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To Decentralize and Centralize - A 'Win-Win' strategy

Empowering Leadership

Josef Frischer

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It has been found (McClelland 1975,1982, 1985, Frischer, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2006) that if leadership wants to exert far-reaching influence and profit, to be powerful, he must make his fellow workers i.e. subordinates, powerful to accomplish things and be profitable on their own in a powerful way. This demonstrates the paradox of leadership and power, i.e. "to be an effective and powerful leader one must turn all so-called followers into leaders" (McClelland, 1975, p. 262). The motive is to empower (to share power) others to be influential and autonomous. The sharing of power doesn't make the leader weaker (A 'lose –win strategy'); on the contrary, both the leader and his coworker gain power creating a mutual 'win-win' power base. This is not power *over* the coworkers but rather power *with* them. Not a 'zero-sum game' but rather a 'plus-sum game'.

A common misconception of empowering leadership is that it by delegating power (such as knowledge, influence, finance) will eventually lose own power and disintegrate. The top leadership may fear becoming obsolete (lose - win) and will do all in his/her power to hinder such a development. Subsequently a 'win-lose' strategy will be advocated for by the top leaders, depicting a common leadership behavior of showing who has more power more than showing who is more effective.

If it is possible, for a leader, to empower a team of coworkers and simultaneously experience an enhanced own power base, it might be difficult for him/her to perceive power at his job not

as a zero-sum game - that the act of empowering is not inevitably losing power. The overall power-base (centralization and decentralization) even expands ('Plus-sum game'), as research clearly has shown (Norrgren, 1981; Rubenowitz, 1986; Tannenbaum 1984; Kets de Vries, 1995). It is also known that empowering leadership correlates with innovation (Kanter, 1988) and with profit (Boyatzis 1992; McClelland & Burnham, 1976; McClelland & Boytziz 1982) in organizations.

Leaders may not immediately embrace the paradox that rejects the 'zero-sum-game' logic. That empowering, which is the sharing of power and knowledge, is different from the sharing of money or other artifacts. You don't get less. You gain.

By using the Relational Learning Model (Frischer 2006) a study and later a training process can be implemented and evaluated on the Decentralization – Centralization problem being studied.

My ambition is to in the SparNord project study the above named topic. Write articles in peer-reviewed journals and try to finish a 'Disputat'.