
LEADERSHIP THAT MATTERS: THE CRITICAL FACTORS FOR MAKING
A DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES AND ORGANIZATIONS' SUCCESS

BY: MARSHALL SASHKIN AND MOLLY G. SASHKIN
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Marshall Sashkin and Molly G. Sashkin offer a comprehensive look at the study of leadership. It cuts across boundaries of various categorizations to discuss the common elements that make a difference in leadership. In the past, they had used the term "visionary leadership" to describe their approach, but they are now deemphasizing this terminology in order to avoid the trap of being labeled within a particular system. Their aim is to present a research-based approach rather than an opinion-based model. The latter, they maintain, typifies most books on leadership.

In seeking to define what leadership really is, the authors drew on their experience with this issue from their many encounters with various groups. Responses that sought to describe leadership generally fell into three categories: the leader's behavior, the leader's personality traits, and the social or cultural context in which leadership takes place. The authors assert that a weakness of most leadership books is that they focus on only one or two of these aspects. Therefore, a major emphasis of this volume is to examine how all three factors relate to the new paradigm of transformational leadership.

A brief look at the evolution of leadership theory notes the early efforts to distinguish between leaders and managers. Trait theory, behavior theory, and situational contingency theory are explored as a backdrop to transformational leadership as it was championed by James MacGregor Burns. Though paying homage to Burns' contribution of asserting the importance of the transformation of people over simply motivating them for a task, the authors observe that Burns failed to describe how leaders actually go about this transformational process. Utilizing their own research and that of Bert Nanus and Warren Bennis, they delineated four key behavioral categories for the transformational leader: communicative skills, credibility, caring, and the ability to create opportunities through a willingness to take risks.

Chapters four through seven present the results of the authors' study of the personality of the leader. The focus is not on fixed traits or skill sets, but one's life, along with the confidence to act. In addition, leading requires the cognitive ability to understand complex cause and effect relationships in order to develop plans that will achieve desired goals. If such aspects are not present, the leader can and must develop them.

Concerning charismatic leadership, the writers conclude that the need for power may produce dysfunctional leaders who make promises to their followers that are often not kept. Resulting actions can be highly manipulative as well as deceptive. While agreeing that in some cases charismatic leadership is the follower's view of transformational leadership, the authors take exception that these are the same. In contrast to charismatic leaders, transformational leaders are able to empower followers because they are secure in their own sense of power (i.e. control over one's own life and resulting self-confidence). In addition, an orientation to action and the constructing of a vision are identified as essential for leadership.

In chapter eight, the insightful point is made that transformational leaders do not simply react to the context but actually construct it. Of particular importance in this process is the shaping of cultural values. For instance, the leader can influence the organization to have a positive outlook like "we can control our own destiny" versus "what we do can't make much of a difference" (116). Leaders can shape culture through involvement with others in defining an organizational philosophy and developing programs and procedures to implement that philosophy. Transformational leaders model the values and the beliefs of the culture they wish to create by "their moment-to-moment *actions* and their consistent *practices*" (122).

The authors conclude with a good discussion of several relevant topics of leadership such as the issue of gender traits and the effects of globalization. The last chapter contains a synthesis of several common elements concerning the behavior and character of the transformational leader. It is noted that the transformational leader must not only be visionary but also be able to create an environment that supports constituents in their efforts to construct meaning.

The work has several important strengths. In the opening chapter, a plan for the book is presented that is followed throughout. This aids in its clarity and readability. Research data is used extensively to support their assertions. The overview of the key concepts of leadership theory over the last century is invaluable. The discussions on leadership and the need for power, the deficiencies of charismatic leadership, and the relationship of transformational and transactional leadership in their complementary and incompatible aspects are excellent. For a relatively small volume, the reader is exposed to a wide variety of key works on leadership. In addition, specific actions of the leader are explored that go beyond the theoretical to the practical.

Weaknesses in the book are difficult to find. However, the authors attempted to cover a lot in a brief volume, which necessitated certain omissions. For example, a discussion contrasting transformational leadership with other leadership styles similar to the ones given with charismatic leadership and transactional leadership would have been helpful. An inclusion of additional specific case studies to deal with each of the main issues explored would have complemented their research-based approach.

Useful as an introduction to some of the key leadership theories of the past century, this book takes a fresh look at what the transformational leader actually does. As a result, the volume is helpful to both new and advanced students of leadership. The authors' applications of leadership theory to real life settings have resulted in their producing a good resource for those who seek to lead.

Steven F. Echols
Associate Dean, Associate Professor of Leadership
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

