

RUNNING HEAD: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER
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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER

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The results of the Self -Assessment tool: Are You a Transformational Leader? gives credence to my opinion that I am a transformational leader. A consideration of the body of knowledge surrounding the theory of transformational leadership demands examination before examining my strengths and weaknesses. The genesis of the theory of transformational leadership is traced back to James MacGregor Burns (1978) who first introduced the concept of transforming leadership in his descriptive research paper *Leadership* on political leaders. This term is now used in organizational psychology as well. The research theorizes that transformational leadership is a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. Inherent in this theory is the suggestion that enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale and performance of followers through a variety of means. The theorist Burns (1978) postulated that various mechanizations of transformational leadership include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them; challenging followers to take greater ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance. Bernard M. Bass (1985) added to the initial concepts of Burns (1978) to help explain how transformational leadership could be measured, as well as how it impacts follower motivation and performance. The extent, to which a leader is transformational, is measured first, in terms of his or her influence on the followers. The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership is associated with alleged effectiveness of the unit and

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positively influences other outcomes of the organization. Four constituents of transformational leadership are explained as follows:

1. Individualized Consideration is the degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, acts as a mentor or coach to the follower and listens to the follower's concerns and needs. The leader gives empathy and support, keeps communication open and places challenges before the followers. This also encompasses the need for respect and celebrates the individual contribution that each follower can make to the team. The followers have a will and aspirations for self- development and have intrinsic motivation for their tasks.
2. Intellectual Stimulation is the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers' ideas. Leaders with this style stimulate and encourage creativity in their followers. They nurture and develop people who think independently. For such a leader, learning is a value and unexpected situations are seen as opportunities to learn. The followers ask questions, think deeply about things and figure out better ways to execute their tasks.
3. Inspirational Motivation is the degree to which the leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers. Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goals, and provide meaning for the task at hand. The visionary aspects of leadership are supported by communication skills that make the vision understandable, precise, powerful and engaging.
4. Idealized Influence provides a role model for high ethical behavior, instills pride, gains respect and trust. As a development tool, transformational leadership has spread already in all sectors of western societies, including governmental organizations.

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In assessing my strengths and weaknesses using the Self- Assessment tool: Are You a Transformational Leader? I view my leadership through the lens of the cause and effects of my strengths and weaknesses on my followers and the intersection between leadership and the social sector. Northouse (2010) suggests that because transformational leadership covers a wide range of aspects within leadership, there are no specific steps for a manager to follow. Becoming an effective transformational leader is a process. This means that conscious effort must be made to adopt a transformational style. To truly be a great leader, you can't just take advantage of your strengths. You also have to recognize your weaknesses, and learn how to make them benefit your particular leadership style. This will help you come across as authentic and competent.

Hellriegel , Slocum, Woodman & Bruining (1998) posit that workers have the volition to act within an environment, particularly a work environment, emerged within management theory expressed in a variety of ways, called “the forces acting on or within a person that cause the person to behave in a specific, goal-directed manner.” The tool referenced by them, The Self -Assessment Tool: Are You a Transformational Leader? measured my strengths in the six basic leader behavior patterns, as well as a set of emotional responses usually associated with transformational leaders. My strengths were shown as being in the areas identified as the Management of Attention, Management of Meaning, and Management of Feelings. My weaknesses as identified by the assessment tool were in the areas of Management of Risk, and Management of Self. I scored in the 17-23 range in all of the areas. I perceived my weaknesses as lying in the areas where I scored between 17 and 19 points. Scores of 20 and above were viewed as my strengths. Northouse (2013) notes that because transformational leaders have a high positive *self-regard*, the focus should be on their strengths rather than dwelling on their

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weaknesses. The assignment of this paper is to identify my weaknesses in the context of the self-assessment. To present a complementary view of my assessment, my personal strengths are presented juxtaposed with my personal weaknesses using the ideas of Hellriegel (et al., 1998):

Management of Attention is described as the ability to draw others to themselves through an intense focus of attention. Individuals who possess this ability have routinely been able to get others to enroll in their own visions. This has even been to the point that they have adopted the vision as their own. Leaders always keep their intentions in clear evidence. An explanation of this strength says to me that “you especially pay close attention to people whom you are communicating. You prefer to “focus in” on the key issues under discussion and help others to see clearly these clear points. You have clear ideas about the relative importance or priorities of different issues under consideration”.

Management of Meaning is the ability to communicate visions, dreams, and ideas effectively to others. These leaders do more than use words they use their entire person to communicate this message. These leaders know talk is cheap and that actions and appearances are the effective ways to communicate. This index assesses my communication skills and shows my strength in my specific ability to get the meaning of a message across, even if this means devising some quite innovative approach.

Management of Trust is an essential aspect of leadership. This section is about constancy and focus. If you want to be a successful leader, your people have to trust you in order to follow you. Team members want a leader they can count on, even if they disagree with them rather than one they agree with but changes position constantly. The key factor assessed here is the perceived

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trustworthiness as shown by the leader's willingness to follow through on promises, avoidance of "flip-flop" shifts in position, and preference to take clear positions.

The areas where I perceived my weaknesses, scoring between 17 and 19 points are addressed:

Management of Self measures the ability to know one's own skills and limitations and to get the most out of them. If you don't have this trait you can do more harm than good. Leaders concentrate on positive goals and do not focus on risks. Here the leader must reject the idea of failure. Here the leader needs to be able to display total confidence and not worry about mistakes. This index assesses the leader's general attitudes toward themselves and others; their overall concern for others and their feelings, as well as for "taking care of" feelings about one's self in a positive sense (e.g. self-regard).

Management of Risk assesses the extent that effective transformational leaders are deeply involved in what they do. They do not spend excessive amounts of time or energy on plans to "protect" themselves against failure (a CYA" approach). These leaders are willing to take risks, not on a hit-or-miss basis, but after careful estimation of the odds of success or failure.

Management of Feeling assesses the extent that transformational leaders seem to consistently generate a set of feelings in others. Others feel that their work becomes more meaningful and that they are the "masters" of their own behavior; that is, they feel competent. They feel a sense of community, a "we-ness" with their colleagues and co-workers.

Correcting personal weaknesses has to start from within. Leaders need to have the self-awareness to know when they have gone off track (and how to get back on) and be willing to do the same for the organization. I have devised a plan of growth to address my perceived weaknesses in

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several areas. If I were coaching a client with the results I produced what I recommend my plan of growth for their professional development in the following ways:

To compensate for areas of weakness, I would follow Jacoby's (2011) suggestion to source experts—recruiting professionals who are top in their field and relying on them while still holding them to the standards of excellence in performance. Developing the discipline to learn complex topics, through reading books would be offered as a help to enhance certain skills. Selflessness is key to being aware and avoiding a myopic view of things. In areas where self- management is a weakness I would explain to the client that the ongoing self-assessment in this area is ultimately about being selfless, present, and realistically assessing what is going on in the transformation process. If a coaching client's weaknesses are caused by a lack of experience, I would advise them to explore more opportunities to gain more experience and have opportunities to lead people in different circumstances. These opportunities could be found in church groups, community outreach areas, volunteering, and shadowing, among other things.

Zhu, Chew, & Spangler (2005) suggest that it has been empirically shown that transformational leadership is positively linked to perceptions, attitude and job performance of the leader.

Transformational leaders have formed a clear image of the future and affected others to implement and share the image despite the resisting and restraining conditions. As a note of caution, strengthening your gifts and talents and addressing your shortcomings are both vital to any plan of growth.

Finally, the potential weaknesses that I see in the self-assessment used in the course are those found. Avolio & Bass (2004) posit that there is a problem of "test effect", in most

self-assessments where you cannot get valid results with subsequent testing. A different test version may help in some cases, but this type of test would be difficult to overcome. Also, if one knows the scoring method, it is rather easy to see in what factor categories the questions fall, and one taking the test could "test out" according to a predetermined classification. I further agree with LeBlanc & Painchaud (1985) that there is strong evidence that self-assessments yield consistent and homogeneous results; indeed, research indicates that learner self-assessment is working in situations that were traditionally reserved for standardized tests (i.e. placement). I concur with Worthen, Sanders and Fitzpatrick (1997) evaluation that self-assessment is not a panacea for all testing problems, and the field is fraught with problematic issues and cannot be used for benchmarking, or cross-institutional comparisons. The Self- Assessment tool: Are You a Transformational Leader? demands expertise in measurement to assure validity, reliability, and utility.

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