

The Shepherd and the Lamb: A Symbiotic View on Leadership

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Introduction

Leadership is a multi-faceted term, sometimes difficult to explain, but usually easy to recognize in oneself or others. As it is spoken, there is a stress on the first syllable, almost guttural, that demands attention, even to the speaker. This is ironic in that a leader is generally viewed as the front-runner, or head person in a group. The guttural pronunciation further demands attention in that it requires a bit of effort to get out of our chest and project through one's voice. This emulates how a leader is defined by their strengths and hard work to get things done. The term conjures up visions of what a person self-identifies as a leader, and the emotions involved with the admiration, dedication, and trust one sees in that individual. There are noticeable psychological changes after it has been spoken, either relief or trepidation, triggered by the deep emotions one feels through being the leader or the follower. Here a balance is surmised between the leader and follower. One can be just as comfortable occupying either role, so the emotions of fear or nervousness apply just as much as confidence and strength. The leader and the follower each provide necessary elements for the other party in achieving mutual goals. This last point expresses the main theme of leadership that will be explored within the following pages. The leader/follower relationship is the mutual extension and acceptance of trust. This is an important concept because no matter the situation, size of group, task to be done, trust must be established in order for leaders to accomplish their goals, and for other members of the group to support those goals. Leadership is usually attributed to position, knowledge, and action. Due to these factors, some people consider that it is a given they will receive respect regardless of treatment or merit. For those same factors, others may be leery of leaders due to lack of respect or understanding by either or both parties. That is why trust and knowing how to earn and care

for it are important skills for leaders to have. Subordinates also must understand their role and how to maintain their responsibilities to the leader. It is a personal investment of oneself to wear the mantle of a leader, yet the same amount of investment can be taken to mold oneself into a crucial asset as a follower. There is a personal transaction that triggers the acceptance of the position and of the leader's authority by the other group members. There is no exact formula to develop these things, it is a process developed from experience, intuition, knowledge of the task and organizational goals, self-knowledge, and understanding. The conglomeration of these factors must equate to appreciation for each other member of the group. Trust must not be a single-sided attribute in the case of defining the leadership/follower relationship. Trust is not taken or demanded, but it is given and respected for the risks that each side presents in the transaction of trust. It is a bond that must not be abused.

Much like a shepherd is trusted by the lamb for his protection and care, the shepherd must trust that the lamb will follow their directions and provide what they need when the time comes. Without the lamb, there is no need for a shepherd, and without the shepherd, the lamb is lost. One can't survive without the other.

Better understanding of the issue and how its facets interact with each other will be addressed in this paper through studying social factors in the professional realm attributed to the topic. To do this, the work in total will be presented through a literature review and a short discussion section. A conclusion will finalize the paper by explaining the implications of the findings in regard to the topic. This paper aims to provide better overall understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers in regard to building trust within their group.

Literary Review

Effective organizations are those that have dedicated belief systems and value the roles of followership (Lundin, 1990, p. 19). Usually, this is due to inclusive or servitude styles of leadership. These belief systems provide the framework for the subordinates and leaders to rely on. This is an initial point to establish commonality between roles, as everyone present has agreed that the tenets upon which their organization are based, are worth supporting through their labor. This infers a bond between the levels within an organization, which needs to be maintained through an environment of trust.

“Trust is an affirmation of one’s own identity and an investment in one’s future. When we trust we not only acknowledge our desire to enter into a social contract with another party, but we willingly accept the risks involved within that relationship. Ultimately, when we trust... our decision to trust is based upon an “internal, personal, subjective” reflection of our willingness to comply within a “zone of indifference” or acceptable range of behaviors requested by the other party (Caldwell 2008, pp. 159-160).”

Capitalizing on these ideas and utilized within a servitude style situation, a leader recognizes or accepts their role as a facilitator of resources, and a mediator between the organization’s expectations versus the real productivity of their team. To do this, they must take or have an interactive role on the production floor/line, sub-management pool, etc. This presents an open line of communication to all levels within their organization. It is also the subordinates’ role to utilize this open forum in order to keep information flowing to the leader. There is an interesting case, as it has been found in some of these situations that subordinates may act differently than they feel in a servitude leadership style of organization. Leaders may mitigate stress, however it is through affective trust, not cognitive trust (Lu, 2019, p. 507). This suggests that in the cognitive, active state, a subordinate may be leery of having the leader so involved, which may direct their outward appearance such as propensity to act in a positive manner, or in showing outward support of leader. This may be the result of misperceptions of micromanagement,

leader's lack of faith, or peer pressure of contempt due to the leader not taking a traditional imposing role. However, in the more subconscious state, the subordinate is more willing to trust that leader in that they feel someone else is in their corner to help with issues. In this case, the leader has affectively influenced their opinion and judgement, which are key motivators of trust. It is on the subordinate to recognize this and react accordingly. Recognition is not only on the subordinate's list of responsibility, and the leader has a much larger purview of that term, not just in terms of rewards.

Leadership is about relationship-to oneself, their followers, the organization, and their view for the task at hand. Leaders need to develop humility in order to relate, and be relatable to, their followers. This requires a bit of selflessness, to achieve the mindset of a steward. Also known as governance theory, stewardship is the ability of a leader to see themselves as working for their followers. This strengthens the mindset of inclusivity within that leader's group because leadership decisions and actions consider the consequences of their choices in relation to group safety and overall success. Caldwell (2008, p. 154) briefly states the points of governance theory:

"... managers are stewards whose motives are aligned with the objectives of several parties. Governance theories are concerned with:

1. how an organization seeks to optimize performance and accountability,
2. how values and goals are integrated within the systems and structures that are created,
3. how leaders develop and maintain relationships that generate the commitment and cooperation of those who work with and for them, and
4. how principles of leadership and management are formally applied in the conduct of organizational business."

This includes demonstrating behaviors such as: accepting responsibilities for failures instead of looking for a scapegoat; and distributing accolades among the group, rather than hoard them.

It is also a survival mechanism in that there are more followers than leaders in an effective organization. The leader takes care of the group, the group takes care of the leader.

Leaders also must invest their time in accurately and adequately evaluating their followers. “(Team) Members’ job satisfaction is demonstrated by continuously paying attention to their performance and being integrally involved in the organization. Employees with high leader trust are found to have greater job satisfaction than members with low leader trust (Kim, 2017, p. 491). This isn’t limited to mandatory periodical performance evaluations, but in understanding their unique attributes that contribute to, or detrimentally affect, team performance. Recognizing different personality traits can guide the tact that a leader chooses to use when approaching an individual, and how to implement tact effectively to accomplish the overall goal (Wang, 2015, p. 501). Just as a subordinate may be expected to anticipate a leader’s needs, the reverse is also true. These investments in time and shared knowledge of one another are crucial, because communication is key to efficiently operating any level of organization. A leader may recognize different means of effective communication for certain individuals, which allows for modification or direct determination in tactics regarding performance evaluations, after task/operation reviews, and showing appreciation among team members. Subordinates must also recognize these traits in their leader in order to judge how to interject constructive criticism and opinions. This also applies to moments regarding the sharing of appreciation for their abilities and care of the team.

Appreciation for conscientious conduct towards one another is a key ingredient to mutual respect. That respect motivates a subordinate to perform as requested or possibly a higher level. That respect will emphasize empathetic and direct tailored means of direction from the leader. These factors all secure the bond of trust between leaders and followers. There are ways to

mitigate negative relationships, or subject mentees to challenges in managing varied personality types within their purview and responsibility to the groups' overall goal. In some cases, it is the leader's decision to deliberately challenge team members to overcome adversity, in others to ease the process during times of immediacy by mitigating risks. Subordinates must also recognize that they are part of a whole organism, and that choices aren't necessarily personal. As a measure of professionalism, it is a matter of remembering that overall, it is everyone's responsibility to contribute to the success of the group.

In fact, as the job market turns towards teleworking and separate, remote nodes of individuals, the tenet that each individual is a leader has become an emerging factor in group dynamics. More complexity exists, requiring project managers to adapt different modes and present different roles to their teams. Challenges, such as incorporating new information and communications technology, cross-cultural communications, global logistical design, technological complexity, information overload, lack of social cues, and the fast creation of camaraderie all need to be incorporated into an overall plan. This requires individuals to be open in communications with their project manager, and even in taking individual leadership roles between team members (Chen, 2008, pp. 305-6). In a virtual setting, the need for an effective leader to recognize differences among team members is even greater than that of face to face settings.

The responsibility for job satisfaction and behavior modification doesn't rest solely on the leader's shoulders. In a study on the effects of perceived abusive supervision:

“...subordinates' personality traits and self-reports of task performance as antecedents of perceptions of abusive supervision. The results show that subordinates high in neuroticism or low in conscientiousness had high levels of perceived abusive supervision partially through their self-reported deleterious job performance (Wang, 2015, p. 487).”

This statement demonstrates a conscious decision on the subordinate's part to act and perform in ways they feel are commensurate with the situation. This is not exclusively directed at personality, as it has been found that "agreeableness has no significant effects on reactive behavior or results (Wang, 2015, p. 498)." A subordinate has the responsibility to not be a negative issue for the leader to consider when making important decisions. This is a key point of respect and duty to perform as expected.

The previous dialogue on the roles and responsibilities for leaders and followers within a group leads to the hardest emotion to overcome within an organization or group: fear. Fear exists in many areas, especially because the working relationship is a social activity. There is fear of not being good enough to meet expectations, the fear of seeming incompetent, the fear of losing one's position, the fear of being publicly criticized or chastised, and the list goes on. These fears apply equally to all members of the group regardless of position. Fear on multiple levels infects the decision-making process for all individuals. On both the leader and follower's parts, these decisions come with experience. However, sometimes in order to gain this experience, bad decisions must be made. That isn't to say to purposely set oneself up, but to not fear failure, and to be able to take risks. Experience comes through learning. Establishing trust is a product of learning, therefore its establishment is also the result of constructing a safe environment between individuals.

When an operating environment isn't safe, surprisingly, trust and risk still apply to bond team members. In the military, law enforcement, and other first responder occupations. Leadership and trust have slightly different connotations that differ from an office environment. These agencies rely heavily on trust, for a slightly different reason. The key factor in their high stress environments is the perception of risk. In this case, the risk is associated to a duty to provide for

others. This is also the difference in belief systems between corporate environments and the high-risk occupations. Members are still bonded by their commitment to their organization's cause. The risk here is defined by a distinct need for trust, because the consequences of taking the wrong action are inherently dangerous to one's personal life, or those around them.

“Obeying orders in the military requires that there be trust in the leader since individuals are expected to give up their right to self-determination and follow orders. Refusal to obey an order carries harsh consequences; not only does it put the individual soldier's life at risk, it also endangers the life of his or her team members and leaders (Bishop, 2018, p. 83)...(This trust is)...a state involving confident positive expectations about another's motives with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk (Bishop, 2018, p. 78).”

Bishop's quote mentions the military specifically, but the premise is the same for all high-risk occupations. Leaders here understand that the ultimate risk is that of getting oneself or others injured or killed. However, that same leader can't maneuver without being able to trust his team to follow up on his directives or possibly take his place in certain situations. In the tactical environment, trust is unique in that it is not withheld unnecessarily due to personality conflict. Even the least skilled or disciplined team member wants to survive, and the person next to them relies on their protection and performance to ensure their own survival. In order to attain this level of trust, it is a matter of enduring the same hardships and training that bonds team members regardless of role.

Risk is also inherent in setting the stage for an organization's future or defining the legacy of a project. In *The Art of Changing Culture*, Dr. Tim Elmore interprets a biblical story, which he calls the Joshua Principle. Moses, leader of a nation of displaced people, recognized that there should be a process for abolishing the need for finding new leadership once he was gone (Elmore 2009, p. 31). Just as in the corporate or military world, the void left when a leader is transferred or lost to circumstances can cause unnecessary confusion and stress. Moses chose to mentor Joshua to be his successor, thereby eliminating the processes involved when choosing a leader from a large

group of applicants. Moses' entire organization could recognize this process, as Joshua was always by Moses' side and gradually took on lesser roles and tasks for his mentor. Once Moses passed, Joshua took over as leader of the nation without challenge. The risks presented in this situation are multiple:

- Moses had to trust that he made the right choice for his successor,
- Moses had to trust that the Nation would accept his choice for their next leader,
- Moses had to trust his judgement of both parties was correct,
- Moses had to trust his methods were effective, and he passed on everything needed,
- Joshua had to trust he could do the job,
- Joshua also had to extend trust to his people in accepting him as Moses' successor ,
- Joshua had to trust Moses was teaching him correctly for the right moral reasons, and
- The nation had to trust both Moses and Joshua as leaders to act in their best interest.

Unfortunately, Joshua didn't mentor a successor, and when he passed, his people suffered greatly before a new leader arose.

This example demonstrates a key activity for leaders to incorporate into their interactive role: mentorship. In selecting mentees from a group, it allows more people into the leader's inner circle, a more intimate relationship in that it risks others seeing the overall process, and possibly can show vulnerabilities that the leader works around. The group views the leader as more of a compatriot and is more willing to take risks and trust that leader with their well-being, regardless of life-or-death situation, or a board determining the effectiveness of a company's marketing campaign. The premise rings true throughout the leader/follower relationship spectrum.

Discussion

“Communities thrive in an environment where members take on leadership roles fluidly; institutions become more efficient within defined structures. The most desirable setup, of course, is when the two can be yoked together (Mohammed, 2014, p. 97).”

The discussion on symbiotic relationships existing between leadership and subordinates is not commonly considered. This is because the repercussions are usually bestowed on the person delegated to have the most responsibility in a group. What has become a habit in many situations is to look immediately to the leader to determine success or failure in a situation or project. While charged with overseeing and directing others to accomplish a goal, a leader assumes pressures from both sides of the spectrum: from their followers, and their own superiors. What isn't considered is that the output is truly the sum of its parts. If they are molded or put together correctly and contain no inner flaws, the machine runs smoothly. In the case of human nature, it is the freedom of choice that can't be a constant when determining one's actions or those of another. Subtle situational nuances trigger varying emotions, leading to the possibility of endless outcomes that determine how a subject will react. These are the possible flaws that break the machine.

A leader can't be omnipotent in foreseeing how all subordinates will feel or react in any given situation. They establish the groundwork of expectations and the overall result of the group's task. The subordinates have a responsibility in honoring those guidelines through their behavior and labor. If those elements are not provided to satisfaction, the leader's position allows them to determine the means of correcting the situation, or if an individual is to be removed from the environment. What should be determined and further developed is how people are introduced to their roles, and that expectations are met through clear, consistent communication. Training all facets of a group to recognize and respect their positions in reference to those around them may increase harmonic production. In doing so, both leaders and followers can become satisfied that

the best efforts were met with the best intentions in any given situation. The difference between leaders and followers can be funneled into one idea, that the leader chose to act as such. It is the conscious decision to care for the group and for the success of the group's purpose. Subordinates must understand that, and have faith in the structure above them, that they will be supported in the best ways possible. By fostering mutual understanding, the idea that leaders need followers and vice-versa, compassionate conduct and enthusiastic attitudes and action can be increased dramatically between all group members, regardless of level of responsibility. In a discussion of the results of the Fetzer Institute's establishment of a new leadership framework, servant leadership and core values of community effectively improved their internal operations and project results. In order to achieve this, they (Mohammed, 2008, p. 97):

- elicited the active participation of community members in helping shape a new vision,
- added a dimension that highlights relationships as a complement to structure and process,
- increased faith and confidence in its leadership, as demonstrated by more staff members bringing concerns to senior management,
- gained a thorough knowledge of its history, philosophy, and past projects,
- heard many members report improved relations and a sense of being valued, and
- integrated ideas from staff into a draft strategy vision.

While demonstrated to work in a smaller organization based in Michigan, this organization still maintained a global perspective, with remote projects being managed by diverse people and cultures. Taking this into consideration, it isn't too far a stretch to assume that larger organizations, and also those with a smaller area of operations, could train employees and modify their practices to follow suit.

Conclusion

Leadership is more than delegating responsibilities down to one's subordinates just as being a follower isn't just mindless reactions to direction. Effective group performance is subject to the environment established by the group. This environment is subject to how each group member feels they are being treated. By establishing mutual respect, trust is established between leadership and follower roles, which allows each party access to the other in a way that is personal almost to the level of a sacred pact. Each party has significant roles to participate in and act upon within the group, or throughout the task completion process. Rather than seeing leadership as an imposing force over a workforce, establishing the leader as the facilitator of the group's needs while accomplishing the organizational goal is more effective. It is also the responsibility of the follower to maintain their awareness of their responsibility to the leader by performing as expected or better.

In this mutual realization of placement rather than status in relation to one another, the stigma of elite leadership versus the working members can be eradicated. In order to accomplish this, levels of trust must be extended to the level where fears can be dealt with effectively at all levels, maximizing all group members' ability to perform at full capacity. By keeping the awareness of mutual reliance on one another for different needs, loyalty through trust can replace blind, forced action with the willingness and desire to perform for one another.

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