

Behavioral Intentions and Ethical Influence

Robin D. Bishop, ORGL610

Gonzaga University

### **Behavioral Intentions and Ethical Influence**

Leadership behavior and influence have long been studied, analyzed, quantified, qualified, dissected, criticized, and sanctified. While style, personality, influence, beliefs, norms, history, and personal experience determine a leadership praxis or intention, it is my firm belief that defining the “good” in leadership classification can only be accomplished through an individual’s desire to work on themselves. A willingness to look in the mirror, take personal stock, assess motivations, come to terms with the dark side, identify duplicity, clarify foundational beliefs, determine communication philosophy, and continue to learn through the recurring failure to maintain awareness of all of the above defines a “good” leader in my thinking.

### **Action Plan**

**Background.** Having been through a recent restructure that eliminated my position in the last organization I worked with, and knowing the same organization has been the poster child for how I do NOT want to practice leadership, ethics, and communication throughout my master’s program, I am choosing to focus on the positive impact I will have on a start-up organization I intend to launch. As this will be a brand new organization, I have the honor of building it from the foundational principles of my own beliefs and will hope to instill values, codes, rituals, and a culture that promotes collaboration and individuality, profit-sharing, an informal work climate, and an ethical dialogue and communication practice that creates a beneficial, engaging, and supportive environment.

**Organizational Context.** Even as the founder I hope to eliminate the formal organization chart and formal corporate elements of old while still holding to the stewardship responsibilities of a more traditional organization. External stakeholders consisting of customers, readers,

contributors, and advertisers, will ultimately benefit from the collaborative and innovative climate of the organization in the healthy working relationships and communication policies, as well as in the high-quality service and finished product. Internal stakeholders will benefit from the supportive and collaborative culture and the voice they will have in individually and collectively achieving goals.

### **Purpose and Impact**

My conservative upbringing of sacrifice and service inculcated an awareness of putting others before myself, sometimes to a fault. While the benefits of this strong foundation remain, I have since found appreciation for the connectedness and of all things and the freedom of exploration beyond the boundaries of traditional structure. Having walked a leadership journey that straddles both sides of leadership praxis, leading and following (collaborating), in healthy and ethical as well as dysfunctional and unethical organizations, I have a solid idea of what I never want to be as a leader. The reverse image of this provides a clear picture of who I aspire to be. Having a solid foundation of servanthood as well as a mature self-awareness that can only come after walking a few miles on this earth, I am allowed to focus on me, believing the work done within will carry through in every role I have in life and will encourage others to examine the same in their lives.

### **Focused Objective.**

The climate and culture of the new organization will include annual philanthropic and charity work to benefit organizations, causes, and environmental issues that the team is passionate about. Social responsibility policies that include a formal paper-free/waste-free policy raising awareness of reducing carbon footprint as an organization, and with the hopes of eventually building a net-zero commercial space to operate from.

All organizational ethics practices will be trained and communicated via a formal founder belief statement (letters), one-on-one orientations with new hires, mentoring new leaders, and a one sentence organizational mantra. Informal reinforcement will be through stories, rituals, practices, attitudes, and behaviors of leadership and supervision that will set an example of equality, diversity, fairness, and decisions based on treating co-stakeholders (internal and external) simply with honor and respect.

As is typical, all devices, information and data exchange accounts, used to fulfill daily task work for the organization would be the property of the organization. This data would be used for training purposes and for opportunities for growth among team members and leadership alike. The policy and culture will utilize a fully anonymous and retribution-safe accountability line for all team members to utilize in order to alert senior leadership to issues that may need to be discussed, improved, re-trained, or that may require intervention. This not only promotes honest and ethical communication but encourages morally responsible team membership.

Moral common ground will be established not only through the walking and talking of core beliefs and goals of the organization, but through establishing formal common moral ground for every team member. The practices that Johnson outlines in *Organizational Ethics – A Practical Approach* (2019) highlight the need for adopting a *cooperative orientation* that promotes individual and team success dependent on each other and *doing your fair share* (social loafing) which speaks to stewardship and responsibility to your team, yourself, and your organization (Johnson, 2019, pp. 229-230).

These practices are to support and build the community of memory as is defined as, “a sense of organizational conscience, retaining what a given organization deems as good” (Arnett et al., 2018, p. 139). The culture and community of memory will always be a top priority, so

anything that endangers these will be reportable, reviewable, and openly and ethically dialogued in an effort to retain a healthy saying of the said (p. 138). Our culture will not only live the “said” but be open to the ever-progressive awareness of the “saying” (p. 143).

### **Action Steps.**

In short, the intent is to practice what we preach, respect ourselves, our team members, our organization, and our readers/constituents through real and intentional moral and ethical behavior and communication.

In my personal leadership plan I have outlined practices and commitments for stewardship, fairness, authenticity, and transformation that I plan to implement in this new organization. Leadership practices include:

**Be revolutionary.** Embrace revolutionary leadership to common goal-setting and goal attainment. Organization is “a highly educational process in which leaders and people together experience true authority and freedom which they then seek to establish in society by transforming the reality which mediates them,” (Freire, 2000, p. 178).

**Encourage “metanoia.”** “Increase awareness of change of one’s entire person, a move toward self-transcendence,” (Carey, 1999, p. 7) in myself and others, supporting decreased organizational dislocation and increasing personal, social, and organizational identities.

**Lead toward logos.** Logos being “the synthesis of all private truths, the integration of all separate realities, that which is common to all,” (Carey, 1999, p. 39), can only transpire when leading from a healthy awareness across all five management frames; rational, human, systems, political, and cultural. Awareness of all five frameworks leads to a balanced promotion of empowerment, collaboration, and dialogue. To fully understand these three things in an

organization, “the leader must not see them as separate activities, but as hierarchical stages on the path toward the logos,” (Carey, 1999, p. 103).

**Embrace the third way.** “The third way is the way of nonviolence, by which [it is meant as] a commitment to act in every situation in ways that honor the soul” (Palmer, 2004, p. 170), mine and others. There are incredible leaders in every level of an organization that are just busting to make a difference, but traditionally have no way of being heard or are never given an opportunity to lead with their heart. I know, I have been one repeatedly. It is dispiriting and disengaging. Embracing the third way will build a culture of collaboration and appreciation.

**Be a kid at heart.** Lead from a place of child-like learning and sharing. The entirety of *Leadership Theory and Practice* (Northouse, 2016) opened my eyes to the breadth of study on leadership and what constitutes a great leader. It reminds me that self-transcendence can occur as long as we are seeking to improve, which I feel the numerous studies, surveys, new discoveries and trends speak to. I especially identify with the newer studies on transformational, authentic, and servant methods that support practicing leadership from a place of vulnerability, equality, and selflessness.

Leadership commitments include:

**I will practice new professionalism.** “In the midst of the powerful force field of institutional life, where so much might compromise my core values, I have found firm ground on which to stand—the ground from which I can call myself, my colleagues, and my workplace back to our true mission,” (Palmer, 2017, p. 213). I will keep my core identity anchored to my values, beliefs, and passions.

**I will mentor/teach/model** - formally, those that are willing; and informally, those that might be in the midst of their self-awareness journey. Teachable moments, shared incidences,

and memorable stories, “offer you the opportunity to pass along lessons in real time, not just in theory or the classroom...,” (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 92).

**I will keep leadership an affair of the heart** (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 313).

Stewardship for those in my organization, whether I am at an executive level of leadership or leading a team or department will remain at the top of the list of leadership and ethics intentions. This I hope to accomplish by keeping the Golden Rule in mind and treating all on the team as real people with hopes, dreams, worries, fears, aspirations, and goals of their own.

### **Ethics and Behavior Table**

**Stakeholders:** Employees, Advertisers, Sponsors, Readers, customers, Founders

**Approach:** A dialogic ethical communication maintained through what Seeger (1997) calls a sense-making model. "Organizational communication ethics listens to the stories that frame a community of memory, connects responsibility to the dwelling place, and attends to the inevitability of change reflected in communicative practices" (Arnett et al, 2018, p. 147).

#### **Roles & Relationships**

These communications will take place publicly and privately, and one-on-one during orientation, in regular reviews, and as needed to address moral team membership issues.

As this is a new organization, support will come in the form of the team members as they build, and my own personal leadership mentors and family members.

**Pre-organization launch:** Establish the organization structure, leadership and business agreements, codes of ethics and operation, and the human resource foundation and philosophy the organization will be operated on (founder story, profit-sharing, training, orientation, etc.), and build the communications for all. Also establishing necessary structure for percentage of every dollar earned to go to charity, and to establish our responsible social and environmental organizational goals based on the Caux Principles (Johnson, 2019, p. 373-374).

### Chronological Timeline

**Upon launch:** Present the organization, its story, its beliefs, its purpose and intentions to the world and begin building the advertiser, customer, and client base.

**As needed and at regular intervals:** With foundations in mind interview prospective employees, hire, orient, and establish clearly communicated expectations and roles. Also produce content for clients, readers, sponsors, advertisers that honors them and the organization and that fulfills the intentions and purposes of the organization. Maintain and repeat as necessary.

### Resources

Resources prior to launch will include a leadership and startup mentor (may not be one person), a partner to share in the vision and the purpose with as well as to share the immense load of work, all of the resources I have accumulated throughout my ORGL studies as reference and guidance, legal to ensure intellectual property protection and for review of all policies, contracts, and documentation being created.

**Short-term:** Quarterly surveys of stakeholders to review whether we are meeting expectations and fulfilling our purpose. Indicators of success will point to quick fiscal traction and advertiser/readership acceptance.

### Short-term & Long-term Indicators/ Outcomes

**Long-term:** Annual reviews of strategies, customer service performance, stakeholder satisfaction, employee retention, fiscal goals being met.

**Successful Outcome:** A moral and ethical approach to authentic business, leadership, and communication practices that provides an unprecedented environment to work in, a unique voice for our readers and stakeholders, and a product and purpose we can all find great satisfaction and fulfillment having been involved with.



### **Impact**

This assignment's structure and the request to put it all down in a formal plan, has made me realize how much more work and learning needs to go into the ultimate ideal of launching an organization of my own creation. Having these critical foundations in place, establishing the core beliefs based on my own and/or partner's beliefs will be critical to all of the other details and pieces being created. Once launched having a solid well-thought-out ethics plan, belief structure, and organizational culture intention will help me to remain cognizant of my ultimate concern as the founder, to be the best steward for all parties involved.

This assignment has heightened the awareness for daily reflection of my motivations in action and communication as well as other team members' motivations in order to remain in the most undivided, useful, moral and ethical place to lead to facilitate personal and professional transformation.

It has heightened my awareness, increased my passion, and has given me an incredible expectation and energy for things to come.

## References

- Johnson, C. E. (2019). *Organizational ethics: A practical approach* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Arnett, R. C., Fritz, J. M. H., & Bell, L. M. (2018). *Communication ethics literacy: Dialogue and difference*. Kendall Hunt Publications.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Carey, D. M. (1999). *Heraclitean Fire: Journeying on the Path of Leadership*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- Palmer, P. (2004) *A hidden wholeness*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership - Theory and Practice*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Boston: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Palmer, P. (2017). *The Courage to Teach*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. (2017). *The leadership challenge* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.