

## Leadership Models for Culture Integration

### LEADERSHIP MODELS FOR CULTURE INTEGRATION

Mergers and acquisitions are on the rise. “In 2006 their value reached a record-breaking four trillion worldwide (Braksick, 2007, p. 8). Lesowitz & Knauff (2003) note that more than three-fourths of mergers fail to achieve their anticipated results. With the acceleration of newly formed organizations not meeting expectations it is of utmost importance to uncover how organizations may possibly control and pre-empt organizational failure from occurring.

Robbins (2005) proposes that organizations have primarily immersed their labor into the process or task side of merging and as a result have often failed to invest in the “social glue that helps hold the organization together” ( p. 489). Merging organizations may not recognize that managing the integration of cultures is a primary ingredient to merger success and as a result fail to consider the topic to be something that matters enough to follow through beyond the initial, introductory merger meetings.

This gap in understanding as to the importance of leadership and culture to organizational integration is the underlying purpose and motivation for completing this leadership model analysis. With this level of importance, further study as to how a top management team (TMT) engages with their followers to create a productive culture will be proposed to bring forth the importance of effective leadership methods during cultural integration.

In order to advance this theory, the following three leadership models are proposed to suggest how members within the TMT may enhance their leadership behaviors and interactions with members during culture integration. The contingency theory, normative decision making, and transformation leadership models will be reviewed as possible leadership strategies to achieve this objective. Each model will be analyzed as to how it was developed, applies to leadership effectiveness during cultural integration, compares to the other models discussed in this project, and how the model may be implemented for future leadership requirements.

### FIEDLER’S CONTINGENCY MODEL

Fiedler’s contingency model proposes that a leader’s style may be task oriented or relationship oriented based on what a leader’s concern or level of motivation is at a given time (Northouse, 2007). For example, if the leader is too focused on task this tendency may negatively impact his or her relationship with members throughout the organization. By being more concerned with getting a task completed a leader may lose the connection and work relationship that is needed from employees that will be expected to accomplish the task.

The model was developed by Fred Fiedler in the early 1950s as the thought

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leader observed that how a leader perceives another coworker may impact his or her leadership effectiveness (Hosking & Schriesheim, 1978). This insight led to the development of a “semantic differential rating” (p. 496) process where one group of responses define a least preferred coworker (LPC) and another set defines a most preferred coworker (MPC). Based on the outcome of the score from each set, the LPC and MPC, a leader receives feedback on their leadership style in relationship to how they interact with the co-worker.

Fiedler added to the model three components of leadership effectiveness: 1) the relationship between leaders and members; 2) structure of tasks; and 3) the position power of the leader (Fiedler, 1972). All three of these variables are of interest to [cultural integration](#) studies as the contingency theory may aid in generating insights as to the most effective leadership style during a circumstance like integrating two separate cultures into a newly formed organization.

### ***Contingency Model Situational Variables***

The first variable, leader-member relations is essential to consider when integrating cultures. The model suggests that how a leader interacts with a follower determines how productive the follower will be to follow through with leadership requests and initiatives. In turn, the same is true with the follower. The frequency and manner in which the follower engages with the leader may determine what tasks the follower is asked to complete, levels of interactions with the leader, and opportunities for career advancement (Northouse, 2007; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994). With these considerations it is of utmost importance to reflect on how the leader-member relationship of the contingency model may impact the organizational culture and what this means to achieving the organization’s purpose and strategy.

For leaders to be effective the leader needs to be responsive to the situation. The leader-follower component of the contingency model would apply to the highly volatile changes employees are experiencing when their positions, roles and expectations modify as a result of a merger. . The value to TMT leaders from this variable suggests the importance as to how TMT members need to view all team members in a favorable light in order to enhance communication and prevent barriers to merger success. For example, if a leader from the former Organization A ignores the value or contributions of a team member from the former Organization B the member may decide to seek employment elsewhere based on the lack of leader-member relationship being established. Although TMT members are initially very busy with coordinating processes and procedures within the new organization, according to Heijltjes, M.G. & Velde, H.S. (n.d.) it is the relationship between the leader and member that “the value creation attributed to the merger should take place” (p. 7). This means that building a foundation of trust between leader and member immediately during the first phase of the merger is critical to merger success. Horwitz, Anderssen, Bezuidenhout, Cohen, Kirsten, & Mosoonyane (2002) confirm this theory as they suggest that while TMT members believe they are providing direction or managing the integration, perhaps they are

missing the mark by not developing a cultural fit in the leader-member relationship. When the employees' individual needs are not met through TMT leadership and motivational approaches a post merger drift may likely occur.

The second variable of leadership effectiveness of the contingency model is the level of task structure provided within the leader-member exchange. This means that a component of the leader-member relationship is a leader providing clarity as to what a member is to do. This level of direction is of importance to creating a favorable environment. When TMT members provide a clear direction of how the newly formed culture will function, members are more likely to positively respond to the changing environment. This means that regular updates of progress and projected timelines of how processes and information systems will be integrated lessens the role confusion and misunderstandings that are likely to occur during the initial phase of a merger.

The third situational variable toward leadership effectiveness involves the position power of the leader in relationship to the member. A leader that is favorably viewed from members within the organization is one that has a high level of power in contrast to a leader that has a weaker level of power within the organization. This suggests that TMT members have a positive impact to the organization based on their position power in which they may favorably influence and sway the results of a newly formed organization. For example, the words and actions of TMT members will directly influence how members respond to integration instability.

Position power may positively impact culture uncertainty through communication channels from the TMT. Chatman & Cha (2003) state that the theory of socialization is a primary tool for employees understanding the "values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge that are essential for participating as an organization member" (p. 27). This communication channel is a must compared to the typical one-way, state of the union communication meeting that senior leadership teams typically hold. It is during this socialization experience that "celebration of early wins", another key ingredient of merger success, are announced and scheduled.

### ***Model Purpose***

The intent of the contingency model was to transition from the trait theory of leadership to propose that leadership effectiveness is based on the situation a leader encounters. "The contingency theory posits that certain styles are effective in certain situations" (Northouse, 2007, p. 115). Fielder's model proposes that when leaders have a low LPC score they will be more effective in the majority of situations. This means that when a leader's style matches the situation the leader is more likely to succeed. The theory's creator proposes this model to be "the basis for decision making on such matters as selection and placement of subordinates" (Hosking & Schriesheim, 1978, p. 498).

### ***Model Application to TMT Members***

The model provides substantial application to members within the organization's TMT as to how to adjust their style of leadership during the critical time of cultural integration. For example, the TMTs that actively manage the integration phase of the merger by engaging their employees in the purpose and strategy of the merger are more likely to predict post merger success. The means that the TMT member that adjusts their style to the situation by ensuring culture is a core business strategy to merger success will have more control over the situation. In contrast, those TMT members that fail to adjust and manage the integration will likely engage in cultural conflicts that result in a drop in productivity and possible failure in overcoming the post merger drift and loss of performance.

### ***Model Analysis and Comparison***

The model has received diverse reviews and applications to leadership effectiveness. First, supporters believe the model to have been a key transition from trait theories to positioning leaders in situations where they are most likely to succeed (Seters & Field, 1990). The outcome of the theory has provided advances in leadership to suggest that leaders need to adjust their style of leadership to the situation. As a result of this theory, additional contingency theory models have evolved such as Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model.

The limitations of the model include the lack of definition of the situational variables and the inability to validate a low LPC score as being a more favorable leadership style based on a leader's "motivational hierarchy" (Northouse, 2007, p. 119).

The terms of relation-oriented in contrast to task-oriented appears to be limiting as the model does not prescribe the important of balancing the leadership skills sets of connecting with people and completing the task as two important components for [leadership success](#).

In summary, the contingency model suggests that task driven leaders are more likely to create a higher team performance level in all types of situations and conditions both favorable and unfavorable. Leaders that have a high LPC score are proposed to create high team performance when the situation is moderately favorable. Regardless of the argument of high or low LPC scores being better than the other, the model suggests that an effective leader is one that has control over the situation and which may influence employees to follow him or her.

### **VROOM AND YETTON'S NORMATIVE DECISION MODEL**

Culture has been defined as "a body of solutions to problems which have worked consistently and are therefore taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think about, and feel in relation to those problems" (Marcoulides & Heck, 1993, p. 211). Marcoulide & Heck continue to put forward that the decisions that are made by leaders are a part of creating a culture or pattern as to how the members will receive and participate in carrying out decisions. Yukl (2002) adds that the Normative Decision Model provides guidance on decision acceptance, leadership influence and motivation levels to implement a decision. All of

these components to the decision process are applicable to culture integration as decisions are often mandated from the TMT during this transitional period which creates misunderstandings and assumptions from those employees that are not involved. To ensure that decision making is effectively implemented the Normative Decision Model will be discussed in order to determine the model's application to TMT decision making.

Vroom & Yetton continues the contingency theory with their model of how a leader should make an effective decision. The thought leaders propose that proper decision making approaches should be decided based on the situation, the quality of the decision, and follower acceptance (Field, 1979). Seven questions create a decision making flowchart for leaders to follow to guide them to the best path for either making the decision autocratically, to consult individually, or to involve others in a participative manner. After empirical studies and support were completed approximately ten years after the model was developed in the late 1970s, it was determined "that leader behavior conforming to the model is more likely to effective" (Ettling & Jago, 1988, p. 74).

Some key assumptions from the model that may provide a leader higher levels of effectiveness in decision making are: 1) team discussions are the most effective format for conflicts as to who should complete a task or fulfill a role; 2) leadership behavior is a critical component to follower acceptance; 3) involvement in decision making increases follower acceptance; 4) the effectiveness of a decision is based on the situation; and 5) when employees have [conflicting priorities to organizational objectives](#) consultation is the best format for decision making.

### ***Model Purpose***

The purpose of the normative decision model was to provide leaders with a process for making a quality decision based on the situation. Yukl (2002) suggests that the model was designed to ensure better decision making skills in conjunction with followers accepting the decision after it has been put into action. The model provides decision rules that a leader may follow in order to reach the best decision with follower commitment. The following analysis will provide how the decision rules correlate with decision making during culture integration.

### ***Model Application to TMT Members***

The first rule of the model is that when a decision maker lacks important information that followers may be able to provide the leadership should not make an autocratic decision. This rule applies to culture integration decision making as information that TMT members need are only found by the experts within the organization that are formulating the new way of doing business. For example, when integrating information systems between two organizations it is imperative that members from the IT department be included in the decision making as to how the two systems will be integrated.

The second rule of the model is when the decision quality is critical and members within the organization do not share the same sense of urgency about the

decision then a group decision is not an effective format for decision making. This means the TMT would not resort to a consensus style of decision making to try to sell members within the organization as to the importance of the decision prior to making a quality decision.

The model's third rule is when all three situations exist - the decision problem is not clear, a quality decision is needed, and the leader making the decision does not have the needed information, a decision needs to be made in a participative mode. Ettlting and Jago (1988) revealed in their research that even though it would be obvious that in this type of situation a leader would use a participative approach to decision making that the norm is that "more autocratic and less participative behavior is exercised by managers" (p. 75).

The fourth rule is that when decision acceptance is important the leader must use a participative format to ensure commitment of the decision. During cultural integration thoughts patterns of employees in the organization create the culture into a positive or a negative environment. For example, these thought patterns often lead to gossip and rumors that flow throughout the organization. When leaders fail to interact with employees these rumors lead to negative assumptions about the unknown which result in low productivity levels leading to lack of goal achievement. In essence starting down the path to value destruction in contrast to value creation.

When the TMT creates a participative forum and provides employees the opportunity of creating the best practices of the merging cultures they begin the transition from what was theirs to ours. This theory and practice is not new. Research indicates that when employees, the stakeholders, are involved in defining best practices rather than the traditional way of TMT creating best practices the buy-in this exercise brings is worth the investment of organizational resources (Burkhardt & Gerard, 2006).

The last three rules confirm the participation theory when leaders make decisions. The fifth rule suggests that when there are conflicting viewpoints about a decision among members within the organization a participative format for decision making needs to be used. The sixth rule is that when follower acceptance is more important than the quality of a decision a participative format for decision making is the best choice. The seventh and final rule of the model is when members share the importance of the tasks related to the decision and decision acceptance is important employees need to participate as partners in making the best decision.

All three of these rules from the normative decision making model stress the important of involvement and engagement with employees throughout the organization in order to make a quality decision. Why is it that TMT members generally prefer to make decisions autocratically if a participative forum reaches the best decision? Greer & Caruso (2007) offers some insight as their research concluded that "high-power teams may actually have poorer decision making ability than low-power teams" (p. 6). Their research revealed that TMTs are obstructed in their decision making because of [low trust levels](#), misuse of power and inter-

personal issues that arise from a mixture of high-power individuals. This evidence on the decision making ability of the TMT directly correlates to potential merger failure through lower performance levels within the organization. When distrust occurs there is a lack of confidence and reliability as to the intention of others within the TMT (Langfred, 2007).

### ***Model Analysis and Comparison***

The normative decision making model aligns with the contingency model in that both models propose a prescriptive approach to leadership by adjusting leadership behaviors and actions to situations that are variables toward leadership effectiveness.

The limitations and controversial thoughts of the Vromm & Yetton Model proposed by Tjosvold, Wedley & Field (1986) suggest that some managers are fearful of using the participative forum for decision making as open controversy and dialogue may not be a constructive format in which to make decisions. This aligns with the low trust levels and misuse of power as suggested previously from Greer & Caraso (2007) as to why some managers would have difficulty with this decision making model. Field (1979) proposes the lack of validity of the model based on the leader's interpretation of whether the decision that the leader made was either an effective decision or a quality decision. In other words, the value of the model, besides the leader's own interpretation, has not proven the model to be successful.

In contrast, additional research from Tjosvold, Wedley & Field (1986) indicates that those leaders that support open dialogue and controversy have found the participative forum to be successful in making quality decisions. These findings align with feedback received from employees that have participated in culture integration experiences. Employees have specified that building trust and motivation as a high priority for integrating cultures compared to implementing processes and procedures during the transition phase (Horwitz et al, 2002). This feedback provides confirmation that the normative decision making model provides valuable insights for members within the TMT to use more of a participative forum with employees to enhance leadership effectiveness and the success of the merger.

## **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL**

Bennis (2004) reminds us that the leader is the "screen onto which followers project their own fantasies about power and relationships" (p. 49). This responsibility of leaders to set the example is a primary consideration during cultural integration. Employees are watching every move of the leadership team to determine how the newly formed organization is going to do business and treat employees. It is with this magnitude of the topic of leadership modeling that the transformational leadership model may apply to leadership behaviors in relationship to cultural integration.

***Model Purpose***

The developer of the transformational leadership model was Burns (1978) which proposed that two criteria be present in order to influence followers to excel. First, that a leader is focused on how the follower is motivated based on his or her self-actualization needs; and second, the transformational leader brings out the dormant needs of those they lead (Dvir, Eden, Avolio & Shamir, 2002). The thought leader intended that a transformation leader “operate out of deeply held personal value systems” (Humphreys, 2001, p. 150) which transfers into a more motivated leader that inspires others in contrast to the transaction leader that is motivated by task accomplishment.

Bass & Avolio (1994) through their research have added that transformational leadership consists of four factors: “idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration” (Northouse, 2007, p. 181). Dvir, Eden, Avolio & Shamir (2002) confirm that these four factors are key characteristics of the transformational leader. Bass (1985) added the element of charisma as a characteristic of a transformational leader so that the four transformational factors of charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration are considered to be key components to the transformational model (Northouse, 2007).

Transformational leadership is a style that leads followers with attributes of integrity, mutual respect and trust. Northouse (2007) refers to this style of leadership as leading with a “moral dimension” (p. 192). Transformational leaders reflect this moral compass by being committed to their goals, passionately direct about their beliefs, and operating with strong core values and a leadership philosophy. In other words, transformational leaders are authentic leaders. The four transformational factors of charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration posited by Bass (1985) provide TMT leaders the behaviors and personal leadership development areas to enhance their moral dimension and develop authenticity. It is these four factors that the discussion of how the TMT may positively affect culture integration will be analyzed.

***Model Application to TMT Members***

Sankar (2003) proposes that charisma adds the element of influencing others through an empowering character in contrast to a controlling manner. This ability to empower provides leaders the opportunity to pursue new ventures instead of continually coping with current challenges as a result of not empowering others to lead. Although leaders may not change their personality, it is with the element of empowering members that the TMT leaders may engage the hearts and minds of those experiencing the dramatic changes related to culture integration. For example, instead of telling members what to do, members from the TMT may ask for input and feedback from the employees within the organization to help them experience a positive contribution to the merger process.

Second, the ability to inspirationally motivate provides followers a foundation of trust to become engaged by offering their opinions and ideas as to how

to achieve objectives which generates higher levels of productivity and commitment from those accomplishing the day-to-day completion of tasks. Hogan, Curphy & Hogan (1994) suggest “that leadership is persuasion, not domination. Leadership only occurs when others willingly adopt, for a period of time, the goals of a group as their own” (p. 493). Transformational leaders accomplish this phenomenon by leading with a passionate style, setting the example, and authentically reflecting the essence of leadership (Hargrove, 2003). TMT members that lead with an authentic style of leadership provide a foundation for building trust and respect which offer the organization the potential to create enormous outcomes. From loyalty, to motivation, to productivity – an authentic TMT leader influences others over and over through the substance of their message. This leadership characteristic has substantial impact to the success of culture integration.

Finally, the consideration factor of transformational leadership includes leadership behaviors of not only engaging people through a leader’s charisma, influence, dialogue and empathy, but also by providing employees opportunities to develop to their fullest. This leader is one that truly emulates a high sense of consideration by encouraging employees with little experience to develop their leadership and structural dimensions. Kotter (1990) describes this development of leaders as creating a “leadership centered culture”. When TMT leaders generate a culture of leaders the organization becomes a learning organization which attracts and retains the best talent resulting in a “leadership center” in which followers are encouraged to grow. This leadership math theory (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) where leadership flourishes from leader to leader provides a foundation for the organization in which the purpose of the merger may be accomplished.

### ***Model Analysis and Comparison***

The transformational leadership, normative decision making, and contingency models are similar in their approach to gaining leadership effectiveness. Each model proposes that by a leader adjusting their style of leadership to the situation a leader may become more effective. The normative decision making model and transformational leadership models are similar in that they suggest a leader become participative and engaging with his or her followers in order to gain acceptance and support of proposed task initiatives.

In contrast, the contingency model is the only model of the three that emphasizes task-orientation to positively affect the performance of followers in favorable or unfavorable situations. This element of the contingency model is outdated as the leader of the future must be able to connect with their followers in the innovative era of today’s workforce (Stage & Dean, 2000).

The leader of the future will be able to take the insights from these three models and apply them to their leadership development plans as the interaction between leader-follower are critical to individual and organizational goal accomplishment. Research findings of these models reminds leaders that the frequency and manner in which the leader engages with the follower may determine what

tasks the follower is asked to complete, levels of interactions with the leader, and opportunities for career advancement (Northouse, 2007; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994). These outcomes are essential to generating contributions and talents from the best technical experts that are needed to make an organization competitive and profitable.

## CONCLUSION

Although these models provide opportunities for leaders to develop and balance their leadership priorities, evidence shows that it is not one model or one particular trait that creates a high-performing TMT, it is “the relationship between leaders and followers that is the crucial variable in the leadership situation” (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2002, p. 175).

Leadership theory has evolved from a “one-dimensional, internal and individualistic process” (Van Seters & Field, 1990, p. 39) to a participative forum in which the team must succeed for individual’s to succeed. It is this transition that Van Seters & Field suggest that leadership has evolved into “the culture era” where influence is sought from the bottom to the top. This leadership model analysis confirms this transition and provides insights and directions for members within the TMT to rethink their leadership priorities. In sum, this researcher would propose that leadership models and theories of the future transition to the truth era.

It is this researcher’s hope that from this analysis and future research that more organizations will recognize that leadership behaviors in relationship to an organization’s culture is a primary ingredient to merger success. Evidence of this awareness will be displayed by TMT members holding communication sessions that discuss their merging cultures, offering team members ways to ensure the prevention of culture conflicts, and deeming this topic to be something that matters enough to follow though by adjusting their leadership style beyond the initial, introductory meetings that are held to create a newly, forming culture.

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