

Values and Leadership

Introduction

Values are powerful things. As Furnham (2005) puts it “Attitudes, beliefs and values do shape (predict) behaviour. They determine in part the sorts of jobs people seek and shun; those that they revel and rebel in; and those where they may be optimally productive or unproductive.”

In 1951 Kluckhohn described a value as “a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action”. Rokeach (1979) defined values as “abstract ideas” that represent a person’s beliefs about modes of conduct or ideal end states, but are not associated with any particular object or situation.” More recently Schwartz (1992) suggested that values represent concepts or beliefs about desirable end-states or behaviours that transcend specific situations, guide selection, or evaluation of behaviour and events, and are ordered by relative importance.

Clearly these definitions agree with Furnham’s view that values shape behaviour and show values acting as a basis for judgement of what is good or bad. Roe & Esther (1999) identified certain qualities that appear common to all definitions: values are treated as latent constructs involved in evaluating activities or outcomes; they have a general rather than a specific nature and they apply at multiple levels.

“Personal values are not lofty abstractions, but intimate credos that we may never quite articulate in words so much as *feel*. Our values translate into what has emotional power or resonance for us, whether negative or positive.” wrote Goleman (1998) regarding values as an “inner rudder”. In a study of knowledge workers awareness of this rudder and its use in the selection of actions was shown to enable individuals to deliver excellent performance.

Values in themselves are neutral. Henderson and Thompson (2003) assert that values are simply “the sum of our preferences and priorities”. Preferences are what we would rather have in our lives than do without. Priorities indicate how important each preference is in relation to another. This makes them distinct from morals – our adopted viewpoints on rightness and wrongness, ethics – an agreed code of behaviour within a specific group or association, and principles – agreed upon time tested truths such as the scientific principle of gravity.

Writing in 1997 Grunert and Askegaard state that “Values are commonly regarded as the point of intersection between the individual and the society because they help to know and understand the interpersonal world and guide the individual’s adaptation to the surrounding condition”. The power of values as a predictor of behaviour is significant because they are more stable over time than attitudes (Rokeach 1973) and are more centrally connected to an individual’s cognitive system.

So if we accept that values are functioning as a window through which the person sees the world and the world gains some insight into them; it should follow that values have the potential to wield tremendous power in the leader-follower relationship but first we have to establish what we mean by leadership.

Leadership

Definitions are numerous and as Northouse (2004) suggests the term leadership “is much like the words *democracy*, *love* and *peace*. Although each of us intuitively knows what he or she means by such words, the words can have different meanings for different people.”

Forms of leadership recognised by different schools of thought include:

- Situational: such as the task, team, individual model proposed by Adair (1973) when the leader acts to balance the requirements of these three demands in any given situation
- Transformational: first put forward by MacGregor Burns (1978) as “a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” so the leader is changing the follower
- Charismatic: is similar to, some consider the same as, transformational but is centred on the personality characteristics and specific behaviours of the leader rather than necessarily on the process of the leadership -followership relationship and “was argued by Weber to be the only non-coercive form since followers wanted to follow rather than had to be forced or persuaded” (Grint 2005)
- Servant/team: like transformational there is emphasis on moral qualities: “It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.” (Greenleaf 1970). Team leadership according to Katzenbach and Smith (1993) has the leader “become a matchmaker instead of ‘central switch’” which is a facilitating rather than directorial role (Bolden 2004).
- Distributed: drawing upon the idea that leadership can be provided by different people in different situations and in this way emerges from circumstances and is not associated with any hierarchies

Authentic: Avolio et al (2004) defined authentic leaders as “those individuals who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others values/moral perspective, knowledge and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and high on moral character”

Consensus on what is leadership remains elusive. Grint (2005), in regarding leadership as an essentially contested concept, says that “because it remains contested exactly how we recognize, train, teach, exert and limit leadership depends fundamentally on that first definitional step.”

In 2003 the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) commissioned research into leadership in the voluntary and community sector which concluded “there is some confusion in the sector about what ‘leadership’ means in a voluntary sector context – and indeed some resistance to the concept itself” .

My view is of leadership as a relational process centred upon a person influencing one or more other people to achieve something in a direction or in a way that they would not have otherwise undertaken. The direction or way may have been determined by the leader on their own and then introduced to the potential followers or may have emerged through the leader acting as facilitator within the group. My suggestion is that when such leadership is rooted in explicit values for a clear value-based purpose that followership will result more easily and willingly than if the values dimension was not so transparent and as such my view of leadership has elements in common with both charismatic and authentic views.

Generating a spirit of co-operation in followers is vital to leadership in many arenas because so much of the leadership exercised by individuals lies outside the realms of their structural authority: leadership around partnership tables with representatives of health, education, emergency services and local authorities in Local Strategic Partnerships; leadership in community settings where residents and regeneration professionals sit together in Neighbourhood Panels; leadership of multi-agency government programmes such as Sure Start or New Deal; today we are surrounded by leadership in places and at points in time when the old rules just don't apply.

Leadership and Values

Dixon (1992) believes "Effective leaders can flow with what unfolds because they are centred and grounded in values and purpose". The reach of a leader's values go beyond simply their own actions suggest, Gilbertson, Resick and Dickson (2005), "the organisational personality and values profiles that develop within organisations are not random; they are a reflection of the characteristics of leaders and founders who transmit their personality and values into the organisation through the goals they establish and the types of people the organisation attracts and selects."

Lord and Brown (2001) see the function of values as "normative standards, values are a basis for generating behaviours that conform to the needs of the group or larger social units" and regard them as key for leaders. They suggest that socialisation to a set of values enables individuals to behave compatibly with other groups members without needing direct social control: therefore by consciously influencing socialisation processes a leader can "create an important means to coordinate individual and group efforts to meet the requirements of larger social systems".

House (1976) in his theory of charismatic leadership makes much of the role of a leaders values. He suggests that in addition to distinct personality characteristics, specific behaviours are demonstrated by charismatic leaders starting with their actions as strong role models for the beliefs and values they want followers to adopt.

It is suggested by various authors including Bass & Steidlmeier, Luthans & Avolio and May, Chan, Hodges & Avolio that authentic leaders are guided by a set of values that are orientated towards doing and achieving things that are right and fair for all stakeholders. From the work of Schwartz we are introduced to a categorisation of values which includes two higher order clusters of values: self-transcendent and self-enhancement shown in Table 1.

Self-transcendent	Self-enhancement
<p>Benevolence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern for immediate others • honesty • loyalty • responsibility <p>Universalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social justice • equality • broadmindedness • tolerance of difference 	<p>Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pursuit of personal success <p>Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dominance over others <p>Hedonism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal gratification

Table 1 Clusters of Self-transcendent and Self-enhancement Values

Transcendent values certainly fit with the view of Safty (2003) “leadership is or at least ought to be normatively apprehended as a set of values with connotations evocative of the higher achievements of the human spirit” (Grint 2005).

Researchers acknowledge that the priority pattern of the value set of each individual is unique but it has been suggested that authentic leaders are likely to have elements of both of the clusters of higher order values above but that they will give higher priority to self-transcendent values. In 2005 Michie and Gooty observed that both theoretical and empirical research suggests, however, that the link between transcendent values and behaviour is tenuous. In their work they suggest that the consistency of leader values and behaviour is strengthened by their capacity to experience positive other-directed emotions such as Goodwill, Appreciation or Concern for Others (Michie & Gooty 2005).

Summary

What ever style of leadership an individual tends towards, whether it varies situation by situation or stays fixed over a period of time, the values that individual holds dear will influence their behaviour and how they interpret the world. Our company, Magma Effect Limited, works with existing and emerging leaders in different settings to enable those individuals to gain insight into the things that motivate them and provide them with a sense of meaning.

One of the most significant roles for leaders and managers in all organisations is that of “sense making”. Can we reasonably expect that function of people day in day out if we don’t at the same time support them in making sense of how they interpret the world and its effect upon the things that matter to them?

Jackie Le Fèvre BSc Hons, Cert Ed, MIPR, MCMI
Director