TOWARD A UNIFIED THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

Robert Grandford Wright

Working Paper No 104

UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA
Faculdade de Economia
Travessa Estevão Pinto
1000 LISBOA

Dezembro, 1988
TOWARD A UNITED

THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

This white paper was written at our request and in preparation
for Professor Wright's optional MBA seminar on Leadership:
Entrepreneurship and Productivity. It represents the opening
passages of a book-length essay being developed on the subject
by the contributor.

Robert Grandford Wright
Visiting University Chair Professor
Catedrático
Faculdade de Economia
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

November, 1988
Toward a Unified
Theory of Leadership

The chapter here presented is the opening essay of a book planned to include the topics that follow:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. The Powerful Human Organization
II. Basic Nature of Role Behavior
   APPENDIX on Self-Concepts
III. Attributes of a Respected Leader
IV. Models for Leaders
V. Hierarchy of Leadership Strategies
VI. Uncontrollable General Trends
   External Forces
   Operating Unit Social Topology
   Hierarchy of Human Motivations
VII. Exceptions to General Trends -
     The Practicum of Case Analyses
VIII. Self-Concept Debriefing

EPILOGUE
The Powerful Human Organization

Curious thing about organizations of people. Even though two or more are supposed to function equally well, that’s not the way they work. Some units, after they are formed and function develop an immense power to do well whatever they set forth to do, others are average, while other units are flat-out inferior (and those inferior ones continue to plod along wasting a society’s resources ad-infinitum nauseam if they are being compared to or competing against other weak ones -- or of course slugging along alone as a monopoly.) Even when everything imaginably manageable is designed to produce homogeneity of function and output -- structure, systems, processes, rules, and all -- neither happen. Instead, indeed, organizations acquire tribal-like idiosyncrasies that distort functional likeness: Organizations generate different rules of power to drive them toward their common purpose so that output differs.

To see clearly this curiosity, picture yourself on a platform raising up above a parade field. Imagine further that an infantry company is marshalled on the horizontal plane of that field in full battle dress and divided into three sub-units called Platoons. You are initially struck by the sameness of the three units functionally. Each has been designed with the same complement of people, with like composites of training and experience, with platoon leaders and squad leaders, the same technology, same specialization or division of labor, and to vex you into confusing form with substance further, all participants are dressed alike -- uniformly, if you will. (If you merely add, a company commander and picture the formation
tilted up to a vertical plane from its horizontal one, you now have a classical organization chart.) You assess initially that if, say, Able Platoon is to Baker Platoon as Baker Platoon is to Charlie Platoon, thus then that either Able, Baker, or Charlie Platoons can function so as to do the same job.

But that assessment is made without enlightening insights from the overall company commander. Tell me about the units under your command, you ask. Able Platoon, he responds, generally meets mission requirements with an acceptable level of losses, both equipment and people. The leader of the company is responding clearly that Able is an average unit. How about Baker, you urge? Here, the Company head can scarcely hide the wince of displeasure that his expression only fleetingly reveals. We have problems with Baker Platoon, he confides, and we're not dealing here with random malfunctions but rather with repeating problems of a systemic or organic nature. (Here, the officer divulges to you the wise side from his years of command -- the ability to incisively separate isolated aberrations from repetitious patterns.) Baker Platoon has an on-going history of missing requirements in the field. And when its mission is accomplished, losses of people and equipment are unacceptably high. We have a lot to do to bring that unit up to minimal essentials, he concludes.

How does Charlie Platoon perform, you ask finally. Charlie Platoon is perhaps the most impressive unit I have ever had the pleasure to command, he responds with a joyful twinkle of authorship in his eye. It is unheard of for Charlie Platoon to miss its mission requirements and in attaining its military objective the unit does so with only a minimum loss of people or equipment. The Commander obviously is sharing with you his understandable
happiness with having a superior organization within the scope of
his command.

Contemplate in passing: What type of soldiers try to get into
Charlie Platoon? And what type of people try to get the hell out?

Turn your thoughts now to another type of organization.
Consider a favored or even favorite athletic team to you -- any team
sport -- soccer, baseball, football, basketball, whatever. And, you
pick the team, whether it is amateur or professional, university or
other. Do you have the team in mind? Notice something here analogous
to the earlier military example. Season after season certain teams
are prime contenders for regional or national honors, while others
reside in the mediocre zone, with still others sharing the cellar as
losers. Here we are referring to weakness in a steady state of
equilibrium as a weak entity, where only some major change (usually
the coaching staff) is sufficiently emphatic to nudge the mal-performer
to a better place.

So, it is also with business organizations. At GTE we had some
33 operating districts in California, all designed to achieve the same
goals with resources, systems, processes, people and all poised to
pounce at the corporate bogey. Yet some always made it, some never
made it, and others never reached those extremes. Look around you.
There are some businesses that are imminently eminent, others are OK,
and some should have been pensioned-off and sent to Florida to retire,
as John W. Gardner observed.

Element of a Superior Human Organization

To develop a model of a truly superior human organization, one
that produces in an exemplary way whatever it sets forth to produce - a
drama, a symphony, a game, medical care, a rock concert, or a product
or service - one asks one's experts. The "experts" used here were
successful, seasoned managers from countless enterprises in a large
number of management development seminars held across the nation.

Where does it all begin, this "superior organization"? The
query inescapably swings to Leadership. It seems axiomatic that
the process must begin with a leader. But the search must continue
to explore, "which leader?" Does it have to be the leader of the
overall, supra organization? Some conclude yes, some no, some mute.

We can conclude that support of superior performance from the top is
immensely helpful, but is it indispensable? It becomes clear finally
that superior performance can emerge at any level, in any functional
specialty. It is thus the leader over the supra or sub-unit where
the process of necessity begins. We are now developing the model, or
"Elements of a Superior Human Organizational Unit." And it is the
leader of that unit who is the catalyst.

It is well to remind ourselves here of the level of performance
of the line infantry company used earlier as an example. What was
its performance as a unit? Momentary reflection reveals that it was
an average organization, algebraically, with Able Platoon average,
Baker weak and Charlie superior. Hence, when one looks for causes
of excellent performance in otherwise homogeneous units, one looks
to the critical differentiating variable of leadership. Here, we
look to the platoon leader of Charlie.

This recognition of the fourth of performance as residing with
the leader at the operational level can be invaluable; it affixes
accountability. Some leaders would like to languish in a state of
victimized non-control.
There are some who would like to believe that their unit is weak necessarily because it is a part of a weak supra, or overall organization. Not true. Though as stated, support for superior performance is most helpful if it permeates throughout the enterprise, it can pop-up with the right sort of leader in oft-times the most unlikely of sub-units. For instance, the most rotten of firms may have a mailroom operation that is impeccable. So this acknowledgement of where accountability resides, in a word, pinpointa the initial source of excellence -- or its opposite. It convincingly disqualifies victimization as the reason for weak performance.

So it begins. We now search for elements that are successively caused by the unit's leader. His or her initial responsibilities to the unit and its people come quickly to the minds of seasoned organizational veterans. The first condition that the leader must derive and gain acceptance to is the mission, the goal or goals, Common Purpose.

Indeed, common purpose is the initial rallying point and the rationale for the design of organizations for all human endeavor. The mere suggestion of some sort of commonality is quite enough for we naturally social creatures to coalesce and structure. With the example of an athletic team mentioned earlier losing sight of the goal required to win is nearly unheard of. With the example of the military infantry company, there is generally a consensus of views on the mission required to win a battle. But alas in business firms, there is often confusion among employers not only where the enterprise is headed, but also in what business they're actually involved. This is especially true when a company pursues a whole hierarchy of pronounced to subtle goals, rather than the straight forward single-minded simplicity of scoring in a game or of winning a skirmish or
In another important way, acceptance of the common purpose differs in utilitarian or economic units from the emotional appeals of goals embraced by charitable, cultural, religious or philanthropic enterprises. With those institutional purposes that are charged with intrinsic psychological persuasions, a goal can easily be intimately endorsed by all participants. For instance, an institute's goal to help blind people learn through audio recordings of technical material may be sweepingly adopted by all members, professionals and volunteers. Yet a business venture of like size designed to make and sell soap likely lacks such appeals to bring on spontaneous and pronounced bonding. In such cases, employees may elect to count themselves as contributors for a plethora of good reasons, none of which address squarely the purpose of making and selling soap. Some work solely to make money, others work for status, still others like to be with others working, some produce to be known as producers and a few actually may be enamoured with making and selling soap. It makes little difference. If in fulfilling each of the employee's individual common purposes the common purpose of the firm is reached well, the underlying motives for the workers' support is of little concern to leaders, but rather of intrigue to psychologists and philosophers.

But a leader with a goal, or common purpose is scarcely specific enough to produce chordal orchestration with people. How does a member of the unit know precisely what she or he is expected to do? Common purpose of the overall organization provides only imprecise, general direction. Yet, workers have a right to know what their leader expects of them, i.e. the institutionalized demands to which they must respond. This prescription fulfills a worker's right: The right to know what the boss expects of them.
So, a clarity of expectations is needed. It is usually communication, informally, by the leader letting his or her desires known by subordinates, or formally, with sub-goals, job descriptions, policies, procedures, methods, rules and so on. Yet this element - clear expectations - requires further definition if the leader's unit is to reach the goal of superior performance. What is the level of expectation required to reach superior performance? Obviously superior -- at least, high -- expectations of each participant is essential. If average, even less, is expected by the leader, workers will probably respond in kind. Herein resides a major barrier to building superior organizational units -- at the bottom or at the top. Some people in positions of leadership fail to believe in the potential of people. They expect and accept only ho-hum performance from others (and themselves) and that's exactly what they get. If we are to expect superior performance from our organizations we must first have leaders who expect nothing less from individual performers. Hence the fully stated element of a superior organization is **High, Clear Expectations**.

**The Human Factor** - The stage has been laid out well: Now the leader plays casting director by adding life to the structure of the drama to unfold. The attributes of the players in this to be superior production deserve careful attention by the leader.

First, our experts concern themselves with the skills required by the role players to fulfill each part. The number of parts are dictated by the fineness of the division of labor, the narrowness of specialization. Authorities readily acknowledge the requirement for people able -- with skills, knowledge, dexterity, strength, taste, judgement, or whatever -- to meet the challenge of thoroughly
can e'rin, pr'ofoundly, to be more humanitarian. Hence in practicing
instructor than I am. Third, they make decisions. And fourth, they
truly own solutions. Second, they are less dependent on others,
in all that follows: First, third, they own communication language for
Manasses wrote that 'communicating' competence can mean all.

As well as to do.

packed with capacity for talk of many and many the point to think
depends on the fact that first and first, that the conclusion to
the introduction will be of having "non" people, if the fact
her communication must men and women in meaningful non-communication

fully implementing.

The success on the presentation of that w-mapping language may be
the inspiration won’t be shared and by the invention, self-stimulation,
that part-programming the reproduction to do a presentation for. It must therefore
be realized, the how may have far to go, and the many who.
Go, so, how a darkly noun would intend, which does of fact
These power because they manipulate, mildly ass emotional than the other.

Here it is well to remind that a number of noncompliant people do

and know that they did good -- kineivation.

"- '-time -- phallicinity

also that on. And, do you want to mention to be good
also the 'present' context, the "primary", conclusion, why, the
also the 'secondary' context, context, and primary, they must
have participated in the development of meaning of an 'Teaching\' Context',
conclusion lines of considering of meaning of an 'Teaching\' Context',

fully implementing that the non-compliance process that one
most parts in the organization confident people play them more skillfully, although they are often more tedious to lead.

The leader who needs self-confident people has to re-evaluate the meaning of the practice of management by exception. The "exception principle," so-called, merely means that only exceptional performance -- different because it is so high or so low -- when compared to expected output warrants attention. But too frequently the idea has become one of managing only by negative exception, i.e. only trouble spots or "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality. Well, leading people to excellence -- or better said, nurturing the healthful culture wherein people's best performance is supported -- requires leaders who continuously acknowledge positive events, as well. For instance, certain people in positions of leadership state that they actively support building subordinates' confidence in their contribution. Yet when you listen to their employees' side by asking, "When did you hear last from the boss?" they reflect and respond, "Not for some time now, so I guess everything's going OK."

When does the worker hear from the boss, one concludes? When things are going badly. Management by negative exception. If leaders are to give organizational excellence more than popular lip-service, they will have to acknowledge good news with the same exuberance they have historically paid to bad news. At least, keep management by exception in balance. Indeed proponents of behavior modification processes opt to keep the exception principle in imbalance on the positive side. That is, manage what you want, not what you don't want.

The formal structure is now in place with the right sort of people lead by the appropriate sort of leader giving a clear idea to
workers of the high performance expected of them to coherently reach the unit goal. The unit awaits its steady structural state an order to function dynamically.

At this point in the organization's design, it is a static set of expectations and people prepared to perform to meet those expectations -- the formation of soldiers awaiting the command, the athletic team at attention to the pre-game playing of the national anthem, the factory workers at their positions a moment before the whistle announcing the shift's beginning is sounded. It is the need of the unit for sound interaction, or dynamism, that causes successful leaders to view sound interpersonal relationships as the next step to create a powerful organizational unit.

Human Interactions - If an organization is expected to produce more than the sum of its parts, or resources -- and good ones do -- then productive interactions are the keys to success. These socio-psychological linkages provide the essential sense to structure.

Veteran managers are thus quick to recognize the need for close cooperation. They call the desired element, Teamwork. Though an indispensable ingredient to superb performance, our experts often miss some subtle meanings to providing this element.

First, though a number of managers who hold the contention firmly that team play or teamwork is required also place the workers (players) in competitive, not cooperative, tension with each other. Rather than cohesive bonding, they create isolation and antagonism. And although there are advantages and disadvantages to both cooperation and competition in human groups, if teamwork is critical it should not be preempted. Some units at work flat-out create alienation as a necessary byproduct of the win/lose type of game. Although other
teams prepare for action by challenging each other, as in mock battles and inter-team skirmishes, re-established teamwork is demanded when the high performance of conflict and competition are demanded. Thus, if say a football team tolerated the degree of in-fighting on game day that certain business units display, the intercepton by a defensive back of an errant pass would be cut down by a tackle from another D-back on the same team. Ludicrous! If teamwork is needed, and that's what we are told, the players at work will be rewarded and controlled to cooperate, not to combat.

Second, seasoned veterans also tend to view the element of teamwork as an effect of something, rather than as having been caused by related conditions. They seem to believe also that people can be ordered to relate closely in teamwork, which seems somewhat suspect since although some people bond tightly with others, they do so highly discriminately. They are selective in their choice of comrades, and the "choice" is made for key reasons. Thus we ask our experts, "Who are those special people with whom we bond as team members?"

Our seasoned management experts are also convinced that some high order of the willingness and ability of open communication is also indispensable; Openness between all members of the unit and their leader. Surely if the organization is to flourish only by a team spirit and team-member involvement, then communications would be spontaneous, multi-directional, ubiquitous. Yet that desirable flow of influence often fails. In some organizations, indeed, rather than an openness, a "closedness" seems to exist, wherein people seem somehow secretive. Perhaps this reluctance to communicate is sensible in a competitive, not a cooperative or team-oriented section. Why tell your competition one's trade secrets, i.e. does
to the unit they have selected to serve.

Sound interactions begin with people who are dedicated, and loyal to each other in the unit, including the leader. It is a matter of being concerned with one's own contribution as well as others within the unit and the overall unit. With this sense of positive identification by participants with each other and the unit's progress, performance is self-imposed primarily, peer-imposed secondarily, and leader-imposed only tertiarily. This identity, concern, dedication, commitment, and whatever, we shall attribute to the invaluable basic feelings of Mutual Caring.

The idea of caring among members can help to bring about the teamwork and openness seen as required earlier. Yet people seasoned in managing healthy organizations also know that such feelings also provide the behavioral understructure for needed competition, conflict (aggression), and confrontation. When practicing leaders accept the notion of mutual caring, it is for practical not maudlin reasons. People who care for each other can withstand the psychological buffeting to face and resolve disagreements, to look at good news and bad news alike, to tell a fellow worker what he or she needs to know not simply what the other wants to hear. If there is a need in human intercourse for "tough love" to help a loved one, then this element might be thought of as "tough caring" in organizations.

Another cause of healthy interpersonal relations is Mutual Trust. It is essential also for openness and teamwork as is mutual caring. Together they are required to set a healthful behavioral milieu from which healthy behavioral integration of effort comes.

Consider the type of person with whom you work hard to communicate candidly. Who is that person? A spouse, lover, friend, parent or
The child? We work hard to be congruent -- or real -- with those persons we care for, often deeply, and trust, often boundlessly. So trust seems to lead to communications, distrust or lack of trust to bounded communications. Without communications, even a loose network of cooperative amalgam is tenacious. But with it, dramatic accomplishments are made possible. Picture a formation of an aerial jet stunt team performing one of its breathtaking maneuvers, let's say flashing. (The instant, collective switch of direction of flight that a flock of birds, such as pigeons, does). Without the mutual concern and trust leading to teamwork and openness of communications, this type of men/machines magic would be impossible. With it, however, aerial acrobatics take place with precision and grace, leaving mishaps as a rare consequence.

One of the problems in leadership is the barrier to openness between boss and subordinate that can so easily be erected -- even inadvertently. Consider a set of long-standing fellow workers from which one is promoted to lead the former peer group. As one-of-the-boys or girls, communications was vibrant, high, intimate. Everyone was open with everyone else. Beyond facts, feelings about things were shared: Beyond the rankings of who knows what and the status hierarchy. Who fears what, who hopes for what, who is angered by what, who is brought joy by what, and on and on. The candidate for a leadership position was an active, integral part of that natural "tribe," but then something seemingly unnatural occurred. The change was double-barreled. First, a peer was lost; and second, a superior was gained. Soon on the new leader searches-out my partner, an industrial psychologist, to lament his feelings of newly-found isolation. Somehow, he figures he's becoming out of touch with his own people. How can this be so? He was so close with them so
The inertia of conditioning in a multiverse within its own omniverse.

...
person, there's a likely chance that one of them, or both, is not
doing the job needed. The sales promoter has a distinct responsibility
to spend it to make it; the budgeter has a fiduciary responsibility
to assure prudent use of company resources. So, the scene for
corporate confrontation -- conflict and compromise -- is set. And
such "battles" are indispensably useful where each function is valuable
to the enterprise. The same type of engagement occurs between the
countervailing ends of quantity produced and quality produced. Each
is needed in some order and it is often up to the P.C. person and the
Production Control head to forge-out a balance.

Yet after the dust settles from these necessary behavioral sorties
and mêlées, the combatants are supposed to ignore the past and join
arms in the spirit of team play, without so much as an armistice or
peace treaty for closure. Unlikely.

If, however, they respect each other in their respective and
highly different positions, they can disagree but also appreciate
the other person's point of view. For instance, in the example of
the sales promotion manager just given, she quite likely will walk
away from the budgeting director with less than wanted when she
walked in. But even though she may smart from the "defeat," with
respect for her adversary she would be able to accept that if the
roles had been reversed she would have done the same thing. Mutual
respect gives congruence and resilience to interpersonal relations.
Without the strength it gives to human interactions, people are
afraid to confront issues with each other for fear that their
relationship is too fragile to take a bit of disharmony. In response,
the truth is avoided if threatened, issues that should be addressed
are hidden and a sick dance of avoidance tiptoes between the emotional
tandemness of otherwise resolvable issues. And this ritual can ruin
any relationship -- one called the J.P. Fredrickson Company or one called Mr. and Mrs. J.P. Fredrickson.

These mutualities -- of caring, trust, and respect -- give human bonds strength across the organization, up and down the organization. These decisions set the psychological tone for teamwork and openness, so understandably viewed as essentials to a successful venture by our "expert" managers.

And where do these several mutualities of caring, trust, and respect begin, we inquire gently, with the leader, the followers, or do they somehow jump forth at the same moment? Let's see, the pros reason. Coincident implosions of such tender feelings seem unlikely. Such displays of vulnerability by have-nots to haves in power relationships is frightening. For instance, if I trust the boss with him in power, I may be wrong and hurt myself. They, thus, conclude if such mutualities occur randomly with those in secure positions -- they can only begin with the leader.

The Payoff - The battlefield is stilled, the playing field abandoned, the factory or office vacant. The organization, even our superior one, disbands. It is gone. Only the individual players remain. Only they are left with their sensations about themselves and their organization. Consider those persons who were fortunate enough to have been a part of a victorious unit. How do they feel about themselves and their organization? The conquering hero? The heralded athlete? The winning businessperson? The feeling, is clear among seasoned managers; it is Pride.

Yet, this assumes that the players are aware that it's their organization and they are victors. In the examples of combat and
sports, victory or defeat is usually distinguishable by the players. But in enterprises with less precise standards -- such as, businesses, governments and academe -- players may not even know that they are a part of a winning venture. Hence, it is little surprise that the accompanying feelings of deep pride and winning victory celebrations are missing. So if the experts are correct in believing that superior organizational units are comprised of prideful performers, then really someone should tell the people if it's so. It would seem incumbent upon the leader of the unit to dispatch this pleasant task.

Summary - There then are the elements of a powerful human organization that produces superiority whatever it produces. The credibility of its features are confirmed by management experts in practice and by distinguished scholars. Shown graphically the essential elements of the unit assume the following final form:

- Leadership
- Common Purpose (Goal(s))
- High, Clear Expectations
- Individual Competence
- Individual Confidence
- Mutual Caring
- Mutual Trust
- Mutual Respect
- Openness
- Teamwork
- Pride

* * * * *
ÚLTIMOS WORKING PAPERS PUBLICADOS


nº 92 - COELHO, José Dias: "Optimal Location of School Facilities". (Julho, 1988)

nº 93 - MOLINERO, José Miguel Sanchez: "Individual Motivations and Mass Movements". (Março, 1988).


nº 103 - SÁ, Jorge Vasconcellos e: "The Importance of Key Success Factors for the Marketing of Nature Industrial Products". (Dezembro, 1988).

nº 104 - WRIGHT, Robert Grandford: "Toward a Unified Theory of Leadership". (Dezembro, 1988)

Qualquer informação sobre os Working Papers já publicados será prestada pelo Secretariado de Apoio aos Docentes, podendo os mesmos ser adquiridos na Secção de Vendas da Faculdade de Economia, INL, na Travessa Estevão Pinto, Campolide - 1000 LISBOA