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Leadership – Fulcrum Above & Beyond
by Gaurang Vora
Advisory Article

Leadership – Fulcrum Above & Beyond [1]

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What comes into your mind when you hear the word "Leadership"?

- Is it the image of a politician giving a speech to a group of people?
- Or is it the image of a sergeant shouting at his soldiers to motivate them?

Gone are the days of so-called command-and-control. I would be sharing my thoughts on the future leaders through a 3 article series, the first in the series would be about the top 3 mantras that future leaders should look for, the second series article would be about attributes of Leader(s) and the third article would talk about the mindset shifts. I view leadership as the center point of going above and beyond (like a fulcrum) in terms of how you can influence as a leader and what it takes to positively influence people to work towards a common vision.

Leadership - what does it mean, there would be many definitions, but I liked Albert Einstein's definition - "Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction."
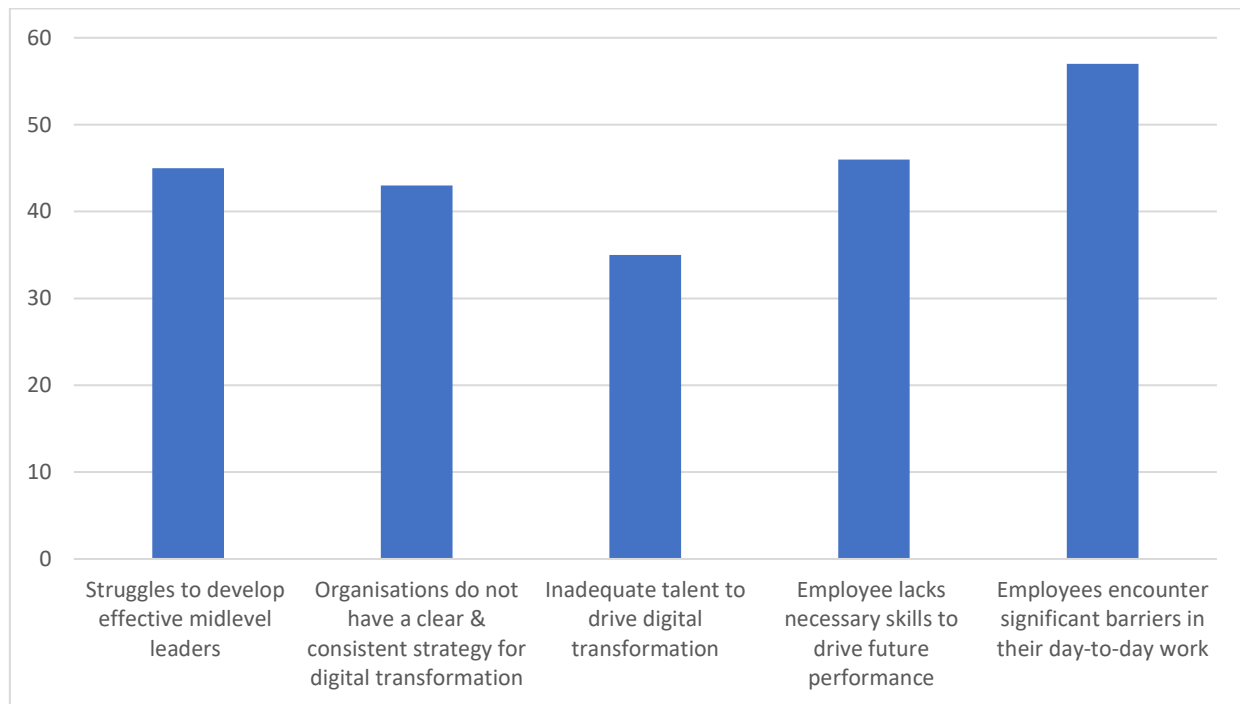
Another viewpoint comes from Douglas MacArthur, who says "A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent."

Gartner had some interesting statistics in their article published on 4th December 2019, about Leadership development in organizations.

In this article, Gartner had identified the top 5 priorities of HR Leaders in 2020. The HR leaders had to ensure that the workforce has the skills it needs for the future, equipping leaders for success with ever-expanding demands, making work easier through organization design and change management, closing the talent gap to drive digital business transformation and achieving higher returns from investments in employee experience.

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https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2019-12-4-gartner-identifies-the-top-five-priorities-for-hr-lead

45% of organizations struggle to develop effective midlevel leaders
43% of organizations do not have a clear & consistent strategy for digital transformation
35% have inadequate talent to drive digital transformation
46% lack necessary skills to drive future performance
57% of employees encounter significant barriers in their day-to-day work.

The above result establishes the fact that future leaders will have to be different in terms of thinking futuristic, there is a strong need to serve the people, be passionate about the work, have various attributes, and to have mindset shifts.

Let's first look at the three mantras which I believe future leaders should look upon –

1. Futuristic Thought Leader: What is going to stay the same between today and the future, the core remains the same as the setting of vision, execution on strategy, decisiveness, effective leading etc, but future leaders must be different and that is because the business will look different in the future due to the below factors

   a. A varied pool of talent
   b. Globalization
   c. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
   d. Changing demographics
   e. Ethics & Transparency
   f. Emerging Technologies

   The leader must View challenges as not permanent but as obstacles that can be overcome, S/he must be thinking of different possibilities viz a viz picking one path.

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For eg. In Chess, an amateur player sees the board for moving its pieces in terms of a single piece (like pawn or rook or bishop) but a professional player would look at it in terms of building strategy based on the opponents move. Which means thinking in terms of decision trees. This is the mindset the leaders should have. Strategize in a way where you might not be surprised as to how the future might look. The leaders should have open conversations with the employees who are working for them to find out how effective they are.

2. Serving your people: Leaders of future centuries must serve and recognize their people to create a culture of inclusivity. To understand this let me share a short story of David Novak, Chief Operating Officer of Pepsico – when David joined Pepsico in an operations role, as he was new, he assembled a team of 12 merchandisers in a room and said I want to know who the best merchandiser is here, who is the one whom people like, who is the one who is admired & respected. One by one the merchandiser started talking about Bob, describing how they learnt from him, why customers loved Bob, they also described how Bob built a relationship and all great things. Suddenly David looked at the corner of the table saw Bob crying, he was surprised! He asked Bob why he was crying, all other merchandisers were praising him. Bob said I have been working here for the past 47 years and I am retiring in 2 weeks, I never knew that everybody thought so good about me. Can you imagine, a person who gave long years to the organization and was never recognized by his leaders or peers for the work he was doing. Thought Leaders will have to make sure to recognize their people. My personal experience is, recognition big or small means a lot to the employee and it will certainly make a big difference.

3. Passion for Leadership: Leadership is passion, passion for your people. Here is another story, this time of Sheryl Palmer, CEO of Taylor Morrison - A few years ago she had to write 2 letters to her family and team. The first letter she wrote to her team was "I will see you in 6 weeks" and the second letter was "Carry on the legacy we started". Sheryl had a brain tumor and she had to undergo brain surgery, she didn't know she would make it out of it or not and so she wrote 2 letters, I would see you in 6 weeks, if the surgery went well and she was back and on the other hand carry on the legacy if the surgery did not go well. She wanted to let the team know that we did so much great work together and the show must go on.

Here is what I think, like the love of parents towards their children which is more mentoring, coaching, disciplining, caring, I see leadership as a loving relationship, love of leader towards the team; it's an evolving journey. In the current world where knowledge is abundantly available Leaders must have idiosyncratic characteristics to drive the vision. To create an impact a leader should know one's strengths, earn respect, loyalty, and commitment from team, should have decisive decision-making skills, a clear communicator & visionary, and above all lead with humility. Leadership is not an easy task but those who have led in some form or other know how difficult it is to leave reverberations that are positive and inspiring. New leaders must create consensus and community, and communicate differently to be highly effective.

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While we touched upon the top 3 mantras for future leaders, the next series article will concentrate on a few attributes that leaders need to cultivate to be successful.

Stay tuned for the next article in my series on Leadership – Fulcrum Above & Beyond…

Acknowledgement & References –

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About the Author

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Gaurang Vora is a knowledgeable Program Manager well-versed in providing strategic direction and ongoing leadership to teams, also proficient in building strong innovative teams delivering successful solutions. He is a veteran of project management with almost 2 decades of demonstrated track record of success playing a pivotal role in transforming through people, process and technology. Ready to apply expertise and experience to challenging new roles, he brings deep understanding of program/project management, delivery management, budgeting and revenue forecast.

Gaurang is a results-oriented leader with a strong track record of working in a BRIGHT (Blur, Risky, Interconnected, Global, Hi-tech, Timely) world with Thought Leadership, Ownership and Accountability. He was a Top 15 PMO influencer as part of PMO Global Awards 2020 and is Director – Projects & Alliances at PMOGA India Hub.

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