

Attributes and Characteristics that Stimulate Innovation Leader's Creativity

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Abstract-Today organizations face a scarcity of innovation leaders. Innovation leaders are successful because of the attributes and characteristics they possess. Characteristics and attributes of three innovation leaders -Thomas A. Edison, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg has been highlighted in this project. These innovation leaders are termed as highly creative and innovative. The author conducted a review of many international publications related to innovation leader. Some of the attributes of an innovation leader that were found in the research are - possessing strong leadership, must be visionary, must act as change agent so that employees are able to change their process and system for the betterment, must be a good sales person to sell ideas to the people, must be a good listener to understand others requirements, must be a logical thinker to make decisions, must be a good team-builder, must be even-keeled demeanor to act in an unbiased manner, must be passionate about new ideas and concept, and must be optimistic. It has also been found and widely acknowledged that innovation leaders play a critical role in organization's success.

Keywords- Innovation leaders; characteristics; creativity; attributes

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Chen (2007), Samad & Abdullah (2012), and Sattayaraksa & Boon-Itt (2012) today organizations face a scarcity of innovation leaders to foster creativity and innovation in their organization because innovation leadership has played quite a significant role, more particularly during turbulent times in achieving organizational goals and fulfilling its mission and vision [9], [39] and [41]. A study by LeBrosseur, Whissell, & Ojha (2002), Samad (2012) and Seltzer (1990) on leadership has found that for organizational success, leadership has played an important role [25], [38] and [42]. Alsolami, Cheng, & Twalh (2016) are of the view that the role of an innovation leader is influencing creativity and innovation for facilitating innovation in an organization [3]. Hunter & Cushenbery (2011) are of the view that Innovation leader become successful and achieve their goal by appropriate leadership [43] but according to Senior and Fleming (2006) there is no single leadership style for all the situations [43]. Samad (2012) and Adelji (2013) are also of the view that innovation leadership is a complex concept and hence there is no single leadership styles to increase innovation [38] & [1]. There are various types of leadership such as Authoritarian, Paternalistic, Democratic, Laissez-faire, Transformation, transactional, Charismatic, and innovation leadership.

2. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Vlok (2012) propose that there is a knowledge gap related to innovative competencies including the characteristics and key attributes of a leader [50]. This issue was also raised by Deschamps (2003) who stressed that the contemporary literature and research on innovation provided a fragmented picture on the key attributes of innovation and leadership[11]. Vlok (2012) argues, there should be a specific focus on the key attributes of innovation leadership that plays a vital role for organizational success [50]. Alsolami, Cheng, & Twalh, (2016) demonstrates that research and study on innovative leadership is incomplete without the study of characteristics and key attribute of innovation leadership [3]. They further conclude that although new attributes for leaders are needed to meet the increasing demands for innovation in many aspects of organizations, limited attention has been paid to identifying which specific aspects are required for a successful innovation leader[3]. Researchers like Carmeli et al (2010), Deschamps (2003), Horth & Vekar (2012), Shavinina, (2011) and Vlok (2012) also argue that key attributes are critical for bringing about change and enhancing the performance of organizations which needs to be explored[8], [11], [21], [45] & [50]. The main purpose of this research is to find the characteristics and key attributes of a person who successfully leads innovation in an organization to make employees, subcontractors, and customers participate in the ideation and development of new products, services, or ideas.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Secondary database sources have been used for this project. This includes Taylor & Francis Online journals and books, Emerald Management e-journals, SAGE publications, SAGE Journals, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Wiley Online Journal and Emerald Management e-journals. Online current and previous editions of Harvard Business Review was also used. An initial search for "Innovation Leadership", "Key attributes of an Innovation Leader", "Characteristics of an innovation leader", were chosen and browsed for its aptness. Each search returned between twenty thousand to forty thousand published resources. Many of the searches contained some indirect materials which were not incorporated. The authors selected thirty most closely related articles and directly related materials were incorporated in this project. Since much of the research has taken place after the year nineteen ninety, therefore articles and research paper published after nineteen ninety was given priority. Though the books cited in the articles were referred, but peer-reviewed journals were primarily used.

4. INNOVATION LEADERSHIP

According to Waples, Friedrich, & Shelton (2011) the term "innovation" refers to creativity, fundamental changes or novice ideas [51]. Various authors have defined innovation leadership in different ways. According to Gliddon (2006) innovation leadership is defined as synthesizing different leadership styles in organizations to influence employees to produce creative ideas, products, services, and solutions [16]. According to Porter and Malloch (2010) innovation leadership is a procedure and method of generating, executing and networking innovation for right decision making [36]. According to Adjei (2013) innovation leadership is the amalgamation and combination of different leadership styles in organizations to influence employees to produce creative ideas, products, services and solutions [1]. These definitions are line with the definition given by Van de Ven and Chu (1989) who mentions that innovation leadership includes the persons own proposal and support, clarity on one's own roles, mechanism of overall feedback evaluation, focus on group task and relationship along with belief and confidence in subordinates [1].

Ailin & Lindgren (2008) are of the view that Innovative leadership apart from integrating the components and outlining the innovation are able to lead them in tactical method [2] and according to Deschamps (2003) Innovation leaders are persons who are able to successfully maneuver creativity and innovation in their organization [11] because according to Stevenson (2012) organization require innovative leaders who can change the mindset, ignite the mind of others for creativity and empowers them to take right decisions [11]. Therefore Horth & Vehir (2012) state that for this to happen, the top

management of the organization must actively support and foster culture that promote creativity and innovation [21]. Hence innovative leadership is essential for continual success of firms[40].

5. WHY LEADERS SHOULD STIMULATE CREATIVITY?

Klemm (1990) emphasize that Leaders should stimulate creativity for two very important reasons: to prevent obsolescence and to increase productivity [26] and according to Donald & Andrews (1976) the basic condition for a creative act is to combine known elements into new combinations or perspectives that have never before been considered [12]. According to Klemm (1990) the first and fundamental step in the creative process is to have a clear notion of what the problem is and to be able to state it clearly and the effective thinker begins by first focusing on the structure of the problem through brainstorming, rather than its technical detail [26]. There is a famous axiom

"Chance favours the prepared mind, and opportunity favours the bold" —Pasteur

"Accident arises out of purpose. . . . The essence of invention isn't process, but purpose". —Perkins

6. HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PUBLICATIONS ON INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP

Harvard Business Review (HBR) have also published many articles on the key attributes and characteristics of an innovative leader for the 21st century. Some of them are as follows:

(1) In one of the HBR review, Amabile and Khaire, (2008) reported that creative and innovative leaders must be able to encourage creative information, able to raise query and difficulty over the matter which motivate, arouse and excite the thinking power, must be able to think from different and varied point of view while easing imaginative and original interface between the employees, by minimizing officious impediment [4].

(2) In another HBR review Goleman (2004 in 2013) reported that innovative leaders must pay attention and be focused in their area of work and the focus must be first applied to inwardly to one self, outwardly to others and externally to the wider world [4]. & [4].

(3) Premuzic (2013) in one of the HBR Review reported there are five characteristics of a successful innovative leader. They are having an opportunistic mindset, have formal education or training, proactivity, have a high degree of persistence and a healthy dose of prudence and social capital[37]. The details of each characteristics are as follows. (1) An opportunistic mindset- According Premuzic (2013), opportunities are at the heart of innovation and an innovative leader must possess an opportunistic mindset because this characteristics help to identify gaps in the market. (2) Formal education or

training. According Premuzic (2013) this is essential for noticing new opportunities as without formal education it is hard to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information; between noise and signals [37]. (3) Proactivity and high degree of persistence. According to Premuzic (2013) an innovative leader must be proactive and should have high degree of persistence as this enables an innovative leader to exploit opportunities [37]. (4) A healthy dose of prudence. According to Premuzic (2013), an innovative leader are more organized, cautious, and risk-averse than the general population. (5) Social capital. According to Premuzic (2013), an innovative leader tend to use their connections and networks to mobilize resources and build strong alliances, both internally and externally[37].

7. INNOVATION LEADERS IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, findings on key attributes and characteristics of three greatest innovation leaders as mentioned in the start up guide (2016) are discussed. They are Thomas A. Edison, Steve Jobs, and Mark Zuckerberg [10].

7.1 Thomas A. Edison

Thomas A. Edison invented phonograph, the motion picture camera, and the long-lasting, practical electric light bulb. He first founded the industrial research lab and later was the founder of more than 14 companies including General Electric in which he employed many skilled people and researchers. His staff was generally told to carry out his directions in conducting research, and he drove them hard to produce results. This indicates that an innovation leaders are totally focussed on their work and use authoritarian style of leadership to achieve results. Edison had the skills of generating new ideas, had the passion for task and cognition ability. He also had passion to enjoy any ambiguity or uncertainty. These attributes of an innovative leader has been supported by the findings of Dubrin [13]. Edison's invention of motion picture camera along with his good communication with his supportive team mates indicates that he was a critical thinker, great collaborator, problem solver and good communicator. These attributes of an innovative leader is also supported by Grose and Freedman [19], Spreier et al. [46] and Dubrin [13]. Edison was a man in love with new ideas and possessed the thrill of running to ground the problem at hand, to do something useful for mankind, and to constantly learn new things. These motivations fascinated the man throughout his incredibly productive 84-year life; and probably accounted for why, no matter what field he decided to work in, he was a success – and radically changed that field (Edison Innovation Foundation, 2011). These findings are supported by Maccoby [32], Bennis and Thomas, [6], Kramer, [27], Alvarez, et al., and Holstien [20]. Edison was learner

centred, was able to mobilize knowledge, process oriented, was able to put theory into practice, was always in demand, personalized, and was answerable to multiple stakeholders. Edison had employed people from different cultures and he worked effectively with all of them and possessed high "Emotional Intelligence". These attributes of an innovation leader is supported by Mayer, DiPaolo, and Salovey [29], Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso [30], Javidan and House [24], and Clark and Matze [10].

7.2 Steve Jobs- Founder and Former CEO of Apple

Steve Jobs was an American businessman, inventor, and industrial designer. He was the co-founder, chairman, and chief executive officer (CEO) of Apple Inc.. After being laid off from Apple for more than 12 years, Jobs had just joined the company at the time when Apple was facing stiff competition from Microsoft, IBM, Dell, and many other competitors. While he was touring his firm, he saw that one of his designer was working hard among a heap of models along with huge monitor who was trying to combine them into one box. In that basement, Jobs saw what middle managers did not. He saw the future and almost immediately he told the designer, Jonathan Ive, that from here on out they'd be working side-by-side on a new line. This indicates the opportunistic nature of Job. Steve Jobs was the greatest *user* of technology to ever live. He saw something that was simply better than what had preceded it, and he was willing to gamble based on that instinct. That required an ability to think first and foremost as someone who lives with technology rather than produces it. This indicates Job attributes to take risk. Once a reporter asked Jobs about the market research that went into the iPad. he was famously told, "None. It's not the consumers' job to know what they want." Which isn't to say that he doesn't think like a consumer—he just thinks like one standing in the near future, not in the recent past. This indicates that Job was visionary. People also often reduce Jobs's success to a ruthless perfectionism. All the attributes mentioned about Job is supported by Finkle and Mallin [15] who report that Steve Jobs possessed the following attributes- High passion, great intelligence and confidence, much resourcefulness, visionary and opportunistic nature, drive and work ethic, willingness to take risks, charisma and persuasiveness, and strong need to achieve. Jobs always thought himself as a leader, he never thought himself as a manager, was leadership centred on “choosing the best people possible, encouraging them and creating an environment in which they could do great work”. These attributes are supported by Lohr [28], McAdams and Olson [31], Mischel, et.al. [34], Premuzic [37], Dubrin [13] and Stevenson, [48]. Jobs had Desire to be creative and believed that there is a creative solution to any problem. These attributes as an innovation leader is also supported by Hence Klemm [26].

7.3 Mark Zuckerberg

Mark Elliot Zuckerberg is a successful American computer programmer and an internet entrepreneur. He is the chairman, chief executive officer, and co-founder of social networking website Facebook. Mark put in hours and hours of hard work to build his company from scratch. Mark's journey of creating a huge social network Facebook was not easy where he endured a series of setbacks including law suit battle with his former founders but through sheer determination, hard work and remaining strong at the face of adversity, he and his team were able to sail through tough times. Many of the people would not dare to dream of the project that he had started in the college dorm room aiming for one billion users from the start to be a worldwide famous brand. Mark would stay in his dorm room and work on coding his website until early in the morning while his friends were out partying. It was only because he had big ideas and had vision for the future. Mark took a lot of risks for raising money for Facebook. In order to meet up the demand of his customers, Mark sometimes used to ignore important phone calls, cancelled meetings and used to shun his major investor. Finally he managed to get twelve large investment firms to fund his dream project. This was only because Mark and his team believed in his product more than anybody else. This indicates of his fearlessness, simple mind-set, team smart, battle-hardened confidence, and passionate curiosity. These attributes are supported by Bryant [7]. Mark's strategy of promoting his product was quite unique. At first Facebook was made available to only top Ivy league Universities like Harvard, Yale and Dartmouth. This was because he wanted to arouse interest in other colleges for being a part of Facebook. This strategy he adopted for the investors also. Major investors could not even access his website when they first heard about the project. By adopting this strategy, Mark made sure that supply never outnumbered the demands and this made Facebook a highly sought after prize. Though there were lots of competitors already present in the market, but it was because of the perseverance of Mark and his team that made them sail through this stiff competition. At present through Facebook, lost family members and friends are being united, it reports conflicts where the freedom of expression has been banned and also has been instrumental for uprisings against the oppressive governments. This indicates Mark's reaching his goal by understanding his main aim and not getting distracted by others. He is a man of hard work, combined with passion, courage and daring to dream big. These attributes are supported by Jagannemani [23], Menkes [33], Sharratt and Fullan [44], and Bell and Patterson [5].

8. CONCLUSION

Innovation Leadership has played quite a significant role, more particularly during turbulent times in achieving organizational goals and fulfilling its mission and vision. Various researches on leadership has found that for

organizational success, leadership has played an important role from time to time. The role of an innovation leader is influencing creativity and innovation for facilitating innovation in an organization. Leaders should stimulate creativity for two very important reasons, first to prevent obsolescence and second to increase productivity. Certain characteristics and attributes that play an important role in becoming an innovation leader are sharply focused, charming, energetic, thoughtful, highly confident, personalized, answerable to multiple stakeholders, attached to global community, attitude towards learning for life, must be collaborative, must be visionary, must act as change agent, must be a good sales person to sell ideas to the people, must be a good listener to understand others requirements, must be a logical thinker to make decisions, must be a good team-builder, must be even-keeled demeanor to act in an unbiased manner, must be passionate about new ideas and concept, and must be optimistic.

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