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Team Leadership Values for Optimizing
Intense Collaboration

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Team Leadership Values for Optimizing Intense Collaboration

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Abstract

The application of values in defining team leadership is helping to determine the required interpersonal abilities, skills and behaviors of future leaders. These reasons have led researchers to study the group dynamics of work teams and to further investigate the building blocks that would help to sustain effective work teams. This paper examines the concept of team leadership values, and the potential impact of these values for optimizing intense collaboration performance. Team development and leadership are explored in the context of values, focusing on team leadership values that are required for enabling effective team performance. The concept of values-based leadership is introduced to determine its application within an intense collaboration team structure. Finally, the impact of team leadership values for intense collaboration is explored, and recommendations are provided for examining how the application of values can enable more effective intense collaboration in military Command and Control (C2) operations.

Introduction

The evolving research on team leadership is increasingly becoming integral for understanding the complexity of integrated and multi-dimensional team structures and how these structures impact organizational performance. Research on team leadership delineates the importance of putting forward leadership values for sustaining effective teams, particularly multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams

that are required for complex problem-solving within collaborative environments (Dose and Klimoski 1999; Maierhofer, Rafferty and Kabanoff 2003; Thamhain 2009). In essence, team leadership values may help to foster shared values within a team structure; which in turn, could improve productivity levels, enhance decision-making capabilities, and instil greater integration for effective collaborative team performance.

This conceptual paper examines team leadership values, and the potential impact of values for optimizing intense collaboration performance. First, team development and leadership are explored in the context of values to attain a more focused understanding of the role of team leadership values for enabling effective intense collaboration team performance. Second, values alignment and value congruence between individual and organizational values are introduced to better explain the impact on team leadership. Third, the concept of values-based leadership is introduced to determine its application within a team structure, and its overall applicability for optimizing intense team collaboration practices. Finally, the impact of team leadership values for intense collaboration is explored, and recommendations are put forward to further examine how the application of values could enable more effective collaboration in military Command and Control (C2) operations.

Leadership Values and Team Development for Enabling Intense Collaboration

The interdependency of team leadership values and team development is integral for the optimization of team performance during intense collaboration practices within military C2 operations. Intense collaboration practices involve collaboration between team members that require coordinated mechanisms and processes to enable continuous intense communication and information processing (Kumar, van Fenema, and Von Glinow 2005). Collaboration intensity is “the required level and frequency of interactions needed for initiating

and sustaining joint action and mutual awareness of: the members of the team; the flux of activities in teamwork; the evolving work-object; and the context of the collaborative situation” (Kumar, van Fenema, and Von Glinow 2005, 131). High collaboration intensity involves both conscious and sub-conscious communications, observations and anticipatory behaviors (Kumar, van Fenema, and Von Glinow 2005). From a team perspective, factors that are important for intense performance include “experience in working together, mutual trust, common purpose, and shared or complimentary skill sets” (Bowman, Pattison, and Gouin 2009, 10). Within a military C2 setting, team performance may be contingent on how well the team develops through the shared values employed by the team leader and members.

To better understand the relevance of team leadership values for the optimization of intense collaboration team performance, it is important to examine the role of team development. The classic theory on group development evolves around a four stage process, namely: forming, storming, norming, and performing (Tuckman 1965). The forming stage involves the orientation of team members around their roles and their contributions to the team. During the storming stage, team members begin to experience some adjustment and may exercise differences of opinion (e.g., how the team will operate). This stage enables team members to listen to each other, and to resolve any conflicts in order to outline a shared way ahead (e.g., common vision and mission). The norming stage focuses on team cohesion, where team members learn to cooperate, and feel that they could collaborate and contribute to team discussions. The performing stage is reached once team goals have been accomplished, trust has been established, and the team is able to focus on resolving complex issues and goal attainment. It is at this stage that cohesion and teamwork enable the team to attain its goals through effective leadership (Waruszynski 2004).

During the forming stage of team development, the group acquires values; which in turn, influence the collective values held by the team (Maierhofer et al. 2003). Values are defined as the “mental constructs” through which we view ourselves, how these constructs help to shape our “personal preferences”, and what we deem to be important to us (Henderson and Thompson 2003). Values are perceived as representing significant principles within organizational cultures (Rokeach 1973; Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach 1989), and are also portrayed as the most distinguishing attributes of a social institution (Rokeach 1979). Values differ in their importance as a function of time, specifically when individuals are influenced by the work values during organizational entry (Maierhofer et al. 2003). The organizational socialization process may influence new employees to adopt work values; and this in turn, may have an impact on team leadership and team performance.

Values that promote personal and collective well-being focus on values that help to direct individual and organizational behaviors. These values include: (a) “values for personal wellness (e.g., self-determination, health and personal growth); (b) values for collective wellness (e.g., social justice); and (c) values for relational wellness (e.g., respect for human diversity and collaboration)” (Prilleltensky 2000, 144). As such, these values are interdependent and need to work together to sustain a balanced approach within organizations. Within team processes, “values are particularly relevant composition variables, especially those values related to the work environment” (Dose and Klimoski 1999, 85).

Researchers have noted that the nature of organizational leadership does have an impact on the social structures and group behaviors within the workplace (Eden 1992; Thamhain 2009). Team leadership requires one to understand the culture and the environment in which the team resides (Thamhain 2009). Team leadership can also draw on attenuating group tensions by enabling group cooperation through the identification of collective goals and one’s identity to these goals (Allen 1996). As such, team leadership values can be

characterized within the context of practiced leadership traits and behaviors that are integral to the overall value system of the team. According to a study on leadership in managing technology-intensive teams, “team leadership is fundamental in managing the work and people relations across diverse organizational and cultural boundaries” (Thamhain 2009, 117). In Thamhain’s (2009) study, the factors that were most significant for effective team leadership included: individual interest, job satisfaction, work challenge, accomplishments, and recognition. Other important influences included the need to employ effective communications between team members and support units, good team dynamics, trust and respect, limited conflicts, and career development opportunities (Thamhain 2009).

Team leaders can be portrayed as “social architects” (Thamhain 2009). Accordingly, team leaders try to “understand the interaction of organizational and behavioral variables, inspire team members, facilitate the work process, and provide overall project leadership for developing multidisciplinary task groups into unified teams and foster a climate conducive to involvement, commitment and conflict resolution” (Thamhain 2009, 120). Zenger, Musselwhite, Hurson, and Perrin (1994) state that team leaders require specialized training and skills to avoid team failure. There are a number of knowledge and skill areas that are integral to effective team leadership and team performance, including (Trent 2004, 95-101):

- *“Guiding a team toward consensus decisions*
- *Recognizing the importance of goal setting*
- *Providing feedback to the team and its members*
- *Rewarding member effort and achievement*
- *Managing internal and external team conflict*
- *Managing work as projects*

- *Facilitating team interaction*
- *Engaging in creative and critical thinking”*

In addition, the integration of repeated behaviors (e.g. self confidence and stress tolerance) can improve leader effectiveness and enhance a leader’s capacity to undergo cognitive functions, particularly in times of crises (Mumford and Connelly 1991). Strang (2004) elaborates on this notion and states that optimal leadership behavior focuses on compensating, combining and balancing behaviors, and functions in complex combinations within specific situations and contexts.

As a result, team development and leadership focus on the effectiveness of teams, and how individuals within the team contribute to the group dynamic. Organizations that promote teamwork and collaboration focus on aligning their value system with a culture that fosters a team discipline approach (Katzenbach and Smith 2003). Collaboration focuses on “bringing together knowledge, experience and skills of multiple team members to the development of a new product or plan, in a way that is more effective than team members performing narrow tasks individually” (Powers 2004, 4). Such an alignment will be even more pronounced within high performance teams that require better integration through shared collaborations and integrated communications for accomplishing their goals and objectives.

Team Leadership and Values Alignment

Leadership values are critical to sustaining healthy work teams, and are important for promoting a better understanding of how organizations can create high performance teams. Examples of leadership values can include integrity, trust, and respect for followers (O’Toole 1996). Leader behaviors can focus on: “[articulating] a collective vision; infusing organizations and work with values by

communicating and setting a personal example regarding the values inherent in the vision; making sacrifices and taking personal risks in the interest of the vision and the collective; motivating exceptional performance by appealing to the values, emotions, self-concepts of followers; inspiring followers by showing confidence, determination, persistence, and pride in the collective; and by engaging in symbolic behavior such as serving as a spokesperson for the collective” (Nicholson 1998, 285). It is through a values alignment process within a team structure that we begin to understand the effectiveness of team performance.

Values alignment is a continuous “process of building a cohesive culture in which the satisfaction and motivation of employees depends considerably on the “fit” between their personal values and the values of their team and organization” (Branson 2008, 381). Value congruence examines the relationship between personal and organizational values to determine if congruence or conflict exists between individual values and workplace values. By examining the aggregate values of an organization, one can determine how different one’s personal values are from the organization, leadership, and clients (Rokeach 1979).

To enable a better understanding of value congruence between team leadership and team membership, several researchers have noted that there exists a relationship between team value congruency and team performance. For example, Jehn, Northcraft and Neale (1999) assessed group value congruence, and found that value diversity decreased group satisfaction, the intent to remain within the group, and overall commitment to the group. As a result, the alignment of team leadership values with team membership values may enable researchers to have a better understanding of the implications of values alignment and congruency on team leadership and team performance.

The importance of aligning individual values to organizational values has led researchers to study the area of value congruence and its impact on decision-making (Liedtka 1989; Posner and Schmidt 1993), value conflict (Liedtka 1989); and leadership (Meglino, Ravlin, and Adkins 1989). Values that are aligned within a workplace context primarily stem from the time of “organizational entry” and as the individual becomes a part of the “socialization process” (Meglino and Ravlin 1998, 355). Similarities and differences in individual values focus on “personal experiences and exposure to more formal socialization forces” (Meglino and Ravlin 1998, 354). Similarity in values fosters the social systems or cultures which enable interactions that are important for individuals to reach their collective goals (Kluckhohn 1951; Meglino and Ravlin 1998). According to Henderson and Thompson (2003, 105), “the more a value is believed to be important by the people in the organization, the more motivated they will be to behave in a manner that is congruent with that value.” If researchers are highlighting the importance of maintaining value congruency (i.e., the fit between individual and organizational values), then how can values alignment influence better collaboration within a team performing highly intense collaborative activities?

Application of Team Leadership Values for Optimizing Intense Collaboration

Based on the current literature review, organizations which advocate teamwork and collaboration need to continuously align their values-based systems with a culture that promotes a team discipline approach. Organizations are leaning towards less hierarchical structures and more towards “integrated structures, empowered employees, teams, and teamwork, and underlying all of this change is a new emphasis on values regarding how the organization functions” (Fitzpatrick 2007, 291). This organizational change demonstrates that collaboration requires a better alignment of individuals’ actions to organizational goals (Beyerlein, Freedman, McGee, and Moran

2003; Fitzpatrick 2007). Collaboration focuses on “collective purpose”, where individuals are motivated to achieve collective goals and actions (Leana and Van Buren 1993).

Within a C2 context, the establishment of a collective purpose is critical to the successful performance of a team. For example, the *Teams of Leaders Coaching Guide* (2009) for European Command (EUCOM) focuses on establishing “a culture of shared trust, intensive collaboration, and networked expertise among horizontal (peer) and vertical (hierarchical) high-performing leader-teams” (EUCOM 2009, ii). Although there is no one person responsible for the team’s leadership, the Teams of Leaders approach represents an innovative way of attaining high performance through more effective shared situational understanding, shared purpose, shared vision, shared trust, shared commitment, and shared confidence. According to the *Teams of Leaders Handbook*, a “shared vision exists when members of the team have a common understanding of: the overall mission, goals and sub-goals of the mission; strategies for reaching the goals; team members’ strengths and weaknesses; and values and preferences of the team as a whole and the individual members” (Combined Arms Center 2009, 35).

According to Fjermestad and Hiltz (1998), leadership plays a significant role in group support systems for effective decision-making. Shared trust is a critical element for any effective collaboration (Leana and Van Buren 1993); especially, psychosocial team factors, such as “experience in working together, mutual trust, common purpose, and shared or complimentary skill sets” (Bowman, Pattison, and Gouin 2009, 10). This is evidenced in EUCOM’s approach, where the Teams of Leaders focus on achieving high performance through more effective *shared* situational understanding, purpose, vision, trust, commitment and confidence (EUCOM 2009). Through the interdependency of shared trust within a specialized network of experts working in a collaborative environment and effective leader-teams, EUCOM is able to build a culture that enables “joint, inter-agency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations to make

and execute decisions while rapidly sharing what they have learned” (EUCOM, 2009, ii). Accordingly, the “implication is that if agreement is going to exist about what goals and behaviors are important (e.g., collaboration), then agreement must also exist about what values will be selected to achieve that aim” (Fitzpatrick 2007, 292).

The role of interpersonal values systems (Meglino and Ravlin 1998) and its impact on collaboration becomes integral to understand from a leadership perspective. A shared vision requires the team to have a “common understanding of the values and preferences of the leader-team as a whole and among the individual members” (EUCOM 2009, 5). The Department of Defense’s adaptive learning environment for responding to asymmetric threats also addresses the importance of applying common values to enable a better integration of diverse networks (Tillson, Freeman, Burns, Michel, LeCuyer, Scales, and Worley 2005). To initiate this new environment, adaptive leaders will have to practice the values of trust and accountability within a holistic system to facilitate better decision-making for all participants and stakeholders across the nation (Tillson et al. 2005). This will involve a personal leadership orientation that focuses on attaining a profound understanding of the beliefs and values about one’s own and other’s leadership. As a result, this will help to minimize conflict within the team and will enable members to have improved collaboration and communication for enhanced decision-making capabilities.

For military C2 structures to be agile with respect to individuals, organizations, and C2 systems (Alberts and Hayes 2003), it becomes imperative to examine the role of individual and organizational values, and if congruency between these values can enable more effective coordination, communication, information-sharing and collaboration within a team context. For multi-level response teams to synchronize their responses and actions through shared communication (Bowman, Pattison, and Gouin 2009), it is essential to examine team leadership values and their influence in enabling more effective decision-making processes within an intense collaboration

environment. Shared team values may enable mutual/interpersonal trust, greater cohesion and more effective norm development (Dose and Klimoski 1999) within intense collaboration teams.

Team constructs, such as team collaboration, need to be examined by focusing on the interdependencies of personal and organizational values and how these values affect collective group behaviors (i.e., collaboration) within a values-based systems context. Team performance and group dynamics within an intense collaboration environment become more important when trying to effectively integrate the networked information and communication technologies for decision-making capabilities (Bowman, Pattison, and Gouin 2009). Shared situational awareness is a key factor for fulfilling a purpose within a team setting. However, there needs to be a greater emphasis on understanding the implications of team leadership values on psychosocial factors (e.g., motivation, types of interactions, and shared backgrounds with team members) and their overall impact on collaboration for effective decision-making.

Role of Values-Based Leadership

The introduction of values-based ‘team’ leadership for optimizing intense collaboration practices may help to foster greater integration through the application of common and shared team values. Values-based leadership theory is concerned with “leader actions to create a specifically defined value construct within which to practice leadership” (Fairholm and Fairholm 2009, 84). The core principles of values-based leadership incorporate eight roles: (1) leaders focus on stakeholder development; (2) leaders concentrate on developing their leadership clusters; (3) leaders try to augment follower trust and commitment; (4) leaders create a vision and vision values; (5) leaders foster a culture of core values; (6) leaders prepare to develop one-on-one relationships with followers; (7) leaders take on the role of teachers; and (8) leaders foster high performance and self-led followers (Fairholm and Fairholm 2009, 87-89). The focus in this paper

is to obtain a better understanding of how shared values may impact team leadership decision-making abilities in a complex environment that demands effective integration across C2 networks.

In developing leaders at all levels, the Australian Defence Force has embraced values-based leadership as part of its leadership philosophy. The Directorate of Leadership, Values and Cultural Engagement (LVCE) is responsible for the development of non-operational leadership skills of current and future defence leaders (Department of Defence 2008). The Australian Defence's common leadership philosophy is based on: "values-based behavior and principles-based decision-making; leadership at every level, both military and civilian; ... adherence to Defence Values [which is] fundamental to individual behavior; results achieved through people; and leadership [as] core to enabling many of the more specific business skills" (Department of Defence 2008, 10). The Australian Defence's shared values include: professionalism, loyalty, integrity, courage, innovation and teamwork (PLICIT). These values play a significant role in ensuring that everyone embraces the leadership capabilities and behaviors that are aligned with the Defence's Leadership Framework.

Values-based leadership is also a part of the Canadian Force's (CF) effective leadership framework built around the CF military values (i.e., duty, loyalty, integrity, and courage). Values-based leadership is about "understanding and living the core values of the CF" (Canadian Forces Leadership Institute 2005, 24). The CF effectiveness framework guides leaders in achieving "mission success"... and in "adapting to the external and internal environments while at the same time keeping in mind member well-being and commitment" (Department of National Defence 2005, 1). A values-based leadership model enables leaders to ground their decisions in line with their professional values—the civic, legal, ethical and military values espoused by the military ethos (Department of National Defence 2005).

From a values-based leadership perspective, the role of team leadership values is integral to further determine how values can enable effective team leadership to optimize team member behavior engaged in intense collaboration, particularly as they affect military C2 operations. Within a team structure, the role of team leadership values can play a significant role in ensuring that interactions are based on a specified value system that would enable greater trust, cohesion, norm development and communication (Dose and Klimoski 1999). From this perspective, collaboration focuses on attaining a “collective purpose”, where the team members realize collective goals and actions (Leana and van Buren, 1993). Shared trust becomes a fundamental component of this collaboration (Leana and van Buren, 1999). Within a C2 context, leaders can effectively help to promote team values that will enable and empower intense collaboration teamwork by ensuring that there is an alignment between team member values and organizational values. This aspect has been noted in the Australian Department of Defence and the Canadian Forces.

Team Leadership Values for Optimizing Intense Collaboration—Recommendations

The application of team leadership values and behaviors for enabling collaboration practices will need to be empirically examined with a greater emphasis on values alignment and value congruency and its relationship to team performance. Horner (1997, 282) states that “tomorrow’s leaders may need to hold visions, values, assumptions, and paradigms that are in agreement with having a team-oriented, empowered workforce in order to be most successful.” The aligned vision and values will enable more effective decision-making in accordance with future organizational structures; and at the same time, the alignment of individual members’ paradigms and assumptions to those of the organization will enable a leader to work most effi-

ciently within a team context (Horner 1997). This will be evidenced even more so within a team-oriented context that will involve intense collaboration activities.

As a result, it becomes important to explore the following recommendations on the application of team leadership values for optimizing intense collaboration performance:

1. Team leaders should develop the knowledge and interpersonal skills that are effective for team performance (e.g., team feedback, consensus decision-making, rewards and recognition, and conflict resolution) (Trent 2004), and how their knowledge and skills interrelate with a core set of team leadership values (e.g., integrity, professionalism, accountability, trust, respect, duty, honour, loyalty and courage).
2. Team leaders should develop the necessary leadership traits and behaviors for team leadership, including: traits and behaviors that are focused on visioning, teamwork and team dynamics, mentoring, coaching, trust-building, and communications (Waruszynski 2004), and examine how these traits and behaviors help to optimize human performance during periods of intense collaboration.
3. Team leaders should understand the implications of working within interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary team structures that involve intense team collaboration, especially across diverse and cultural backgrounds, and examine how team leadership values affect the dynamics of different team structures (e.g., team cohesion and mutual trust). The dynamics of highly intense collaborative teams distributed over geographical boundaries, time zones and organizational cultural contexts (Bowman, Pattison, and Gouin 2009) will need to be examined within a team leadership values-based context, focusing on the deployment of

intense collaboration environments (e.g., distributed and networked communication technologies) and the impact on team performance.

4. Team leaders should examine which metrics would best describe the impact of individual values on team leadership and team membership for effective collaborative team performance (i.e. develop measures of effectiveness to examine the relationship between team value congruency and team performance). Within a C2 setting, it will be important to examine team leadership and how the team as a whole or collective impacts team performance. This will involve a better understanding of the congruency of values across the team, and the potential impact of leadership within a team structure. As a result, the entire team needs to be studied as a collective, focusing primarily on how each member contributes to the leadership of the team (Horner 1997).
5. Team leaders should evaluate the role of values (e.g. interpersonal trust) during specific periods of intense collaboration (e.g. time pressure to reach decisions; the unpredictable nature of events and consequences; the speed of changing circumstances; and the required information updates) (Bowman, Pattison, and Gouin 2009), and determine if there is an empirical link between individual values and behavioral decision-making during different levels of intense collaboration. This will involve a better understanding of consensus team building/decision-making and unproductive conflict within a team context. According to Fitzpatrick (2007), there is a clear relationship between values alignment and collaboration, where aligned values enable effective collaboration to take place and could very well be a proactive approach to unproductive conflict.

Conclusion

Values offer “the embedded codes of a culture, which means that the starting point for attempting to understand cultural values is to identify the beliefs, behaviors, rituals, icons, symbols, actions, systems and decisions of the group” (Branson 2008, 382-383). The research on team performance has demonstrated that values are integral to an organization’s culture. In order to identify with the alignment of personal values to organizational values, individuals need to see how the applicability of team leadership values may enable more successful collaboration decision-making capabilities, particularly within a military C2 context.

Future research on values-based theories may help to understand the role of values on team leadership and its impact on team development, particularly during periods of intense collaboration. Although individuals are encouraged to work in collaboration with others, the whole area of collaboration needs to be examined from a values-based leadership approach. For example, more research needs to incorporate the relationship of personal and organizational values as they pertain to team processes that involve empowerment, autonomy, control, conflict, and team effectiveness from varying leadership perspectives.

Finally, it will be important to understand the effectiveness of team leadership development through shared organizational values, and how team leadership values could help to sustain successful military C2 operations. The proposed recommendations will enable researchers to further explore the perceived value of leadership, teamwork and team processes (Bowman, Pattison, and Gouin 2009) as they relate to military command and control structures, including: perceptions of individual and organizational collective values, relationships and meaningful interactions, knowledge sharing, culture and vision, stewardship/self-interest, empowerment, trust, conflict, and how all of these elements impact on different levels of intensity to enable effective collaborative decision-making capabilities.

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