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# Servant Leadership to Toxic Leadership: Power of Influence Over Power of Control

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## **Servant Leadership to Toxic Leadership: Power of Influence Over Power of Control**

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### **Abstract**

To lead, you must serve. Servant leadership is the systematic process of developing the needs of servants ahead of those leaders found within private or public institutions. The principle behind effective leadership is based on the interplay of responsibility, respect, care, and working with people, not against people. Ultimately, leadership is about character and substance. Using the distinct characteristics of servant leadership to promote and foster the development of successful individuals is one of the fundamental concepts of servant leaders. Honest and caring concern for others leads to empowerment and emotional support which inspires the members to embrace the needs of the organization and creates a learning environment that is conducive to producing optimal performance from their employees. Although many times leadership roles and responsibilities are misunderstood, leadership is

firmly grounded in doing the right thing; servant leadership serves to balance out that misinterpretation. Employee attrition is a direct result of problematic leadership. Today, more than in the past, leaders are being tasked with enormous responsibilities that demand both competent and effective leadership skills. Making an effective leader involves careful thought and skill development. The collective evidence strongly suggests that environments created through servant leadership will produce employees who challenge themselves to become creative, dedicated, loyal, and productive to the needs of their institutions, rather than toxic culture within any organization.

**Keywords:** Servant Leadership, Leadership and Management, Power, Influence, Control, Toxic Leadership, Narcissism

## **Servant Leadership to Toxic Leadership: Power of Influence Over Power of Control**

### **Different Philosophies and Levels of Leadership**

Just as adult education has many philosophies of transferring knowledge from faculty to students, leadership has many philosophies of the transfer of knowledge and experiences either through influence or control. In higher education, faculty have different philosophies of the learning process and varying grading policies, types of assessments, discussions, expectations, assignments, and research. There is a challenge in adapting to each learner's style, and students respond differently to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, whether the environment is the traditional, teacher-dominated classroom or the independent, non-hierarchical format (Hur, Glassman, & Kim, 2013). The *progressive style* of adult education helps in critical thinking to stimulate or instigate thought for professional dialogue by seeking expertise and knowledge from all parties, and content from such courses are applicable to the real world.

There are different philosophies of leadership that can be witnessed in various organizations. Management, which is a status quo environment, looks at short-term goals. Leadership on the other hand, is more about long-term goals. Leadership involves decision making; in higher education, for example, classrooms can be arranged in a management versus leadership format. Hur, Glassman, and Kim (2013) admonished that a grade is a nominal goal for a student to receive based on their work. From a leadership perspective, students should focus on a lifelong learning approach that is more collaborative in nature. "A more modern take might be individuals engaged in activity more for long-term sustainability than for short-term achievement" (Hur, Glassan, & Kim, 2013, p. 305). An effective faculty member or leader of an organization must continually reward and influence their students-employees based more on intrinsic values than extrinsic values. People want to be rewarded based on influence and

develop that sense of belonging. Otherwise, the willingness to participate, learn, and be part of the organizational structure will weaken.

Whether a faculty member or an individual with a titled position of an organization, power can be used to either influence or control people. These philosophies have different levels of influencing or manipulating others. The influence point of view is based on shared power and a servant leadership approach. The power of control is an entirely different approach with an opposing position of narcissistic characteristics. Using power through exploiting others by virtue of one's entitlement, authority, arrogance, and self-absorption can destroy any organization and the mission of its existence; this narcissism is toxic to any organization.

### **Leadership and Management: A Historical Perspective**

There was a monumental shift in the understanding and application of leadership and management that occurred throughout the 1980s and 1990s. During the industrial era, organizational effectiveness was based on the practice of scientific management made famous by Frederick W. Taylor (Hatch, 2013; Taylor, 1914). Organizational structures were generally bureaucratic with the traditional separations of work units and a ridged hierarchical structure (Locke, 1982). Leadership models during this period included the great man theory that proposed that leaders were born, not made (Borgatta, Bales, & Couch, 1954; Cawthon, 1996). This was superseded by the trait theory, which was similar in that it outlined the traits that were common to a good leader, but unlike the great man theory, it believed those traits could be environmentally dependent (Van Seters & Field, 1990). This was the common management and leadership thinking during most of the 20th century. A few management authors and theorists began to challenge the early industrial models as early as the 1940s. The statistical process control and quality management approach of W. Edwards Deming and the writings of Peter

Drucker challenged some of the traditional notions of both management and the functions and practice of leadership (Bowman & Wittmer, 2000). Although these writings were available by the middle of the 20th century, some of the concepts did not come into widespread practice until the later in the century.

Leadership theory was also evolving in 1939, at which point Kurt Lewin and colleagues categorized different leadership styles; namely autocratic leadership, democratic leadership, and laissez faire (The History of Leadership Studies and Evolution of Leadership Theories, 2012). These styles are still used in leadership literature and evaluations today, although some sources vary the category to authoritarian, participative, and laissez-faire leadership. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, leadership theories became more progressive. The behavioral theory of leadership had now completely divorced itself from the notions that leaders were born; instead stating that the leadership traits from the trait theory were actually learned behaviors (May, 2010). This notion opened up an entirely new mindset. If leadership is a set of learned behaviors, then those behaviors can be taught and developed. Another newer leadership model contradicted the great man's premise that there is only one style of leadership; the new thinking was that leadership is adaptive to different circumstances, thus its name the situational leadership theory (Graeff, 1997).

Major changes in organizational structure and the concepts of leadership were taking place. Organizations were moving away from the traditional hierarchical, line, and staff organization model to other models such matrix organizations, cross-functional teams, or the use of temporary interdisciplinary teams (Denison, Hart, & Kahn, 1996; Joyce, McGee, & Slocum, 1997). These structures could no longer be supported by the traditional management archetype. Since the late 1980s, management and leadership thought and corresponding literature began

exploring revolutionary leadership models where a temporary project team may include a junior person in the lead role with support from more senior people. The concept that leadership could be shared with each person, a valued leader in an organization would be heresy in the leadership paradigms of just a few decades earlier.

The new model of participative management, leadership opportunities were spread throughout organization structure. Managers and employees at all levels were invited and expected to participate in traditional management functions such as problem solving and even strategic planning. The use of self-managed teams required team members to develop and utilize leadership skills such as goal setting, facilitating communication, and evaluation (Manz & Sims, 1987). Many organizations began training employees how to perform the management and leadership functions with which they were now engaged (Porter & Parker, 1993). The new management leadership trends began treating leadership as a function and not a position. New organizational structures supported, encouraged, and even necessitated decentralized leadership and decision making and leadership functions being performed throughout the organization. These new organizational and leadership models were proving to be more nimble and responsive to changing environments, and thus more successful.

Leadership and management can be evidenced in any type of organization. Covey (as cited in Epler, 2014, p. 13) stated that “all things are created twice. There is a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation to all things.” Covey (1989) described leadership and management as *creations*. Leadership is described as the first creation with an understanding that it is not management. Leadership deals with the top line: The tasks that a manager or employee can accomplish. Management on the other hand is noted as the second creation, and is a bottom line focus: The processes how a manager or employee can best accomplish a specified

task. While management's function is *doing things right*, leadership's function is *doing the right thing*. In most organizations, professions, and personal experiences today, leadership is demanded first and management is demanded second (Covey, 1989; Epler, 2014).

Covey (1989) illustrated some key differences between leadership and management. He has the reader envision a group of managers and leaders fighting their way through a jungle of heavy undergrowth. The managers are sharpening cutting tools, writing policy and procedures, developing programs, improving technology, and setting up schedules, while the leaders are surveying the entire situation. As the group makes its way through the jungle, a leader realizes they are in the wrong jungle and points this out to the managers. The managers want to proceed because it seems as though the group is making progress and it would not be doing the right thing by leaving the wrong jungle. The moral to this dilemma is that some managers are so caught up in trying to progress, they neglect to do the right thing. Norton (2005) inferred that an organizational structure can improve if the leader implements his or her beliefs, values, and expertise.

Leadership styles are generally classified by management decisions where a leader involves the employees to be part of the decision-making process. Bolman and Deal (2003, 2009) identified two operating frameworks that deal with people and structure: The caregiver and the analyst. Two other frames of leadership are needed, which "decode a world dominated by passion and power" (Bolman & Deal, 2009, p. 14). The two frames known as political and symbolic are not dominant with leaders who do not like to deal with conflict and the political games within an organization. If an organization is well-structured and operated efficiently, leaders hope the political games and nepotism will disappear. The symbolic frame is more difficult to understand. "They don't see it-or if they do, they don't get it. Great leadership



cannot flourish without directly addressing political and cultural issues. Too many leaders don't even know which game they're playing. They try to play it safe and stay on the sidelines. That's why today's organizations need more wizards and warriors" (Bolman & Deal, 2009, p. 15). A warrior can lose focus of the goals based on their obsession and do not see the big picture; whereas, a wizard is more symbolic by understanding values, wisdom, and rituals. An organization that does not have wizards can become toxic (Bolman & Deal, 2009).

Although leadership can be dated to the early 1900s, for years there has been dialogue whether leaders are born with leadership traits or whether these leadership traits can be learned. Trait theories are based on the notion that people are born leaders, and behavior theories are based upon leadership being learned or acquired (Mehta, 2012). Although the terminology may vary among authors, practitioners, and researchers, there are four basic styles of leadership. The terminology employed by Kuykendall and Unsinger (1982), Hersey and Blanchard (1981), and Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) included *selling*, *telling*, *participating*, and *delegating*.

Mehta (2012) illustrated that many theorists' beliefs (e.g., Fiedler, Tannenbaum and Schmidt, Vroom and Yetton, Hersey and Blanchard) of leading people is situational. Mehta mentioned that there is no best method to influence others. Therefore, a leader chooses a specific leadership style based upon the behaviors of the individual, such as the task at hand, the person's maturity level, and the willingness or unwillingness to perform the task. The selling style of leadership makes fair decisions, and then attempts to persuade employees that a specific action was necessary and needs support. Defining the selling style of leadership is determined as a two-way communication and socio-emotional support to get the employees to buy into management's decisions (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001; Kuykendall & Unsinger, 1982; Mehta, 2012). This style places emphasis on a high task and high relationship as the leader continues to direct

and closely supervise employees, explains decisions, promotes feedback, and supports progress. The leader coaches the employees to provide opportunity for clarification.

In the telling style of leadership, managers make decisions themselves, and then inform employees after the decisions are made. Kuykendall and Unsinger (1982) and Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) defined the telling style of leadership as one-way communication where the manager tells the employee what, how, when, and where to do the specified task. This style emphasizes a high task and low relationship as the manager tells the employee what to do, with no feedback or decision-making by the employees (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001; Kuykendall & Unsinger, 1982; Mehta, 2012). The leader who makes all the decisions closely supervises the task and simply tells the employee the goal.

Kuykendall and Unsinger (1982) and Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) defined the participating style as two-way communication and facilitation of behavior to encourage shared decision-making. This style emphasizes a high relationship and low task (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001; Kuykendall & Unsinger, 1982; Mehta, 2012). In the participating style of leadership, managers allow employees to have a key role in the decision-making process. Managers discuss issues and share the authority to make the decisions; consequently, employees have ownership and control of their future. Rosen and Brown (1996) described this as building a strong partnership between management and employees. Participation creates a winning mindset and environment, building people's self-confidence, and promoting employee ownership.

Managers can delegate to grant authority and responsibility to others within the organization. For a manager to delegate more effectively, he or she should delegate the entire task to one person rather than dividing it among several. Kuykendall and Unsinger (1982) and Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) defined the delegating style of leadership as when a

manager allows the employee to make all the decisions his or her own way. This emphasizes a low relationship and low task, requiring very little communication on the leader's part (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001; Kuykendall & Unsinger, 1982; Mehta, 2012). The employee performs the task with minimal or no guidance.

Bennis and Townsend (1995) suggested that a leader must be congruent, caring, competent, and consistent in action. Daft (1991, 2014) mentioned that power comes from personality characteristics that command employees' identification, respect and admiration, so they can follow their leader with confidence. This type of inspirational power is derived from admiration and reverence, rather than from the authority of a manager and their formal title.

Management and leadership concepts have been compared, but has the current management and leadership staff been adequately trained to manage or lead? Most managers have their own respective leadership styles, but still need improvement on communication and execution skills. A manager needs to be consistent and concerned with their employees; otherwise a manager may lose respect and commitment when an employee will not go that "extra mile" in reaching the organization's goals. Not all managers are leaders; a leader has certain qualities that make him or her stand out among others. For instance, if several managers are placed in a room without a leader and given a problem or task to solve, one person will emerge as a leader and assume control.

There are many seminars, courses, and programs that are designed to turn managers into leaders. It is unrealistic to believe that by attending one seminar, a person can become a great leader. Leadership requires a lifetime commitment. While leadership traits may not be innate, it is possible that proper training can modify the behavior of managers. However, there are no absolute techniques in transforming managers into leaders because of the diversity of personality

traits, culture of employees, maturity level of managers and employees, and situational factors. Such conditions of every leadership scenario require a leadership style that best achieves the specific goals of the organization.

## **Leadership**

Executives must know what it takes to lead. Throughout history, leadership theories have evolved to reflect events occurring within the societies of the current time. According to Joffee and Jones (2002), there are three dominant qualities that seem to be fundamental to all successful leaders and that have also been an historical continuum in leadership theories. Successful leaders are inspirational leaders and they must know how to engage people and encourage their commitment to the goals of the company. According to the Joffee and Jones, the four common characteristics found in inspirational leaders include: (a) approachability and humanity and the ability to reveal weaknesses, (b) reliance on intuition and soft data to make certain decisions data, (c) they must demonstrate empathy with their employees, and (d) dare to be different and express their uniqueness.

Leadership is not only about the personal development of one person, but rather the formation of a learning organization. Leadership becomes an organizational and societal issue. A characteristic of a successful leader is encouraging people and supporting the accomplishments of tasks without being directed or micromanaged. The visionary leader who pursues creative approaches to leadership will find success in positive and measurable ways. This has been amply demonstrated by Harvard University, Starbucks Coffee, and Southwest Airlines representing a few examples of flagship organizations among a growing number of leaders who have embraced the demand for accountable and goal focused servant leadership. Today more than ever, leaders in any setting must encourage people to become critical thinkers

in order to focus upon new and creative ideas. Employees in an organization or students in a classroom have competing interests with sometimes scarce resources, but still must be led to perform at an optimum level and beyond. For an organization to be effective, real and valued input is encouraged from its people.

Leadership decisions may not appease everyone when implementing change. Drucker's research on positive humanistic leadership and organizational management is one of the many pioneers responsible for the paradigm shift away from the outdated autocratic style of leadership. According to Drucker (1998), "one does not manage people as previously assumed. One leads them" (p. 166). Servant leadership is not about oppressing or rejecting the ideas and values of others because of personal conflict, differing opinions, or insecurities. To step aside from the power-control image of a leader, the servant leader actually reframes the partnership with coworkers and promotes others to rise above their current status and values them by selecting the right people for tasks. A servant leader utilizes positive reinforcement to facilitate personal growth in the organization.

Deming (1986) observed that leaders must become empowering by tapping the potential of an organization's most important resource: The people who are dedicated and committed to the organizational mission, vision, and core values. "The greatest waste in America is failure to use the abilities of people" (Deming, 1986, p. 53). Among the many components that make up an organization are people and teams of people. They are not only important; they are unique, emotional beings who are subject to cultural conditioning. To understand people, a leader needs to know and be aware of their interactions with each other, the system in which they work and learn, and their motivations (Deming, 1986; Marquardt, 2011). When an employee is motivated, he or she is more consistent in performance and eager for constant improvement. Building teams

and relationships are needed to keep the organizational goals on a positive path. Without motivation, communication, collaboration, and social relations, there could be a disruption in the flow of the organization (Levi, 2010).

The cost of public institutional services is measurable, and output is found to increase significantly because of the subtle power of coaching and the persuasion process used by the servant leader. The servant leader also benefits from this process by understanding ethics and power along with awareness of the value of organizational trust and its integrity and the coming together style of servant leadership. To become a servant leader, leaders must provide positive reinforcement and influence, so people can perform at an optimal level.

### **Servant Leadership**

The philosophy of servant leadership is to place the needs of the organization and people first and help others increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities, so they can contribute to the organizational mission and vision. The following characteristics help a servant leader focus on the needs of their people: healing, stewardship, serving others, listening, foreseeing the future, compassion, conceptualization, ability to persuade, knowledge of what is going on around them, sense of group closeness, and desire to help people grow (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2007). When people are pleased with their workplace environment and treated well by their peers and leaders, they are productive and committed to the organization. Servant leadership has a pay it forward philosophy as well: if an employee is happy, they pass this behavior on to others.

A significant issue for effective leadership in the future is to place the internal customer (the employee) first. This effort builds a confidence level within an organization in several ways. Employees feel part of a group, develop a sense of team within the group, and learn that they possess many talents (Morrison, 1994). Garfield (1992) spoke with leaders of three

companies to find out what they are facing and having to overcome in their future. The leaders' philosophy of giving empowerment to the people helps build trust and respect between the leader and follower. By involving everybody and focusing on the employee, the employee takes pride in his or her work, feels part of a team, and develops a strong commitment to the organization. "Rigid, authoritarian styles of management are being discarded in favor of greater employee participation in decision making" (Garfield, 1992, p. 9).

Servant leadership models are successful in higher education and any other global organizations. Servant leadership, particularly in higher education, builds collaboration, trust, empathy, ethics, and various conditions (e.g., cultural, demographic, economic, sociological) to meet the needs of all stakeholders. If this leadership model is applied to the context of higher education, it can be a long-term process, not a tactic to deceive employees. Instead, it creates a buy-in approach to fixing past organizational issues of high attrition, mistrust, poor performance, union conflicts, and low morale.

The theory and concepts behind servant leadership are in sharp contrast to the notion that managers and leaders serve as power brokers and standardize discipline. In 1970, Greenleaf coined the term, servant leadership as the idea that places servants first, shifting from the *tough love style* leadership paradigm. Today, the visionary leader recognizes that a lack of business and political acumen along with a misunderstanding of the organizational culture and demands can result in poor productivity, as well as damage to the employees and the organization.

Servant leadership focuses on the leader serving the people under them (Greenleaf, 2002). Servant leaders are entirely different than traditional leaders, but only because they have observed the value among corporate boardrooms and public sector agencies and have grown to recognize that both sectors are pleading for change. Servant leaders do not hide behind their

subordinates, but rally among coworkers from the front lines in a similar fashion to one of the original pioneers of servant leadership: General Stonewall Jackson serving during the Civil War.

Private and public institutions have significantly improved their organizational cultures and services through developing and supporting a vertical and horizontal culture of servant leadership. Relationships are important in developing functional organizations or groups of people focused upon common goals. The lack of understanding this organizational restructuring will not promote effective change. Leadership is an art and involves a multitude of variables that require attention.

The importance of relationships is another principle foundation of servant leadership. Interpersonal relationships are critical elements within any organization as they afford a basis for how effectively the organization and its people function, perform tasks, and react to the external environment (Baron, 1996; Flum, 2015). It seems safe to assume that numerous scientific studies undertaken by researchers and supporters of servant leadership, including Stephen Covey, Margaret Wheatley, Kenneth Blanchard, James Collins, Peter Senge, and Max DePree, corroborate the measures of organizational performance outcomes through well designed skills and are more interested in building positive relationships. These types of organizations are full of valued team members much like the employees of the Herman Miller Furniture Company. These employees have not only enjoyed the feeling of empowerment through servant leadership for over 42 years, but the company demonstrates low attrition and high production of quality goods and outstanding customer service that has led it into its premier status as leading the industry standard for goods and services.

Focusing on the needs and wants of a group, the organization can improve relationships. No one feels threatened and retaliation becomes an embarrassingly outdated concept. Individual



leaders and managers do not become the focus. Relationships can be developed through compassion; this trait is the ability to consider an employee's personal circumstances while performing job tasks. Leaders can be approached with questions and concerns that may not be directly related to job functions, and suffer vicariously through the employees. This compassion leads to greater personal and organizational relationships; a leader understands that personal affairs may impact the employee, yet considers this when delegating job functions. This in turn leads to greater attachment and confidence with the leader, and employees feel more comfortable addressing concerns with their leaders that are external to the work environment. The mutual association that can be created when the group knows its needs come prior to their leader is astronomical. When the leader reframes the previously held notions of power and authority brokers as being the dominant member of the organization, the organizational relationship will significantly improve as individual needs are met. A persuasive leader influences others to perform; if one follows based on a desire rather than a need, a personal relationship of loyalty and fellowship will be established (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2007).

## **Power**

### **Influence Versus Control**

Daft (1991, 2014) has determined that there are five elements of power used by leaders within an organization to influence the behavior of employees: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, and reverent. Leadership is the actual utilization of power which brings about change in employee behavior. If a leader has expert and reverent power, employees will share in the leader's point of view and vision. If the leader has legitimate and reward power, the employee will agree to carry out the instructions even if they do not agree with the given information. When a leader uses coercive power, it usually generates resistance, causing the employees to

disobey orders, sabotage efforts, or to deliberately ignore any instruction from the leader. Daft (2014) states there is a need for power: to influence or control others, to be responsible for others, and to have authority over others. An eminent need for power is often associated with those at top levels of positions within an organization.

Three components of leadership are prominent: people, influence, and goals. Daft (2014) observed that leadership involves the use of influence, and this influence is used to attain goals. Influence in leadership implies that the relationship among people is dynamic and designed to achieve a goal. Therefore, leadership is designed to have an effect on employees toward the attainment of the organizational goal. This necessitates that leaders be involved with their employees in the pursuit of the organization's objectives. Leadership is a dynamic function which includes human resources and involves the use of power. The element of power is essential in influencing employees, whether or not the leader has the ability to generate compliance. These viewpoints fit into the framework for all organizations.

Winter (1973) explained that power has its roots in a Latin term described as *to be able*, forming his theory of power from observation of abilities. Winter refers to Freud's description of leadership as the differentiation of the ego and the world in terms of the awareness of power and ability. This description is an illustration of a person being influenced by external forces. Winter also relates power to ability as contrasted with the environment; there are three conditions necessary in a useful definition of power. First, one or more persons must have an effect on the behavior of others. Second, that person(s) must have an ability to produce an effect, signifying they can accomplish something whenever they want to. Third, social power can be an action, as one person could affect the behavior or emotions of another person when and if he or she wants to. He also described social power as the ability or capacity of some person producing intended

effects, consciously or unconsciously, on the behavior or emotions of another. Winter described good power as leadership, guidance, and authority.

Dawson (1992, 1994, 1995, 2011) contended that there are eight levels of power used for performance, persuasion, and negotiating with employees: legitimate, reward, coercive, reverent, charismatic, expertise, situation, and information. Legitimate power is also known as title power. Dawson (1995, 2011) claimed that a manager needs to influence and empower members of the organization into a position knowing they are the biggest, best, most experienced, or simply that they have the best solution for their problem. Once this is accomplished, then the manager must influence them with his or her ideas. Tradition is a form of legitimate power. Doing something for a long time (tradition) is a valid form of influence, which does not require any justification. If a manager establishes consistent procedures over time, few employees will ever question it.

Dawson (1994) mentioned reward power as the fastest way to persuade an individual. A manager can have power over employees through reward. He or she needs to look for things to reward employees; when employees are rewarded, they will in turn produce more for their manager. If rewards are given to employees, it reinforces the development of a more positive perspective on their job. Reward becomes reciprocal, and can be imitated to produce desirable results, exemplifying the *pay it forward* mentality.

Coercive power is also known as punishment power. When an employee disobeys a directive, fails in his or her responsibilities, or breaks a rule or regulation, the manager needs to reprimand the employee in some way. Dawson (1992) explained that if an employee thinks a manager can enforce punishment, then he or she can be influenced. A manager needs to influence employees to believe that by becoming team players, coercive power will not be

necessary.

Dawson (1995, 2011) claimed that if people respect their manager, they can be persuaded. This process then becomes the strongest influencing factor of all. Having reverent power is having a consistent set of values, which will promote mutual respect and lead people to look up to you. If a manager is consistent in his or her decision-making, the employees will become inspired and want to be led.

Charismatic power is defined by Dawson (1995, 2011) as a special quality that gives a person the ability to acquire the insight of another person, inspiring support and devotion. Dawson (1994, 2011) observed that if a manager is well-liked, then influence can be developed. A simple good morning or welcome can become the catalyst for dialogue. Beyond expressing these social graces, the leader can avoid the appearance of arrogance by developing a sense of humor, remembering the names of employees, and expanding the manager's sense of self. This will allow the manager to interact with all the employees.

If a manager can legitimately convince employees that he or she has knowledge that the employees want to know, the manager will have power over them. Since the world and workforce has become more complex, expertise is needed to do this. Dawson (1994, 2011) observed that if employees see expertise in their manager, this power will draw them closer to the manager. Dawson (1994, 2011) referred to situational power as when a person is powerless in other areas of their life, but due to certain situations, he or she will gain power over others. Some people who have knowledge, skills, ability, but limited resources may still have some power dependent upon a particular situation. For example, a teacher can share information from a recent conference on new curriculum policies where they will debrief the leadership team. Now the teacher possesses this knowledge and expertise, and has claimed influence over upper

management.

The average human has a natural desire to know what is occurring around them. Dawson (1995, 2011) listed information power as the final element of personal power. Sharing information with another person will create a bond. Information power is a function of the need-to-know principle. Withholding information tends to create a culture of distrust, and exclude and intimidate people; whereas sharing information creates a cooperative bond. Some managers develop control over their employees by creating an atmosphere of secrecy. This is done by withholding information, thereby putting the managers in a position of implicit power. The positive side of information power is the sharing by management of knowledge, plans, ideas, and goals with the employees.

### **Crisis in Institutional Leadership**

#### **Attrition**

Rosenbach, Taylor, and Youndt (2012) noted that there are many definitions of leadership being studied and observed, yet leadership remains little understood except to recognize that leaders are not born; leaders are made. Theories of leadership can be measured by its effectiveness in various sectors. Leadership has many traits, whether they are behavioral theories where leadership is learned or acquired, or based on the trait theory that people are born leaders (Mehta, 2012). There is no specific best-fit style of leadership as many theorists base leadership on decision making, goal structure, structuring of group tasks, power, personality, and situations (Mehta, 2012). “Leadership effectiveness can be achieved by ensuring a fit between the leadership style and the demand of the situation” (Mehta, 2012, p. 24).

One measurement of poor leadership is attrition; poor leadership leads to attrition. Leadership can be further explained as a process of social influence within diverse

organizational environments in which there is a set of common traits for every situation.

Rosenbach, Taylor, and Youndt (2012) explained that understanding leadership is necessitated by organizational and environmental dynamics and the increasing complexities of the workplace. With the workforce becoming increasingly diverse, leaders have more pressure and responsibility to deal with the challenges presented by employees. The employees of today's workforce need to be influenced by effective leaders who can protect their interests while pursuing the goals of the organization.

Attrition is an indicator of problematic leadership. Considering the competing result of scarce resources to recruit and retain good employees, attrition issues become one of the most sobering matters facing institutional leaders today. Employees can find themselves negatively impacted by the culture of the organization and miserable from being exposed to the degradation that runs rampant within their jobs. There is a high demand for control and expectations from the organizational leaders and employees are bound to fail. Poor supervisory practices account for a significant number of employees who feel dissatisfaction and hold negative feelings. If a leader lacks certain elements of power, they have found to be tyrants and "on other occasions to be more aggressive or abusive than others" (Lee-Chai & Bargh, 2001, p. 119). Raven and Kruglanski (as cited in Lee-Chai & Bargh, 2001) mentioned that coercive power and tactics are used by people who lack confidence and other levels of power, such as expertise and informational power. Four areas which can be identified as problematic and noteworthy are (a) disruption in the work setting; (b) lack of communication with policies and procedures; (c) abusive, tyrannical, and inept leadership; and (d) organizational failure.

High attrition rates can become fiscally monumental. Large attrition is not unique to most organizations. A considerable amount of turnover occurs in state and federal agencies

where costs can easily exceed thousands of dollars and higher to recruit and train individuals for employment, excluding relocation and other costs. It takes several years to adequately train an individual in their field of expertise. There is a drain of qualified people and the loss of productivity, lower morale, and safety issues surrounding high turnover rates. Also, the number of complaints and the potential for civil liability increases the argument for a review of the servant leadership model.

To help curtail attrition, servant leadership certainly offers any organization an opportunity to develop into a learning organization, becoming a healthier, comfortable, and empowering place to work, and be recognized for achievement and growth. To create a healthier professional environment for all stakeholders (i.e., employees, supervisory levels), there is a need for equity, equality, respect, core values, open communication, continual training, and other incentives to develop an internal self-confidence. An organizational structure should foster a sense of camaraderie and encourage growth for everyone to pursue a common set of goals, which leads to a strong sense of belonging and personal motivation to remain employed within the institution. Moreover, the personal empowerment of these employees is further supported by working in a learning environment where the culture supports ownership in the organization through active participation of managers and leaders who are open to new ideas and change (Marquardt, 2011).

Aside from ownership within the organization, most employees desire the opportunity to be treated in a fair and balanced manner by the agency leadership. A few of those examples include fair promotions, mutual respect, educational opportunities, and consistent increases in annual pay and benefits. Employee attitudes can range from disempowered to empowered. A disempowered employee places recognition in the hands of the organization; whereas an

empowered employee is responsible for his or her own sphere of influence. No matter what an individual's position is in any organization, the recognition process affects an individual's ability to reward and recognize others. "Empowerment implies that employees throughout the organization have the authority to do whatever is necessary to meet requirements and satisfy customers and are trusted to make the best choices without having to wait for approval from management. It is a process of power sharing" (Schultz, 2014, p. 44). This influences employees to develop self-esteem and job satisfaction, thus increasing the organization's productivity and therefore the value of the organization. It is leadership that fosters the growth of new ideas.

### **Toxic and Chaotic Leadership**

Leadership has been researched for decades. Leadership also has another angle, which is the toxic side of operating an organization. Poor leadership includes *the chaos theory, toxic leadership*, and the increase of narcissism permeating the 21st century. Bolman and Deal (2009) stated that a person can avoid the toxic side of leadership by gaining a sense of self, build on strengths and weaknesses through feedback and reflection, and look for trust within their organization. Leona Helmsley, known as the *Queen of Mean*, had a type of leadership that was toxic and abusive; she used coercive power. A toxic leader causes isolation; this type of leader is unaware of his or her faults. Trust is also a virtue that is lacking in a toxic environment. There is a cost to distrust within an organization, which is a trend occurring in the past decades; particularly within the political arena. Covey (2010) demonstrated the media reports of many scandals of corporate or political leaders that have violated the public trust. The banking system, Wall Street, and other corporate giants have placed disgust in the American people, who have consequently demonstrated in the streets and in the nation's capital. Covey stated that "as trust



goes down, speed goes down, and costs go up” (2010, p. 10). To rid distrust and toxic leadership within organizations, there needs to be a change in direction. For organizational leaders to be influenced and inspired by their people, building and modeling trust is vital. In addition, transparency is extremely important to build trust and collaboration.

“Toxic leadership is a multidimensional construct that includes elements of abusive supervision along with narcissism, authoritarianism, self-promotion, and unpredictability” (Dobbs, 2014, p. 15). Research has found that toxic leadership impacts various organizations and sectors. These areas include (a) physical and mental health of employees, (b) increased dysfunctional group behaviors, (c) increased absenteeism and tardiness, (d) reduced productivity, and (e) resignation or transfers. In addition, toxic leaders possess the following characteristics: unethical or bad behavior, self-promotion, abusive and tyrannical supervision, downward hostility toward others, engages in destructive and demotivational behaviors, and narcissistic and authoritative tendencies (Dobbs, 2014; Schmidt, 2014).

Schmidt (2014) found certain organizations with rigid hierarchical structures like the military had characteristics of subordination and abusive control. Bandura (1973) found people who considered leaders to have strong authority also had high rank. In some situations, there necessitates autocratic leadership; however, the term subordinate within other industries can lead to arrogance, hubris, abuse of power, mistrust, and performance issues. “Military experience is a powerful way to test and develop oneself as a warrior” (Bolman & Deal, 2009, p. 16). Bolman and Deal (2009) consider a warrior as a leader who can build a stable organization; they recognize conflict and strive for reaching the goals of the organization. Leadership style(s) become fluid and represent a juxtaposition opportunity for meaningful dialogue among

organizational stakeholders in most industries, with the exception of these few autocratic missions like the armed forces.

It is unlikely observations would not produce levels of arrogance, hubris, and bullying within any organization. An argument for the skewed "feel good" human brain neurotransmitter behavior suggests that pleasure is sought and many times obtained from those in titled positions of authority because they lack effective skills as leaders and managers. If a manager-leader lacks confidence in his or her own skill sets, the more prone he or she may be to the use of abusive tactics to control operations and people. This abuse can increase with longevity within the company. It is rare to find authentic leaders who are secure with their own skills and are willing to embrace-promote and encourage more creative thought provoking staff who can take the organization to a more advanced position of critical thinking in a regulatory-driven and competitive business.

It is unlikely a perfect "organizational fit" exists; however, there is an expectation of a humanistic approach to leadership of most organizations, and is more dominant than symbolic, political, and structural approaches (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Given the current issues with unemployment and underemployment conditions in the United States, it would be reasonable to postulate that people want and need jobs to support their families and become employed full time in a job with fair benefits. It would not be uncommon to find employees who are willing to accept and be mistreated by organizational managers-leaders who choose to abuse their own position of authority and power to exploit others they feel are inferior to their organizational fit. One of the most damaging types of abuse is the marginalization of employees over non-merit factors or feelings of jealousy for those who have developed more advanced levels of critical thinking, and are viewed as threats to those in current leadership positions.

Drawing from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, people want to feel a part of the mission of the organization, and not be excluded from improving skills and contributing to the overall goals and outcomes. However, there are ill-prepared and toxic people at all levels who hinder productive outcomes stifling healthy and productive ones. People who remain in this environment perpetuate dysfunction within an organization.

Global leaders must be sensitive to the needs of people in their organizations. An aloof and distant autocratic manager, who seeks to impress and gain favor from upper level management, has diminished the organizational culture and its human assets. The sycophant approach to leadership and management is a clever con game causing extensive damage that stagnates performance and morale within the organization. If treated correctly, most staff members are willing to engage in any task to advance the mission and goals of the organization. Servant leadership as applied to the workplace suggests employees demand for authentic leadership and loyalty as it can be applied to groups of diverse populations seeking common goals.

Recently publicized was the City of Detroit and its poor direction for over 50 years from the governmental individuals who could not effectively lead a city. Due to this crisis in institutional leadership, the city went bankrupt, social services of fire-law enforcement-sanitation decreased, population decreased, and city pensions were cut. The crisis in institutional leadership also impacts productivity, motivation, morale, trust, and confidence. In some workplaces and the organizational structure and environment, there is an inclusion of mobbing, also called workplace bullying (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 2005; Duffy & Sperry, 2014; Namie & Namie, 2003). If this type of behavior infiltrates the organization, the *so-called leader* with no true leadership qualities would be the main contributor to the crisis. A person who is

ineffective as a leader uses the chaos theory to control and bully people. With this type of philosophy, a so-called leader promotes a lack of knowledge of organizational direction so people will rely on this so-called leader for answers and directions. This *control tactic* creates great crisis in the organization.

There are issues from different past and present organizations experiencing a crisis. Lt. General Mark Heitling (Retired) spoke about a *leadership issue in Iraq*. He stated that the Iraqi Army was becoming a good army, but not a great one. From 2007 to 2011, the Iraqi Army was being trained to improve; however, as soon as the United States Armed Forces left, the new Iraqi government began to replace the leadership positions. Heitling stated when an organization does not have leaders, it will weaken. He felt that their army deteriorated because they did not want to fight *when their own government was not supporting them*.

### **Various Case Studies of Toxic Leadership**

These case studies demonstrate an existing crisis in institutional leadership and the issues that many organizational personnel face on a daily basis. These situations could be corrected with effective leadership, policy development and revisions, and ethical behavior.

#### **Political Arena**

Today, political campaigning strategies focus more on malicious personal attacks rather than platform goals. Attack advertisements have been on the increase since the 1990s. In the State of Florida, the 2014 mid-term Governor's race cost a total of 345 million dollars. One party had 47% of the vote and lost, while the winner had 48% of the vote. One could question the leadership in the elected governor. If he won with 48% of the vote, this means that 52% of the state's population felt a lack of confidence in the leadership. Both parties spent \$345 million to be elected as a governor to lead the state on many issues, but a person willing to spend such

funds to serve in a paid position of \$150,000 has other agendas. This type of spending should be redirected to support the state needs. Can this type of leadership, which publically promotes lies and attacks against another human, build trust with the public? This toxic leadership exemplifies a self-absorbance and quest for power of title: legitimate power. How could this behavior be explained in other organizational structures? An organization that promotes servant leadership has policies in place to support their people rather than demean them.

Chuck Todd, the moderator for Meet the Press, hosted Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz on November 8, 2014. When Todd asked Schultz of the economic growth in America, Schultz demonstrated compassion for rural America, and commented on how Washington conducts business. Schultz stated:

But the truth of the matter is problems exist throughout the country not only in rural America. We have stores everywhere. I feel as if the economic situation that we are dealing with is directly linked to this situation in Washington in which there's been a fracturing of trust and confidence for over ten years now. . . . Washington has let the country down. The Congress now has a unique opportunity with the administration to stop the polarization dysfunction and demonstrate immediately a new set of rules. And that rule has to be civility and conversation and cooperation. If we don't get that in the next 30 days, the business community is going to do what they've done for the last ten years, dismiss Washington. But we can't have that. This is a unique opportunity. (Meet the Press, 2014)

### **Higher Education**

Most degreed academics-scholars would conclude they have been exposed to and probably completed numerous academic and technical coursework (e.g., personal observations)

of people, organizations, leadership, management, economics, social issues, general business principles, and legal-human resources as examples of performance driven issues that embrace the workplace. Unless there is honest and transparent dialogue among staff, sporadic servant leadership is a worthless enterprise.

Perhaps some of these higher education representatives will and do embrace real organizational challenges and find creative solutions by applying the servant leadership model; however, this data is difficult to capture and validate because of the many variables that present diverse challenges in the workplace. No one can assume servant leadership is the only effective style of leadership that will produce the best of quality work and workplace culture. Servant leadership is a more humanistic and productive means to manage and lead within higher education and other sector workplaces.

### **Local School District**

The following scenario depicts a crisis within a school setting of an administrator who disregarded the main district's policies and procedures. One male administrator patronized female subordinates, "I don't care about the district's rules, I don't care about the teachers, I don't care about the kids, I just care that you follow the rules at this school." One teacher asked for an apology. Although the administrator finally did apologize, the administrator said, "Although I am apologizing to you and the teachers and will try to be professional next time, I will not trust any of you." Due to a lack of direction and violation of policies, this school has created another crisis: Rapid increase in student fights, which jeopardizes the safety of all stakeholders. This school has had several disasters leading to a true crisis in institutional leadership. Many types of organizations face these adverse situations and crisis in leadership. This is a big issue in business today as many organizations have major issues, especially

arrogant, narcissistic seemingly impenetrable leaders.

### **Civil Service**

This case study describes the administrative decision to promote an employee for violating policy and state statutes, highlights the collapse of leadership, and identifies issues surrounding a decrease in morale. The effects discussed surround the failure to build a culture of trust and recognize the problem, and establish a code of ethics.

In a small town, a road patrol supervisor was driving under the influence while off duty. While in this state of drunkenness, the off-duty supervisor was involved in a hit-and-run accident with injuries. Although this supervisor left the scene of the accident, he was never charged and in fact, was later promoted to the next level of mid-management. The irony was the promotion was to lead the traffic-accident division. This type of toxic culture caused disbelief within the ranks of the employees. Employees questioned the leadership decision making and begin to distrust the top leader. They felt as though the *good old boy* mentality persists within a toxic culture.

### **Conclusion**

Failure is not the end to success. The autocratic method of leading with a divide and conquer bully mentality fills employees with fear and destroys the organization. The opportunity to move ahead and develop an optimum performance model in educational organizations through a process of learning from missed clues and missteps becomes an inspiration to the agency's leadership.

Servant leadership is not intended to be passive in organizational edict when required, but most relationships respond well to employee nurturing to reframe the intended organizational goals through individual participation. True leaders work as part of a team and foster individual

as well as group success. A manager must be willing to be a pupil, willing to listen, admit to, and learn from employees' mistakes, and accept constructive criticism. Regardless of how much education or experience a leader has, he or she should know how to incorporate listening skills into his or her personal leadership style.

Servant leadership is inspirational and promotes a culture of integrity, trust, and a real concern for others grounded in mutual respect. It sets the organizational foundation to serve the public and community through effective and competent leadership, which entices public servants to want to learn and become empowered to serve. The demand for great leadership is within every one of us.

Activities can be quantified, and we can assess a value to the task. Numerous critical questions arose during the research and analysis of this paper. Aside from the obvious costs associated with employee attrition, other costs include the brand value and reputation for the organization. There are the costs to replace personnel, recruitment, retirement, medical and physical healthcare, loss of clientele, and the organizational intellect. Organizations that breed a toxic culture drive people to leave and transfer their intellect to the competitive market as there is no opportunity for people to become long-term employees. Those organizations that constantly seek recognition by having organizational culture style surveys produce data; however, it is not clear whether the responses are truly unbiased and accurately represent how employees feel working within the organization.

It is commonplace for employees to mistrust organizational managers and leaders based upon prior experiences and colleagues who have experienced personnel challenges. During the frequent transition of managers and leaders within an organization, there is a fear in the ambiguity of the future style of organizational leadership under new administration. This



confusion seems to benefit the new administration when people guess about how old traditions will be changed during the new administration.

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