

LB27: Building a Better Crisis Leader: We CAN do more

Stacy L. Willett
Associate Professor of Emergency Management
The University of Akron
Smuffet@uakron.edu



Where are we going?

- Evolution of Leadership Theory
- The Context of Crisis
- Common Problems and Recommendations



Leadership Defined

- There is no one agreed upon definition of leadership.
- *Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives*

(Yukl, 2006 p.8)

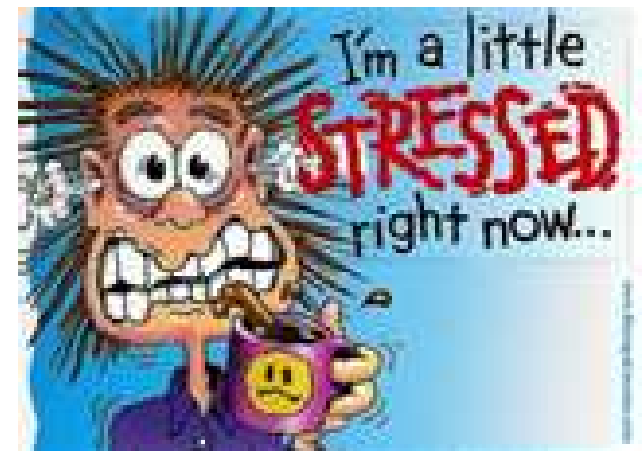
Evolution of Leadership Research and Theory

- Trait Approach
 - Hundreds of studies performed in the 30's and 40's failed to find any traits guaranteed for leadership success
- Behavior Approach
 - Began in the 1950's examining what people do. 1) How they spend their time and 2) how they cope with demands. Tried to correlate specific behaviors with leader effectiveness.
- Power/ Influence Approach
 - Influence process between leaders and people. Unidirectional – leaders act and followers react. Study of influence tactics.
- Situational Approach
 - Emphasizes contextual factors. 1) What leadership process are the same or unique across organizations. 2) Look at the change in environment and the change in leadership attributes.

Integrative Approach- Mixes the variables.

Add Crisis Factors into the Mix

- Rosenthal & t' Hart (1991):
“a serious threatwhich- under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances – necessitates making critical decisions”



The Context of Crisis

- Crisis events threaten the viability of the organization (Pearson and Clair, 1998),
- Are rare in nature (Cornell and Sheras, 1998),
- Have the potential to dismantle an organization (King, 2002),
- Fall under close media scrutiny (Fink, 1986) and
- Can be a turning point in an organization (Borodzicz and van Haperen, 2002).

Building Better Crisis Leaders

- Need to experience adversity and failure early in career
- More likely to advance to a higher level over those that experience only success
- Most common issues:
 - Mistakes in business issues, dealing with important people, career setbacks and personal trauma
 - Change can only happen if they take responsibility and overcome
- Immerse people in a wide variety of company problems
- Start preparing them!

Let People Make Decisions!

- Empower Others
- Crisis Leadership is not one person- it is not one department - everyone has a role in the organization.
- Those in positions of authority need to empower others. Mold others to think critically and have confidence to strengthen the organization as a whole.
- Servant form of Leadership (the true leader is the one that develops leadership in others)

Quote

- "I think you saw that in FEMA and Katrina. People were afraid to make decisions because they did not have a trust in their leadership and their leadership did not have a trust in them so people that needed to make decisions were afraid to do so because there wasn't that two-way relationship of trust. Very dangerous, dangerous situation"

Quote

- *- if this person doesn't have the ability to make decisions - I don't want them here- I want somebody who can, and I have sent people away from the EOC and said "send me somebody else".*

A Look at Crisis Simulations in Many Organizations

- Use created or canned models
- Often begin with disaster
- Often end after response
- Involves no / little stress
- Usually hosts coffee and pastries
- Most people are relaxed and even smiling
- There's always a plan

What's Missing?

- Information being thrown at you from people you've never met
- QUICK decision making
- Freelancing of co-workers/ disagreement
- There's no plan for the event



Corporate Disaster Drill Perceptions

- "...but it's more or less a casual atmosphere, a loosely structured and not a lot of stress. It's like ooo I don't have to get on that conference call because I have an emergency drill to go to. So you're basically taking the people out of work and putting them into a much easier environment with less stress and they just talk with their buddies that they haven't seen in a while and they go on..... Wake people up in the middle of the night and put the fear of Jesus into them and see what happens."

Building Better Crisis Leaders

- Know your role... and everyone else's including external agencies
- You may have a plan, however you may not be the only one calling the shots. Know what you will and won't have control over and how to work through those issues ahead of time.

Organizational Perspective

- "... incident command is a broad term or phrase but it has the side with emergency services, but also has a place in business. Too many businesses are unwilling to bend to some sort of emergency command process. They think oh we have a problem- we'll handle it. They don't know the protocol of weapons of mass destruction if there's a terrorist attack that we're not going to be doing anything because the government is going to be calling our shots- they're going to tell us when to go into our building- they're going to tell us how to respond and we've got to respond that way. But here they're still under the mindset we're going to do what we're going to do..... "

Building a Better Crisis Leader

Be aware of your organizational culture

- Are you in a sick or healthy organization?
- Politics, distrust, and a competitive environment can block decision making
- Don't count on things to be different in times of crisis

Building a Better Crisis Leader

Understand the importance of
organizational TRUST

- Information sharing will only happen on a shallow level if people do not really trust each other or the organizational culture. Important information will go around you to someone they do trust

Quote

- “The worst thing I think for a leader, the worst position for a leader to be in.....and I have had people do this to me....and I have been pretty pissed when they did.....is for people not to tell you the truth or to not tell you when there is an issue that could potentially be significant and then after the issue is blown up say – “well I knew that was going to happen” – well then you needed to tell me.....I may say “I hear you but we’re still going down this road”..... but to not tell me- to not tell the leader does a disservice to everyone...”

Building Better Crisis Leaders

- Organizations need to understand the importance of having designated people to prepare the company
- Many end up taking crisis responsibilities in addition to their “true” job responsibilities without any additional resources because well... someone needs to do it.

You know you have a lot to do but your understanding of the actual specifics is minimal.

Wrap This Up!

- Immerse people early and often into tough decisions
- Disaster drills are not “social events” or checkmarks- put people in the fire
- Understand sick organizations lacking in trust will hinder information flow- work on relationships.
- Understand the larger roles outside of yours if you are to make more informed decisions.
- READ – READ- READ– Learn from others’ mistakes! There are plenty published accounts!

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