White Paper

Leadership Success:
Behaviors, Competencies and Responsibilities That Produce Positive Results

Part 3 – Responsibilities

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Introduction

"The Buck Stops Here."

           —Former U.S. President Harry S. Truman

One of the great strengths that defines a successful leader is the ability to build teams that can deliver products and services faster, better and more cost-effectively. Developing this strength, however, requires a successful balance of several factors. In 2005, my colleague David Williams and I designed and developed what we termed the Behaviors, Competencies and Responsibilities (BCR) approach to leadership to identify these very factors. As you can see from the diagram below, when the three critical elements of behaviors, competencies, and responsibilities come together—as they do in the center purple area—you get effective, successful, productive, powerful, thoughtful, prudent, strong and wise leadership results.

I'll be exploring each of these aspects individually as they relate to successful team leadership in three successive White Papers. Part 1 focused on **Behaviors**, and in Part 2 I addressed **Competencies**. In Part 3, we examine the final aspect—**Responsibilities**.
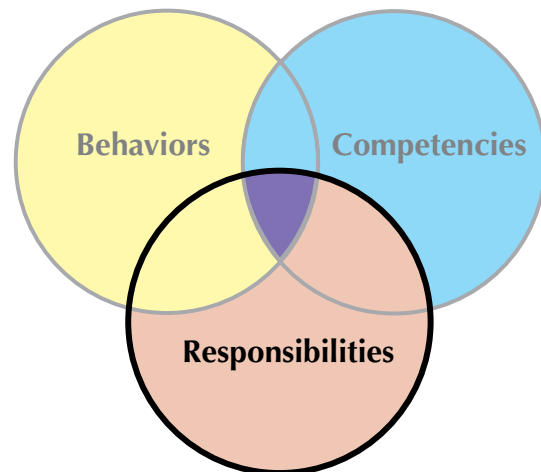
Responsibilities

In essence, responsibilities are what leaders consider are their duties, obligations and work. Executing the following inspirational responsibilities is a hallmark of effective leadership: providing coaching, aligning visions and goals, and managing change.

Providing Coaching

Coaching represents a critical attribute of leadership. A leader who coaches helps others advance their skills while building a stronger team and providing career guidance. According to Emotional Intelligence (EI) guru Daniel Goleman, coaching in leadership is best summed up by the phrase "try this."[1] Leaders use coaching to help employees identify their strengths and weaknesses so that they, in turn, can exploit their positive aspects and overcome their limitations. Also, team members' individual career aspirations and personal goals are incorporated into the project mix, so that team and individual goals are seen as being connected to—and congruent with—the larger effort.

Keep in mind coaching in leadership is not being a "hand holder." It is about giving plenty of feedback on performance, delegating effectively and giving out challenging assignments. Leaders who use coaching most effectively have the ability to send these messages to their teams:

- **I believe in your abilities**

- **I'm willing to invest my time in you**

- **In exchange for this trust and investment, I expect you to do your best**

Goleman's research also found that coaching was the least common inspirational responsibility found in the workplace, mostly because the majority of leaders don't see themselves as having the time. On the other hand, although it takes time and patience, it's a short-term investment that yields above-average team performance in the long term.

To summarize, coaching leaders are genuinely interested in helping the team succeed. They do this by focusing on the development of others, along with aligning team and individual goals, while using empathy and Emotional Intelligence.

Aligning Vision and Goals

In Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice asks the Cheshire Cat, " Please, could you tell me which way I should go?" "That depends on where you want to go," the Cheshire Cat replies. "I don't really care," says Alice, "as long as I get somewhere." To which the Cheshire Cat responds, "Well, it doesn't matter then, does it?"

Unlike Alice, leaders *do* need to know where they're going and need to establish a vision. That vision should focus on:

- **Determining goals** (Where are we going?)

- **Developing strategies to reach them** (How will we get there?)

- **Developing and conducting evaluations to identify the point when the goals have been reached** (How will we know when we get there?)

A vision is more than a forecast. It shows how all the parts of a project fit together and relate to one another. By thinking strategically and systematically, leaders ensure that there are clear team goals that will foster excitement and commitment within the team.

In fact, followers expect leaders to set the stage. Says Peter F. Drucker, "The foundation of effective leadership is thinking through the organization's mission, defining it and establishing it, clearly and visibly. The leader sets the goals, sets the priorities, and sets and maintains the standards. What distinguishes the leader from the misleader is his goals. Whether the compromise he makes with the constraints of reality—which may involve political, economic, and financial people problems—is compatible with his mission and goals, or leads away from them, determines whether he is an effective leader. And whether he holds fast to a few basic standards (exemplifying them in his own conduct), or whether standards for him are what he can get away with, determines whether the leader has followers or hypocritical time-servers."[2]

Managing Change

The late U.S. President John F. Kennedy said, "The one unchangeable certainty is that nothing is certain or unchangeable." By accepting that change is natural and good, leaders can help teams transition through it while always looking for ways to improve performance and manage change more effectively by determining what might be done differently.

Essentially, there are three competing questions that a leader must assess and balance to achieve successful and sustainable organizational change:

1. **What performance is required now?**
   This question addresses the global market forces and competitors that affect the business. To be effective, leaders need a quantitative and intuitive understanding of the team performance that will yield the greatest success.

2. **What are the priorities for improving organizational performance?**
   Knowing what's going on in the marketplace assists the leader in ranking what needs to be changed, resulting in a clearer vision of critical opportunities.

3. **What is the capacity to change of the people in the organization?**
   A critical leadership responsibility is to assess the capacity of an organization to change and match that to the existing capacity of employees to learn new skills and behaviors.[3]

To sustain success, leaders must never rest on their laurels. Instead, they must constantly challenge the status quo by experimenting and creating excitement that will get attention, energize followers and inspire team members to not simply settle for less than the best.

Summary

Over the course of these three White Papers, I have shared with you what I believe are the leadership behaviors, competencies, and responsibilities—the building blocks of the BCR approach—to provide leaders with the tools and techniques that ensure success. Hopefully, these Papers have made it clear that it's essential to take care of the "people" side of things (i.e., emotions, motivations, needs, aspirations, etc.), and that the degree of success you achieve as a leader will be measured by the results that are realized through the efforts of the team.

It's my firm belief that the information I've shared here will equip leaders with skills and abilities they can apply to optimize productivity, boost performance and deliver high-quality results. Ultimately, a good leader will build a team in which each member's strengths are made productive while their limitations are made irrelevant by the strengths of others.

References

1. Goleman, Daniel, Boyatis, R., & McKee, A., *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead With Emotional Intelligence*, Harvard Business School Press, pgs. 59-64, 2002.

2. Drucker, Peter F. *The Essential Drucker*, HarperCollins, pg. 270, 2001.

3. Heim, Ph.D., Pat, Chapman, E., & Lashotka, S., *Learning to Lead: An Action Plan for Success*, Thomson Learning, pgs. 52-53, 2004.

Web Sites

Ninth House Network:
Provides the latest news and resources related to improving leadership and management skills.
http://www.ninthhouse.com

FastCompany.com:
A monthly journal that features articles about leadership challenges and experiences.
http://www.fastcompany.com/homepage/index.html

The CEO Refresher:
A monthly newsletter concentrating on topics in leadership and high-level management.
http://www.refresher.com/ceo.html

The Harvard Business Review:
For those who want to delve a bit further into the latest research about today's workplace.
http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu

Books

The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness

by Stephen R. Covey
(ISBN: 978-0762428533)
Publisher: Running Press Book Publishers

Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ

by Daniel Goleman
(ISBN: 978-0553375067)
Publisher: Bantam Books

Working with Emotional Intelligence

by Daniel Goleman
(ISBN: 978-0553104624)
Publisher: Bantam Books

The Tao of Leadership: Leadership Strategies for a New Age

by John Heider
(ISBN: 978-0893340797)
Publisher: Humanics Limited

Managing Change and Transition

by Richard Luecke
(ISBN: 978-1578518741)
Publisher: Harvard Business School Press

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James L. Haner is the head of Ultimate Business Resources Consulting, an independent firm offering business consulting and project management services. James has more than 30 years of experience in business and IT. His responsibilities have included establishing a corporate Web presence for a Fortune 500 company, creating a successful organization-wide employee development plan, and developing the IT infrastructure for a start-up company in both project management and leadership roles. He earned an MA degree in Management from the Claremont Graduate School and took classes with Peter F. Drucker, "the father of modern management." James is also an instructor, author and technical editor for Learning Tree as well as a certified Project Management Professional.

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