Becoming an Authentic Leadership Development Consultant

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Introduction

The focus of this article is based upon the critical role of management consultants to develop authentic leadership that has emerged as a more applicable and more adaptable leadership model than the many others that are available today. Leadership has always been at the forefront of management training (Mills, 2005). However, the four functions of management depict leadership as one of the four. For instance, Henri Fayol has been posited as the forefather of the functions of management. While he had more than four in his original publication in France which was translated to English in the 1930s, the four that seemed to stand the test of time are organizing, leading, planning, and controlling.

What is the Defining Leadership?

Leadership, being a strong component of management, has manifested itself into the forefront of many executives and aspiring leaders. There are more reasons than one that Fayol included leadership as a function of management. For example, in Steven Markham’s (2012) view, leadership stems from ancient history. The concept of leadership highly manifested itself in ancient extended families that constructed clans as the central ingredient of cities such as Rome. The role of leadership was considerably centralized, and membership in the clans was highly demanding in order to be successful in the social institutions. Today, the question remains, can leaders be made or do they have to be born leaders to be successful? Before attempting to answer this question, let us agree that leaders can be made and that being a born leader may be an additional attribute of leadership.

While Fayol captured the essence of leadership in his functions of management, leadership is not a new phenomenon and stems from ancient times. Warren Bennis (2009) illustrates, in an attempt to differentiate the concepts of leadership and management, that while a leader acquires his competencies by embracing education, a manager becomes familiar with managerial activities by undergoing training. He asserts that the education system is more strategic, synthetic, experimental, flexible, active, and broad when compared to training principles that manifest themselves in being passive,
narrow and rote. Moreover, there is a profound difference between leaders and managers. A leader, in fact, takes a proactive approach towards more strategic goals, and evokes expectations of followers and images for them to follow in the direction of influencing and coaching them. Leadership focuses on challenging the current norms and motivating employees. Followers, as intellectual capital, are trained to think about organizational issues in a more innovative and creative manner.

This intention cannot be achieved without developing trust-based relationships by which human assets could share their knowledge and new ideas with others. So, the question still arises – why is management and leadership so different. Henry Mintzberg (2007), an author and scholar in the area of management at McGill University in Canada, feels that they are not so different and being a manager is being a leader. For example, Joseph Rost (1991) conceptualizes management as an authority relationship between at least one manager and one subordinate who coordinates their activities to produce and to sell particular goods or provide some type of service. Management emphasizes more operational objectives rather than investigating strategic goals. Therefore, management has been highlighted as an authority relationship to maintain the status quo through coordinating and controlling subordinate activities. This is where scholars part ways. Once the status quo is mentioned, it appears that management is stagnant and overly consuming in nature. It is not – management and leadership are one and the same and to be a good manager a person has to also be a good leader.

Although the current definitions on the concept of leadership and management are somewhat different, these idealized definitions provide various viewpoints about leadership that could positively contribute to define the concept of leadership. Let us now define this thing called leadership as influenced interactions with groups of followers to implement changes and achieve the determined goals. That definition sounds a lot like management, and it should be because, as mentioned earlier, leadership is a function of management. This controversy among academics has taken on a new form. Scholars are experts in management and leadership but very few take pride in being scholars of both except for Fayol who would fall into the category of a management historian.

The true basis of leadership was built upon a model that generated two sides of an X and Y axis. On one side is the concept of leadership that creates change through taking a process-oriented and the other as more of a relationship-oriented approach. When thinking of leadership and politics, a leader has to be a politician but a politician does not always have to be a leader. Similarly, based upon the management versus leadership idea, a manager always has to be a leader but a leader does not always have to be a manager. Let us look at authentic leaders and determine their competencies aimed at answering the question of how management consultants can play a strategic role in developing authentic leadership within companies.

**Developing Authentic Leadership Within Companies**

The prominent scholar on authentic leadership is Bill George (2003) who sheds light on authentic leaders as those chief executive officers who truly perceive their own values
and beliefs, and are highly recognized by other people as being aware of their own and followers’ values, strengths, and weaknesses. Authentic leaders are most knowledgeable about themselves and the context in which they lead. This leadership style takes place at the organizational level, and it can be shared (Hmieleski, Cole & Baron, 2012).

The key for management consultants is that seven practices have been determined for authentic leadership:

- Positive psychological capital
- Positive moral perspective
- Self-awareness
- Leadership process/behavior management
- Self-regulation
- Follower development, and
- Organizational context.

It is important for management consultants to develop a positive work climate in which followers more effectively contribute to a firm’s performance and competitive advantage. Management consultants must also have the desirable expertise about the authentic decision-making process, which identifies moral dilemmas, and then evaluates and selects the best available alternative to be implemented. Furthermore, management consultants need to understand that authentic leaders continually understand their own beliefs, strengths, desires, values, and aspirations. Management consultants can distinguish the processes and mechanisms whereby an authentic leader influences his/her followers. Authentic leaders can effectively influence their followers through taking various processes such as positive social exchange. Management consultants should at least be aware of self-awareness and self-regulation by which authentic leaders effectively align their core values and individual interests with institutional interests and their practices. In fact, a strong alignment can be achieved in values and goals by using a transparent process between leaders and followers. Management consultants are already aware that an authentic leader takes a coaching role for transforming and developing people. Finally, it is important for management consultants to develop effective workplaces that promote the depth and range of knowledge access and sharing, and provide equal opportunity for all followers at various levels of the organization in order to actively respond to the constant changes occurring in the external environment.

Conclusion

This article raises vital questions as to how executives can effectively lead companies in today’s hypercompetitive business environment. Executives see that I expand upon the subject matter of an organization’s leadership. For management consultants, this article can portray a more detailed picture of the authentic leadership within organizations that have been mentioned but not placed in a set of practices based on acting and doing in the past. Furthermore, I suggest that scholars take these ideas and continue to conduct
research using executives as the focal point so that academic scholarship can meet the needs of managerial implications at the higher echelons of organizations worldwide.
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