

## Strategic Leadership

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### Abstract

*Leadership as a concept has been very useful in the last decades, but when it comes to defining and especially to applying strategic leadership theories into the day-to-day life of organizations, things become much more complicated. It is imperative that managers select their basic theoretical need in order to assess one organizations leadership. The following article aims to prove that it is necessary to choose more than one theoretical instrument before applying them into a specific plan, which combines more than one theoretical approach for evaluating and improving strategic leadership into an organization.*

**Key words:** leader, leadership, organization, ability.

**J.E.L. Classification:** M10, M12, M21, L26

### 1. Introduction

As proven many times in theory leaders are different than managers. However, it is those who choose to take what's best and most importantly, what's efficient, from each one and combine it into on individuals character, that can end up being true and appreciated leaders. Leadership is therefore a complex process of influencing others with the purpose of achieving entity goals, or group goals through change. The main question that needs to be addresses is both *what/how do we want to influence?*

### 2. Knowledge assessment regarding strategic leadership

People have different behaviors on a daily basis. Some of them are daring, some of them shy, some of them noisy, quiet, some warm, some cold, some aggressive, some passive, hardworking or lazy. These behaviors are determined by the individual **traits** of a person.

The trait is the most important element or distinctive quality of a person, an essential aspect of the character of someone's personality. (Băileşteanu, 2008)

**The personality** is given by a combination of traits which characterizes the individual behavior. It's important to observe and understand the personality of an individual, because this is the thing that determines its behavior, perceptions and his/hers attitude. Knowing the aspects linked to the personality helps us explain but also to predict the behavior of an individual and also the efficiency obtained at the working place. (Țuțurea et al, 2010)

The personality is determined by genetic factors and also environmental ones. The genes and also family, friends, and working places influence personality traits. There are many methods of classifications of personalities.

The model of 5 traits is the widest accepted model because of its basis in research. Although it was initially advanced by Ernest Tupes and Raymond Christal in 1961, and then advanced by J.M. Digman, it was Lewis Goldberg who extended this model into organizational analysis. With the help of the 5 main personality traits one can determine, with a relatively high precision, the 5

personality traits that encompass one or more traits that can describe any given person. This model fits traits into the following 5 different categories: **1) dominance and extraversion; 2) responsibility (conscientiousness); 3) neuroticism (sensitivity); 4) openness (to change); 5) agreeability.**

1. The first category has two components of dominance and extraversion. The people who own this trait of dominance desire to assure him/her self-tasks and to move forward through competition and influence, as leaders. Those people that have within a weak presence of this trait mostly want to be supporters (contributors) and do not to compete or influence others.

Extraversion is one of the poles of a bipolar dimension, the other one being introversion. In the Jungian psychology, the way of thought of extroverts is that they are oriented toward the outside world, they are sociable, have many friends, they like to meet new people and they flourish in contact with them, they like confrontation and competition, while the introverts are shy, silent, cautious and reserved.

2. Another personality trait is **responsibility**. This trait includes those features related to task completion and the person is a continuum between being responsible – trust worthy – and irresponsible – who is not trust worthy. High responsibility presumes credibility, the ability to self-organize and conscientiousness. The people with this trait are hardworking, they put a lot of effort into achieving their objectives and obtaining high performance, often putting in a lot of overtime into their work. (Mardar, 2013).

3. The trait of **neuroticism** includes features to emotional stability, which is a continuum between the existence of stability and instability emotional wise. The stable ones have good self-control, they are calm, relaxed, sure of themselves, good under pressure, positive, appreciating and commending others for their work. The unstable ones control themselves less, are more anxious, angry, uncertain, pessimistic, weak under pressure, usually criticizing others.

4. The fourth trait is the **openness to change**. This includes sub-traits pertaining to the desire to change and do/create new things or have new experiences. People with high openness to change seek to change or do new things while the people at the opposite pole are very conservative, comfortable, and avoid change.

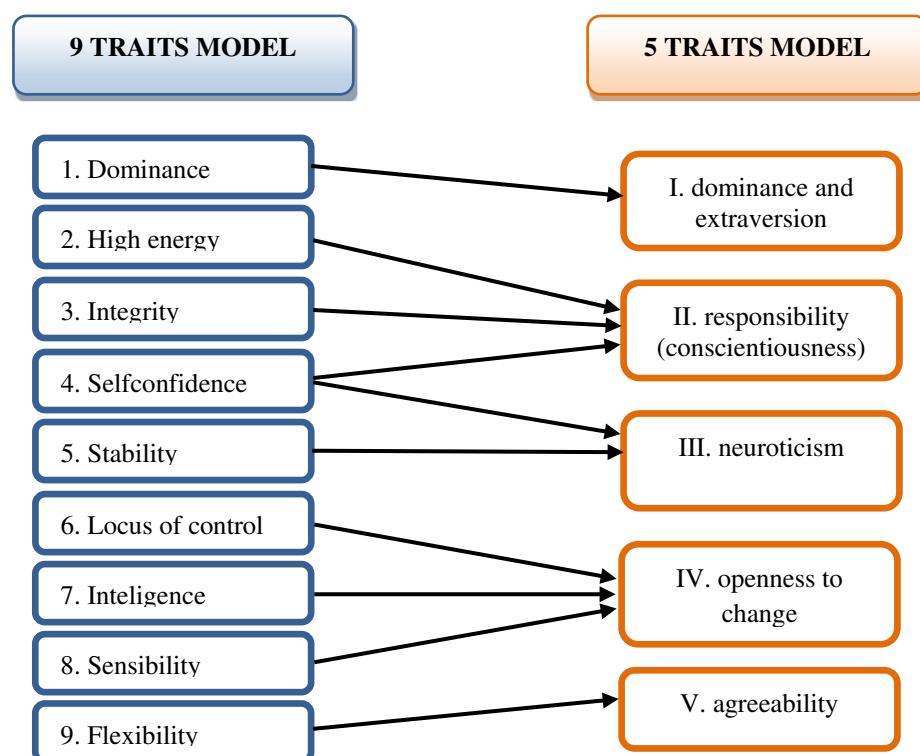
5. The fifth trait is **agreeability**. Unlike the trait of dominance, which entails being at the forefront of others, this trait is concerned more with having a good relationship with others and being more likeable. A person more is agreeable when they are warm, friendly, sociable, and show a lot of compassion and empathy. A person is non-agreeable when they are cold, unfriendly, unsociable and uncompassionate. High agreeability presumes consuming a lot of time spent with people but also the presence of many friends in one's life.

Charles Garcia ties the motivation to the leadership, in his book "Leadership Lessons of the White House Fellows", based on assessing a group of 600 remarkable leaders from all of the American society. He highlights that to the employees the most important thing is to have powerful leaders that motivates them into giving their best. He offers 8 methods by which the leaders could motivate their employees (Garcia, 2011):

- the leader must bring passion and positive energy in the environment in which he is active, on a daily basis;
- the people are the "engine of success", so to be a good leader one must concentrate upon the people in his/hers subordination;
- the leader must have always integrity and must act accordingly;
- leadership influences others and it cannot be achieved without an efficient communication;
- The most efficient leaders are those who invest time in listening not only to the things that a team is communicating, but also to the hidden meaning of those sayings;
- The leader solves the problems;
- The leader LEADS with experience and competence, not by titles and position.

There is also a "9 traits model" that define great leadership designed to achieve high level of performance (Mardar, 2013). They can be easily explained by correlating them with the 5 traits model explained above:

Figure no. 1. Traits model



Source (Tutunea, 2010, 29)

Strategic leadership, as a process, is therefore realized by strategic leaders. From this last category, it is considered that strategic leaders can be selected from the following types of managers: general managers, front line managers, board members, division managers etc. Strategic leadership involves conceiving and implementing successful strategies. (Stan, 2013).

Strategic management is a leading, comprehensive, continuously, process, which helps training and implementing effective strategies which ensure agreement between the organization and its environment, in order to achieve strategic objectives. (Ionescu et al, 2011).

Strategic efficient actions are the essential existential conditions in developing and obtaining competitive advantages. Also, strategic leadership involves using activities of general interest to help the growth of human interest when it comes to helping an organization face the challenges that are constantly rising. (Țuțunea et al, 2010).

A manager has to poses four main abilities in order to be able to apply efficient leadership strategies:

- intellect;
- abilities of self-evaluate;
- abilities of supervising and control;
- abilities of communicating;

There are two different leadership strategies when it comes to strategic leadership: task-oriented (T) or people-oriented (P) (Mardar, 2013).

Some (Warren & Bennis, 2000) state that strategic leadership has the following key elements:

- vision (aplied in a medium-long term plan)
- social arhitecture (which include elements that are defining, such as: the origin of the organization, the fundamental operating principles, the nature of his work, information management, power distribution and decision making abilities, impact and statute)
- the promotion of trust inside the organization
- the promotion of inovation and creativity and social development.
- There are also six ways in which strategic leadership can be translated:

- developing human capital – refers to the knowledge, professional abilities, level of specialization and qualifying , professional expertise of the labor force from an organization. Employees are viewed as a capital resource, with them being a major resource in obtaining competitive advantages.
- establishing a strategic direction– it refers to establishing strategic intentions and missions, long term visions (5 to 10 years). In establishing a strategic direction there need to be taken into consideration the strengths of a company. These strengths can make up as important elements of support into achieving major changes
- keeping and utilizing high standard performances - as strategic leaders, managers need to take decisions that help develop an organization, maintaining and enforcing high performances within the organization.
- developing an efficient organizational culture – organizational culture refers to a set of complex ideologies, myths, slogans, symbols and values within an organization, which influence the leadership and help regulate and control employer behavior. Also, an organizational culture that promotes initiative spirit must also promote risk taking, and rewards must take into consideration long term performances as being the opposite as short term performances. Reward systems are also decisive in ensuring the development and maintaining an organizational culture oriented in ensuring a high initiative spirit and ability of achieving strategic goals.
- requirements of an ethical behavior – strategic leaders are well known for insuring an ethical behavior within the organization. One way of promoting this kind of practice is to introduce ethics into the organizational culture of the organization, which then will guide the actions of employees inside and outside the organization, with the help of sanctions if necessary.
- existence of a strategic control system – within an organization there can be used, mainly, two control systems: financial and strategic control. In some situations, the two control systems are opposable, with strategic leadership trying to ensure a balance between strategic control and financial control.

### 3. Conceiving a strategic leadership plan

Before speaking of a strategic leadership plan or of evaluation of any of its results, there must first be conceived a diagnosis stage, a certain evaluation of the current state in which leadership is in an organization, because we do not refer to a completely new notion, thus a strategy of leadership could be set up from the following phases of action:

**A. Assessment of the current state of leadership in the organization**, in which the targeted manager must have his profile drawn based on his personality but even on the basis of his duties which it entails:

A1. Individual assessment based on the 5 traits model;

A2. Individual assessment based on the 9 traits of efficient managers;

A3. Attribution assessment of the manager, from the perspective of the features that their fulfillment implies;

Once established the data which entails the individual concerned and its attributions, the second part of the leadership strategy would suppose recognition for the organization and ways of manifestation of leadership within (as previously described).

**B. Identifying ways of showing strategic leadership across the organization**

The third stage of strategy would consist in the establishment of key elements which are not found in the organizational leadership

**C. Identifying key elements that weren't found in the organizational leadership**

C1. In terms of the manifestation of strategic leadership among the organization

C2. Key elements

**D. Making action proposals regarding future** directions to be followed from the strategic leadership point of view, setting up a temporal limit at which they will be evaluated to which extent they have been achieved.

**E. Their assessment at a later date.**

#### 4. Conclusion

Managerial and leadership types determine the performance of individuals. Therefore any organization needs to adopt a certain strategy to assess what already has been done, identify both problems and solutions and make action proposals. It is impetuous that leaders sometimes have psychological approaches towards improving their subordinates, as it has been proven that subordinates value their leader above anything else.

The 5 traits model has therefore a decisive role into assessing each individual and knowing how to motivate him towards the desired direction.

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