

**Personal Leadership and Profile Essay**

PAF 311: Leadership and Change

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December 4 , 2014

## Scholarship Essay Example about Leadership

The first part of becoming a great leader is becoming conscious of self by identifying your strengths and weaknesses. Being aware of one's weaknesses better equip people to "challenge themselves to apply new skills and improve themselves through practice" (p.303, Komives & Wagner). By identifying one's own strengths, one can learn how to apply those skills to benefit a group or situation. Participating in the self-assessments throughout this course has given me an opportunity to identify my strengths and weaknesses. The assessments have been an eye-opening experience which have led me to develop a deeper understanding of my actions, motives, and values; and how they contribute to successful outcomes and/or negative consequences. Learning about myself through these self-assessments has been an investment in the future of both my personal and professional life.

The self-assessment titled, *Least Preferred Co-Worker Measure*, proved to be extremely accurate. My final score recognized the value that I place on working with others effectively and maintaining a positive relationship. As a high LPC, I may not necessarily like a person that I work with, but I am able to push dissimilarities aside and focus on having a productive working relationship. The *Least Preferred Co-Worker Measure* survey states that "the high LPC attends to tasks, but only after she or he is certain that the relationships between people are in good shape." I see this to be both a positive and negative characteristic of the high LPC. I think that relationships are extremely important in a work environment. However, I think that if somebody lets relationship issues get in the way of completing tasks, job productivity can decrease; this may have a reciprocal effect of disappointing people and creating more relationship problems.

Overall, I find myself content with being a high LPC. I feel that my relationship-oriented style will benefit me in my future career and will enable me to be very customer and team oriented.

The *Personal Style Inventory* was probably one of my favorite self-assessments throughout the course. After taking the assessment, I learned that my personality type is ENFJ (Extrovert, Intuitor, Feeler, Judger). This is referenced to as the Energizer. As an extrovert, one of my major weaknesses is that I am very impulsive and impatient with routine. This is definitely true. I am constantly making decisions and doing things on impulse. Although this can be exciting and rewarding at times, it can tend to be a costly and consequential personality trait. As an intuitor, one of my major strengths is being able to work with the complicated; one of my major weaknesses is being impatient with the tedious. As a feeler, my strength is being able to consider others feelings while my weakness is being less organized. As a judger, I am able to remain with a task, yet I can be very unyielding and stubborn at times. This is a very accurate assessment and I understand how being able to recognize personality strengths and weaknesses will enable me to handle future situations more efficiently.

After participating in the *Team Player* assessment, I learned that I was a high collaborator and a low challenger. My score as a high collaborator ties in with the other assessment results stating that I am very relationship oriented. According to Komives and Wagner, collaboration “is about human relationships, how people work together, and how they value and relate to each other” (p.196). Collaboration, extroversion, and relationship-orientation are all integral aspects of my personality.

Being a low challenger ties in with my personality trait of being a feeler. I enjoy warmth and making others happy, and challenging people can test that sense of stability. By recognizing

myself as a low challenger, I am given an opportunity to try and enhance my challenging abilities. According to Kouzes and Posner, “challenge opens the doors to making extraordinary things happen” (p.116). By shaking things up a bit and embracing new ideas and concepts, I will grow to become a better leader.

The *Orientation Toward Change* assessment was able to identify areas of weakness for me. It is apparent that I can be resistant to change at times. Although I would like to believe that I am very adaptable and I easily embrace change, this is not always the case. My resistance to change coincides with the fact that I am a low challenger. According to Komives and Wagner, “the deeper the understanding of resistance and where it is coming from, the more likely it is that energy behind the resistance can be shifted into a productive force in the change process. When encountering resistance, one of the first steps to take is to find out as much as possible about what the resistance is about and where it stems from” (p.132). From here on out, I will make it my goal to identify where my resistance stems from. From past experiences, I have learned that the resistance generally comes from fear of failure. Instead of living in fear, I need to adapt to a new way of thinking and visualize success over failure.

The one self-assessment that I did not feel content with was the *Listening Self-Inventory*. After calculating my score, it was noted that I am a bad listener. Over the years, I have been working really hard on improving my listening skills. I was able to identify my weakness early on, and I feel that I have grown a lot in that area. However, I do recognize the fact that there is, and will always be, room for improvement. I notice that I have sometimes formed responses prior the speaker finishing their message. Since taking this survey, I have been working really hard to not form any opinions or judgements until the message has been clearly conveyed. I have

also tried to think about the message as a whole before formulating a response. By doing this, I have been able to gain credibility with the speaker by acknowledging that I have heard and interpreted their message fully. I have been able to establish better communication techniques and create a more supporting and empathetic environment for the people I am communicating with.

The self-assessments have been a great tool to use and I have no doubt that they will help guide the way in my future leadership opportunities. Throughout the journey of learning about myself, I have been able to grasp the idea of leadership and what it really means to me. My personal vision of a great leader is someone who has a consciousness of self and knows what they stand for. They live in congruence with their values and morals, and they strive to achieve the fullest potential of the group as well as the fullest potential of themselves. A leader never gives up and they are always committed. They ensure that every member of the group shares a common vision and is given the right tools and resources to achieve that vision. A leader is a role model, a motivator, an informant, a challenger, a citizen, and a change agent all in one.

A leader is a role model at all times. Leaders model the way for their constituents by living in congruence with their values and beliefs. According to Kouzes and Posner, values “serve as guides to the actions you take. They inform the priorities you set and the decisions you make” (p.27). Typically, it is the values and beliefs of a person that contribute to the development of passion and commitment towards a goal. When passion and commitment are modeled by a leader, it becomes contagious and can quickly spread into others.

When values, passion, and commitment are extended into other people, a shared vision can be inspired. When people share a vision, they become driven towards working together to

make dreams become reality. Kouzes and Posner state that “only *shared* visions have the magnetic power to sustain commitment over time” (p.86). In order for a leader to inspire a shared vision, they must recognize the driving forces behind a group. By authentically listening to people and integrating their ideas, a leader can identify motives and develop a cause for commitment within a group. Great leaders strive towards having a cause for commitment because they know that people will work hard for something that is important and meaningful to them.

Exceptional leaders are excellent motivators. They are able to encourage others through the use of their own words and actions. Leaders recognize how their own actions influence people within a group, and they adapt accordingly. Great leaders can recognize whether a group is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, and they are able to lead and inspire through those motives. Leaders work to inspire intrinsic motivation in order to build a foundation of loyalty and commitment to the group and their purpose. When a group is motivated in the right way, they are capable of achieving their goals. When a group lacks motivation, productivity will decrease and the ultimate destination of a group may never be met. Motivation skills are a key aspect of being a great leader.

Great leaders are informants and they ensure that all of the necessary information is available for the team. They foster a learning environment and they enable others by sharing knowledge and resources. Exemplary leaders are focused on developing a team's confidence and competence. Exemplary leaders “need to continuously assess the capacity of individuals and the group to meet the challenges they face. That requires attention to the skill power and the willpower of each person you lead” (p.200, Komives & Wagner). When a leader is able to assess

their team, they are able to identify the teams strengths and weaknesses. The leader is then given an opportunity to develop the teams weaker skills through practice, while making sure that the teams strengths are contributing in the right way.

Successful leadership requires the ability to challenge the process. As identified in the self-assessments, this is an area where I have considerable room for improvement. Challenging the process is important because it paves the way to new opportunities. Without a leader who is willing to challenge the process, strategies and techniques would never change and therefore, never improve.

It is important for a successful leader to be a citizen as well as a change agent. Citizenship “implies active engagement of the individual (and the leadership group) in an effort to serve the community” (p.151, Komives & Wagner). It is extremely important for a leader to be actively engaged in the efforts of the group. Participating in group efforts helps gain the trust of the group and establishes credibility of your skills. Being an active citizen helps build community within the group. Community is important because it makes the group feel more established and loyal to one another.

Becoming a change agent is a vital aspect of successful leadership. According to Komives and Wagner, “a first step to becoming a change agent is to claim the personal empowerment to recognize oneself as a leader” (p.401). This circles back to identifying the characteristics that are addressed through self-assessments. Once you are able to internalize and recognize your attributes, you are more likely to become empowered to change. You are able to identify what is important to you, and learn how to make those values and beliefs lead the way to achieving dreams.

In order to enhance my own personal leadership development, I need to challenge myself on a daily basis. By defeating small challenges daily, I will continue to grow and to take on larger challenges in the future. One example of a small challenge that would be beneficial, would be to practice trusting other people. From other assessments, I have learned that I have trouble trusting people. By challenging myself to be the one who trusts first, I will open up my network of friends and I will build trust and confidence in others.

It would also be beneficial for me to become more involved in my communities. Throughout my college career, I have become less engaged in events and daily activities that are part of these communities. Challenging myself to step out of my comfort zone and involve myself more will help establish me in the communities and will prepare me for a leadership role in the future.

Another way that I can develop my leadership abilities, is by learning how to listen to others more effectively. By maintaining eye contact, not forming responses ahead of time, and by authentically trying to interpret a message without being bias, I will be able to develop my listening skills. Effective listening skills will lead to more productive communication and thus, more successful interactions. By challenging myself and improving my listening skills, I will enhance my own personal leadership development and my career.

Taking the time to evaluate myself through self-assessments has provided me with a deeper understanding of what skills I possess, and what skills I need to work on in order need to become a more effective leader. Taking the time to develop my personal vision of leadership has allowed me to recognize what I value in leadership and how I envision a successful leader. This will help me recognize what skills and attributes I need to focus on growing and obtaining in



order to become an effective leader and a successful change agent. Throughout the course of this class, I have learned more about myself than I ever have before. I intend to take my newfound knowledge and apply it in my life and my leadership journeys.

## References

- Komives, Susan R., & Wagner, Wendy. (2009). *Leadership For A Better World: Understanding The Social Change Model Of Leadership Development*. San Francisco, Ca. A Wiley Imprint.
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