

The Theory of Three Leadership Styles

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Abstract: The theory of three leadership styles puts descriptions of three types of leaders' behaviors. Each of them has coexistence of advantages and disadvantages and shows wonderful impact on different industries particularly.

Keywords: Leadership Style; Autocratic Leader; Democratic Leader; Laissez-Faire

1. Introduction

The discussion of leadership begun at 1930s and researchers shifted their studies to actual behavior of leaders from 1940s. At first, the theory of leadership styles was presented by some scholars of the University of Iowa. Then, Lewin (1939) proposed that there were three leadership styles, which indicated that different leader acts with different leadership style. To solve Lewin's problem, a lot of researches such as Tannenbaum (1958), Robert (1964) and Fiedler (1951) put forward many important arguments of leadership styles. What they done in the field of leadership management created a new phase of western leadership theory and provided an instruction for some specific industries to shape their own management styles.

According to the study, diverse leadership styles are defined as three types. They are autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. This assignment will explain the definitions of three leadership styles separately. After that, the assignment provides some applications and analyzes reasons why every leadership style is directly applicable to certain industry. Finally, come to the evaluations of the theory.

2. Case Study

Compared with autocratic leaders, democratic leaders have different requirements which included participative leadership, shared leadership, open-book management, participative decision-making (Eric, 2015). Initially, democratic leaders lead employees by receiving information and accept comments from them. This type of management is flexible and it is more like a bridge for communication between employers and employees. Even democratic leaders have to make decision and take action in person, the plans they make are based on those discussions that come from staff. In this case, employees are encouraged to participate the decision-making process, actually, they do not have rights to decide anything. Kathrins (2007) asserts that democratic style is most acceptable among leaders because it has been used in various industries successfully.

Another type of leadership style is laissez-faire, however, it's quite different from democratic leaders. Firstly, Eric (2015) points that laissez-faire leaders allow staff to solve problems and manage challenges. For instance, laissez-faire leaders make their employees involved to make all decisions. At the same time, they have to take responsibility for results of the decisions. There is a famous experiment which is made by an American researcher. The experiment arranges some children into three different groups and trains each leader of the three groups to be autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire before testing. Then, ask these children to make snowmen. The researcher analyzes leadership behaviors by children's working efficiency. The result implies that laissez-faire leaders are not as efficient as autocratic and democratic leaders. Nevertheless, the control from laissez-faire bosses that clients need to deal with is not very strong. What is more, it can be a good management style for some professionals actually.

The theory of three leadership styles is applied widely because some special characters of the three leadership styles meet requirements of particular industries. There are some examples.

Autocratic leaders perform well in hospitality industry due to the complicated management system. Hospitality industry has complex management system with many departments such as food and beverage department, MarCom department, purchase

department, financial department and so on. Therefore, it is impossible to let every employee to get involved to decisions. Also, delivering information from employee to employer becomes hard if some messages change through information transmission. All of these require a powerful leader to operate the whole team. As illustrated above, autocratic leaders make decisions by themselves. It saves a lot of time because information asymmetry is avoided to autocratic leaders. For example, the success of Starwood Hotels may be contributed to the leadership style of Frits van Paasschen. As is known to all, Starwood Hotels is one of the biggest hotel in the world and it supports more than 171000 employees. Besides, Starwood Hotels creates sorts of new departments to attract people that means the management of Starwood Hotels is complicated and tough. Frits van Paasschen, the CEO of Starwood Hotels, is an authoritarian. He pays attention to his employees and makes them important positions when they are outstanding in their work area. While Jiapan Zhang (2015) in 'Starwood Hotels Representative Leadership Analysis Report' indicates that Frits van Paasschen, though he motivates employees always, never lets clients make decisions by themselves. Instead, he joins every part of operation and protects his absolute authority to decisions. What he does makes his staff encouraged and his decisiveness ensures efficiency of the hotel. In addition, the leadership style becomes his personal brand that many leaders want to copy.

As to democratic leaders, there are three reasons which supports that they can be satisfactory in IT industry. In the first place, a creative job performance is significant in IT industry. Wang (2013) argues that democratic leadership style has positive effect on employees' job performance. According to Wang, democratic leaders encourage staff to participate each decision-making process, which leads them to work with higher work enthusiasm. Secondly, democratic leaders provide a better working environment for their employees especially when they are doing professional researches (Kessler, 1993). Third, team work also plays an important role in IT industry. Democratic leadership style, sometime, determines the communication effect of team interaction (Yang, Wu, Wang, & Chin, 2012). Regression analyses are used in their research paper and the final result suggests that democratic leaders have more positive effect on a group work. Actually, Twitter is a representative case of democratic leadership style. Eric (2015) states that even though Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass, who are the founders of Twitter, share different views on Twitter's development, Dorsey as the core leader remains his mind that Twitter may change the world by the text-messaging service. The democratic leadership style enables Twitter to be fashionable and successful because leaders of Twitter develop a great strategy from their employees' advices and there is high work efficiency due to employees' involvement.

Laissez-faire, with minimum binding on employees, meets product design firms' needs like apparel industry. Roman Maqueira (2011) in the article 'Latin American youth entrepreneurs: Differences between coached and laissez-faire entrepreneurial experiences in their employability skills and their entrepreneurial innovative attitude' claims that laissez-faire leaders motivate innovation attitudes of staff. At the same time, it is useful for skill improvement of employees. For instance, DKNY is one of famous apparel company in the world. Donna Karan, the founder of DKNY jeans and apparel, is a totally laissez-faire leader. Eric (2015) in his paper 'What is Laissez-Faire Leadership? How Autonomy Can Drive Success' illustrates that Karan just focus on profits of DKNY but never interrupts the employees' activity. The designers who work in her company show their talent without too much restriction from her. According to the Center for Association Leadership noted in 2013, Karan trusts employees, which emboldens them to solve problems and meet challenges. Also, she gives some positive feedbacks to her employees if they need. Unsurprisingly, Karan employees perform better in professional work and the productivity increases as well owing to her leadership style.

The theory of three leadership styles is valued by three major aspects but it is limited by two considerations.

First above, the theory of three leadership styles is the base of many leadership theories. Many researchers begin to explore leaders' values, attitudes towards risk and their communication skills after that (Yousef, 1998). Moreover, a lot of leadership styles are defined much accurately. The theory, to some degree, shapes the management culture because people start to be aware of the importance of leadership that it acts as an essential factor of management but can turn back to influence team performance meanwhile (Kazemek, 1990).

Second, as demonstrated above, the theory of three leadership styles is utilized in management systems in different industries because the relationship between leaders and employees in any company is dissimilar. Sirgy (2001) notes that leadership style will influence on their employees' quality of work life. Because leaders and employees are connected tightly in workplaces. In the third place, leader's fostering benefits from the theory. As Kay and Russette (2000) claim, Indeed, the most important issue for leader is self-development and the most necessary character for leaders is perception of leader effectiveness. It shows a implication that real

effective leaders have clear view on their employees and they do know what their clients think about and how they act (Butlera, Kwantesa, & Boglarskyb, 2014). The second advantage leaders can gain from the theory of three leadership styles is improving decision-making ability. Minett, Yaman and Denizci (2009) do a study on Australia hospitality leaders which implies that a choice which leadership styles he or she want to follow is needed because it help us to build our decision-making styles and improve our ability of making decision.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the theory of three leadership styles puts descriptions of three types of leaders' behaviors. Each of them has coexistence of advantages and disadvantages and shows wonderful impact on different industries particularly.

Autocratic leaders who are tyrannical and stern to employees are suitable for hospitality industry because only a powerful leader can handle complex hotel management system. While democratic leadership style, which gives employees some participations to decisions, meets IT industry's demand due to the vitality of IT industry. To laissez-faire leaders, their free management gives employees enough space to show professional skills. Many types of industries can use the theory to enhance relationship of managers and employees and leaders who want to be good at management are encouraged by the guides of the theory.

However, there are some discussions that the theory of three leadership styles provides insufficient explanations of leadership styles such as particular classifications and applications. In the future, we can do more researches on the theory of three leadership styles especially focus on some certain aspects of management. Efficient methods to solve practical management problems and leader-training problems can also develop based on the theory.

In a nutshell, the theory of three leadership styles gives a hand to people to understand leadership fully and it is one of the most useful theories for the management field.

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