Summary & Application Paper

Leading at a Higher Level / by Ken Blanchard

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The impetus to write this book came from Blanchard and his company's mission and vision to train people, help organizations be led by, and motivate others by observing people who lead at a higher level. The first section focuses on establishing the right target and vision for the organization. In Chapter 1 aspiring HPO's targets are the triple bottom line; to be the provider, employer, and investment of choice. Blanchard's team developed the acronym SCORES representing six elements needed to hit that target. These are shared information and open communication, compelling vision, ongoing learning, relentless focus on customer results, energizing systems and structures, shared power and high involvement. HPO leadership is collaborative and supports learning at every level for long term growth and discovery.

In Chapter 2 an inspiring and enduring vision that guides daily decisions to keep people aimed at the target include three elements: 1. having a significant purpose; 2. it paints a picture of the future; and 3. it includes clear values that guide daily behavior and decisions. Leadership becomes self-serving if the vision isn't shared. Visions are realized through multi-level collaborative creation, continual communication internally, and actions that prove the organization's leaders are committed to making it happen (how it is lived out).

The legendary service Blanchard lifts up in Chapter 3 consists of five elements that include Ideal service, Culture of service, Attentiveness, Responsiveness, and Empowerment (ICARE). Leaders turn into 'service champions' when they enable others to provide this kind of service which turns your customers into enthusiastic advocates of your company. Like athletes picturing themselves winning a championship, deciding what the ideal customer experience should be helps to develop a picture of how to serve customers, followed by humbly asking for feedback about how to improve. The service can't happen without employees who are empowered to respond to customer

needs (Fig 3.1), feel fulfilled in their work, given some autonomy and control of achieving the goal, and celebrating big and small achievements.

Chapter 4 is about creating an organizational climate that empowers employees by incorporating their knowledge and experience at work. The first key is sharing information since it builds trust and fosters organizational learning that can lead to new ways of doing business. Creating clear boundaries translates the vision into specific actions which helps goal setting so that people know where they can be autonomous and responsible. Third is replacing old hierarchy with highly skilled, interactive groups with self-managing skills that are self-directed.

Chapter 5's approach to leading (fig 5.1) includes four styles connected to the person's level of development that include directing an enthusiastic beginner, coaching the disillusioned learner, supporting the capable but cautious performer, and delegating the self-reliant achiever. Higher leaders must respect the fact that an individual may land in different places on the grid based on the project or task at hand. It would do the person and organization harm to think that we should treat everyone the same. To master situational leadership, one must master diagnosis, flexibility, and partnering for performance. Effective diagnosis involves paying attention to their levels of competence, motivation, and commitment to the task at hand. Although its human nature to have preferences, as employees develop, we must be willing to adjust leadership styles which means getting comfortable using all four styles. The best leaders do it with, and not to employees which means we must be of one accord regarding the leadership style and their level. Effective leadership is a journey that starts with mangers creating an empowered work force of self-led employees that can solve problems and make decisions on their own. This will happen through individual and corporate-sponsored mentoring, training, and support. The first skill of a self-leader is to have the courage to challenge assumed constraints. They are usually based on past experiences which hinder

present and future experience, performance, or opportunity. The second skill is being able to celebrate and identify one's five points power. Figure 6.1 on page 96 illustrates the five which include position power (the authority inherent in your title), personal power (coming from character or interpersonal skills), task power (connected to the ability to influence based on one's position in relation to the situation), relationship power (from friendships/associations/position), and knowledge (expertise or skill). When asking for feedback about how to develop each point, assertively saying 'I need' instead of 'I want' reduces the chance of feeling like a victim. The last skill is similar to Chapter 5 except now the impetus to collaborate for success is coming from the employee (figure 6.2). This means that an enthusiastic beginner needs directing, disillusioned learners require coaching, capable but cautious performers need support, while the self-reliant achiever flourishes with delegation.

The second piece of the empowerment puzzle covered in Chapter 7 reviews the three-part process to effectively partner for performance. The process starts with performance planning involving three steps previously discussed which are: 1) clear goal setting and agreeing; 2) diagnosing the specific development levels of each goal by honestly evaluating the direct report's competence and commitment; and 3) matching the right leadership style to the level. Once these are set, leaders must provide a comprehensive plan that covers work direction, performance expectations, and outlines accountability while affirming that the person can get it done! Gauging progress and tracking how effective your leadership and their performance is can only happen through active, involved coaching. Often the problem isn't the person with the problem but the organization's fault for not providing the right leadership. Scheduling routine evaluations or check-ins may be a short-term inconvenience but identifying the first signs of any loss of commitment is priceless. Higher level leaders do not place blame, check their ego, and own up to their part of

problem. These decreases mean that leaders must take a step back on the curve and move to a more supportive leadership style, not directing.

It's important to address a specific issue or behavior; think of a sniper rifle not a shotgun. The first step involves getting the relevant, un-biased facts about the situation and acknowledging anything the leader or organization may have done to play a role in the issue. Scheduling a meeting and stating its purpose clearly along with ground rules will ensure a productive meeting that doesn't get derailed. The meeting's goal should establish mutual understanding based on common ground to move forward. If commitment can't be made, then direct leadership is needed. But assuming that commitment to work together has been made, it's important to make sure that the issue is resolved from the corporate end as completely as possible. The last step is getting back to partnering for performance and figuring out where you both land on the situational leadership model. Last is crafting and efficient and effective performance review that doesn't have to be so formal. The author suggests a one-on-one, 15-30-minute review every two weeks (minimum) to build rapport. This will foster job satisfaction, healthy relationships, and stop issues from festering.

Chapter 8 lifts up four ways mangers can partner for performance by reviewing "One Minute" goals, praise, reprimands, and apology. First its crucial to have a limited number of SMART goals. Clear and specific goals provide purpose, challenges, give meaning and define accountability. Feedback on results is more valuable than money and harps on the last paragraph's 15-30 min bi-weekly reviews. It's in these meetings that the authors encourage us to praise from our gut and not intellectualize too much. Besides praising during that review, immediate and specific praise (even if it's not 100% perfect…praise progress!) in real time is priceless for employees which means leaders need to stay close and not stuck in their offices or even on another floor all the time. One-minute reprimands work for those who have the skills but seem to lack commitment.

Reprimands, like praise, should come ASAP, be specific (reprimand the BEHAVIOR not the person and make them aware of the negative impact), communicate your feelings and if necessary, take the blame for any unclear direction in order to get on the same page. The last and most important thing to do is to reaffirm the person. This way the individual leaves thinking about what they did wrong, not the leader. The one-minute apology has to start with being truthful about what happened and end with recognition of personal failure and reaffirming that the behavior is not who you want to be. Then the focus needs to be on making amends with the individual and committing to change so you don't repeat what happened.

Coaching as defined in Chapter 9 is the process leaders use to create an environment that results in a person's growth, action, and sustained improvement. When a capable and confident person's performance is dropping, accurate and objective feedback that highlights consequences from a performance coach is required. Developmental coaches use a supportive style to encourage and actively listen to ways they can increase opportunities in self-reliant achievers. When direct reports are 'killing it' mangers need to be comfortable having regular conversations about career coaching. These show direct reports that the company values them and wants them to grow. To ensure corporate training is applied, scheduling follow-up coaching conversations to proactively apply what was learned three times over the following eight weeks is recommended. Creating an internal coaching culture emphasizes leadership development, fosters a mentality of owning one's work, and guards against blaming or finger pointing.

When a PERFORM team (fig 10.1) has been assembled, it's important for them to agree on what the goal is, why it's important, and how they'll achieve it. Teams will know where they fall on the stages of development model (fig 10.3) by tracking productivity and morale. Combining the situational leadership model with the data from the stages of development (fig 10.5) will let leaders

know whether to be more directive or supportive. In this case, orientation needs directing, dissatisfaction needs coaching, integration needs support, production needs delegation, and termination needs support. Leaders have to share information and be in tune to the interpersonal dynamics by regularly scheduling touch-bases. A learning attitude, trust-based relationships, openness to difference, and an attitude of 'we' are key to high functioning teams.

In Chapter 11 the authors note how managing the organization's journey of change and not focusing exclusively on the goal is the key to effective organizational leadership. Using the stages of concern (fig 11.1) leaders can process the questions people have during transitions. For information concerns, using a focusing/directing style works. In personal and implementation concerns, a focusing *and* inspiring style is suggested. Impact, collaboration, and refinement concerns call for an inspiring leadership style. The more involvement, voice, and influence people have in transition, the less they'll feel controlled and embrace change.

Chapter 12 brilliantly presents a model (fig 12.1) and unpacks nine strategies for leading change. Since it's a fact that a perceived loss of control increases one's resistance to change (fig12.2), the first step is to expand the scope of involvement and influence. The next critical step is selecting and aligning the leadership team. The team must consist of sponsors (executives with the authority to support implementation and reinforce the change) and leaders who will oversee daily operations, and hold a variety of perspectives and roles that represent the entire organization so that even neutral voices will be heard.

The team MUST operate as one cohesive unit without subversive infighting or else employees will either loose trust or feel like they can outlast the proposed change. Third, and seemingly obvious but very important is rationally explaining why the change is necessary. Employees need to realize that the status quo is no longer an option. The fear of doing nothing has to

outweigh the fear of change and as long as the case is not compelling, people will either drag their feet or resist. MLK Jr's speech was so compelling because he had a dream; not a plan or strategy! In the same way we must present an inspiring vision of the future to captivate our audience and back it up with our actions in order to get other people involved as did Dr. King. Many successful people have noted how they learned more from failure than success, which is why strategy 5, experimenting to ensure alignment, has to be embraced. I would not drive a car that was never test-driven. Likewise, our change plans must be efficiently piloted and tested. This will reveal blind spots, recognize what not to do, and help measure and access progress. If we don't want rumors to become facts about the testing or progress of the change plan, then repetitive effective communication has to be a priority. People's reality vs expectation along the journey must be reconciled and addressed.

To guard against implementation and impact concerns, strategy 6 calls for leaders to enable and encourage people to embrace the change. This will require leaders to take on a directing and or coaching style to help close skill gaps or provide the tools and resources employees need to build competence and commitment through affirming success and coaching through mistakes. Change efforts can fail when leaders lose credibility, don't properly measure the progress or recognize changes people have made, and/or forego accountability. Leaders can fight these issues by pro-actively executing and endorsing (strategy 7) the change by consistently modeling the behavior they want in others. Furthermore, celebrating short term wins and creating conditions for accountability will keep people engaged, motivated, and enthusiastic along the journey.

For any change to last long-term, it must be embedded in the organization's culture. Choosing the most critical values form the vision and removing values that don't support the new changes are necessary. Finally, strategy 9 calls for the change options proposed by the leadership

team to be reviewed by a proper sample of those who will be impacted to satisfy information concerns.

In managing successful transformations, the 'right' culture will vary but must serve the entire organization, not just leaders. Culture combined with a compelling vision has the power to drive performance, employee passion, customer service, and consistent quality. Walking through the four phases of transformation: discovery, immersion, alignment, and refinement, requires senior leaders to demonstrate long term commitment, model the values they espouse, maintain accountability on all levels, communicate to all staff at every phase, and do too much at once.

The key to organizational vitality (fig. 14) are humble, 'called' leaders who S.E.R.V.E. They create and maintain an ethical and effective culture which enables the company to be the employer, provider, and investment of choice for employees and customers alike! They create HPOs where employees experience success and significance by being involved at all levels.

The first element of crafting a personal leadership POV is by reflecting on people who have modeled leadership well and how they influenced one's ideas about leadership. Combining the top three or four positive personal characteristics and successful ways a person interacts with people will help shape their life purpose. One's beliefs about leading (the essence of a POV) is found through a combination of three or four core values, their purpose, characteristics, role models, and life events. Transparency about what people can expect and how things will look under your leadership is critical. It's also imperative to give people a picture of the behavior you expect from them and that you'll walk the walk yourself.

The most relevant and applicable strategy in my current ministry context has to do with how epically I failed in situation team leadership (Chapter 10) when it came to the monthly worship night that the senior pastor and I had put together before the COVID-19 pandemic. Our church is very

traditional in its worship style (hymns, robes, organ). The pastor, myself, some youth, and more than a good number of members were very open for an alternative worship style. The goal was to cultivate an atmosphere that would allow for a freer flow of the Spirit that would influence the preaching and touch the hearts of our members and their friends to 'taste and see' what they were missing. The deacons and elders recognized that changing the worship format of Sunday mornings at this time was not an option, and so a separate monthly worship night was approved.

Even though we held 3 worship nights, they were all organizational failures for the following reasons which I pulled from pg. 167: 1. We didn't take enough time to clarify the purpose and goals; 2. There was a lack of accountability; 3. Lack of effective shared leadership; 4.Lack of focus on creativity and excellence; 5. Lack of support for team culture; 6. Inability to deal with conflict; and 7. Lack of training. I plan on sitting down with my senior pastor over the next few weeks and use the PERFORM acronym to get us on the right track for the fall:

P-Purpose. Our purpose is to plant seeds of revival at APC by introducing a more contemporary style of worship that will help to create an atmosphere that ushers in the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit. This will also be used as an evangelistic tool to invite anyone from the community or Armenians from other church traditions to worship together.

E-Empowerment. According to Blanchard's definition we were empowered, thank God!

R-Relationships and Communication. This is where I dropped the ball. Three of the members from the youth group never felt connected to the senior pastor or the other older band members, and they would communicate with me via text and never reply to emails. I served as a middleman on the same team which bred animosity when their song selections were not chosen. Indeed, we need to be better about ACTIVE LISTENING on the part of my pastor and the girls as well as to recognize the common good not individual agendas to find common ground.

F-Flexibility. Among the band members (most in their mid-late 40s) flexibility was there but again the girls were not flexible when it came to singing songs they didn't like. This caused an unspoken rigidity between them and the senior pastor who had the final say in songs. This goes back to helping them see that the goal is bigger than their preferences.

O-Optimal productivity. The commitment level from the band was not equal. The biggest gap was with the girls who would barely ever show up to practice (some due to driving restrictions and school). The standards were also not equal partly because we didn't have any other options for vocals. Moving forward we will have proper auditions and create a TEAM CHARTER so that everyone is on the same page and equally committed to making the experience an excellent one.

R-Recognition and Appreciation. Members were vocally thankful and appreciated our efforts but internally the girls didn't feel appreciated or valued. There was very little rapport between the team because we had not taken enough time to build an interpersonal team dynamic.

M-Morale. I felt like the morale was only superficial because of the 'Christian' environment. Again, the gap in participation, perceived interest, and ineffective leadership from myself and the senior pastor was evident.

I'm going to use the Situational Leadership Chart and cross reference the Team Development Stages on page 183 with my senior pastor to diagnose exactly where we land by measuring the productivity and morale, but only AFTER we have a team assembled that has agreed to a CHARTER so that we're all clear about the vision and purpose of holding these worship nights.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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