe to tell the truth around here, but it's not okay not to tell the truth."[2]

Leaders enhance their influence by being trustworthy. That includes keeping one's word and honestly disclosing information without "spin." This has a further benefit as well: it allows team members to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, so they feel free to ask for help when they need it without fear. It also provides a secure, guilt-free environment where team members can admit when they're wrong.

Ultimately, when it comes to matters of integrity, just "talking the talk" isn't enough. One needs to "walk the walk" as well by behaving with honesty, fairness and making sure actions and beliefs are consistent, predictable and believable.

Showing Consideration and Caring

Current research compares the relative utility of five leadership dimensions—charisma, consideration, motivation, rewards, and structure—in predicting employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and leader effectiveness. The same research identifies passive leadership behaviors (not being available to employees, failing to take action to prevent problems, etc.), as negative predictors of employee attitudes. [3] Clearly then, one of the most important behaviors a leader can cultivate that will positively influence employee attitude is consideration, which involves treating employees with respect and valuing their input. A successful leader also treats people fairly, applying the same set of rules to all. [4] When the team is successful, they make sure to recognize the team's accomplishments rather than individual achievements.

Leaders who build successful teams do so by concerning themselves with the human needs of their team members: helping them with their problems, providing psychological support, caring about them as individuals, and freely expressing warmth, joy, happiness and enthusiasm in their interactions with them. By practicing this kind of consideration and caring, leaders are rewarded by having their teams willingly entrust their well-being to them. There is a shared understanding that both the personal and professional lives of the team members are important.

Working with Difference

A team leader must also figure out how to achieve success while managing a diverse range of people. To accomplish that, the leader needs to assess the pool of talent within the team. Posing the following questions to each team member helps to identify their individual strengths, experiences, priorities and aspirations (SEPA):

Strengths
What do you find straightforward and easy to do?
What are your areas of interest?
Are there areas of work or leisure in which you would like to become involved?

Experiences
What work experiences do you/did you enjoy the most?
What kinds of things are you involved in outside of work?

Priorities
Given the following list, rank these from 1 to 10:
    Being recognized, valued and respected
    Benefits
    Career growth, learning and development
    Exciting work and challenges
    Fair pay
    Great work environment and culture
    Meaningful work
    Pride in organization and product
    Supportive management/great boss
    Working with great people

Aspirations
What are your current priorities?
What are your goals for the future?

In addition, there's the more direct approach in which leaders actively go out and engage team members by doing what's become known in management circles as MBWA, or "management by walking around." They ask employees what management support means to them and, in response, exhibit a willingness to learn and change. This approach yields further benefits for leaders because it encourages team members to approach them openly with new information and specific comments.

Adopting a Servant Leadership Role

Larry Spears, in his book *Reflections on Leadership,* suggests a different way of looking at leadership: "Traditional autocratic and hierarchical modes of leadership are slowly yielding to a newer model—one that attempts to simultaneously enhance the personal growth of workers and improve quality and caring through a combination of teamwork and community, personal involvement in decision making, and ethical and caring behavior...called 'servant leadership.'"

At the heart of this is the idea that the leader—having made the conscious decision to lead—is still a servant first because the decision to lead is rooted in the desire to serve better (help others), rather than gaining increased power (help oneself). Ultimately, the objective is to enhance the growth of individuals in the organization and increase teamwork and personal involvement. A servant leader's first question is, "How can I help you?"

The servant leader avoids the common top-down hierarchical concept; emphasizes collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power; provides what team members need to operate at peak performance; and must consider the individuality and special needs of each team member. They see themselves as a resource for—not the boss of—the team.

In sum, the entire approach is based simply on the principle that leading is about serving others—employees, customers, and community. When the leader endorses these behaviors: active listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to others' growth, and community building, then the behavioral work is done. When goals are achieved, the team says "Amazing! We did it all by ourselves!"

Conclusion

As I mentioned at the beginning of this White Paper, **Behaviors** are just one aspect of the BCR approach. However, they represent actions that must be internalized by leaders to achieve success. By adopting traits such as embracing integrity, building trust, showing consideration and caring, working with difference and adopting a servant leadership role, leaders get the most out of their teams by setting a standard they themselves exemplify.

I will address the remaining elements, Competencies and Responsibilities, in Parts 2 and 3, respectively.

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2. Bodaken, Bruce, & Fritz, R., "The Managerial Moment of Truth: The Essential Step in Helping People Improve Performance", pg. 16, Free Press, 2006.

3. Piccolo, Ronald, Judge, T., & Bono, J. E., "The full range of leadership behaviors: Which ones really matter?", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2004.

4. NASA Leadership Development Program, **http://www.nasa.gov**

Books:

The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People
by Stephen R. Covey
(ISBN: 978-0671708635)
Publisher: Free Press

The Tao of Leadership:
Leadership Strategies for a New Age
by John Heider
(ISBN: 978-0893340797)
Publisher: Humanics Limited

The Serving Leader:
Five Powerful Actions That Will Transform Your
Team, Your Business, and Your Community
by Ken Jennings and John Stahl-Wert
(ISBN: 978-1576753088)
Publisher: Berrett-Koehler

Web Sites:

Ninth House Network:
Provides the latest news and resources related to improving leadership and management skills.
http://www.ninthhouse.com/home.asp

FastCompany.com:
A monthly journal that features articles about leadership challenges and experiences.
http://www.fastcompany.com/homepage/index.html

The CEO Refresher:
A monthly newsletter concentrating on topics in leadership and high-level management.
http://www.refresher.com/ceo.html

The Harvard Business Review:
For those who want to delve a bit further into the latest research about today's workplace.
http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b01/en/ hbr/hbr_current_issue.jhtm

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James L. Haner is the head of Ultimate Business Resources Consulting, an independent firm offering business consulting and project management services. James has more than 30 years of experience in business and IT. His responsibilities have included establishing a corporate Web presence for a Fortune 500 company, creating a successful organization-wide employee development plan, and developing the IT infrastructure for a start-up company in both project management and leadership roles. He earned an MA degree in Management from the Claremont Graduate School and took classes with Peter F. Drucker, "the father of modern management." James is also an instructor, author and technical editor for Learning Tree as well as a certified Project Management Professional.

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