Keeping the "dream" in mind is indispensable for successful leadership

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Introduction

Displaying leadership is an indispensable condition for successful work achievement. Although it may be clear in our minds that leadership is indispensable, we are likely to be hard put to provide an answer to the question of exactly what leadership means. In our present, affluent, society leadership is not a matter of coercion. It does not consist of separating planning and execution functions, rather it should mean convincing one's subordinates to accept the group's common aims and to go all out to achieve them. The essence of these activities is discussed in the present article.

Historical outline

In 1981, 20 years ago, in his keynote address at the 25th EOQC Conference in Paris, Juran (1981) summarised the characteristics of QC practices in Japan that have led to Japan's quality revolution as follows:

- a massive quality-related training programme;
- annual programs of quality improvement; and
- upper management leadership of the quality function.

Ten years later, in 1991, Juran (1991) identified eight lessons that could be learned from US companies that have applied for the USA's Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award as effective ways of achieving a quality revolution. Among the lessons they learned, he stressed the importance of upper managers' leadership, saying that upper managers must personally lead the effort.

Clearly, displaying leadership is always one of the important prerequisites for success. Nevertheless, although we may be clear in our mind that leadership is always indispensable, we are likely to be hard put to provide an answer to the question of exactly leadership means. Leadership is an abstract concept, and the problem lies in how to pin it down in concrete terms and actually put it into effect. What we can say at the present stage of discussion is that leadership appears to be different from simply issuing orders or the "shut up and do as I say" approach which many of us have been subjected to in the past. Managers' lives would indeed be easy if all...
they had to do to secure the success in their undertakings was to tell their subordinates just to keep quiet and follow orders.

There certainly was a time in the past when this approach was effective. The Taylor system that proved so successful in establishing mass-production systems at the beginning of the twentieth century was a case in point (Juran, 1973). We should note, however, that a precondition for this system was the employment of poor, low-skilled workers, and this is the very reason why the piecework payment system was such an effective tool.

In the Taylor system, it was seen that planning and execution are separated; the planning is the job of managers and engineers, and the execution of established standards is the job of workers. This separation of planning and execution brings two serious adverse effects. First, it fails to make full use of the capabilities of the employees charged with carrying out the work; and second, it diminishes their strong sense of responsibility for its successful execution (Kondo, 1993). (The sense of responsibility that is being discussed here is not the after-the-fact type responsibility but before-the-fact type responsibility which is defined as the strong desire to achieve, by some means or other, the aim of the work assigned.)

Today, a century later, the social climate has changed entirely. As people's educational levels and lifestyles have improved, the value of money in relation to work, and consequently the effectiveness of the piecework payment system has declined remarkably and rapidly. Money may be effective for getting rid of human dissatisfaction factors, but it may have no effect on providing human satisfaction. If we believe that work is nothing more than earning money, it often leads to an increase in the absenteeism of workers. At the same time, people are exercising their individuality more and more, and worker participation in industries has become a powerful social trend.

In such times, the task of managers naturally becomes more difficult. Whether or not we like it, workers' desire to participate in planning and executing their work is bound to continue intensifying in the future. In addition, the shop-floor autonomous management activities are being adopted by more and more companies as their employees' capabilities improve. In fact, they are already producing far better results than originally anticipated. As employees' self-confidence improves in this way, it is only natural for their desire to participate in planning and management to increase. The leadership we are considering is the type we need in times when more and more workers want to participate in this way.

**Leadership in participative society**

As described above, a natural consequence of our lives becoming more affluent and our educational levels rising is that we start to exercise our individuality more and more. As a reflection of this social trend, the following may happen: those in positions of authority discuss every trifling detail with their subordinates, even though they themselves feel it annoying and time-consuming, for fear that they may be faced with opposition later, if they do not do so. Meanwhile, although they take part in the discussion, the same subordinates sit there thinking that a real leader should not have to discuss every little thing with them in this way. As a result, both parties end up wasting time. We experience this kind of situation frequently, and it makes us question what leadership and participation are actually about and what leadership is in participative society.

As previously discussed, leadership is not a matter of coercion ("shut up and do as I say!"). It does not consist of separating the planning and execution functions so that leaders draw up the plans and then compel their subordinates to carry them out. Leadership means convincing one's subordinates to accept the group's common aims and to go all out to achieve them. Then the leaders should start with themselves. A US poem, "Get rid of management" (Kaede, 1987), ends up saying "If you want to manage somebody, manage yourself. Do that well and you'll be ready to stop managing. And start leading".

The specific functions of leadership therefore include: persuading subordinates to accept the common aims of the group and agree that they are worthwhile; starting with themselves; displaying tenacity and patience while the goals are being approached; and guiding, developing, and encouraging subordinates.
Whether or not we are aware of it, our competitive spirit is very strong and cannot be stifled. What we can only do is to try to ensure that any competition that does take place is fair. Leaders must hold extensive discussions to determine mutually acceptable rules, and actively encourage fair competition within the framework of these rules. The participants in this kind of fair competition must focus on competing with one another to develop their creative ideas in a positive way, rather than trying to block their opponents’ efforts or squashing their creative ideas.

From these considerations, we can list the following six preconditions for effective leadership in the participative society (Kondo, 2000):

1. Leaders must have a “dream” (a vision and shared goals).
2. Leaders must have the strength of will and tenacity of purpose to do whatever is necessary to realise the “dream”. They must be able to exercise patience and perseverance.
3. Leaders must be able to win the support of their group members. For this to happen, the "dream" must be sufficiently worthwhile and beneficial to society and acceptable to the group members.
4. Leaders must be able to do more than the group members do. At the same time, they must not interfere with what the group members can do for themselves. They must act when the group members cannot do (in other words, they must be able to lead in a crisis), and they must foster capable members.
5. Leaders must always succeed, but they must never sacrifice the group members in order to do so.
6. Leaders must be able to give the right advice to the group members at the right times.

We may not instantly be able to furnish ourselves with all of these qualities, but it is vital that we keep them in mind and make a continuous effort to acquire them.

The amoeba management in Kyocera Company, Japan, is well known. Kazuo Inamori, the honorary chairman of board of the company (2001), hit upon an idea of returning to the commencement of the enterprise with all employees acting as the managers. This type of management proved to be most effective in motivating people to display fully their abilities. The whole manufacturing process is divided into several smaller systems due to individual processes and product groups. Each of them is independently managed and multiplied. Achievements are not necessarily reflected in the amount of salaries but only in honour and pride: satisfaction obtained by the contributions to the group and the appreciation from colleagues are the highest reward. Inamori believes that the elevation of abilities as the result of fair competition is the highest motivation of people.

Perceiving the "dream"

A company's basic philosophy is of fundamental importance, since it underpins the enterprise's annual and long-term policies and provides its employees with a standard by which to measure their behaviours. Okusa (1985) cites the contention by the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset that human beings take absolutely no pleasure in simply "existing in the world", but they take pleasure in "existing well in the world" and points out that if the words "human beings" are replaced with the word "company" in this statement, it tells us that companies that "exist well in the world" make some form of essential contribution to society by acting in individual and unique ways, and this is important for keeping companies alive.

In the future, especially in an affluent society, it will become of even greater importance for every company to work out a basic business philosophy that can be accepted and bought into by all its employees, is regarded as an attractive feature by its customers, and forms the basis of goals shared by its entire workforce. We call it "common aims".

Human beings participate in society in groups such as families, communities, sports clubs, companies, and so forth. Each of these has its own raison d’être, and it is extremely desirable for its purposes to be accepted by all its members. For this to take place, the group’s activities must be useful to its members and beneficial to society. Moreover, these activities must not be merely simple, mechanical, and repetitive, but must be rich in variety and must help us exercise our creative abilities. People entrusted with carrying them out must regard them as being
worthwhile. They should be "appealing", "attractive", "helpful" and "adventurous". Such activities bring out our human qualities and stimulate our desire to work. It may be appropriate to express them as the "dream".

Quality is thought to satisfy these conditions of the dream, and it is impossible to speak of them without talking about quality. The story about three masons is famous in European countries (Dahlgard and Kondo, 2000). On being asked what they are doing, the first mason replied, "I am a mason", while the second mason answered, "I work for $15 a hour'. The third mason gave the following answer: "I am building a cathedral which is to stand here for many years to come and which is to serve as a spiritual place of rest'. Among them, only the answer of the third mason is linked with positive employee satisfaction and can be deployed into detailed items of quality.

Homer Sarasohn (Zeleny, 1990) emphasises that companies must put quality ahead of profit; pursuing it rigorously with techniques such as statistical quality control, that every employee deserves the same kind of respect as fellow managers receive, and that good management is "democratic management". Lower-level employees need to be listened to by their bosses. He refers to the motto of Newport News Shipbuilding that:

We shall build good ships here; at a profit if we can, at a loss if we must, but always good ships.

It is the quality-first philosophy itself (Zeleny, 1990).

It is certain that from now on quality will be an essential attribute that attracts customers and acts as the focus of shared commitment on the part of all employees.

When people were poor, work and money were tightly linked. This is because, in order to survive, people must have money to provide their basic needs such as food and clothing. Money is indispensable for diminishing our dissatisfaction. However, as our lifestyles become more affluent and society becomes more advanced, the value of money in relation to work decreases rapidly. Although money is effective for getting rid of human dissatisfaction, it has little or no effect on providing our positive satisfaction.

We need money in order to live, but is our work really nothing more than a way of earning money? We know that there are other rewards apart from money that make us want to do good and worthwhile work. We call these rewards "human satisfiers". Investigating them more deeply and specifically is undoubtedly the key to unlocking the secrets of motivation. This problem will become more important in the affluent twenty-first century.

**Human satisfiers and the "dream"**

Maslow's (1953) hierarchy of human needs is very well known. According to this theory, human needs can be divided into the following categories: physiological needs; safety needs; social needs; ego or esteem needs; and self-fulfilment needs.

The correct interpretation of this theory is that all five human needs are always present and their relative importance shifts gradually from physiological needs to self-fulfilment needs as our living standards rise. It should be remembered that people always have a number of different needs changing their relative strength from time to time.

Herzberg (1969) proposed in his theory of motivation that motivation is governed by two different types of factor called "satisfiers" and "dissatisfiers". It is thought that satisfying the human needs of lower levels corresponds to eliminating human dissatisfiers, and attaining the human needs of higher levels corresponds to providing human satisfiers. Both are necessary for motivation. It is also thought that the character of these human needs changes from extrinsic and material ones of lower-level needs to intrinsic and mental or spiritual ones of higher-level needs. As already explained, monetary compensation is only effective for eliminating human dissatisfiers. Our "dream" cannot be bought with money; it is of more intrinsic and spiritual character, and it is something more essential for positively providing human satisfiers.

**Conclusion**

Fully displaying leadership is always indispensable for successful work. But, leadership is not a matter of coercion. The specific functions of leadership include persuading subordinates to accept the group's common aims and agree with them that they are worthwhile as well as displaying tenacity,
patience and guiding, and developing and encouraging subordinates.

A company's basic business philosophy is of fundamental importance. The companies that exist well in the world make some form of essential contribution to society, and this is important for keeping companies alive. It is accepted by all its employees, is regarded as an attractive feature by its customers, and is called "common aims". They should be appealing, attractive, helpful and adventurous and bring out our human qualities and stimulate our desire to work. It may be appropriate to refer to them as the "dream". It is indispensable for providing human satisfiers and motivating people because of its intrinsic and spiritual character.

References


