

Sample Student

Dr. Kruse

Organizational Communication

Term Paper

December 1st, 2013

I have a successful network marketing business as a Gold Young Living Independent Distributor, which means that I am both self-employed and a business owner. Young Living Essential Oils is a global network marketing company and has been successful now for 20 years. They were the first company to produce therapeutic-grade essential oils, and are still the only company with standards high enough for their products to be used in cancer research in the United States and abroad. I began seriously pursuing a business with this company about a year and half ago, when I quit my full time salon job as a hairstylist. In that time, my team has expanded from about 120 members doing roughly \$6,500 in monthly sales to over 1,800 members doing more than \$150,000 in monthly sales. I have made 2 full rank advancements and multiplied my paycheck exponentially. While there is a lot of flexibility and variety in my workday, there are some activities always on my calendar.

My typical workday begins just before I go to class in the mornings and ends just before my husband gets home from work. Before my 11 o'clock class on campus, I check my business social media and e-mail, and make notes of any correspondence that may need to be addressed urgently. A time-sensitive issue may pertain to end-of-the-month orders, incorrect information being spread, or an emergency product-use question where someone needs to know what essential oil(s) to use for an immediate need. After class and lunch with my husband, it is back to

work. Most of my one-on-one meetings and conference calls happen in the afternoon, either from my home or within a 20 mile radius of it. If I do not have anything scheduled, during the afternoon is when I break from work and begin to study. Any classes I have scheduled to teach about the products or share business strategies usually happen in the evenings. Because of my college schedule, I typically do not travel far for work during the semester. I generally keep within a distance that I can drive there and back between the time I get out of class (12:15pm) and the time my husband gets home (11:30pm). So, these classes typically happen at coffee shops, in homes, health care offices, or at community centers. Throughout the day, I am checking my e-mail and especially Facebook. This time is spent approving new members to my business and product support groups, answering questions, scheduling and planning events, and sending out business and product tips and resources. I very rarely do business over the phone with my team members unless it is a scheduled conference call. Most of our communication happens via the internet.

There are also monthly and weekly events I participate in that do not happen every day, but are typical job duties. At the beginning of the month, I send out welcome letters to new members and reminder notices to members with accounts about to go inactive. The template for these letters I created and saved when I began in the business, and I update them with the current month and promotions before sending them out. I get up bright and early every second Tuesday to attend and co-host a leadership breakfast for all Young Living Independent Distributors in Northeast Oklahoma. The agenda for this event is established the week before by me and two other local ranking leaders in Young Living. We try to include something fun, educational, and inspiring at every breakfast. In the middle of the month, I check the corporate events page and send out event invitations to my members in those areas with events in the next 4 weeks. And

every Friday afternoon I have a business brainstorming call with another Gold leader in Young Living.

Everything about my typical workday requires self-motivation, time management, and clear objectives. I can take time off when I need or want to, adjust what hours and days I take appointments or teach classes, and decide how much communication I will have with my team. One temptation for many people trying to develop a strong team in this business is being too flexible and taking time off for everything. I do love this flexibility! But, one thing I have learned as a leader in this company is that high activity levels earn high results. While a big perk for me is having the flexibility to spend time with my husband and spend time on my academic education, I choose to maintain daily activity and regular events so that I can continue to advance and meet my goals in this business.

The study of leadership in organizations brought to my attention the **Situationa** Leadership Model. This approach to leadership was developed in the mid 70's by leadership theorists Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard. Paul Hersey was also the founder and director of the Center for Leadership Studies, and a professor of Organizational Behavior and Management (Hersey & Keilty, 1980). In the Situation Leadership Model, leaders adjust their style of leading based on their followers' maturity level. That is to say, how adept they are at doing the job. These adjustments in leading are broken down into four styles of leadership. The effective leader is one who applies the appropriate style of leadership in any given situation, from instructing new employees to supporting more independent and experienced employees. This includes recognizing what kind of power the leader has, and ways to encourage maturity in followers through recognition.

Comment [1]: "SituationAL": here and throughout.

The four styles of leadership are telling, selling, participating, and delegating. According to Paul Hersey and Joseph W. Keilty, with the Situational Leadership Model "...there is no one 'best' way to go about influencing people" (1980). Hersey & Keilty provide their readers with a bell curve diagram based on the four styles of leadership, two types of behavior (task behavior and relationship behavior) and how those concepts relate to the follower's maturity levels. Task behavior is how much the leader instructs people, and relationship behavior is how a leader communicates with people. One scholar describes it as directive and supportive behavior:

Directive behavior is characterized by the leader giving detailed rules and instructions while monitoring closely that they are followed. The leader decides what is to be done, how it is to be done and when. Supportive behavior is characterized by the leader listening, communicating, recognizing and encouraging. The behavior rests on mutual respect and trust, understanding and openness and close human contact and warmth. (Irgens 36-42)

Each of the four styles of leadership has a different amount of task behavior and relationship behavior based on four levels of maturity. Telling is the style of leadership used for someone with low maturity. This could be someone new on the job who needs direction in exactly what to do, and how to do it. They do not need a lot of relationship support, but they do need detailed task instruction. Selling is the style of leadership used for someone who is still pretty new, and so does not have all of the practical skills required for the job, but is willing to take responsibility and be more independent. Because of the lack of skill, task behavior requirements are still high on the part of the leader, but relationship support is higher here in comparison with telling because the follower needs motivational support to keep his or her enthusiasm about the job high. Participating is the style of leadership where the follower is adept

Comment [2]: Always include page numbers with quotations, unless originally published on a website.

Comment [3]: Year needed in APA.

at the task oriented aspects of the job, but needs extra encouragement from a leader to stay motivated and confident. This leadership style is low in task behavior, because of the follower already knows how to do the job, and high on relationship behavior because the leader needs to stay involved with the follower through two-way communication. Delegating is on the opposite side from Selling, as it is a leadership style for followers who are both well-trained and highly motivated. The delegating leader does not have to provide much in the way of task behavior or relationship behavior in order for the followers to get the job done (Hersey & Keilty, 1980).

In the Situational Leadership Model, the effect leader is someone who is able to recognize the maturity level of his or her followers and adjust leadership styles accordingly, while also encouraging followers to grow into the next level of maturity. While not every follower may reach a maturity level that responds well to the delegating style of leadership, it is still a leader's responsibility to help followers attain their highest potential. The opposite is also true, in that sometimes a follower needs more relational support or task support than in the past, and a good leader must be able to assess that and respond accordingly. Philip Gates, Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey provide a couple of practical examples of when regressing maturity calls for more involved leadership in the article, "[Educational Leadership Problems: A Situational Approach.](#)" When an individual is experiencing emotional disturbances due to a crisis that may be outside of the work environment, he or she may need more emotional support to stay on task and a leader may find it beneficial to move to the style of participating where the leader may have been using delegating in the past. A more positive example is in the case of promotion. If a teacher performing well under a delegating style of leadership is promoted to a new position that requires learning new skills, the leader will need to adjust styles. Where the leader may have been delegating in the previous position, a new position may mean the follower needs both high

task and high relationship behaviors and the leader should adopt the style of selling until the follower gains maturity in his or her new position (Gates, Blanchard & Hersey, 1976).

Methods of organizational communication analysis have grown out of situational theory to help leaders learn where their followers are in terms of maturity and aid them in improving their leadership abilities. Hersey & Keilty provide nine helpful descriptions of communication called “behavioral elements” for analysis, called directing, questioning, supporting, attentive listening, accepting, rationally responding, rejecting, and irrationally responding (1980). These elements are organized into three primary categories: leader behavior, effective follower behavior, and ineffective follower behavior. Supporting, directing, and questioning are appropriate leader behaviors. Rationally responding, attentive listening, and accepting are effective follower behaviors. Irrational responding, rejecting, and nonattentive listening are ineffective follower behaviors. Observing these behaviors between leaders and followers helps an organization discern where more training is needed for followers and leaders in communication.

This approach to leadership is also applicable to those who are traditionally considered followers, but need to develop leadership skills in their positions. In the article, “Taking the Lead When You’re Not in Charge” Kenneth Blanchard describes points of power relevant to becoming a leader from his Situation Self Leadership program. Blanchard states five main points of power: position power, task power, personal power, relationship power, and knowledge power. Position power is the traditional leadership role people find themselves in when they are the boss. Managers, CEOs, Officials, and Presidents have position power because their influence on others is based on their job title. This is the most commonly identified form of power, but not

the only relevant form. Blanchard emphasizes that not having position power does not make one powerless, because the other four types of power can be just as influencing.

Task power, personal power, relationship power and knowledge power all have their place in influencing others. Someone with task power performs a specific practical function necessary to the job, like approving expenses in accounting (Blanchard, 1994). Personal power follows those with excellent leadership skills, and according to Blanchard, “This power emanates from strength of character, passion, inspiration and a personal vision of the future” (1994). People with personal power are easy to follow and naturally motivate others. Relationship power influences those close to an individual or those indebted to another. Someone influenced by relationship power may take action to make the other person like them more, to seek approval, or out of obligation to an individual. A person with knowledge power has information valued by others because of its relevance, depth or specialty. This person may have more experience in the field or have gone through more education and training over a particular subject, making their knowledge more valuable to the group or an individual. Blanchard suggests that everyone is strong in some power type, and by learning what it is, one can strategize to make up for weaknesses in other areas (1994). Someone high in knowledge power but weak in relationship power could use their skill to help others (who lack that knowledge) and begin building relationships with that power.

Recognition is an important task for effective leaders to employ. In the article, “Recognition and Situational Leadership II” by Kenneth Blanchard and Bob Nelson, four types of followers are identified who are in great need of recognition by their leader. The first three types followers are the enthusiastic beginner, the disillusioned learner, and the capable but cautious contributor. The enthusiastic beginner is best recognized by effective telling leadership,

characterized by "...attention, specific direction and redirection" (Blanchard, 1997). The disillusioned learner faces some of the same difficulties in adjusting to a new job and learning new skills like the enthusiastic beginner, but has been at it longer and the eagerness that comes with landing a new job has worn off, making the difficulties much more frustrating. Positive reinforcement by praising the disillusioned learner's achievements and jobs done right is the best way of providing this follower recognition. The capable but cautious contributor needs more confidence to continue producing good results. Similar to the disillusioned learner, this type of follower is encouraged by "clear, specific positive recognition" (Blanchard, 1997). All three of these followers may be recognized by their leader effectively and at no cost to the manager. Some examples of "no-cost ways to recognize employees" are with personal thank you notes, public praise, extra time with leaders, and rewards like time off or special celebrations.

The fourth type of follow identified by Blanchard is the self-reliant achiever. This type of person is highly motivated, highly committed, and highly productive basically all on their own. But they need recognition, too, because they need to feel valued by the organization and not used. While some of the same techniques for the first three types of followers can be used to recognize the fourth type, the self-reliant achiever is much more encouraged by recognition that comes in the form of giving them more autonomy and power in their job position. Blanchard notes that recognizing the high performer in front the organization also encourages others and provides a good example for them to follow in terms of performance.

Many characteristics of Situational Leadership are applicable to being a leader in a network marketing company. At the rank of Gold, I have people in my organization who are just starting out and need specific instructions all the way up to people who build their business better than I do but still see me as a leader and need recognition. Some people join the company with a

background in marketing and a vision for business success, while other people join because they want to be part of a healthy and helpful community. There is a lot of flexibility in this business and people are free to advance in rank at any speed they choose or are able to, they can work the business in many different ways and still be successful, and they do not technically have anyone with position power to report to. I am a leader, not a boss or a manager. But even without position power, I can see how Situational Leadership concepts apply to my line of work.

There are many different maturity levels represented in my organization, so I have to adjust my leadership style accordingly. When a distributor is still in his or her first two rank levels, my leadership style is a lot of telling. I am teaching the basics of the products, the compensation plan, and how to get and use all of our resources. There is very little relationship support as the new distributor is learning the ins and outs of the company. During the next two levels, the distributor has begun building a team and has more of the technical aspects down but needs to learn more in order to become a leader for his or her team. My leadership style here is selling, as the distributor needs both directive and relationship support in order to continue advancing in the company. I can answer more difficult questions about how product is developed, more detailed aspects of the compensation plan, as well as handle any issues that come up that are beyond the distributor's sphere of influence. Once a distributor advances to the rank of Executive, my role becomes much more participatory. The distributor now has access to more leadership resources in the company, a greater sphere of influence, and more knowledge about how the company works. However, Executive is a major transition for the distributor into a stronger leadership role for their team, utilizing the same skills the distributor has already developed but in very different proportions. This requires low task but high relationship behavior from the leader to help the distributor stay motivated and enthusiastic while adjusting to the new

role. Past Executive is the rank of Silver and then Gold, and at both of these levels (and beyond, to Platinum and Diamond) the leader needs to do very little to keep up momentum in that part of the group. A distributor at the rank of Silver has the experience, skill, and confidence to get the job done.

At all levels, recognition is a constant activity that I model as a leader and that the company encourages. For each distributor's lower level rank advancement I recognize them with a personal note of encouragement and a public congratulation on social media. One of my Silver leaders has special gifts that she sends to her distributors to reward each new rank advancement. At our last monthly leadership breakfast, I awarded a new Executive with a gift and recognized her publically for high performance and exhibiting strong personal power. After Executive, the company recognizes Silvers & above at rank-specific all expenses paid recognition retreats. This year, I attended one in Idaho where I opted out of the fancy Coeur d'Alene resort in favor of staying in a cabin at the company's St. Maries farm and participating in the planting, harvesting and distillation processes. Next year, rumor has it that Diamonds will be going to France and I plan on being on that plane! At the yearly international conventions, Silvers & above are invited to an awards dinner in their honor and get special perks like VIP lines, VIP seating, and extra training opportunities. There are also special rewards and recognition throughout the year for high performers in the company and outstanding contributions.

The Situational Leadership approach makes me think more about how I can motivate people who are new to the company and help them develop their own business and advance faster. Blanchard's points of power are especially interesting to me in this regard because of how much faster people advance when they are teamed up with someone that compliments them. If I am able to better assess what kind of power a new person naturally has and strategically place

them with people who have other strengths, and if I can help my entire team learn to constantly be improving their communication skills then no doubt our momentum will improve together. Also being aware of when a distributor regresses in terms of maturity level and adjusting my style to match is something that I paid little attention to prior to studying this approach to leadership. I think that many times leaders can get set in a pattern of behavior that is not the most useful for encouraging their followers, but this approach helps leadership break out of that pattern and refocus on the individual. The concepts in this approach are also simple and seem easy to apply to real life.

Works Cited

- Blanchard, Kenneth. "Taking the lead when you're not in charge." *Emergency Librarian* 21.3 (1994): 34. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 27 Nov. 2013.
- Blanchard, Kenneth. "Taking the lead when you're not in charge." *Emergency Librarian* 21.3 (1994): 38. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 27 Nov. 2013.
- Gates, Philip, Kenneth Blanchard, and Paul Hersey. "Diagnosing Educational Leadership Problems: A Situational Approach." *Educational Leadership* 33.5 (1976): 348-355. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 28 Nov. 2013.
- Hersey, Paul, and Joseph Keilty. "One on One OD Communications Skills." *Training & Development Journal* 34.4 (1980): 56-60. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 27 Nov. 2013.
- Irgens, O. M., "Situational Leadership: A Modification of Heresy and Blanchard." *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 16.2 (1995): 36-42.

Very good! A few minor issues, but overall, great job.