Leadership in the Midst of Change
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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Abstract

As a member of the Ball State Women’s Soccer Team and the Honors College, I had a unique college experience. Lending to the distinctiveness of my experience is the fact that our soccer team witnessed three coaching changes in just four years. As I pursue a career in Human Resource Management, I am prepared to face many more changes similar to the ones I experienced in college. In an effort to apply what I have learned in college to my future in business, my thesis explores the concept of leadership, primarily in the midst of change. I begin by offering definitions for both change and leadership, and then I discuss the leader’s role in times of transition. Several tables are included to aid in the understanding of the topic.

Acknowledgments

- I would like to thank my advisor, Jennifer Bott, for taking the time to offer suggestions regarding my thesis, edit my thesis, and for encouraging me to pursue a career in Human Resource Management.

- In addition, I would like to thank my three coaches, Ron Rainey, Michelle Salmon, and Michael Lovett, for teaching me important lessons about leadership and its value and teaching me to embrace change.

- Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Nancy and Joe Rein, for supporting me in everything I do and never letting me settle for average.
MY EXPERIENCE

The Motivation for this Thesis

Let me begin by first explaining my motivation for basing my final thesis, a project that in many ways is used to define me and my four-year experience as a college student, around the influences of leaders in changing environments. I wanted to work on a project that not only told my unique experiences as a student-athlete, but also showed how these experiences are applicable to my future.

Up until college my life was relatively simple. I lived in the same house for nineteen years, I went to school with all the same kids, and my group of friends remained about the same. The biggest change I had to deal with was graduating from middle-school and going to high-school. Let’s just say I had no clue what I was in for when I came to college. Although I was sure I would experience more change in college than I had my whole life, I knew one thing would remain constant. Soccer.

The great thing about being on an athletic team is you have a group of friends waiting for you when you get to college. As cliche as this may sound, it is truly like having a “family” away from home. Playing soccer was the perfect way for me to transition from high-school to college and from dependence to independence. While soccer seemed to provide the consistency I needed for the first few months of school, I would have never guessed it would turn into the source of the most change I would face in college.

After having the most successful season in school history my freshman year, our coach, Ron Rainey, was offered the head coaching position at the University of Iowa. While Iowa’s soccer season scarcely compared to the success of ours, they were a Big Ten School; we were only in the Mid American Conference. I did not understand it then, but Ball State is a mid-major school, meaning it is often viewed as a “stepping stone” school in the athletics realm. That is exactly what Ron had done; he stepped in, made an impact, and moved on.

I was completely caught off guard by Ron leaving. After getting over the initial shock of the news I was forced into the recruiting process for a new coach. In my naïve, narrow-minded brain we would never find a coach as good as Ron. After months of searching, interviewing, and campus visits, the athletics department hired a woman named Michelle Salmon. Michelle previously coached at a smaller division one school in Baltimore, Maryland and played at the University of Maryland. Most impressively, she earned All-American Honors in her collegiate career and spent a short time playing for the United States Women’s National team. Initially, I was intimidated by Michelle’s knowledge of and passion for the game, but as time went on, I fed off it.

I was apprehensive about the coaching change but I came to realize that, although Ron and Michelle had very different coaching styles, they were both great leaders and possessed admirable qualities. Michelle had a knack for creating a vision, communicating it, and implementing that vision. She had very high expectations for us as players, students, and as a team. Michelle taught the team to think big and reach beyond our perceived potential. Under her leadership we achieved a lot of success, winning two conference championships and multiple individual recognitions.
So unless you already know me and/or this story (or read the abstract,) you may think, “Okay, this girl had a coaching change that influenced her to study the affects of leadership.” Well, you would be half right, but my story is not quite over. After my junior season, a season that felt nearly perfect, Michelle got an offer to coach The University of Cincinnati Women’s Soccer Team. Therefore, in three years I would have three coaches, a situation I never dreamed I would encounter.

This time around, however, I was much more open-minded. Having been through this situation before, the seven other girls in my class and I had complete confidence we would have no problem adjusting to another coach. We all recognized the importance of keeping a positive attitude throughout the recruiting process in order to make the adjustment easier for the underclassmen (who were experiencing their first coaching change.)

By the early spring of my junior year, the athletic department staff and our team decided that Michael Lovett, an assistant coach at Virginia Tech, was the best coach from our pool of candidates. Unlike our previous coaching change, we had the majority of our spring season to get to know our new coach, his personality/temperament, and his coaching style. When fall season rolled around we had most of our team back including eight out of eleven starters. We were all excited about the upcoming season and we were confident we would leave our mark on the Mid-American conference once again.

Unfortunately, things turned out much differently. At the end of the fall semester we were looking at one of the worst seasons in the soccer program’s history. We barely made it into the conference tournament and finished seventh out of twelve teams for the year. So what changed? I wish I could answer that question. Of course, I take personal responsibility for our failed season. My first question to myself is always, “What could I have done better?” But could the coaching change really effect our season and our success this much? So many questions about leadership, how powerful it really is, how it affects others, and especially how important it is in changing environments, filled my head.

While deciding the topic for my thesis, these questions still lingered. As a business major I know I will encounter many more leadership changes, some where I might be in the leadership role. I want to know what I can take away from my unique college experience and how to apply it to my future. Therefore, my thesis is an exploration of the affects of leadership, especially in team environments that are constantly changing. How do leaders react when a team encounters change? How should they react? What can a leader do to make transitions smooth? I hope the following will answer these, and many other questions regarding leadership.

INTRODUCTION

By nature, it is difficult to define both change and leadership. However, before delving into discovering how leaders can manage change, it is imperative to have a basic understanding of the separate concepts of change and leadership. I will explain the different drivers and types of change that make every situation and every change initiative unique. Following my efforts to clarify change and its meaning, I work to create an understanding of leadership. Leadership is even more complex than the concept of change and is a heavily studied topic. Therefore its
definition is much more subject to opinion. I want to take an unbiased approach to the subject, so I highlight the major approaches, theories, and styles of leadership. In defining leadership it is also important to differentiate ideas such as effective leader vs. leader and management vs. leadership. The final element before discussing leadership in the midst of change is the concept of change management. This idea ties together the two separate definitions of change and leadership.

As I mentioned earlier, my motivation for writing this thesis is to discover how my past experience has played a role in my future. In order to do this, I had to study how leaders should behave in times of transition. This is the central part of my thesis. The combination of my research and experience led me to six common actions that most successful leaders take in order to mitigate change, which include; assessing the situation, creating a vision, building trust, empowering and employing, documenting, and performing self-assessments. From these actions are three common themes throughout; the leader’s ability to communicate, coordinate, and be consistent. There is no secret recipe for how much of each action is needed, and I am not here to say one cannot be successful if he/she does not use all steps. This is section simply states what actions are common among great leaders. To simplify this complex topic, I conclude by compiling characteristics that great leaders possess. In other words, I gave a synopsis of how leaders should behave and followed that with what characteristics they need in order to behave in such a manner.

Both the effects of change and leadership intrigue me, which led me to write about leading in times of change. This topic is important to me because it is not only representative of my college experience, but it will also aid in my future endeavors. Because change and leadership are applicable to everyone’s lives it is my hope that you, too, can learn from my experiences and research.

**DEFINING CHANGE**

I have always said the biggest lesson I have learned in college is, “change is constant.” No matter who you are or the type of life you live, you are bound to experience a number of changes throughout your life. Perhaps the reason for the prevalence of change is there are so many different types of changes. In an organizational setting, for example, technology, human capital, politics, government, competitors, and the economy are just a few of many drivers of change. Because there are so many different types of change, it is difficult to find a catch-all phrase that defines it. The definition I like best is, “A transformation or transition from one state, condition, or phase to another” because it captures the idea that when change occurs the situation is altered in such a way that it requires attention and action (Random House Dictionary, 2009).

**Drivers of Change**

Just as I mentioned, there are many different drivers of change. I will continue focus on the different types of changes in an organizational setting, as my ultimate goal is to show how leaders on a team alleviate the stress of change for an organization. Organizations experience change from both internal and external sources. While company executives and leaders have the ability to manage internal change, the external environment is not as easily controlled. When the external environment changes, it forces an organization to re-think strategies which may affect many aspects of the business including the organization’s structure, processes, and culture.
Therefore, changes caused by the external environment often result in internal changes for a company.

All organizational changes fall into internal and/external categories, however, the predominant drivers of change in an organization change with time. Human capital, technological, economic/political, and market/competitive forces, however, are change drivers that consistently confront organizations and will remain forces of change in the future. According to Bill Leban and Romuald Stone, co-authors of Managing Organizational Change, “Managers at all levels must remain alert and sensitive to these forces as many are interrelated and fuel the constant change that organizations face (Leban & Stone, 2008, p. 8).”

Human capital forces include, but are certainly not limited to, demographic changes, diversity, changes in leadership, and telework and telecommuniting. As the baby boomers age and plan for retirement, the workforce faces a number of changes including generational disputes, a significant increase in healthcare and retirement costs, and an increase in job availability. In addition, the workforce faces diversity changes that may challenge organizations. For example with a quickly growing Hispanic population, managers may have to mediate cultural differences and make accommodations differences in values. Similar to my experience with coaching changes, organizations are constantly experiencing employee turnover, which includes changes in leadership. Finally, as newer technology trends emerge, telework and telecommuniting is becoming more common and is changing the structure of the traditional organization.

Technology becomes more and more advanced as time goes on, and integrating new technology into a business creates considerable change. Technology can potentially speed up processes and improve efficiency but can also be too complex or extremely expensive. It can cause change not only by changing organizational practices, but it also promotes change in employee relationships and employee behavior.

Drivers of change that are especially evident today are economic/political forces. When President Barack Obama was inaugurated into office this past January, many legal changes were made. Certain new laws and regulations are unavoidable by organizations and changes must be made accordingly. In addition to dealing with new government standards today’s businesses also face changes from the economic recession. The downturn in the economy is challenging companies to alter practices and procedures while maintaining competitiveness. Similarly, an upturn in the economy would create more jobs and promote expansion, resulting in even more organizational change.

Market/competitive forces will also consistently drive change in companies. Organizations are always compared to its competitors and company leaders must make the appropriate changes in order to maintain or improve its position in the market. Items such as strategy, product quality, customer service, efficiency, and brand image are often assessed when trying to uphold a competitive advantage. If one company in an industry makes a strategic change, it will subsequently cause other related companies to make adjustments, which is why competitive forces will forever be a driver of change.
While there are many forces that drive change within and outside of an organization, human capital, technological, economic/political, and market/competitive forces are the most common for an organization. The ubiquitous nature of change makes the concept difficult to define but helps to understand why it is constant, especially in the business environment.

Types of Change
After providing an understanding of the drivers of change, Leban and Stone continue their change management discussion by helping to simplify the concept of change through typologies (also known as classifications systems.) As we go through this discussion please refer to Table 1 for a visual of the topic (Leban & Stone, 2008, p. 53).

In the discussion of change there are two categories; 1.) The scope of change- is the entire organization affected or just certain subsets of the organization? and 2.) The positioning of change- is the change a response to another event or was it initiated by the organization itself? The scope of change is further broken down into subcategories; incremental change and strategic change. Incremental change is defined as, "change that focuses on individual components with the purpose of maintaining fit between the components (Leban & Stone, 2008, p. 52).” On the other hand, strategic changes are those that affect the entire company and its strategy. Positioning of change is also characterized by two subcategories; reactive and anticipatory. As each title suggests its meaning, reactive changes are those that occur in response to another stimuli such as a change in the external environment, and anticipatory changes are those that the organization brings on itself in anticipation of future events.

As it is depicted in Table 1, when the scope of change and positioning of change intersect, the result is four change classifications. First, tuning involves the improvement of efficiency to meet an anticipated event. Reorientation occurs when an organization changes its strategy in anticipation of something in the future. Adaption is the simple changes made to an organizational sector in response to a past event. Finally, recreation involves adjusting the organizational strategy of the firm in response to another change or stimuli.

In addition to the typologies, it is also helpful in defining change by classifying the intensity and the complexity of the change. The more intense a change, the more traumatic it is for the organization. Tuning has the lowest amount of intensity followed by adaption, reorientation, and recreation respectively. Change can also vary depending upon the complexity of the organization. As the size of the organization (measured by the number of employees, product lines, and business sectors) increases, so does the complexity. Geographic dispersion also increases complexity. Similar to augmented intensity, the more complex an organization, the more difficult it is to implement and/or adjust to changes (Leban & Stone, 2008, p. 53).
If it is not already apparent, defining change is difficult to do because it is complex and multifaceted. There are several different drivers of change, especially in a business environment. A few of the most common change forces are human capital, technology, political/economic, and competitive/ market. The changes experienced can also be broken down into typologies which will later help in understanding how to deal with the different types. Tuning, adaption, reorientation, and recreation are four change types that vary in both intensity and complexity.

This newly found understanding of the driving forces and types of change will aid in realizing the importance of managing change as this discussion continues. It also aids in the clarification that change is constant and often unpredictable. Change is an element that plays an integral part in every organization regardless of the industry.

DEFINING LEADERSHIP
You think defining change is difficult? Try coming up with a definition for leadership. The concept of leadership is even more ambiguous than change and is always a topic of conversation (and many times argument) among scholars. The definition of leadership has evolved quite a bit over the years. It was once thought that leaders were not made, they were born. Then people believed that great events made great leaders. Some scholars looked at leadership as something that existed but was not definable. As Bennis and Nanus see it, leaders possess power and use it wisely to transform followers and benefit the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 16). No matter the style, approach, or theory on leadership, someone is bound to disagree. One thing nearly everyone sees eye to eye on is the importance of leadership. Although definitions differ, it is readily apparent that great leadership is vital in the success of organizations.

Leadership Styles, Approaches, and Theories
Although some leadership perspectives are outdated and/or irrelevant, it is important to address each view in order to take an unbiased approach to the topic. The most common of these studies are the trait theory, situational approach, contingency theory, path-goal theory, leader member exchange theory, team leadership, and transformational leadership. Some of the theories are more contemporary than the others, but all are conclusions from extensive, long-term research on the topic of leadership.

First, the trait theory is relatively self-explanatory. It centers on the idea that individuals who possess certain traits are inherent leaders. These individuals have particular mental, physical, personality, and emotional traits that aid them in successful leadership. This theory is unique because it does not consider the actions of the leader, but only his/her characteristics.

The skills approach emphasizes the competencies, individual attributes, leadership outcomes, career experiences, and environmental influences leaders need for success. With individual attributes, career experiences, and environmental influences, leaders develop competencies (problem solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge) that lead to leadership outcomes (effective problem solving and performance.)

The situational approach to leadership is the most widely practiced leadership technique in today’s business world. Situational leadership involves a leader adjusting his or her leadership style based on the unique needs of specific organizational situations or employees (Northouse,
Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007). In this approach effective leaders are keenly aware of their employees’ needs and adjust their strategies accordingly. Leaders assess situations and determine what combination of directive and supportive behavior is needed. Just because the situational approach is most common, does not mean it is most successful. This approach is often criticized for being reactive rather than proactive and not allowing for issue prevention.

Contingency theory of leadership is unique because it focuses on changing a situation to fit a leader rather than a leader adjusting his or her leadership style to fit a situation. When leaders change the environment, as the contingency theory suggests, they engage their employees and as a result increase the overall efficiency and success of the business (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007).

Unlike contingency theory and similar to the situational approach, the path-goal theory focuses on how a leader or manager can change his or her style to fit the needs of the employees. The path-goal theory “provides direction about how leaders can help subordinates accomplish their work in a satisfactory manner (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007).” This theory, however, is a bit more complex because it bases behaviors on both the needs of the group members as well as the characteristics of the task. For example, when group members are dogmatic and authoritarian and tasks are ambiguous, complex, and have unclear rules, the situation needs a supervisor that provides guidance and psychological structure.

In his book on leadership Peter G. Northouse presents and describes the leader member exchange (LMX) theory as an idea that primarily focuses on the relationship between the leader and the follower. Followers giving the leader leadership responsibilities and status characterize this relationship. The stronger the relationship is, the more benefits realized by leaders, followers, groups, and organizations (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007). The task does not play a role in this theory because LMX is, above all, concerned with the similarities and differences between the leader and follower.

Many of today’s organizations thrive off the proper functioning of work groups or teams, which is why the team leadership theory is becoming more popular in the business environment. This theory suggests that all leaders are leaders of teams. The leader’s role is to clarify team goals, facilitate tasks, support the group by giving them the proper resources to perform, set behavioral standards, and organize the group members (Rubenstein, 2005, p. 42).

Transformational leadership theory is also growing in popularity. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. It is the process where an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007, pp. 175-176). The main feature that makes this theory unique is that both the leader and follower benefit from their relationship with each other.

**Leader vs. Effective Leader**

In addition to having an understanding of the most common leadership theories, it is also important to differentiate between a leader and an effective leader. Without this differentiation
one could argue that someone like Hitler, for example, is a great transformational leader. Hitler, however, is a pseudo-transformational leader, or a leader who is self-consuming, exploitative, and power-oriented, with warped moral values (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007, p. 177). In the same way, there are leaders and there are effective leaders.

Leaders are individuals who intentionally exert influence over others to structure their behaviors and relationships. Those who possess the responsibility and status of a leader are not necessarily considered great leaders or even good leaders. On the contrary, effective leaders, similar to transformational leaders, realize long-term success for their work group and subordinates. The leaders I am referring to as I discuss leadership in times of transition are effective leaders.

**Management vs. Leadership**

In order to fully understand the concept of leadership it is also vital to differentiate between management and leadership. Authors Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus make this important distinction stating, “managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 20).” Further, the major functions of management are also different than the major functions of leadership. While managers may be more involved in planning, budgeting, organizing, controlling, staffing and problem solving, leaders may find themselves more involved in functions such as establishing direction, aligning people, motivating, and inspiring. Some scholars even argue that managers are reactive and have low emotional involvement where, on the other hand, leaders are more active and have high emotional involvement (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007).

Although much research has been done to define and differentiate leadership and management, the two still have many similarities. Leadership and management both involve influence, effectively accomplishing goals, and working with people. Therefore, differentiating between a leader and manager is not always clear-cut and there are several cases where the two overlap. For example, a leader may be involved in recruiting potential employees which is a staffing function associated with managers. Similarly, a manager may motivate a marketing team to realize its goals. In both cases the individual was acting as both a manager and a leader. Table 2 below summarizes the roles of managers compared to the roles of leaders (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Produce Order and Consistency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Produce Change and Movement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and Budgeting</td>
<td>Establishing Direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Establish agendas</td>
<td>- Create a vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Set timetables</td>
<td>- Clarify big picture</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Allocate resources</td>
<td>- Set strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizing and Staffing</td>
<td>Aligning People</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Provide structure</td>
<td>- Communicate goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Make job placements</td>
<td>- Seek commitment</td>
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<td>- Establish rules and procedures</td>
<td>- Build teams and coalitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlling and Problem Solving</td>
<td>Motivating and Inspiring</td>
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<td>- Develop incentives</td>
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As we move on in our discussion of leadership and change it is good to know the differences and similarities between management and leadership, but at the same time, know that this argument is not the focus. While I am certain this discussion is pertinent, I am more worried about looking at the process of leadership in changing environments.

**IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP**

Just as I mentioned earlier, one thing almost all who study this topic agree on is the importance of leadership in an organization. Because most leaders have influence over multiple subordinates, their behaviors, attitudes, and actions have great impact on the company culture. It is of utmost importance that leaders understand and take responsibility for the influence they exert on followers.

Kelly Packard, first-year women’s basketball coach at Ball State University, embodies how leadership can create an environment built for success. In her interview after her team handed powerhouse Tennessee their first-ever first round NCAA Tournament loss, Packard explained to the media that the strength of her team’s relationships on and off the court was what gave them the ability to realize such an upset. On paper the Lady Cardinals could not match the size and strength of the Lady Vols. However, the camaraderie that Packard encouraged off the court helped the team make history on that particular night.

When leaders like Packard recognize their influence and use it in a positive manner a team can achieve beyond its perceived potential, maximize efficiency, and exploit productivity. Leaders can use their skills to create an environment built for success. It is truly remarkable how one individual can make such a positive difference in an organization. As one reads on, he/she will realize that the strength of a leader’s influence is especially strong in changing environments.

**CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

Change management is the concept that combines the notions of change and leadership. Leban and Stone explain:

> Managing change is all about moving an organization from its current state to some future desired state. And because what happens in an organization is driven by the attitudes and behavior of the individuals in that organization, change management must also consider altering the behavior patterns of the people within that organization (Leban & Stone, 2008, p. 6).

In short, it is imperative that a leader recognizes task needs as well as personal needs (attitudes and behaviors) in order to be successful in managing change initiatives. Leban and Stone continue, “Change is all about people – if they do not change, nothing significant changes (Leban & Stone, 2008, p. 6).”
An organization’s response to change is vital to its success. Firms that do not properly manage change usually do not have ideal results and sometimes completely fail. Change is inevitable, especially in a business environment, and it is important that leaders aid in the organization’s overall acceptance and adaption to change so the company can thrive. “But how”, you may ask, “do leaders create this ideal environment of success?” The next section is my best effort to answer this burning question.

**LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF TRANSITION**

Here it is, the heart of this thesis. My influences and experiences have led me to explore leadership behaviors. More specifically, what a leader can do to realize optimal results in changing environments. There are a number of elements that play a part in a leader’s success. He/she must analyze the situation, build trust, create a vision, empower, and document every little detail. All the while, the leader must coordinate all activities, be consistent, and communicate clearly. Changing environments are often ambiguous and lead to uncertainty and it is up to the leader to create an atmosphere of encouragement and security. It is not simple to be a great leader but it is by no means impossible.

**Assess the Situation**

Before taking any course of action it is important that a leader knows what he/she is dealing with. Regardless of how pressing an issue is, some sort of assessment must take place. In all cases there should be a period where the leader defines tasks, subordinate behaviors, and the environment; aligns all these elements with the organization’s strategy, mission, and values; and finally creates a plan to best utilize these resources. This is an imperative first step in successful leadership that is, unfortunately, often the most overlooked step (Andoolsen, 2008, p. 41).

In what I will refer to as Stage One of assessing the situation, the leader must define tasks, team member characteristics, and the environment. In defining the task the leader must come to an understanding of why the team is working together, the benefits of the collaboration, the obstacles to overcome, and what rewards may result. Tasks are defined in terms of ambiguity. The more ambiguous a task, the more effort it will take the leader to get the team on the same page.

Perhaps even more important than defining the tasks, is assessing the individual team members. This involves recognizing each member’s strengths and weaknesses in regards to their behaviors, skills, and competencies. The leader’s understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses should also reveal team strengths and weaknesses (Andoolsen, 2008, p. 41). In changing environments, leaders have to understand the personalities of their team members in order prevent any issues rather than have to react after the fact.

Along with defining the tasks and the individuals’ characteristics, a leader must define both the internal and external environments. As far as an organization is concerned, the external environment most commonly includes; competitive, economic, and governmental forces. Of the three, competitive forces carry the most influence. Leaders often have to base decisions on the behavior or expected behavior of other companies in their industry. Similar to analyzing tasks, when the leader understands its external influences it can anticipate change rather than react to it.
For the same reasons, knowing the internal environmental forces is just as important. Internal environment is the company's strategy, mission, vision, and its culture. This leads us to, what I will call, Stage Two of assessing the situation; aligning the tasks, team, and external environment with the internal environment. It is important that team activities do not contradict or deter from the overall strategy of the organization. This is a crucial part of assessment because the goals of the team could seem positive but if those objectives do not align with the organization's visions the results could disastrous for both the team and the firm.

Finally, Stage Three of assessing the situation is the development of a plan. This is where the leader decides how to best utilize the available resources and makes a chronological plan of events. In this stage team members are assigned to certain tasks and an agenda is set for each step to the teams goals. I plan should be simple enough for everyone to grasp and flexible enough to change incase the team encounters any obstacles along the way.

With the proper assessment of the situation the leader sets a foundation for success. After this process, the leader must focus on building strong relationships with his/her team members while never losing sight of the specified task. As you will begin to notice, leading in times of transition is a balancing act with keeping your team happy, keeping top management happy, and carrying out the task in an efficient, productive, and ethical manner.

Creating a Vision

Many of these steps overlap and intertwine. There is no perfect order or timeline for each event. When and how the leader chooses to go through these steps is often unique to each situation. Creating a vision, for example, might be done along with assessing the situation or perhaps it is done afterward a plan is made. Regardless of when it happens, creating a vision is a must for leaders.

Leaders search for a vision, synthesize their vision, and work to get others committed to the vision. It is important for an organization to have a clear vision to empower its employees. According to Bennis and Nanus the most important thing a vision should do is, “articulate a view of realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 82).” When searching for a vision, leaders need to make sure their ideals fall under this definition by simply asking questions and paying attention to workplaces norms.

The vision must be simple enough to understand. A long, complex vision serves little purpose because it is usually difficult to grasp and remember. In addition, it is important for the leader to clearly communicate their vision. “Leaders are only as powerful as the ideas they communicate,” write Bennis and Nanus (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 99). A leader could have a great idea or vision but if he or she does not communicate it or communicates it poorly followers will never jump on-board.

Finally, it is vital that the leader constantly repeats the vision. Followers need to be reminded of goals and the vision they are working toward so they feel inspired and motivated each day. Consistency is key in getting team members on-board with a vision. This helps remind everyone of the reason for the change initiative and results in less dissention between group members.
Building Trust

Trust is a touchy subject because some believe you cannot succeed without it while others say it’s not necessary. Some argue that a team does not need to trust their leader in order to accomplish tasks. While that may be true in some cases, I have to disagree and say that without a trusting relationship between the leader and followers the team cannot meet or reach beyond its perceived potential.

In explaining what they call “trust through positioning,” Bennis and Nanus write, “Trust is the emotional glue that binds followers and leaders together,” while positioning “animates and inspires the leader’s vision (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, pp. 142-143).” If followers do not trust their leaders they will not buy into the leader’s vision. It is important to build strong relationships with all the members of the organization. A leader could go about doing this by holding high ethical standards for himself/herself and others and by building a community around common interests and shared circumstances. A leader would position an organization by aligning their vision with both the internal and external organizational environment. When trust is established and the firm is properly positioned, employees are less likely to resist change and are more passionate about the leader’s vision (Bennis & Nanus, 2007).

There are many ways to build trust and the leader must decide what techniques are best fitting for each unique situation. My former coach, Michelle Salmon, told me this about trust; “You [the leader] have to trust your team first before you can expect them to trust you. You have to believe in their capabilities and their desire to want to succeed (Salmon, 2009).” Of course, Michelle is not an expert on leadership but I think she has a great point. In times of change it is a necessity that leaders view their subordinates in a positive manner. Leaders need to see that their followers are worthwhile and are capable of improvement in order to build a foundation of trust and a positive relationship (Andoolisen, 2008, p. 46).

Michelle also told me that she thinks being transparent is important in building trust. When leaders open up and allow subordinates into their lives, it creates a comfortable environment where the subordinate feels more valued and is more likely to give honest input. Again, clear and honest communication is a key in making this trust building technique work.

The most important thing to understand about trust is it must come from all parties. Followers must trust in their leader’s intentions and leaders must trust in their followers’ will and abilities. When team members enjoy trusting relationships the group is much more successful. In changing environments trust is vital for creating a feeling of safety and the most productive milieu.

Empower and Employ

Using the metaphor of building a house; assessing a situation, formulating a vision, and building trust set a foundation for great leadership, while empowerment serves as the walls. In my opinion, the ability to empower employees and employ the vision is what sets great leaders apart from the others. Leaders who encourage, motivate, inspire, and give recognition are the most...
successful, especially when a team encounters change. Leban and Stone explain, “Empowerment is the key to unlock the energy and talents that reside within an organization and make it competitive.”

During a change initiative it is important that team members give their best effort in achieving goals. Encouragement from the leader is vital in keeping spirits high and attitudes positive. The leader should personalize his/her leadership for each individual. It is important to understand that everyone has different needs and the leader can make a significant difference by catering to those needs and helping team members become more productive (Andoolsen, 2008, p. 44). Positive and consistent communication is a second way to encourage employees. I am a strong believer that stressing team members’ strengths, rather than weaknesses, brings out everyone’s best aspects. Consistent communication keeps the vision in the forefront and reminds employees of goals deadlines which encourages them to gear their efforts toward the team initiative.

There are a number of techniques a leader can apply to motivate team members. Similar to what I have mentioned in previous sections, the practices used by a leader should be unique to each situation. Additionally, leaders should use a variety of techniques to motivate. Three of the most common and most effective ways to motivate include; creating a team spirit, offering opportunities for self development, and setting a personal example.

Creating a team spirit gives team members a sense of ownership. In most cases when an individual feels as if his/her work affects others and the team as whole, he/she will put in more effort, be more efficient, and produce higher quality products. The leader creates this spirit by emphasizing teamwork through communication and involving employees at every level. Team members should be given some decision making power and encouraged to share information and be innovative with co-works. Everyone should be welcomed and involved in implementation of the vision (Leban & Stone, 2008, p. 136). For a leader, the purpose of creating a teamwork environment is to make the employee and his/her opinions feel valued.

Team members are also commonly motivated by opportunities to gain skills and knowledge that will help them to be more successful on the job. More simply said training employees motivates them. For example, training a marketing research team about the benefits of using updated data analysis software will motivate the team to use the method and may lead to higher quality and productivity. Some also see training as a trade-off for quality work. An individual might feel more obligated to produce great results if the company/leader devoted time and money into training that individual.

Setting a personal example of the vision is of utmost importance for a leader. As I am sure you may have heard this on a number of occasions but I will say it again; a leader can talk the talk but if they do not walk the walk his/her credibility deflates. Leaders have to practice what they preach in order to motivate. Followers will never buy into the leader’s message and vision if the leader himself/herself is a bad example. People learn in all different ways and the leader’s behavior is one way in which followers learn what behaviors are acceptable. Leaders’ actions do not only motivate, they inspire. Leaders can use their charisma and inherent excitement to enroll employees in the team goals and vision.
One very important and sometimes overlooked technique for empowerment is recognition and feedback. First of all, if a team member did an exceptional job on a task or went above and beyond, he/she should be recognized in some way. Recognition does not necessarily mean handing out bonuses and raises. While those are sometimes affective in empowering employees, a simple “thank you” or “congratulations” can go a long way. Secondly, feedback, even if it is constructive, can empower. If a team member is doing something wrong, he/she may not know it. The leader is responsible for assessing relaying performance results for each individual. When employees have a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses they can work toward strengthening their strengths and mitigating their weaknesses. If the employee is unaware of his/her performance results then he/she cannot be expected to improve.

It is imperative for leaders to empower their followers as organizations experience change. Leaders empower by communicating high expectations to followers, inspiring them through motivation to become committed to and a part of the shared vision in the organization (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007, p. 187). Encouragement, motivation, inspiration, and recognition are the key ingredients to empowerment and unlocking employee’s talents to benefit the team. Empowered individuals lead to teamwork which, in turn, identifies, develops, and implements, strategic plans (Leban & Stone, 2008, p. 137).

**Documentation**

As I have mentioned several times throughout my thesis, great leadership is not easy. But I must reiterate, it is also not impossible. Documenting everything, within reason, is a very efficient (but mostly underused) way to keep plans organized and ensure all efforts support the vision and strategic plan. In addition to organizational benefits documentation is vital in proving legality of practices.

Some important questions to think about while documenting are: 1.) What training methods have you used and which ones work well? 2.) What type of communication seems to be the most effective? 3.) What personal issues have been addressed? 4.) How does the team respond to different positive and negative environmental influences? The list goes on and on, and should always be unique to the situation. The documentation can serve as a reference for how to deal with future events. For example, if you sent an email to your team members congratulating them for an unexpectedly productive day and noticed an even greater boost in morale the next day, you may use a similar technique in the future.

Unfortunately, as we all know, everything is not all rainbows and sunshine in organizations. In many instances legal issues arise and the company faces great financial threat. Documentation is the main key in saving organizations from this very real problem. If you documented all practices, events, complaints, and everything of the sort, your defense in court will be much stronger. It is the leader’s responsibility to the company to make sure this type of documentation is accurate and complete. Overall proper documentation can not only help improve practices and result in more satisfied employees, but it also plays a vital role in protecting a firm from potential legal threats.

**Self-Assessment**
Another benefit of documentation is performance appraisals. Of course, it is always important to appraise each individual team member and give feedback and/or criticism, but I already covered that in the section on “empowerment.” Here, I would like to focus on the value of documenting the followers’ assessment of the leader. The best leaders I have worked with and many that I have read about always ask, “How am I doing?”

A leader should never expect subordinates to grow, learn, and make changes if the leader himself/herself is not willing to adjust. Great leaders get feedback on their leadership abilities from their followers and make appropriate changes to relay the value of the feedback (Andoolsen, 2008, p. 46). One must understand that doing a self-assessment is only the first half of honing leadership skills. The second, most important part is using the assessment to improve practices.

Authors Bennis and Nanus write about a strategy for great leaders called “deployment of self.” This strategy focuses on the leaders themselves and how they continue to grow and develop their leadership skills. All the great leaders that Bennis and Nanus studied were perpetual learners. The leaders were persistent, took risks, accepted losses, and most importantly were passionate about learning (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 174). This idea of “deployment of self” means great leaders are constantly learning and encouraging their followers to do the same. It is of utmost importance that leaders and followers have an instilled desire to learn because it aids in adjusting to various types of change and allows the organization to realize sustainable success (Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 2007, p. 183).

The Three C’s

There are a lot of elements that go into being a great leader but communication, consistency, and coordination are common themes throughout. These three C’s create an excellent working atmosphere, help teams understand the nature of the tasks and objectives, increase productivity, and speed up the resolution of problems (Andoolsen, 2008, p. 42).

Communication is the key to solving many potential internal problems. The leader must not only use their voice to empower employees to make the vision a reality, but must also listen. It is said that listening is 70 percent of communication. Leaders who can master the art of listening tend to have more satisfied team members and more success in achieving objectives. The importance of listening is included in Table 3 which depicts a list of eleven other suggestions for communicating change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Be proactive rather than reactive.</th>
<th>Plan ahead. Communication should not be an afterthought or a reaction to those struggling with the change.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specify the nature of the change.</td>
<td>Link messages to the vision or strategic purpose of the change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain why.</td>
<td>Share information on why the change is occurring and what the various options are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the scope of the change, even if it contains bad news.</td>
<td>Erase fear and uncertainty by communicating the facts of the change initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a graphic representation of the change project that people can understand</td>
<td>Give the employees a visual of the change, but keep it clear, simple, and memorable.</td>
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</table>
Along with communication, consistency plays an integral in implementing change. The last thing a leader should do in transition periods is complicate the situation. With a consistent leader, followers have a better understanding of team objectives and are less frustrated with the change initiative. Great leaders are consistent in all aspects of their work and, in turn, are viewed as reliable, honest, and trustworthy — all vital elements for implementing change.

Finally, coordination is creating harmony among all aspects of the organization including the leader, his/her followers, and both the internal and external environment, in order to achieve change objectives in the most efficient and effective manner. Reflect on all the factors we have already discussed that have a role in organizational change and leadership. Now imagine coordinating all those tasks. Talented leaders can make all functions of the change initiative complement each other. Coordination is not easy and is a unique ability that great leaders possess.

**Even Great Leaders Fail**
This paragraph should serve as a sort of disclaimer. It is important for everyone to know that great leaders can, in fact, fail. There are times when the leader has done everything in his/her power and still cannot implement change in an organization. Many factors can contribute to a talented leader failure to realize success. The responsiveness of team members is the most common threat to a leader’s attempt at implementing change. Although great leaders possess the personality characteristics and the abilities to make change easier for followers, there are times when the followers will not budge and are completely change adverse. This is especially true if the change has a personal effect on the team members. Another common hurdle to success is timing. There are situations in which time does not allow for the leader to implement his or her vision. Other challenges leaders face include, both the internal and external environment. For example, the economy (as we have seen lately) can be unforgiving and does not allow room for the leader to succeed. While great leaders who have positive objectives are very powerful and influential in many ways, they cannot always overcome outside factors which hinder their performance.
Leadership Characteristics

I am neither a professional nor a noted scholar on the topic of leadership, but I do recognize a theme of common characteristics that many great leaders possess. The previous sections focus on the actions great leaders take to mitigate change, while this section should serve to highlight the competencies needed carry out each task successfully. Great leaders may not possess all of these qualities but they definitely possess a unique combination of several of these characteristics that makes them successful. The following is a list I gathered of qualities that play a significant role in great leadership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Brief Explanation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honesty/Integrity</td>
<td>Builds credibility and relationships with followers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Creates a realistic point of view</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Builds credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength/Confidence</td>
<td>Aids in the willingness to take risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charisma</td>
<td>Builds trust and understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Allows team to overcome challenges and take risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Skills</td>
<td>Promotes positive communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Reduces frustration and allows for efficiency and effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Creates an achievable goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource allocation</td>
<td>Provides team with the necessary tools to achieve the objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>Demonstrates behavior needs to complete tasks in the most efficient manner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>Divides work based on team members’ strengths</td>
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<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Lends itself to innovation and “thinking outside of the box”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>Creates a schedule and completes tasks in an orderly way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Sensitivity to the needs of each individual to promote a team environment</td>
</tr>
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CONCLUSION

Like I mentioned earlier, this subject is something I am passionate about because my college experience opened my eyes to the ubiquitous amount of change that occurs in all our lives. More importantly through my experience, I learned how to accept and embrace change. I certainly never imagined have three different college coaches, but I am very thankful for my experience, because I gained a great deal of knowledge that will guide me as I face challenges in the future. After researching the topic of leadership in the midst of change, I can now understand the hurdles each of my coaches faced in leading our team. One of the biggest lessons I learned (while it may seem simple) from this thesis is leadership, in and of itself, is not easy, and leadership in times of transition is especially not easy. More importantly, however, I learned that great leadership is not impossible. With hard-work and courage a great leader can persevere through most any situation. I can only hope that the challenges presented to me, in my life, offer me the chance to succeed as a leader much like the great leaders I described in this thesis.
Works Cited


