

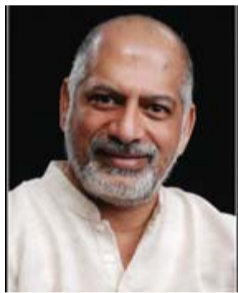
THE NEW LEADER AN EMERGING BUTTERFLY

T.T. SRINATH

Abstract

Modern day organizations are complex entities that are ever evolving. Therefore, managing them successfully calls for 'extraordinary ingenuity' and requires investment of immense 'human energy'. In such a system, leaders play a critical role and exercise great influence on the organization's environment. This article presents a leadership framework and explains the key behaviors that efficient leaders already do or need to exhibit.

About the Author



T.T. Srinath Ph.D., is a sensitivity trainer who uses 'T' Group processes. He has undergone intensive Gestalt Therapy Training supervised by Steve Vinay Gunther, Director, The Northern Rivers Gestalt Institute, Lismore, Australia. He is a certificate holder in 'Playback Theatre' from Action Methods, England, accredited school of Playback Theatre. He has been trained by Francis Batten and Ron Wiener, both senior trainers with the British Psychodrama Association, in Sociodrama and Action Methods. He has trained with Jenny Biancardi and John Casson, both of The Northern School of Psychodrama, Glasgow, UK, in Psychodrama. He is an alumnus of XLRI one of India's foremost school of management and has spent 27 years as an entrepreneur and over 16 years as a programme facilitator.

As winds of change sweep the world, leadership must awake and rise. The clarion call is to take charge.

Organizations today can be defined as a 'complex, adaptive, symbiotic systems' (Olson, 2001). Their functioning, therefore, requires 'self-organizing.' A complex adaptive system renders visible, legitimate and significantly a great deal more live human behaviour than old bureaucratic structures allowed. It is an entity that is constantly changing. It evolves, adapts, develops and exhibits extraordinary ingenuity in the process. All kinds of forms of human energy that are invisible and often taboo in older structures present themselves and are available for continued engagement.

Given this truth, three principles need to be recognized:

1. Order is emergent as opposed to predetermined
2. The system's history is irreversible
3. The system's future is often unpredictable.

Leaders in such a self-organizing system play three distinct roles:

1. They set the container
2. Focus on significant differences
3. Foster transforming exchanges.

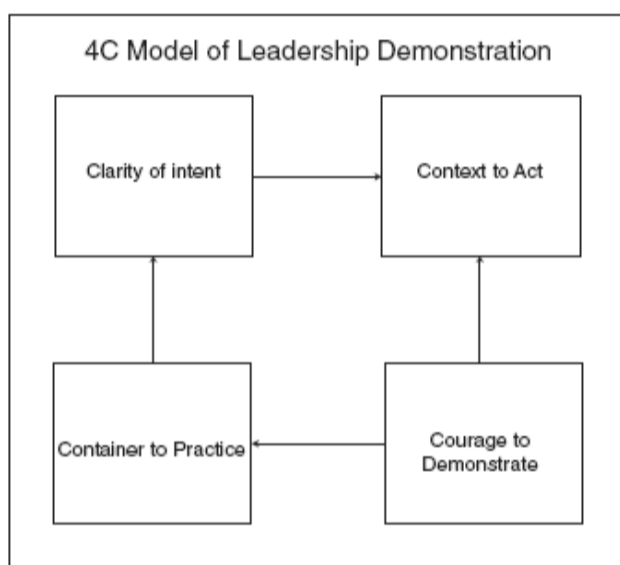
Setting the container means influencing the environment that shapes the behaviour of a system. Leaders must set general requirements for the outcome, but

decisions on how to proceed are left to the players of the organization. Control is distributed, yet leaders generate a sense of urgency. They stretch boundaries; they also shrink boundaries and finally decide on what business we are in.

When *focusing on differences* they explore contradictions, accept contention and adversity, raise tough questions, encourage workforce diversity and understand significant differences in the external environment.

In *fostering transformational exchanges* they encourage feedback, reconfigure (loosen or tighten) networks and encourage learning.

A model of leadership demonstration presents itself for consideration:



Intention has been conceptualized as being a function of beliefs that provide a link between thought and subsequent behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Bird's (1988) model of entrepreneurial intentionality illustrates intention as a linear process moving from beliefs, to attitudes to intention to behaviour. The relationship between intention and behaviour is also influenced by such factors as skill, ability and will-power. The free disposition to play a leadership role is impacted by contextual factors. It is a combination of these factors, affected, as

they are by the internal dialogue that encourages an understanding of the leadership role. Intention thus reflects the leader's willingness to pursue a given behaviour. Significantly, when Walt Disney made vocal his intent to provide his clients with a 'Fun experience', he programmed himself to demonstrate such behaviour. The display of intent is governed by the leader's personal history, abilities, stored information, belief and self-dialogue.

Thus the leader in response to his/her intent establishes the context within which his/her people can act. This can be explained through the examples of luminaries such as Azim Premji who moved from vegetable oil making to Information Technology, setting clearly the context for his people to act. When Dhirubhai Ambani declared to the world that he wanted a telephone call to be cheaper than a post-card, he set the context for a new business. Therefore a leader sets the context in which his/her followers can act.

Mere context setting does not allow leadership demonstration. This is followed by the leader's courage to demonstrate risk taking, seizing opportunities and showing initiative. Leaders do this in many ways. Some are:

1. Through structuring resources
2. Maintaining flexible focus
3. Develop temporal agility
4. Behavioural flexibility
5. Influence others to commit to resources.

a. Through structuring resources : This is linking existing resources such as money, invention and hard work to future outcomes. The leader exercises choice in directing the organization's efforts. Structuring resources is also affected by timing of events and this timetable involves expectations,

business plans and motivations of the leader.

b. Maintaining flexible focus : Flexibility of focus and clarity of vision helps the leader assume responsibility for the details of daily operation as well as the big picture. The ability to move between details and vision is like a strategic zoom lens, remaining focused by changing the frame of reference.

c. Develop temporal agility : The ability to comfortably move between multiple future time horizons. Long-run thinking is important to forming relationships with others and to strategically position the firm. Agility requires a cognitive reframing of expectations when solving problems.

d. Behavioural flexibility : Developing behavioural flexibility along with the shifting frames of reference requires the leader to be able to shift from function to function and from role to role. Leaders who remain in control of their ventures as they grow, mature, and change go through significant role transitions. Behavioral flexibility and willingness to learn characterize those leaders whose firms are likely to remain and grow.

e. Influence others to commit resources : Leaders must exercise substantial influence over others to realize their intentions. Leaders must marshal facts, analyze data in support of their efforts and use persuasion to influence others. Successful leaders draw on non-traditional emotional resources to influence the behaviour of others.

Leaders must make use of wide range of other's resources and talents to develop exchange-oriented relationships both inside and outside the organization. Inside the organization growth motivated leaders build a team with necessary skills.

Outside the organization they develop and use a network of associations. The use of experience, observation, dialogue, discussion and feedback are methods that can help a leader in examining structuring resources, maintaining flexible focus on business issues, developing temporal agility, developing behavioural agility and influencing others to commit resources.

Clarity of intent, context to act, courage to demonstrate cannot happen without boundary definition. Thus setting the boundary or the container becomes paramount. The recent example of 'Aravind Eye Care System', India, where Dr.G.Venkataswamy established unequivocally, that he wanted to eradicate blindness, set the boundary for every ophthalmologist who joined the hospital, to operate within. It was not a hospital for general surgery but for eye care.

While leadership can be a lonely journey the challenge is for leadership to foster the belief, particularly at a time like this that the people we have are the best. Seeding excitement, commitment, ownership and motivation are required to urge the business forward without compromise or conflict.

If thoughts such as these are available to a leader's instinct he/she must, given his/her clarity of intent, operate through five simple principles (Cooperrider, DL 1990):

- 1. The constructive principle** : recognise that all reality is co-created.
- 2. The poetic principle** : recognise that each person interprets reality one's own way and that must be factored in.
- 3. The anticipatory principle** : recognise what is going right than what is going wrong.
- 4. The simultaneity principle** : recognise that all processes happen concurrently.

5. The heliotropic principle : recognise that all human endeavours are towards growth.

These five principles coupled with clarity of intent, context to act, courage to demonstrate and container to practice when recognized, act as the new leader's dictate; the philosophy to embrace then is:

1. Emphasize collaboration and participation of all voices in the system; generating inclusion
2. Approach the whole process as a journey

3. The organization is learning and is therefore in infancy, and needs constant nourishment

4. Core values do not alter with time

5. Build on life-giving forces by remembering moments when the system has performed optimally in human, economic and organizational terms.

If the model that has been presented and the approach resonate with you 'intelligent reader', please commence a dialogue for health restoration in your role as leader.

Reference

- Bird B. (1988), 'Implementing Entrepreneurial Ideas: The case for intention' *Academy of Management Review*, Vol.13, No.3, pp.442 - 453.
- 1. Cooperrider, DL (1990), 'Positive Image, Positive Action: The affirmative basis of organizing', in S.Srivastva & DL Cooperrider [Eds], 'Appreciative management and leadership', San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Fishbein M. and Ajzen I. (1975), 'Belief, attitude, intention and behaviour: An introduction to theory and research', Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Olson, Edwin.E and Eoyang Glenda H (2001), 'Facilitating organizational change: lessons from complexity science', Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, San Francisco, CA.

April | 2009 NHRD Network Journal 135