

Leadership Development Initiatives of a Japanese Transnational Company Through Blended Mode: Virtual and Face-to-Face

Shikha Gera

University of Delhi, India

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intent of the current case study of a Japanese multinational company is to document and understand the process of developing a transformational (quantum change producing) leadership style in its fast-track leaders in the South West Asia region. The researcher got an opportunity to observe the process of leadership development training that was delivered over a period both through virtual and face-to-face mode. In the current case study, no instruments were used and therefore no objective data were available to gauge the impact of the training program. However, training partners had identified some of the training outcomes on participants such as 1) participants displayed initiatives to introduce change and persisted that change throughout the completion of the vision with positivity, 2) they examined self-strengths and weaknesses and demonstrated the ability to improve through feedback, and 3) they identified the business, financial, leadership, entrepreneurial, and other challenges at hand and designed the robust plans to overcome those. In short, the researcher can conclude with a reasonable confidence that the training program delivered online could be a success, particularly when it is blended with a FTF experience at some point.

INTRODUCTION

Most organizations around the globe appear to be concerned with understanding, searching, and developing leadership. Leadership is definitely not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ sort of word. It is one of those words that is debated ceaselessly and typically elicits a spectrum of opinions: from describing personal attributes, ‘position’ characteristics, leadership behaviours, to leadership process. Whatever the arena be – sports, politics, religion, business, education, and many such others – a leader impacts and influences group effectiveness. Many aspects seem to interact to determine the actions of a person in a leadership role. Perceptions, attitudes, motivations, personality characteristics, skills, knowledge, experience, confidence, aspirations, and commitments are a few of the variables—both for the leader and the led—that are found to be important for understanding the behaviours of the leader.

Traditional view on leadership effectiveness has focussed primarily on transactional leader behaviours that are found as an exchange process in which the leader provides rewards in return for the subordinate’s effort. More, recently, however, the focus of leadership research has shifted from examining the effects of Transactional Leadership (TSL) to the identification and examination of those behaviours exhibited by the leader that make followers do more than they are expected to do by motivating them. As a contrast, this style of leadership has been termed as Transformational Leadership (TFL) and it is gaining importance in research.

The technology revolution and the Internet have changed the very nature of the work structure. It has transformed the nature of communication and working patterns. Often the physical Face-to-Face (FTF) communications have been replaced by virtual communications mediated by communication systems. In this new virtual world, conventional ways of leadership simply may not work. We need leaders to deal with the teams that transcend the boundaries of distance, time, organizations, and cultures. Previous success may not throw any clue, let alone any guarantee, of future success for leadership. More exploration is certainly required to understand this new reality.

Rise of Virtual Teams

Lately, a new and novel type of team has generated interests of both organizations and scholars. Increasing 24x7 competition (Algesheimer *et al.*, 2011), globalization, advances in Information Technology, cooperation and collaboration among organizations, and a move towards flatter organizational structures and knowledge work cultures have provided ways to the new form of team, generally referred as

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