Leadership Effectiveness Plan

My leadership effectiveness plan integrates my learning about advanced leadership behaviors during this semester to my life both as a leader and as a follower.

1. Write out your own definition of leadership. Which behaviors from this semester do you feel are most important to leadership as a process?

Leadership is a blend of guidance, ownership, and inspiration. Leadership requires a common goal with a positive impact, a shared mission that is both impactful and meaningful. Leaders and followers collaborate toward this mission and are most effective with shared ownership, clear guidance, and effective inspiration.

2. Cite at least one other definition of leadership and document the author(s) of the definition(s).

"Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes." (Rost, 1991, p. 102)

3. Briefly compare and contrast your definition with the one you cited.

I believe that a common goal or a mutual purpose forms the strongest bond between leaders and followers. Both of our definitions suggest guidance or influence in the influence relationship, which will vary by leadership behavior. Mutual purpose or a common mission are also common elements. Rost is more general in stating "mutual purposes". My definition is more specific by suggesting a shared mission that is both impactful and meaningful. I think having a common mission puts more focus on making a difference. Moving from a mutual purpose to a shared mission, especially when effecting positive change, can inspire by itself.
Add inspirational leadership into this formula, and I believe this can become an effective and powerful combination.

4. Review the list of leadership behaviors from this semester and indicate which of the leadership behaviors we have discussed are your strengths. Why?

Leadership behaviors are part of an evolving field of study. As a society, we have moved away from factory worker mentalities to more inclusive and collaborative approaches. During the industrial revolution, leaders were authoritative, and workers seemed expendable. Assembly line workers were likely not asked for their opinions, nor were they pulled into collaborative workshops with upper management. I understand and identify with the categorizations of leadership behaviors in our book *Understanding Behaviors for Effective Leadership*. I agree that most leadership behaviors can be explained using the categories presented. I also believe that through evolution, our understanding of leadership and our organizations will continue to change. I think that we will continue our progression, that we will continue to improve, and that we will effect positive change in leadership in doing so. I appreciate learning about directive, participative, supportive, reward and punishment, and charismatic leadership behaviors and think of these categories as a point in time or a foundation upon which to build.

I have participated in multiple evaluations (e.g., DiSC, Meyers Briggs, Social Styles) and have learned about my personality and how I approach and interact with others. My results from these tests all track similarly. However, I find` that my measurements vary over time. When I was younger, I leaned toward amicable or agreeable. As I became weathered and more experienced, my results indicated a shift away from laissez-faire toward driving behaviors. I moved away from participative to become more directive. My observation of others largely influenced this shift. The most effective leaders I studied were charismatic and directive. I decided to be more like them to replicate their success. Later, I found that the best leaders could adjust their leadership behavior. They demonstrated the most appropriate behavior for a specific situation.

In studying organizational leadership, I have learned the reasons behind these observations. I have learned that a good leader can move with fluidity between supportive, participative, reward and punishment, and directive based on the team's needs at a given point in time. I would assert that my strengths are in all four of these leadership behaviors, with some being stronger than others.

The leader's real strength lies in learning when to apply which behavior for maximum effectiveness. The follower's real strength is understanding which leadership behavior is most appropriate for giving feedback or making suggestions to help their leader be more effective. Good leadership understands that feedback is a gift and will be appreciative of savvy followers.

5. Describe the behaviors you wish to change to become a more effective leader and follower. How would you like to respond in a particular situation? These behavioral changes may be the means to achieve a goal, a way to solve a problem, and/or an end result.

Charismatic leadership behavior, which I did not list as a strength above, is one that I would like to improve. I believe this would increase my ability to influence and to inspire.

Recently, I changed the direction of a project by making a compelling argument based on an elaborate presentation of facts and figures. It took a lot of time, a lot of contemplation, and a lot of work to formulate my proposal. I thought about potential protests and worked through logical arguments based on real data. I spent hours in preparation. At the very beginning, I knew from experience that I was proposing the best way forward. How much easier would this process have been for a charismatic leader? Maybe I could have replaced some of my preparation with a confident and convincing argument. Being charismatic and perhaps more confident would have saved me some fact gathering and preparation time.

I have had followership experiences where charisma could have helped to overcome gaps in confidence. Fades in confidence and the use of hedging language are two things I have had to

overcome. I now coach others on the use of hedging language to help them to avoid it. Instead of saying *I may be able to*, say *I will be able to*. When tasked with a large project a couple of years ago, I stood up and stated confidently, "the project will be done on time and on budget."
I understood that my job depended on the success of the project. During the project, I found that management was sensitive to language. When I had a problem with the schedule, I learned to refer to it as a schedule adjustment or a reshuffling of tasks. Only once did I mention a "slip" in the schedule and quickly learned that slip was not the right word. My thought is that smaller gaffes like this could be smoothed over with a little charisma. I did the best I could to recover and think I could have done better.

My goal for myself is to work on becoming more charismatic as a leader and as a follower.

6. Describe what you are presently doing, feeling, and/or thinking in a particular situation that provides you the impetus for changing.

I have a goal to serve as a leader in an executive role. Considering I had only two semesters of college and a GED, I have experienced great successes. Without a college degree, I have always been looking over my shoulder, feeling like I do not measure up to my peers.
I know that I will need both the knowledge and the piece of paper to transcend my current station. My impetus for changing is my realization that my goal will be more difficult to attain without confidence and charisma. I believe that earning my degree will increase my confidence, followed by a natural boost in charisma.

7. What is your ultimate goal for self-improvement BOTH as a leader AND as a follower? This goal may be one very specific behavior or a cluster of behaviors, ways of thinking, bodies of knowledge, or beliefs (attitudes). Be careful not to be too general or too all encompassing! One way of not doing anything is trying to do everything.

I have gained insight by reflecting upon several past experiences throughout this course. These insights have led me to contemplate my current strengths and weaknesses. I have areas upon which I can improve in both leadership and followership. I appreciated taking a deep dive into followership at the beginning of the class, as this topic is often set aside with our focus on leadership. I have studied teams as groups of leaders but without such an intense concentration on followership.

My ultimate goal for self-improvement is becoming more charismatic both as a leader and as a follower. I can become a better follower through increased confidence in myself, my team, and my leadership. I can become a better leader by telling inspiring and compelling stories charismatically.

8. Leader and Follower - What obstacles, barriers, and/or resistance are you likely to encounter as you make these changes? These may be internal and external. Think about social, organizational, or other perceived external restraining forces.

The most challenging barriers to overcome can be internal. We can be our own worst critics. I find inspiration in the stories told of Abraham Lincoln in *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and Benjamin Franklin in *Getting to Yes*. These stories illustrate that these extraordinary people are still just people with uncertainty and doubt. Reflecting on "Separating the People from the Problem" gave me the idea to separate myself from my problem. I can attack the problem by brainstorming for objective solutions free from my own objections.

I find external barriers easier to overcome. I like to think of the story of the crabs in the bucket, where the crabs keep pulling each other back in to prevent escape. The solution is to find

another bucket. In life, that could be to find a new job or to change up your friend group. I was once in a specific situation where I had over-confided my doubts with my direct supervisor. In an instant, I had lost a lot of credibility. The situation became bad, unrecoverable. My take-away was to internalize doubts and to project only confidence. Longer term, I found that this was not a workable solution and I learned to express doubts differently.

I have improved my approach by asking well-formed questions, seeking inputs from experts, and doing quick research. I have found that I must keep my composure both as a leader and as a follower. One will instill confidence from leadership or management, while the other will instill confidence from your team.

9. Leader and Follower - What resources do you need to help you achieve your desired change and reach your goal? Who are you willing to ask to help and support you to achieve this change? What specific behaviors, words, or symbols of support do you want from them?

The biggest challenge is not finding resources but figuring out which ones are the most relevant and the most valuable. I could spend hours watching online videos, reading blogs, or subscribing to "leadership" newsletters. The Fort Hays State curriculum has helped me narrow my scope while focusing on the right resources. Whether it is Coach K's *Leading with the Heart*, Fisher and Ury's *Getting to Yes*, or Hackman's *Leading Teams – Setting the Stage for Great Performances*, I have been able to concentrate my time on consuming some of the best materials about leadership. I have stepped outside of the curriculum a little and have collected a few other books. To name a few; Rost's *Leadership for the Twenty-first* Century, Greenleaf's *The Servant as* Leader, and finally Brungart & Crawford's *Risk Leadership*.

While I have many of the necessary resources, I will continue to build my network of people. I have friends who serve in higher-level leadership roles, and I need to ask them for guidance. I do not have a good reason for not doing this sooner, other than perhaps I have freshly

identified a particular thing that could benefit from some attention. Attributes I look for in a mentor are candidness, straight answers, and genuine interest. I have been through the process a few times and find these three qualities to be the most engaging.

10. Leader and Follower - What specific steps are you willing to take to both start and sustain the change?

I am willing to engage with friends and acquaintances who formerly served and currently serve in high-level leadership positions. I plan to ask them for mentorship to build charisma. I think the better way to label this attribute may be *executive presence*. In my company, we also refer to this as eminence. By focusing on executive presence, I believe my charisma will improve organically.

I also believe that my network of instructors and professors at FHSU will continue to grow. Now entering my senior year, I have now had courses with the same instructors. As I progress through the 600 level courses in the Organizational Leadership program, I believe these relationships will develop further. What could be better than being able to bounce an odd-ball question off of one of your Ph.D. professors for the rest of your career?

11. Leader and Follower - How will you reward yourself and perhaps celebrate with others when you have accomplished your goal?

Had this question asked about reward and punishment as a leadership behavior, I would have answered differently. I am not one for large celebrations. I take small, measured rewards. I like how Coach K tells the team; enjoy this win briefly, then put it behind you and move on. I guess it is my “two semesters and a GED” thing that keeps me looking over my shoulder, that keeps me moving on.

References

Rost, J. C. (1991). *Leadership for the Twenty-first Century*. Praeger.