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DENY THE CONSENT TO BE GOVERNED: RISK LEADERSHIP THEORY

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Denying the consent to be governed: Risk leadership theory takes a radical approach to leadership, change, and organizational improvement. It departs from the traditional and contemporary views of leadership where the leaders/power figures serve as the change agents for their organizations. Instead, most change agents are not the recognized leaders/power figures, but rather are the lower and middle level employees because power structures reassert stability and squash change when risk is felt. Organizational leaders, as well as lower and middle level employees, need to recognize the weaknesses of contemporary change models that are top-down and reinforce status quo quick fix thinking solutions. Risk leadership theory encourages lower and middle level employees to confront and challenge the status quo authority for the purpose of transforming their organizations. Furthermore, this model seeks to establish a corporate culture that not only accepts, but also expects, confrontation and challenge to enhance problem solving, decision making, and overall organizational performance. This theory is a call for lower and middle level employees to "step up to the plate," and not wait for the power structure to transform their corporation.

Introduction

Classical Leadership: The Will to Stabilize and Control

Leadership has been an important issue for centuries. From the era of Roman Caesars and the days of Attila the Hun, the effect of leadership was often measured in blood. In medieval times, dark robes and grave fear of the omnipotent, absolute authority of one man inspired leadership over others. This concern became more noble, but none less bloody, in the Napoleonic battles as well as our own Revolutionary war. Those leaders carrying the biggest "stick", the heartiest troops, and the most modern weaponry were considered the leader of men.

With the introduction of industrialized techniques, the popular study of leadership has become more centered on the modern organization (Drucker, 1993). Many scholars and great thinkers have struggled with the notion that effective leaders spur maximum production. Leadership of this era was generally wasteful of the valuable human resource that kept them in power. Leadership was measured not by body counts, but by the number of rifles produced, bricks laid, and bushels of cotton picked. The results of this era, though literally different from the barbaric centuries, are figuratively similar to the extent that humans are a means to an end determined from above.

As the industrialized world moves into the era of information and knowledge work, the role of the leader is no less important (Drucker, 1993). Today, society is marked with some of the same challenges as the year 1 AD. Men still fight over dirt. The political element has many corrupt and deceitful elements. The workplace is much like a battlefield or factory floor where work is done despite the concerns of an important constituent - the worker.

The classic leader was more than just acceptable to the people they led; they were expected to act in a manner consistent with "how leaders are supposed to act". While some may look at the means they used as antique, they produced necessary results in workplaces that often had many unskilled and "disposable" people. Despite the challenges, classical leaders still exist because they get the job done.

Assumptions and Purposes of Classical Leadership

Classical leaders have several guiding convictions from which to pattern their leadership style. The assumptions of classical leadership have been unusually consistent since before the dark ages; there is no reason why classical leadership should stray from these very focused commitments given the results: production at minimal costs. For many classical leaders the purpose can be simplified to one very primitive concept: to create stable profit. Stability is key in the classical organization. Change is seen as disruptive of the workflow and allows more error and chance in the business equation. Profit is critical to the organization as well; every day without profit is failure.

Leaders have the 'right' and 'duty' to lead. As the key element of the workplace, leaders are often given much authority over day to day functioning of staff members (Barge, 1994). Leaders have the authority to make decisions, confront issues, make others

accountable, as well as hire and evaluate employees on a daily basis. For classical leaders this responsibility takes the form of a duty, or right, to perform leadership in the way they see best. This right, given by anyone from the next level of management, to the CEO, or even from divine sources, is unquestionable.

This form of leadership works because the contribution of followers is limited to following directions (Drucker, 1993). Classical leaders generally share the belief that workers are inefficient, and if left to their own devices, would not perform at a satisfactory level. Leaders under this model generally use more direct, and sometimes coercive, means to get the job done.

In less civilized times, the "right" to lead often came through two complimentary forms. First, the right to lead came from a legacy like a kingdom, or the confirmation of spiritual purity. The second form, fear, often followed this first and was often even more compelling. Because people understood the divine right of a few to rule the many there was fear of the consequences that the few could muster against the masses. These actions stood as a strong deterrent to possible change agents that stood watching in the crowd as people died for their insurrection.

A further implication arising from this assumption is that not everyone can lead. In the world of the classical leader the only people with leadership duties are leaders. Since not everyone can lead others, and since they are the leaders, they must have the right and duty to lead. Furthermore, it does not take a serious stretch of reasoning to assert that if classical leaders do not perform then the people they account to may well sound the death march for their job. So classical leadership has more than the desire to lead since they have been socialized in that manner, they have the duty to lead in the directive manner since their superiors are often classical and mandate results from them.

Methods of Classical Leaders

Knowing the "why" and "what" of classical status quo leadership is one thing, knowing the "how" is quite another. While the effects and results emerging from classical leadership are quite direct and astounding, the methods that are used to achieve these results range from obvious "power plays" to covert "sting operations".

Leaders can do as they wish as long as they get results. One of the most used features of pertaining to classical management is the notion that managers do what it takes to get the job done in the most expedient and efficient manner possible (Burns, 1978). Perhaps a most striking example comes from the traditional drill

sergeant and basic training recruit. In this situation the drill sergeant is given the difficult task of leading new recruits to an outcome that is so foreign to them that often "shock" management must be performed. To make tough soldiers out of new recruits, a kinder and gentler drill sergeant approach will not work. Instead, as has been done for centuries, recruits are subjected to more than strenuous exercise, sleep and hygiene deprivation, extreme hunger and thirst, mental, and often physical abuse. Of course people excuse this behavior since it has always been done this way and it seems to work. Both of these statements are true and are a strong argument in favor of this approach, but still for many a recruit this approach borders inhumane for even the most "gung-ho" recruit.

Another basic task of the leader is to divide labor (Barge, 1994). In traditional sweatshop and fishing pier labor situations this was perhaps the most visible function of leadership. If you were in poor favor with your leader, your hours (and hence your lifestyle) would suffer. If, however, you were in the favor of your leader you would be allowed to work the long hours, doing back breaking work, for a mere pittance, and go home satisfied with the abuse you endured because it "built your character" and "that was all we ever knew".

Another concern surrounding the division of labor is the fairness and equitability of the work. Every person has had to work for someone that they thought treated them unfairly or singled them out for the worst jobs. There are jobs that must be done by someone; jobs that no one really wants to do. In a traditional organization, given the fact that leaders had virtually unrestrained power and authority over people, the jobs were probably much worse and the decision was less than arbitrary and sometimes even capricious. The division of labor is the tool of the leader to promote those in favor by exposing only them to the jobs that lead to promotion and by withholding those same jobs from people in less favor.

Leaders lead, workers work. The role of leaders is easily summarized, but complex nonetheless. Leaders make the company money! This is done in a variety of ways. In some organizations the work of leaders is ritualistic and rule based. For example, in the military, policy drives much of the action of any person "in command". At the large and historic corporate giants, like General Motors and IBM, policies drive much of a leader's efforts. As well, we all know policies are infinitely regressive: you can always build more policies for the policies that you have just codified. Policies serve the purpose of keeping leaders in power and keeping workers working. Policies serve to stabilize, organize and to make efficient the roughly inefficient

worker in a chaotic organization. Policies keep the status quo working, and keep change to a minimum. In their purest sense, the role of policies is often to substitute for creative managerial responses in the face of unique situations. To say that invoking policy has been a driving force of the success of organizations would be only partially true! The fact of the matter is that policies, and the rituals that are associated with the policies, are just easy ways of getting out of doing the real stuff that leaders should be doing…leadership!

In other organizations there may be fewer rules, but the effect can be the same for the classical leader. The only thing that could create compliance quicker than a policy is the fear of a classical leader's wrath. Though informal, this type of control can be as motivating as any formal policy. This wall of power becomes most problematic when followers, out of fear and excessive control, actually prop up the leader and allow status quo thinking to rule. Change agents cannot permeate this wall of control. Fear and control has now squashed all hopes of changing the very system that allows the status quo leader the authority to strike fear.

According to classical leadership, workers have no real incentive to do any work since classical leadership regulates and restricts any individuality and "fun" out of the workplace since it does not fit within the guidelines of production. People come to work to work, not to have fun, after all. If people want to enjoy themselves they can do it after work. So workers go to their job day after day and do the same dull and unempowering job over and over. Laziness is programmed into the workplace to the extent that people have no control over improvement of the system or their workplace. Suggestion boxes are lame and trivial ways of getting the point across and whistle blowing is a sacrilege even if there is criminal action or obvious incompetence involved. Workers are lulled into a sense of security and stability, even if the stability is not very appealing. There is blind faith in leadership given the stability of this system. Blind faith may be the hood over the face of social change right before the axe of stability and status quo thinking falls.

Leadership is not for everyone. Classical leaders embrace the notion that leadership is special. For the classicist there is a definite mystic quality surrounding leadership. This special quality eludes the mortal worker since they could never understand and appreciate the full complexity of leadership. Leadership, to the classicist, is held at the top, by the few, for the few, with the best interests of the company in mind (Champy, 1995). These goals have little latitude for concern of the worker, and maximize the power of the few…the suits.

Classical leaders follow the Golden Rule of Management - those with the most gold rule! This thinking creates a degree of exclusiveness within the ranks of leadership, since not everyone can be a player when the classical leader throws funding at those areas that best meet their objectives. Leaders promote those within "the club", and those outside the box are minimalized, trialialized, and tokenized, if need be. Classical leadership does not reward diversity, cultural or pragmatic, unless they are forced to or if the diversity becomes co-opted and mainstreamed. After all, if the classical leader holds all the rewards, then the organization should bend to their desires, rather than the needs of other less fortunate worker types. Leading is the use of power and position to achieve the maximum production possible in a manner that promotes stability and control.

Leaders organize, control, command, decide, and manipulate for results (Barge, 1994). The real methods of leadership, from the classical perspective, coalesce around command and control (Champy, 1995). The most effective leaders are the ones that can impose structure on a chaotic organization that had no form before. Given the fact that the classicist desires stability and little change, formal structure is the ultimate way of codifying what is good in the organization. If you were to look at any number of organizational charts prior to the 1960s you would quickly notice that there were often 4, 5, or even as many as 6 levels of management between the CEO and the line worker. Management creates a linking system where one person has a span of authority over their subordinates. Leaders above them have a span of control that goes beyond them to others. This thinking led organizations to become departmentalized as opposed to being teamed.

Leaders must be decisive to be most productive. Since decision making is where money is made or lost, classical leaders must be quick and emotionally detached in their decision making. Classical leaders don't pass on making decisions since that would be a sign of weakness and lack of control, so they make decisions that could be made by those below them with more information. Subordinate workers are there to work, not to make the decisions about work. Classical leadership thinking said that leadership, at its best, should be resolute in their determination to depersonalize the job of leading others. Leaders should treat others at a distance, to make sure that too much attachment would not "cloud their good judgment". The mechanical nature of leading others is reinforced by the fact that leaders follow policy to make decisions.

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In retrospect, the method of classical leadership is decisive, commanding, controlling, and unquestionable. As a method of leadership, this model is severely flawed given the top-down, autocratic nature. Still, many people around the world, and around your block, work in organizations that have not yet outlawed this form of activity. Classical leadership is alive and well in industrial America.

Results from Classical Leadership

Of all the things that could be said about classical leadership, the ability to generate results must be near the top of the list of truisms. Through fear, command, control, and manipulation classical leaders are able to push production to the efficient limit, and maintain that level as long as the leader sustains control and stability. Unfortunately, that control often fades due to burnout, excessive attrition, or organizational transfers making efficient production more elusive than the stability seeking classical leader desires.

Classical leadership has been the poster child for efficient and stable production for a long time. Classical leaders have been able to produce when other methods have failed. All you need to do in order to see the results of classical leadership is to explore wartime industries in Europe of the United States. Much of the factory work was dictatorial and autocratic. The resulting production was large enough to win wars. The modern educational industry has also been patterned off this template. Students have been herded through the system in the most efficient method possible. These tendencies have been institutionalized in not just company policy, but also in the content students are taught. Accounting and management principles classes have become the mainstream tools for teaching people about leadership.

The basic effect of this efficiency mindset has been even more comprehensive than perhaps we can know. The arts, possibly the last bastion for the fight against stability, have become mass-produced at every possible chance. Businesses are evaluated only on the basis of the balance sheet as opposed to the employee's needs, the values they enact, or the greater good they produce for the community and the world around them. Efficiency has given the leader an objective basis for judging good and bad, right and wrong. The essence of this push has been a depersonalization of the workplace, perhaps even dehumanization.

A second effect of the push for efficiency has been organizational stability. Today organizations enjoy prosperity at a level only imagined 20 years ago. American and international businesses enjoy globalization to a degree that was never considered by most classical leaders years ago. Many organizations have survived by using a strategy of efficiency and stability. But, as many have argued, the last 20 years of the 20th century have brought about serious change in the way business is done. Stability has been the date we brought to the dance, but we better be thinking about other friends to be leaving with. Your date died on the dance floor. Your company is stable now, but in the day of "grow or die" mentality stability is not the ticket to future organizational riches and boardroom success.

With all of the stability that has come from the historic prevalence of classical leadership, the modern bureaucracy has emerged as the "state of the art" for organizational structure. Bureaucracy, or the unfettered building of department and policy upon department and policy, is the popular model of efficiency. Bureaucracy allows classical leaders to hide behind rules, regulations, and polices, and to further minimize the personalization within the organization. Bureaucracy allows leaders to build power in uncontrolled ways to protect themselves, to benefit themselves, and to exploit others (even the company in some cases). Bureaucracy centers its resources on self-reservation and stability and the death of individuality and spontaneous organizational change and expansion. Bureaucracy takes the perspective that the organization should not depend on any one person; even classical leaders can be replaced by other more stable and efficient classical leaders.

Division between the haves and the have-nots has become endemic in the classical leadership model. Classical leaders reward those who are willing subjects of their version of leadership. The division becomes more institutional when leaders promote ONLY those who act like they do, who lead like they do, or look like they do. Even though bureaucracies have adopted policies that promote traditionally divided entities, the classical leader finds ways of using those policies that serve their ends and finding other policies to subvert the integration. The division to which we refer here is not limited to minority, but could include socio-economic divisions, where your kids go to school, the color of your hair, facial hair, and other points of personal issue for a classical leader. Division becomes a way of life for the classicist

Implications of Classical Leadership

Classical leadership is really more about leaders, not leadership or followers (Burns, 1978). The classicist uses methods that are focused on their personal gain or organizational objectives rather than the greater collective. The real method of leadership is top-down rather than peer, collaborative, or bottom-up. Classical

leadership offered the peace and stability that was necessary for an uneducated and unmotivated workforce. In the industrial era, the efficiency of classical leadership was essential in order to maximize the benefits and minimize costs. Classical leadership was expected and somewhat appropriate given the circumstances of that era (Burns, 1978).

Classical leadership, though important for centuries, is not responsive enough for success in the current fast-paced environment. Classical leadership, with its bloated bureaucracy and drive for stability, dooms the modern organization to mediocrity. The 1980s and 1990s saw a major reaction to classical leadership. This reaction, progressive leadership, offered hope and prayer to doomed classical organizations and their leaders.

Progressive Leadership: The Will to Change and Empower

By the mid-1970's, it became apparent to most of corporate America that stability was no longer the prescription for organizational health. Relatively easy growth that had served the 1950's, 1960's and much of the 1970's was no longer holding true. Business leaders throughout America realized that economic conditions were much more competitive and volatile. The corporate environment was experiencing tremendous changes. A combination of increased market and global competition, regulatory demands, new microeconomic trends, technological changes, and demographic shifts in the workplace led to a new business climate (Kotter, 1990). Status quo thinking and slow incremental organizational change and improvement would no longer be enough for survival. Thus, the will to stabilize was not going to be the answer for organizational success, but rather, a ticket to sure failure (Katzenbach, 1998).

Purposes of Progressive Leadership

Business leaders began to realize that they would have to increase quality and reduce costs to insure growth, to compete, and to even survive in this new environment. Transformational change and leadership would need to replace incremental approaches to improvements. Therefore, corporate leaders began playing a new game – the change game. In the 1980's and 1990's we experienced an explosion of new management techniques and approaches to enhance organizational growth (Rost, 1993). The quality movement (TQM, CQI, etc.), re-engineering methods, strategic thinking and planning, change management, organizational improvement, and transformational leadership were all attempts to implement major "change" in our companies (Katzenbach, 1998). In the

name of organizational success, managers and consultants alike were encouraging intervention strategies that truly altered the organization. The motto chanted by many was (and for that matter still is) – change or die! The will to stabilize no longer guaranteed growth, success, or even survival. The will to change had become the answer.

Over the last two decades management consultants and scholars have introduced a wide array of "change models and strategies" (Katzenbach, 1998). These vary from simple 1-2-3 management techniques and strategies for implementing change to very large comprehensive and elaborate models that are intended to transform the entire company. For example, McCarthy (1995) talks about the need to follow a tight transition plan which includes describing the future state, identifying preconditions, evaluating abilities, developing a change master plan, and then communicating that change activity. McFarland, Senn, and Childress (1993) illustrate a model with conflicting forces. Here an innovation cycle interacts with the inevitable resistance cycle to produce movement. Tichy and Devanna (1997) describe a three-part drama including the recognition for change, the creation of a vision, and strategies for institutionalizing the change. Although the literature makes organizational change sound like an easy step-by-step process that eventually leads to growth and success, the fact is the journey is never that simple. Those who have participated in serious transformation describe the process as a confusing endeavor with some successes. More often than not, it is filled with wrong turns, missed opportunities, and varying amounts of troubles (Katzenbach, 1998).

In the process of writing this article we studied numerous change models and interviewed dozens of managers who had survived (and some that had not) the change game. What we found was that every successful implementation of change goes through four basic phases. While these steps are easy to understand and follow, they are anything but easy to carry out. First, the organization has to get to the point where it "refuses to accept things the way they are." Management refuses to accept the status quo. Very simply, if you never reach the point of unacceptability, you will never engage in transforming change.

In the second phase the organization creates a vision for future success. Although we found this is usually developed by top management, any level of an organization can add value to the vision. The strategic vision provides the company with a road map and direction for the change. If change is about moving the organization from what is to what ought to be, then the

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mental vision is the creation of what ought to be. This could be as simple as a professional football team's goal of winning the NFL championship or a university seeking to double its enrollment.

In the third phase, those who serve as the change sponsors and agents (usually top management) must both initiate and communicate the vision and resulting change plan within the organization. Change agents must not only talk about the vision and create the detailed action steps for change; they need to make the initial movement. These agents of change must be successful in communicating the vision, the detailed steps towards that goal, the obstacles to be overcome, and most importantly the purpose of the transformation (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Their success will determine the level of commitment, compliance, and resistance they will encounter. In most firms, this usually takes place in company-wide forums or numerous staff meetings. Leadership lays out the vision and plan, listens to the rank and file, and then seeks commitment (or at the very least, compliance) from change recipients. Next, managers and line staffs at all levels begin the process of implementing the change plan.

Finally, for the change to be successful, the entire organization (or at least most of it) must sustain the change. This is by far the most difficult part of the entire change process. After the initial excitement and enthusiasm is gone, and when visual support from top management seems lacking, the troops are asked to carry on. This is the phase where most, if not all, failed change efforts stumble. Day in and day out managers and staff are facing an endless line of obstacles. The organization tires and internal resistance gains momentum. Often, the change agents and change recipients look for the easier and simpler life – go back to what we were doing before. Those organizations that can keep their focus and energy on reaching their vision through this difficult sustaining movement phase will more likely be successful in transformation.

As we have discussed earlier, the role of leadership for most of the 20th century had been to stabilize the complex arrangements that make up the organization. Today, however, most recognize that this status quo management approach is not sufficient for today's dynamic and changing business climate. The key now facing business leaders is how to promote, encourage, and master the art of organizational change. In this new business climate, top management is now serving as a "change agent," in the hope of transforming their organizations (Tichy & Devanna, 1997). Therefore, in the new environment -- the change game -- the leader's role has been transformed from an agent of stability to

an agent of change. Their responsibility is now to provide the foresight and energy to carry change forward (Burns, 1978). This new and progressive leadership calls for leaders to move from their traditional roles and lead the organization through the painful process of real change (Rost, 1993).

As change agents, leaders serve as the visionaries (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). They create the vision and direction for the group. They clearly state what should and what needs to change. In addition to providing this direction, they are the initiators of the change process. This includes implementing and monitoring the change process. As progressive leaders they are responsible for directing the structure, processes, and the culture of the organization through the four phases of the change process.

Methods of Progressive Leaders

In addition to the overall purpose of leadership changing from status quo thinking to organizational change, so to has the method in which leaders pursue that change. Today's popular literature describes a completely different management style or approach. Instead of classical leadership where the leader is tough-minded, in-control, and functions in a top-down situation, we now recognize that the leader needs to be more of a collaborator and facilitator in a volatile climate (Rogers, 1992; Tichy & Devanna, 1997).

Vietnam, Watergate, and political scandal after scandal in the last several decades have taught each of us not to follow our political leaders blindly. This same skepticism and attitude has carried over to the workplace. The result is Baby Boomers and Generation-X employees are less impressed with authority. Most of us are not willing to be led or managed in the traditional control style. More and more employees at all levels want to feel empowered, and have more decision-making power in their work environment (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Finally, experts also point to the availability of information as another reason to challenge the hierarchical structure. We now communicate more and with more people, and therefore, we often are more knowledgeable about the organization. Both scholars and practitioners alike describe the decline of the hierarchy and they encourage us to create new flexible structures and cultures that maximize the contributions of all employees.

Although there are many different types, styles, models, and approaches to empowerment, to some degree they all revolve around the simple concept of shared power (Rost, 1993). These models call for top management to transfer power to lower levels of the

organization in the hopes of "maximizing the full potential" of all employees (Rost, 1993). Replacing the traditional top-down hierarchical structure that is boss-dominated and compliance-driven, the new empowerment approach is described as a flat and flexible organization with collaboration, informal communication networks, decentralized accountability, and shared power (Tichy & Devanna, 1997). The purpose of this leadership style is to make the organization stronger by encouraging critical thinking and decision-making with more and more employees. To be successful in today's business environment, it takes the contributions of all employees. Empowerment advocates tell us that the benefits are endless. By sharing power with everyone in the organization, we are in fact "unlocking the potential" of all employees (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Results from Progressive Leadership

The results of progressive leadership have been mixed at best. In the research for this article, we found several cases where the leader did adequately play the role of a "collaborative change agent." They joined in partnership with their employees and successfully pursued transformational change. Motorola, Harley-Davidson, and the Saturn project are just a few limited examples of the success of progressive leadership. In these cases, management and staff worked side by side in a shared power environment to accomplish real change. Although these cases illustrate the rewards of the progressive leadership model, we believe these examples are more the exception rather than the rule. We do not deny that there have been limited successes of the organizational change and empowerment models; however, in most situations the results have been less impressive (a lot less impressive) than most would admit (Katzenbach, 1998).

In our interviews with management and staff we heard hundreds of stories about failed change efforts and so-called empowerment strategies that never really shared power. What we found was small and incremental change and, at best, limited empowerment. Status quo thinking and top-down control still dominates the organizational landscape. While management often talked about and provided lip service to the contemporary themes of change and empowerment, in the end, most leaders were unwilling to relinquish control and power.

In theory, the concepts of organizational change and empowerment provide corporate America with useful models and ideas for sustaining growth. In reality, however, these concepts have not been widely used.

Rather, today we find that most organizations are experiencing incremental change and some top-down empowerment. In most cases, corporate leaders are tightly controlling the change process and strictly administering limited top-down empowerment strategies. With only limited use of the progressive leadership approach, management has itself threatened the very survival of the organization.

Although partial blame for the failure of progressive leadership can go to all of us, clearly it is top management who has not been willing to make the sacrifices needed to fully implement real change and empowerment. Honestly, most leaders are less interested in true transformation. The current status quo situation benefits their control and power arrangement (Burns, 1978). By leaving their comfort zone and pursuing change, they threaten their future power base within the organization. When traveling down the path of change, there are no guarantees. Quinn (1996) describes participation in the change process as "walking naked in the land of uncertainty." It is inevitable that in the change process leaders (like the rest of us) lose more control over the organizational environment. Thus, most leaders are not willing to make the leap from incrementalism to transformationalism.

Current wisdom says, "Empowerment starts at the top" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Ultimately, it is top management who transfers power to the rank and file. The essence of this transfer rests with the leader's belief that his or her employees can use this power to the benefit of the organization. The problem is, however, many companies nurture a leadership style and culture that reinforces the traditional hierarchical organization. While many managers talk about their empowering strategies, few are willing to test the shared power waters. In some cases command-and-control structures prohibit such action. Even beyond the bureaucracy, most leaders don't have the confidence or the willingness to surrender power to others. In our consulting work, we often found managers at all levels that were threatened by the entire concept of shared power. They feared a loss of power and control. The bottom line is that top-down empowerment remains only a concept.

Risk Leadership: The Will to Confront and Challenge

If stability and control are not the answer for the 21st century organization – then what is? If change and empowerment are only theories that in today's environment have not truly been implemented – then what's the answer? What future arrangements can be made to ensure, or at least encourage, organizational growth? Risk leadership breaks away from the classical

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and progressive approaches and proposes a radically different model to leadership, change, and organizational improvement. Risk leadership asks us to create a completely new mindset about our organization. It makes the leap from top-down management thinking to a bottom-up confrontational approach. Finally, risk leadership forces us to take a different look at organizational power in general, and more importantly, the leader-follower empowerment arrangement (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

Risk leadership departs from the traditional and contemporary views of leadership where the leaders (power figures) serve as the uncontested change agents for their organizations. Instead, most true change agents are not the recognized leaders, but rather, are the lower-level energetic employees of the organization (Sloane, 2003; Bray, 1994; Gardner, 1990). Current power arrangements and supporting structures reassert stability and squash change when challenge is felt by the leadership. It is important that top management, as well as lower and middle level employees, begin to recognize the weaknesses of contemporary change models that are top-down and reinforce status-quo quick fix solutions. The risk leadership model encourages lower and middle level employees to confront and challenge the status quo authority for the purpose of transforming the organization. This model seeks to establish a corporate culture that not only accepts, but expects, confrontation and challenge to enhance organizational performance. Finally, risk leadership calls on lower and middle level employees to assume responsibility and not wait for the traditional power structure to transform the corporation (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

Failure of Classical and Progressive Leadership

Clearly, the traditional and contemporary approaches to leading organizations have not provided the successful growth many will need to survive. While some may say that things are just fine, what they are really describing is slow death, or what John Gardner (1990) calls "a creeping crisis". Stability (or even incremental change) in today's volatile marketplace will no longer provide the company with the direction, the means, and more importantly, the right attitude to succeed. Leading by a strong hierarchical command-and-control style in our current workplace will surely meet an unfavorable result. There are times in every organization where some short-term issues suggest strong leadership. Over a protracted period of time, however, the 21st century employee will likely not be motivated to provide the resources needed. Today's employees demand to participate in a much more

democratic or shared-power climate (Christensen, 2003; Gardner, 1990).

Similar to the classical approach, progressive leadership in most cases has failed to produce the organizational performance promised. However, contrary to the traditional leadership style, the core principles of change and empowerment of progressive leadership do hold tremendous potential. Management has never given the progressive model a chance. The lack of control over the situation and the reduction of power to make and implement decisions have forced many top managers to pursue safer approaches (micromanagement). Issues such as personal insecurities and power-driven egos have prohibited most from truly experimenting with transformational change and empowerment. Thus, the central flaw in the progressive leadership model is that it operates from a top-down mentality that is never overcome. It makes the assumption that top managers will have both the vision and the courage to transform their organizations in a shared-power climate (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

At stake is organizational success. We believe the progressive leadership approach of transformational change and empowerment does hold the appropriate keys to organizational success. Our fundamental assumption is that those who hold the high hierarchical positions are not willing to make the personal sacrifices needed (Glazer, 1995). When pressure is felt, most top managers are not willing to risk their own power arrangements to implement progressive leadership. While they may pay lip service to the concept, or test it under "controlled conditions", in most cases they are not willing to fully endorse the approach. If top-down driven change and empowerment has not succeeded; then what is the answer? Clearly, a new model or approach is needed to implement transformational change and empowerment.

Why Confront and Challenge?

Why should you and I confront and challenge authority? Why should we initiate confrontation at the cost of personal risk? If our organizations are going to get better, even a little better, it will take much more than the decision making ability of top management. The growth of the organization, and even its survival, is too important to be left in the hands of the CEO and his or her lieutenants. If transformational change is to happen, then it is clearly up to the rank and file (Christensen, 2003; Sloane, 2003; Bray, 1994). If management will not share power, then it's up to the troops to seize it for the collective good of the organization. Therefore, the responsibility for the success or failure of the company

not only rests with its leadership, but more important, lower and middle level staffers who must challenge those traditional structures. Organizational health, to a great extent, will be measured by the success of energetic and innovative employees who serve as risk agents that confront and challenge the ideas and the methods of the traditional change agents, top management (Christensen, 2003; Sloane, 2003).

The motivating factors that encourage these lower and middle level workers, the risk agents, to participate in leading the company revolves around three pressure points – issues, people, and transformation. First, risk agents often mobilize around key issues of the time. They are issues that risk agents feel management has simply failed to address. It may include a missed opportunity or a problem area that management has not adequately solved. A lack of resources for the sales department, the need for modern equipment on the factory floor, or to counter a competitor's advantage could all be examples that may encourage an issue-driven revolt (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

Secondly, the lack of effective leadership from top management could also lead to internal revolt. This could include repeated errors of judgment and decision-making, inappropriate behavior, or the abuse of power. What motivates the risk agents here is their desire to defuse, replace, and correct the activities of the leader. These employees recognize the weaknesses of their leaders and mobilize for the purposes of keeping the company on track (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

Finally, the third explanation for why lower and middle level workers challenge authority rests with the simple idea, they are unhappy with the general performance of the organization. Risk agents believe their organization could be more; that it should be more; and that it can accomplish more. While this transformation driven revolt usually includes concerns over particular issues, and the lack of adequate leadership, it's much more broad-based and comprehensive. Risk agents believe that they are part of an "average" company. The organization is not meeting the needs and expectations of both employees and consumers. In this type of revolt, risk agents attempt to challenge management for the purpose of providing a new direction and leading a transformation (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

Risk Agents and the Risk Agency

Risk agents are those who are not satisfied with the performance of the organization. They are lower and middle level employees who not only have a deep interest in their own careers, but also the output of their sub-unit and the organization as a whole. They are typically younger and newer to the company and are usually upward mobile. Risk agents are those in the organization who are seen to be energetic, enthusiastic, innovative, and most importantly, they have a reputation for hard work and high performance. It is these very qualities that give them the organizational power to risk and challenge authority (Sloane, 2003).

To successfully confront the organizational power structure, a single risk agent can not act alone. For that matter, two or three of the brightest employees won't survive in a long-term struggle against management. What is needed is a "coalition of revolutionaries" who empower themselves to challenge and transform the organization. This coalition is called a risk agency and operates off the premise of "the power of many." The formulation of this risk agency provides the organization with a new power unit that must be reckoned with. With a strong coalition, the risk agents have their best opportunity for success.

This informal cluster of revolutionaries shares many common beliefs. First, they have a strong belief that the company should and could be better. They see mediocrity all around them and are frustrated with what they see as little or no hope for improvement. Secondly, risk agents have lost faith in management's ability to successfully lead the organization. To them, top managers have little concern for the real issues of transformation, and lack the courage to make the difficult decisions. Thirdly, these risk agents believe they can play an active role in directing and mapping out the future of the organization. To them, if the company is to grow and prosper, then it's up to them (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

Although risk agents serve as the core of the revolt, the risk agency includes others as well. Usually determined by the issue(s) of the moment, risk agents recruit others to join their movement. The recruitment of stable guard members provides tremendous power and protection for the agency.
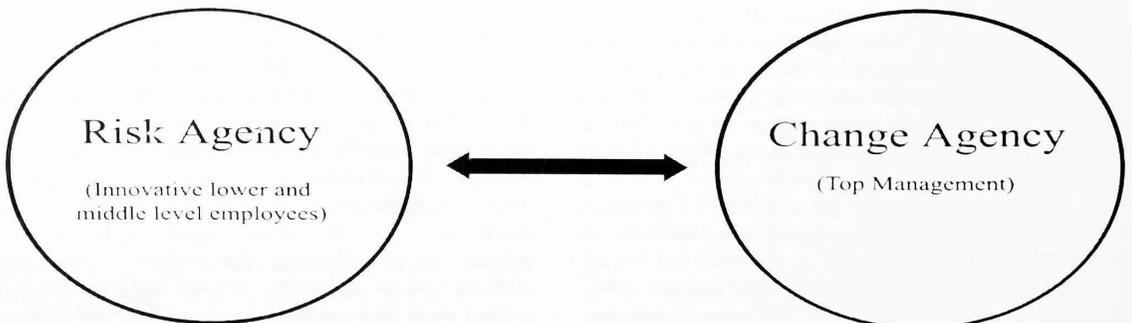
Risk Agency
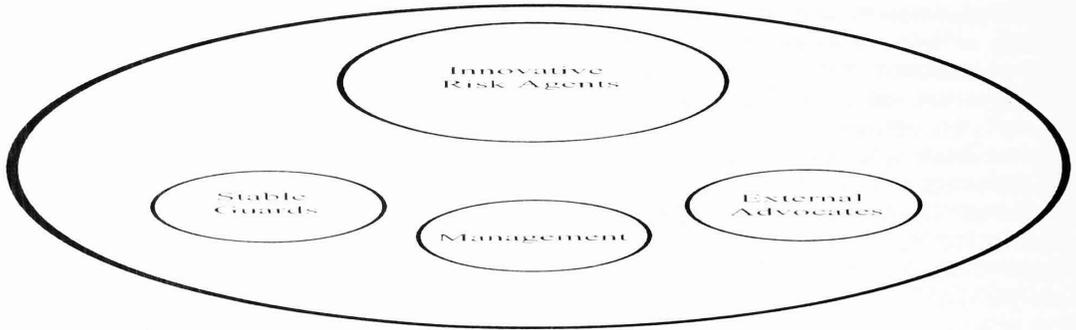
These are employees who have tenure (considered to be "lifers") and are seen by management as key to the stability of the organization. They are extremely loyal to the company and their knowledge and experience of internal processes makes them valuable to any successful challenge. The risk agency will also seek the support from outside the organization. Influential players in the industry can often times bring credibility and strength to the cause. Finally, the recruitment of some innovative and empowering renegade managers on a selective basis (usually revolving around a particular issue) can also bring strong allies to the risk agency. They bring the agency crucial information, knowledge, access to resources, and thus, power (Sloane, 2003; Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

At the most basic level, what the risk agency does is bring a new player to the poker table. This player has a pile of chips that others around the table can not ignore. Although the size of their "pot" and the length of their winning streak will likely vary from time to time, it will serve as a permanent force in the poker game of organizational power.

Real Empowerment

If empowerment is to work, it's up to the risk agent (Christensen, 2003; Sloane, 2003; Bray, 1994). As we have examined, top-down empowerment has only been a fantasy. Few top managers have illustrated the confidence and the courage to "walk the talk." Therefore, if real empowerment is going to find a permanent footing in corporate America, the responsibility rests with risk agents and the risk agency. Very simply, bottom-up empowerment is the only real option (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

Risk agents realize those traditional approaches to organizational problems and issues will not lead to real transformational change and improvement. Only a substantial adjustment in the power arrangement will allow for new and brave views toward organizational change. This new arrangement pits the risk agency against traditional management (or the so-called change agents). Our risk leadership model suggests that this unique bipolar struggle will eventually produce the positive change desired for organizational success.

Risk leadership calls the risk agents to pressure the traditional change agency toward new and innovative solutions to organizational problems. Whether the revolt is motivated by a single issue, weakness of the leadership, or a transformational-driven challenge, the work of the risk agency follows five basic steps. First, risk agents must challenge, test, and to some degree, deny power to management. It must be recognized by all involved that there are limits to the power leaders' exercise.

Risk agents should not follow them blindly; rather, they deny them the consent to be governed, and the ability to ultimately make and implement decisions. Next, the risk agency confronts management. Here, risk agents simply say – NO! Enough is enough! We have a better idea! Then risk agents directly or indirectly challenge authority. Whether it is behind closed doors or in open display, they challenge the agenda (or the lack of) being proposed by management. In turn, the risk agency recommends an alternative. The risk agency will work through the systems, around the system, and even at times, subvert the system when needed to carry positive change forward.

Next, risk agents will often be required to activate conflict in order to have their vision and change plans adapted. Obviously, conflict (through non-violent acts) is not easy or comfortable. But without this uncomfortable strategy, management is not forced to recognize the new power arrangement, and thus, make serious changes. Finally, for the organization to avert anarchy, both sides must compromise and, hopefully, collaborate. It should be apparent to the risk agency and management that only by working together can real progress be made. Each is dependent on the other. Risk agents bring energy, innovation, and labor, while management brings the all-important resources to the table. This interdependence will demand collaboration (Brungardt & Crawford, 1999).

Revolution Process

(1) Deny Power

(5) Collaboration

(2) Confront

(4) Activate Conflict

(3) Challenge
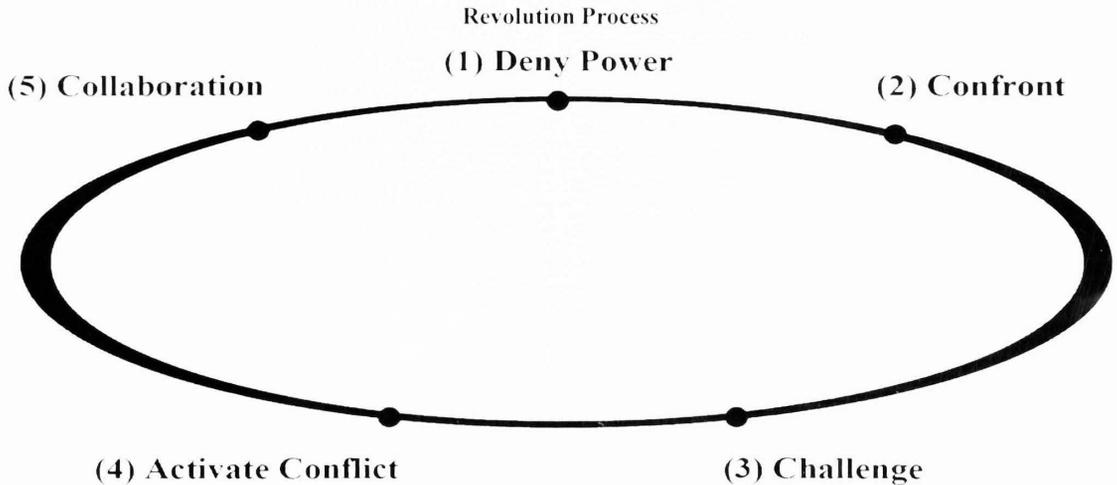
Risk Leadership Culture

As a final part of the process of creating and institutionalizing a risk agency, there must be a major attempt to modify the traditional organizational culture in favor of a culture of real empowerment, innovation, and change. Ultimately, risk agents must create an organizational culture that not only accepts confrontation and challenge, but expects it! There must be every attempt to create a permanent revolt of sorts, but by its very nature (revolutionary, innovative, and driven by spontaneous issues at times) this may defy the creation of a central culture.

The coalition of revolutionaries must find a way to make the process of confrontation and challenge expected. The ability to deny power, though seemingly simple, must be allowed and respected. Instituting processes where confrontation can exist and be expected to start (devil's advocate, real TQM or CQI sessions, open forums, etc.). You must also reward the successful revolutionaries and find a way to help the unsuccessful risk agents back to their feet after the TKO. Even when the risk agency fails, room must be made for their alternative views, or factions and counter-cultures will prevail and take up where the risk agency left off, only a destructive manner.

Summary

Risk leadership proposes a new model for leadership, change, and organizational improvement. Built on a bottom-up confrontational approach, risk leadership encourages lower-level employees to confront and challenge authority for the purpose of leading transformational change. Failures in the classical and progressive leadership approaches demand that we develop new power arrangements that will encourage organizational growth and success.

Risk agents will most likely be motivated to initiate and sustain internal dissent because of key organizational issues, the weakness of top management, or the failure of company transformation. Innovative risk agents then develop a "coalition of revolutionaries" who empower themselves and alter the power arrangement within the organizational structure. Through a series of revolutionary processes, the risk agency first challenges and then collaborates with management for the purpose of moving the organization forward. Finally, risk leadership calls upon all players to recognize the value of this unique approach and encourages the development of a permanent culture that allows for healthy confrontation.

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