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Abstract

In this chapter we investigate the relationship between leadership and dependability. Dependability is a skill that relates to a number of other workplace skills. The Bases of Competence skills model has been used to capture the skills related to dependability. There are four bases—*Managing Self*, *Communicating*, *Managing People and Tasks*, and *Mobilizing Innovation and Change*—made up of individual skills. Three of the bases consist of four skills and one is made up of five skills. The performance of a leader was shown to relate to the skills and other factors. Leadership performance and dependability are presented through several concepts: 360 degree stakeholder interactions, meeting deadlines, credit given to others, trust, mindfulness, and motivation. The difference between leadership in a crisis and in a stable situation is considered. A case study entitled “Saadiyat: A Global Team in Trouble” concludes the chapter.

Keywords

Dependability • Workplace skills • Competence skills model • Managing self • Communicating • Managing people and tasks • Mobilizing innovation and change • 360 Degree stakeholder interaction • Deadlines • Giving credit

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Introduction

Dependability relates to leadership through various managerial skills. It is not just meeting deadlines (although that is very important), but relates to the leaders' promptness and attitude toward workers' dependability. In this chapter we will explore the relationship between leadership and dependability in the context of critical workplace skills. The skills are based on "The Bases of Competence" (Berdrow & Evers, 2009, 2010, 2013; Evers & Rush, 1996; Evers, Rush, & Berdrow, 1998). This model consists of four bases, each of which is made up of four or five specific workplace skills.

Dependability can be defined as "worthy of trust."¹ Furthermore, a worker might think of his manager's dependability in terms of: "when you always do everything that you say you will and never make promises you cannot keep."² Dependability is similar to reliability or repeatability, i.e., always carrying out what you set out to do.

Leadership is commonly defined as the art of convincing a group of people to accomplish a goal that the leader sets out to achieve. It is similar to management but a broader concept not necessarily tied to managers. The core of leadership is related to dependability in that a good leader or manager does what she says she will do. Leadership is a much broader concept than dependability made up of many skills that must be used in an ongoing manner. For our purposes in this chapter we will use "The Bases of Competence" skills.

The Bases of Competence

The Bases of Competence were developed in a research project called "*Making the Match between University Graduates and Corporate Employers*" (Evers et al., 1998; Evers & Rush, 1996). A total of 1610 university students and university graduates completed three waves of questionnaires. Managers were also asked to complete questionnaires on the same topics. The topics covered competency of the skills, demand in the future and related questions. The major result of the project was a model of skills that university graduates need in corporate employment. We developed an 18-skill model first and then summarized the skills into four bases: "*Managing Self*," "*Communicating*," "*Managing People and Tasks*," and "*Mobilizing Innovation and Change*" (Table 14.1). One skill, "Quantitative," was dropped from the analysis because it did not factor analyze with any on the other skills. Therefore we have a 17-skill model incorporating the four bases of competence.

Managing Self was defined as "constantly developing practices and internalizing routines for maximizing one's ability to deal with the uncertainty of an ever-changing environment" (Evers et al., 1998, p. 5). It consists of four skills: "Learning,"

¹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/dependability>.

² <http://www.yourdictionary.com/dependability>.

Table 14.1 The bases of competence and specific skills***Managing Self:***

Learning: involves the ability to gain knowledge from every-day experiences and formal education experiences

Personal organization/time management: involves managing several tasks at once, being able to set priorities and to allocate time efficiently in order to meet deadlines

Personal strengths: comprises maintaining a high energy level; motivating oneself to function at optimal levels of performance; functioning in stressful situations; maintaining a positive attitude; working independently, and responding appropriately to constructive criticism

Problem solving/analytic: consists of identifying, prioritizing, and solving problems; individually or in groups. Includes the ability to ask the right questions, sort out the many facets of a problem, and contribute ideas as well as answers regarding the problem

Communicating:

Interpersonal: involves working well with others, understanding their needs and being sympathetic with them

Listening: involves being attentive when others are speaking, and responding effectively to others' comments during a conversation

Oral communication: involves the ability to present information verbally to others, either one-to-one or in groups

Written communication: involves the effective writing of formal reports and business correspondence, as well as informal notes and memos

Managing People and Tasks:

Coordinating: involves being able to coordinate the work of others and encourage positive group relationships

Decision-making: involves making timely decisions on the basis of a thorough assessment of the short- and long-term effects of decisions, recognizing the political and ethical implications, and being able to identify those who will be affected by the decisions made

Leadership/influence: involves the ability to give direction and guidance to others and to delegate work tasks to others in a manner which proves to be effective, and motivates others to do their best

Managing conflict: involves the ability to identify sources of conflict between oneself and others, or among other people, and to take steps to overcome disharmony

Planning and organizing: involves being able to determine the tasks to be carried out toward meeting objectives, perhaps assigning some of the tasks to others, monitoring the progress made against the plan, and revising a plan to include new information

Mobilizing Innovation and Change:

Ability to conceptualize: involves the ability to combine relevant information from a number of sources, to integrate information into more general contexts, and to apply information to new or broader contexts

Creativity/innovation/change: involves the ability to adapt to situations for change, at times initiating change and providing "novel" solutions to problems

Risk-taking: involves taking reasonable risks by recognizing alternative or different ways of meeting objectives, while at the same time recognizing the potential negative outcomes and monitoring the progress toward the set objectives

Visioning: involves the ability to conceptualize the future of the organization or group and provide innovative paths for the organization or group to follow

“Personal Organization/Time Management,” “Personal Strengths,” and “Problem Solving/Analytic” (definitions of the skills are in Table 14.1). *Communicating* was defined as: “interacting effectively with a variety of individuals and groups to facilitate the gathering, integrating, and conveying of information in many forms (for example, verbal, written)” (Evers et al., 1998, p. 5). *Communicating* also consists of four skills: “Interpersonal,” “Listening,” “Oral Communication,” and “Written Communication.” The third base, *Managing People and Tasks*, was defined as: “accomplishing the tasks at hand by planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling both resources and people” (Evers et al., 1998, p. 5). *Managing People and Tasks* is the only base that consists of five skills: “Coordinating,” “Decision-Making,” “Leadership/Influence,” “Managing Conflict,” and “Planning and Organizing.” The final base, *Mobilizing Innovation and Change*, was defined as: “conceptualizing, as well as setting in motion, ways of initiating and managing change that involve significant departures from the current mode” (Evers et al., 1998, p. 5). It consists of four skills: “Ability to Conceptualize,” “Creativity/Innovation/Change,” “Risk-Taking,” and “Visioning.”

The overall ratings by students, graduates, and managers were between “high” and “average” on a five-point scale (“very high” to “very low”) for all the skills, and hence, the base competencies. Within this range there were interesting differences. *Communicating* and *Managing Self* were consistently rated higher than *Mobilizing Innovation and Change* and *Managing People and Tasks* (Evers et al., 1998, p. 43). New hires consistently gave themselves lower *Mobilizing Innovation and Change* and *Managing People and Tasks* scores than other groups and rated themselves higher on the other two bases (Evers et al., 1998, p. 44).

We also asked our respondents which skills they felt would be in greatest demand in the future and which ones needed to be improved. Visioning, creativity, and risk-taking from within the *Mobilizing Innovation and Change* base were felt to be in the highest demand in the future (and yet were rated the lowest in terms of competence). Also, leadership and managing conflict from the *Managing People and Tasks* base were viewed as critical skills for university graduates in corporate employment. When asked which of the 17 skills were most in need of improvement, *leadership* ranked first (Evers & Rush, 1996, p. 292). It should be noted that although the study was conducted some time ago, the model has been verified in several studies (Berdrow & Evers, 2009, 2010, 2013).

So, we have leadership as a skill needing competency improvement while being in great demand in the future. Taken as a whole, the bases and related skills can be thought of as contributing to dependability in the workplace. Leadership and dependability are abstract concepts incorporating a number of dimensions.

The bases help to understand the relationship between leadership and dependability. *Managing Self* focuses on having the strengths to learn to deal with various tasks and being able to handle problems that occur. This is the foundation for being dependable and functioning as a good leader. Leaders are not necessarily managers; an individual working in an organization may be in a team and need to take on the leadership of the team for a particular project. Individuals who are self-employed need to act as leaders when they deal with clients and other organizations.

Communicating is another important base competency when it comes to working with others. Excellent *Communicating* clearly is a sign of a dependable leader. Colleagues, supervisors, and those supervised have to understand what individuals are communicating in writing, orally, and via computers in order to be dependable workers and leaders.

Managing People and Tasks is at the heart of dependability and its relationship to leadership. Coordinating, decision-making, managing conflict, and planning and organizing are all related to leadership. Being a dependable leader depends upon how well these skills are used in everyday work. We included leadership as a skill in this base competency because of its importance. *Mobilizing Innovation and Change* is a complex base competency related to understanding a problem and its relationship to resources and visualizing creative solutions. It also encompasses careful risk-taking when necessary to the solution of a complex problem. These are the final elements in the development of a successful and dependable leader.

Performance of a Dependable Leader

The actions of leaders can impact work performance, quality of work output, satisfaction and morale, and cohesiveness of work groups (Agho, 2009, p. 1). Leadership performance can be measured as the effectiveness of the group over time (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005, p. 172). The leaders' influence over the group comes through their credibility, integrity, decision-making, competence, and ability to convey a vision.

While there is an ongoing debate over the impact, if any, leaders can actually exact on the effectiveness of organizations, there is support for the argument that a leader influences the outcomes of followers. It is at this local level of analysis, those interpersonal, group level activities, that we focus our assessment of performance outcomes.

We have laid out the competence-based view of leadership—what competencies a leader needs to effectively influence the work and direction of others. We have also laid out what we mean by dependability—the leader that can be relied on to do what they say they will do and not surprise others. In essence, we believe in the perspective of leaders as enablers of individual, team, and organizational performance. Now we focus on the performance outcomes of this dependable leader. How do we know if the dependable leader is achieving high performance outcomes? We look to their actions and interactions with the task and the people engaging in that task, the followers.

(a) **360 Degree Stakeholder Interactions**

For a leader to achieve a goal or an outcome by guiding the work of others, they must be aware of all who can impact, or will be impacted by, not only their own decisions and actions but also the decisions and actions of the people they are leading. This 360 degree consideration of all stakeholders is critical to making the right choices, anticipating and responding to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis). Even if not all stakeholder objectives can be

satisfied, they do have to be considered. Blind spots will lead to surprises that can jeopardize the whole team and/or organization.

This analysis depends on the leader's ability to identify and interact with relevant stakeholders. This calls on all of the base competencies. The skills of problem solving/analysis and learning are important for mapping out the stakeholders, and incorporating the input they provide into effective leadership decisions and actions, guiding the team around threats and into areas of opportunity. Effective communication, in particular listening, is the vehicle through which connections are made, relationships are established, and important information is gathered. Coordination and decision-making turns the information into useful next steps. Potentially the most important skill is the ability to conceptualize, combining, recontextualizing, and applying relevant information to new or broader contexts.

In the process of conducting the stakeholder analysis, a dependable leader also gathers information about their own performance, and uses that information to improve their style, their relations with followers, and to continually develop their leadership skills. This continual learning builds trust and communicates the importance of self-managed skill development.

360 degree stakeholder consideration creates a culture of inclusion and consideration, rather than exclusion and competition.

(b) **Meeting Deadlines**

Leaders are responsible for two main activities—achieving outcomes and managing relationships. One cannot happen without the other. But if the goals and objectives are not met in an efficient and effective manner, the role of the leader is called into question. Fundamental to leadership is achieving outcomes through others. If deadlines are missed, the leader might have a list of reasons but the assessment would still be ineffectiveness of leadership efforts. Consistently setting and meeting appropriate deadlines characterizes a leader as dependable, one who is able to deliver regardless of obstacles along the way.

(c) **Credit Given to Others**

Leaders are most powerful when they share their power with others, providing opportunities for followers to learn, achieve, and be rewarded appropriately. Acknowledging achievements of others, rather than taking the praise and rewards for themselves, enhances self-efficacy and motivates followers to stretch further.

(d) **Trust**

An effective dependable leader is by definition trustworthy, and creates a culture of trusting teamwork. Establishing a climate of trust is imperative for individuals to work together cooperatively. If people do not trust each other, or the leader, it is highly unlikely that they will freely offer their skills, knowledge, or efforts to a common activity. A leader establishes his trustworthiness through transparency, consistency, and commitment.

(e) **Mindfulness**

“Mindfulness” according to Thich Nhat Hanh, a leading Buddhist, “is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply at every moment of daily life.”³ Shapiro and

Carlson (2009) define mindfulness as “the awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open, caring, and non-judgemental way” (p. 4).

A mindful leader is one who is aware of what is happening both in the task and the relationships of the team, and responds with intelligence and compassion. Being aware and present for the issues that arise allows a leader to gather all relevant information without preconceived notions of what is happening. As soon as we label a person or event, we shortcut our analysis jumping straight to pre-programmed responses. In doing so we miss critical information that might have led to a better decision or reaction. Reading body language, facial expressions, tone, and personal interactions can facilitate accurate assessments of team climate and personal circumstances.

Blindness to or inconsideration of people’s situations, anxieties, ideas, or aspirations sends a message that they don’t matter, it is not important to the situation at hand. Trust is broken; the leader is no longer viewed as dependable. Acknowledgement creates a connection, sends a message that even if I can’t fix this, I recognize it and am supportive.

(f) **Motivation**

Followers are motivated when they know what is expected, they believe they will be appropriately rewarded in ways that matter to them, and they feel they are capable of doing what is being asked. Leaders can foster motivation by ensuring that the right people are in place and that they have the resources they need. This ability to create and outfit an appropriate team can be challenging, particularly in a complex environment in which there is uncertainty and ambiguity. McKelvey (in press) argues that complexity theory suggests leadership should focus on the ability to “foster and speed up the emergence of “distributed intelligence” (DI), which is a function of “strategically relevant human and social capital assets—the networked intellectual capabilities of human agents” (p. 1).

Leaders facilitate knowledge sharing and effective performance within a team by building the team’s expertise. The leaders’ role as “knowledge builder”—to “create opportunities and processes that stimulate and encourage knowledge sharing amongst team members”—is vital to the team’s effectiveness in sharing, utilizing, and evolving their knowledge pool (Lee, Gillespie, Mann, & Wearing, 2010, p. 475).

“Complex leadership involves creating the conditions that enable productive, but largely unspecified, future states” (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001, p. 391). Marion and Uhl-Bien argue that leadership effectiveness is not just about controlling the future; it is about fostering the conditions that enable a productive future. These leaders are able to cultivate emergent interactions that shape and direct people towards high performance outcomes. This means the future and the path towards it is not predictable. Followers depend on their leaders to support and guide them through that uncertainty. In doing so leaders build confidence in followers, modeling appropriate assessment and risk-taking, as well as effective decision-making. This trust in the leader and confidence in themselves is a winning combination for creating effective outcomes.

³<http://www.plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice.html>.

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the relationship of leadership and dependability through a skills model and a number of concepts. A number of conclusions can be made. Leadership is the process of getting others to achieve the leaders' goals. Dependability is delivering on promises and goals set out. Leaders get things done through the work of others, operating individually or in teams. Leaders are responsible for themselves and others. Leaders are responsible for the tasks and relationships of themselves and their workers. Leadership is a competency understood through four bases of competence: *Managing Self*, *Communicating*, *Managing People and Tasks*, and *Mobilizing Innovation and Change*. Leaders operate in a complex network of relationships and events. A dependable leader may act differently in a crisis than in a stable situation, but the characteristics of trustworthiness remain constant. Dependable leadership is enacted through 360 degree stakeholder analysis, meeting deadlines, giving credit where credit is due, creating a culture of trust, embodying mindfulness, and motivating others.

In conclusion, leaders who are not dependable jeopardize the existence of their organization. They will not be successful over the long haul. The climate of an organization with leaders who are not dependable will be an unpleasant place to work. Dependability is at the very core of good leadership.

Case Study 14.1: Saadiyat: A Global Team in Trouble⁴

Situation

As Bob and Michal sat down to begin their assessment of the Saadiyat project, Bob worried about how to gain the trust of the team while getting the project back on track. As Global Fast Start Lead for AECOM, a \$19 billion global company focused on designing, building, financing, and operating the world's infrastructure, it was Bob's job to facilitate rapid improvement of team performance.

The Saadiyat commission was to provide a large multidisciplinary team providing technical services to a demanding Middle East client. The Project Team consisted of approximately 90 professionals from numerous countries representing over 15 nationalities. The Project Team was at the project site, integrated with the Client Team. The Project Team was in crisis; hence the contract was in crisis. Bob and Michal were the 2-person leadership team injected into the Project Team with the aim of quickly recovering the situation.

Peter, the original Project Team leader, had left abruptly without a succession plan and there was a complete loss of trust by the client team

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⁴Provided by Bob Coote, AECOM, with thanks from the chapter authors.

(collectively and individually). Project Team performance was generally poor overall and team members were distrustful of the client and of each other. There were several nonperformers on the Team. And to make matters worse, there was no structure to the work—no documented procedural or work practice framework; in other words, no rules of the game. The deputy leaders were burnt-out, they left shortly after Bob and Michal arrived, providing a limited handover. The Team was in a crisis-of-the-day reactive mode rather than a proactive mode. In essence the Project Team was “rudderless”; there was no “recovery plan” and no plan to develop a “recovery plan.”

Concurrent with this situation the client project was entering a critical delivery phase: the Project Team’s workload was increasing in scope and complexity and the team had commenced a significant staff build-up which was exacerbated by both voluntary and involuntary staff departures. The majority of staff was new to the Team and new to the company.

In summary, the new leaders had to reconfigure the bus while it was moving quickly down a busy highway with very important, and distrustful, clientele on board.

Approach

The Leadership approach was to conduct a rapid situation assessment and to then develop and implement prioritized actions which included the development of a comprehensive, longer-term Recovery Plan. The critical task was to reestablish trust throughout the Team and with the client.

The immediate steps were to:

- (a) Communicate the situation to AECOM. This step ensured the necessary management support for implementing actions.
- (b) Develop a Short-term Action Plan addressing the immediate people, process, and tools deficiencies.
- (c) Communicate the approach to the client (the first step in reestablishing Trust).
- (d) Communicate the Short-Term Action Plan plus the underlying reasons to the Project Team (This established a shared understanding of the situation and set the *commitment baseline*-Leadership promises to the Project Team and to the client).

By delivering against the commitment baseline, Bob and Michal were able to demonstrate their dependability and thereby start the Trust establishment process.

The development of a longer-term Recovery Plan was a critical, once-only Team re-building opportunity; Bob and Michal spent significant effort in getting this right which included involving the Team in the development and implementation of the Plan.

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They knew that individual leaders needed to demonstrate that they followed through on their commitments and were visibly accountable for their actions; Bob and Michal instituted a number of activities and processes to provide the necessary opportunities. These were used to enable these behaviors to be cascaded through the Team (sub-teams, working group, and individual level).

Analysis

This situation and the leadership response serve to illustrate a number of the concepts discussed in this chapter. What follows is a description of actions taken against those concepts.

1. Skills of a Leader

- (a) Dependability of the leaders was demonstrated by publicly announcing leader commitments and then following through on those commitments.
- (b) Bases of Competence
 - *Managing Self*—Each Leader was assessed and individual coaching/mentoring implemented when required. This included 360 degree assessments.
 - *Communicating*—Leaders facilitated regular and routine team meetings supplemented by an open-door policy.
 - *Managing People and Tasks*—Leaders established a documented procedural framework and aligned individual goals and objectives to the broader Team Purpose and Values.
 - *Managing Innovation and Change*—Through the enhanced communication means and procedural framework leaders were able to move from a reactive to a proactive delivery mode giving confidence and trust to the Project Team and to the client.

2. Performance of a Dependable Leader

- (a) 360 degree interaction was achieved by leaders':
 - Regular communication to the broader team.
 - Development and implementation of a High Performance Team Development Plan.
 - Implementation and review of 360 degree team assessment and feedback.
- (b) Meeting Deadlines:
 - Established daily “Huddle” meetings.
 - Created highly visible deadline charts to highlight and track the achievement of milestones in this time schedule-driven project.

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- (c) Credit given to others—via the daily “Huddle” and monthly meetings.
- (d) Trust:
- Bob and Michal established personal connections with the team members. By introducing themselves collectively, then with one-on-one sessions with key team leaders, and finally with one-on-one sessions with each team member, everyone had an opportunity to get to know the new leaders and communicate their experiences and opinions about the project.
 - Consistently following through on commitments; (established a baseline of delivering on commitments ~ the daily “Huddles” were a very good means to achieve this), used open communications, establishing stated and public team behaviors (Core Values) and linked these to individual goals and objectives for performance management purposes.
 - Removed the client from the immediate team presence; moved from integrated to co-located organization. This successful disengagement was an initial “win” by Michal and Bob as it was a demonstration that they had effected a clear change for their team.
 - While the client had established a list of Project Team nonperformers in conjunction with the previous leadership team, Michal and Bob insisted on a re-evaluation period during which they reviewed individual’s performances based on feedback from the client, relevant Project Team leaders, their one-on-one interviews and direct observations. Where appropriate they also assigned perceived nonperformers with individual tasks to assess their level of performance. The Leaders also insisted on implementing formal performance improvement protocols in accordance with natural justice processes (i.e., identifying performance issue to the individual and agreeing on performance improvement areas and metrics). The end results were that non-performers and core value transgressors were removed from the Project Team. Those with potential were put on Performance Improvement Plans. Team members who were deemed to have been wrongly labeled by the client as non-performers were defended, on occasion in public.
- (e) Mindfulness—the daily “Huddle” provided insight into current and emergent issues, instituted a “management by walking around” culture; restricted intra-team email.
- (f) Motivation:
- Developed a Purpose and Values statement and then established Sub-Team Goals; linked these to individual Job Descriptions, the

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documented Procedural framework (clear roles/accountabilities) and individual Goals and Objectives (performance management).

- Reinforced positive achievements through routine and ad hoc communication with the Team.
- Addressed performance issues proactively.
- Communicated situational change impacts immediately with the team once they were known.
- Publicly defended unwarranted client criticisms.

Discussion Questions

- What is the relationship between leadership and dependability?
- What is the purpose of the Bases of Competence?
- How do the Bases of Competence relate to leadership and dependability?
- How can a leader effectively rebuild a team that has suffered under poor leadership and performance?
- Is leadership dependability assessed equally in times of crisis versus stability; in times of growth versus decline?
- How can leadership dependability be established in virtual environments?
- How does the case study show leadership dependability?

Chapter Summary

- The relationship between leadership and dependability is studied.
- The Bases of Competence skills model is used to define the skills that are needed in the workplace by university graduates.
- There are four bases: *Managing Self*, *Communicating*, *Managing People and Tasks*, and *Mobilizing Innovation and Change*.
- Each base consists of individual workplace skills. There are four skills in all but *Managing People and Tasks*, which consists of five skills.
- Research results showed that the competence of university students and graduates working in corporation was higher on *Managing Self* and *Communicating* than *Managing People and Tasks* and *Mobilizing Innovation and Change*.
- Looking at the specific skills “leadership” was found to be high in demand and need for improvement but lower in competence than many of the 17 skills.

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- Dependable leadership was investigated in detail and shown to be enacted through 360 degree stakeholder analysis, meeting deadlines, giving credit where credit is due, creating a culture of trust, embodying mindfulness, and motivating others.
- A case study showing leadership dependability and the relation to the base competencies is included.

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