

The Beatles' Personalities--Leadership Style as it Relates to the 21st Century

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The theory of leadership is typically characterized with decision making. The authors emphasize virtues and personalities such as tolerance, compassion, harmony, etc in this article as it relates to the musical group—The Beatles. This article examines the basic theory of leadership and how one group's member's personalities have lessons in leadership. The purpose of this paper is to extend the discussion on leadership theories in a more critical manner. Lessons learned may benefit leaders and employees worldwide. The emphasis is on the musical group the Beatles and how their four distinct personalities paved the way for success not only in the music world, but the financial world, as well as in the world of public opinion. The authors argue that the four Beatles personalities, are everywhere one looks: in leaders, managers, and employees. Everyone experiences the distinct personalities all the time and in every place. The authors identify gaps in literature as well as make research recommendations for future research.

Examination in the era of leadership theory from about 2300 B.C. to 1 A.D. shows that this was a period characterized by who were great men with inherent and learned sources of authority and justice. During this period, world leaders chose subordinate leaders whom they thought to be appropriate for certain roles: kings, princes, chiefs, or prophets (Bass, 1990). Each of these chosen leaders eventually became heads of state and led people in all realms. They possessed various characteristics and personalities that made them great and facilitated the masses to follow them. In essence, they were individuals who directed others to follow them through various mechanisms of power and control. This theory has evolved over time.

Leadership can come through various vehicles. Sometimes it comes through self-inspired thoughts, or even through watching life as it occurs. At other times, it comes in a song, words put to music, or even through the lives of those playing the music. How often is it that we admire and emulate musicians we listen to on the radio; records; cassette tapes; CDs; or even shared music? This article is about a musical group—the Beatles—and the personalities about the four Liverpudlians, who not only changed the world in terms of style and music, but also possessed the four basic personalities that all human beings, including leaders at all levels, possess or acquire as they grow, learn, and apply leadership to situations around them. The four basic personalities which all individuals fall into at one time or another in their lifetimes are those of the Beatles—John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr. In addition to their distinct personalities, they each also possessed individual music talent, which when combined with their individual personality, produced a sum of four greater than each could produce individually.

One does not have to be a Beatles or a musician to be successful as a leader, nor does one have to possess individual musical talent. What the leader of today needs to understand is that his or her

personality and how he or she uses those talents or learned behaviors, especially when placed in leadership scenarios, may characterize the leader's style. This paper discusses the four basic Beatles' personalities and how leaders of today can use them in conjunction with leadership theory and style in order to succeed in leading others or even succeeding in life in general.

Social Power Theory

More than 50 years ago, French and Raven's (1959) article entitled *The Bases of Social Power*, described the five modalities (reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert power) managers use to influence others (French & Raven, 1959). One modality (referent power) is the foundation of what is known as leadership that changes both manager and employee for the better in the workplace (Bass, 1999). Referent power refers to the phenomenon that takes place when employees and managers connect on an interpersonal level, and identify with each other because of personal liking or admiration (Elias, 2008; Rahim, Antonioni, & Psenicka, 2001). Previously, managers practiced influence through tasking (task-oriented leadership) of employees, whereas today, cultural changes necessitate a more creative effort on management's part, in order to keep employees motivated to accomplish organizational goals (Jing & Avery, 2008).

According to Steven Elias' (2008) article entitled *Fifty Years of Influence in the Workplace: The Evolution of the French and Raven Power Taxonomy*, researchers should investigate links between leadership that establishes a positive relationship between manager and employee (Elias, 2008). When employees positively identify and interact with managers, the effect is to motivate, empower, and communicate clearly with subordinates and employees, so they feel better about themselves and their jobs. This indirectly, and perhaps directly, influences them to act in accordance with organizational goals and objectives (Bass, 1999).

Inevitably, everything in today's management paradigm deals with power and influence (Bass, 1999; Elias, 2008; French & Raven, 1959), whether it is leading a military unit on the battlefield, leading employees in the Air Force, or managing a group of employees. Leadership, by its nature, is about human interaction, and getting followers to act on behalf of an individual or organization, to further that organization's goals and objectives (Elias, 2008; French & Raven, 1959). The question remains how to increase manager-employee interaction through a leadership style that is best suited to manage, and positively influence employees. The main issue is determining how managers can positively influence employees via a power mechanism, minimizing friction, and still getting employees to act accordingly on behalf of their employer.

There is no doubt that leader everywhere face the issue of identifying which leadership style works, and how it will be used. Leaders, at whatever level in which they find themselves, continuously strives to improve manager-employee interaction through a form of leadership mechanism that enforces basic leadership principles, but also encourages employees to connect with managers, and accomplish organizational goals and objectives.

What Entails Leadership?

Inevitably, everything in today's management paradigm deals with power and influence (Bass, 1999; Elias, 2008; French & Raven, 1959), whether it is leading a military unit on the battlefield, leading professionals in the Air Force, or managing a group of employees (Sampayo, 2012). Leadership, by its nature, is about human interaction, and getting followers to act on behalf of an individual or an organization, in the furtherance of that organization's goals and objectives (Elias, 2008; French & Raven, 1959), and it is sometimes based on the leader's personality. The main issue in this article is to determine which Beatles personality one falls under as a leader to better understand the self, but more importantly, to know how to use such personality traits to lead others or apply learned techniques to lead. In order to understand the factors that contribute to leading with one's personality, there need to review the definition of basic leadership theories.

Leadership Defined

Leadership is defined in many ways. There is no single universally accepted definition of leadership. Definitions of leadership mainly relate to the various leadership perspectives. These perspectives include personal traits, behavioral aspects, power-influence and/or situational environment. Some define it as a process of influencing others to act (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010). However, for purposes of this paper leadership is defined as a process of influencing and getting things done with the aid and support of others to pursue a common goal. Still, others describe it as organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal, or getting them to perform to their maximum potential (Cohen, 1990). Leadership is also defined as persuading subordinates to work toward organizational objectives and goals (Northouse, 2010).

The manner (style) in which leaders use their influence to motivate, and have followers comply of their own volition, is the key element (Phillips, 1992). Winston Churchill defined leadership as influencing others by having them put aside their own personal interests and support a different plan, at least for a period of time (Boseman, 2008). In general, leadership is based on various models that developed over the years through a long history (Taormina, 2010; Van Vugt, 2006). The five most common leadership theories are trait, behavioral, contingency, situational, and path-goal models (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010). These theories are inherent in all leadership styles, and thus are the underlying concepts from which all personality leadership springs. Moreover, the leader's personality can be a major factor and key element of the leadership paradigm. What this demonstrates is that leadership is defined in terms of transformational and transactional dimensions.

Trait Leadership Model

The most common leadership theory is leaders possessing inherited traits (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010), indicating that leaders are born, and not developed. This theory involves the identification of an individual's (the leader) talents, skills, and physical characteristics. It concentrates on personality, motives, values, and skills, including intelligence and experience. There are basically two types of leaders (Bass & Avolio, 1994). One engages with others on a personal level, and he or she is considered a transformational leader. The other type directs others, in exchange for a reward of a non-personal nature—monetary or otherwise—and is a transactional leader.

In addition, other traits affect how a leader manages and influences subordinates and employees. These traits are predictable, and are common in all organizations and employees at any level. Traits associated with the successful manager include intelligence, personality, humor, ethics, and gender (Northouse, 2010). While some of these may be considered immutable traits, others, such as humor, ethics, and personality, can be considered behavioral, learned over the course of a career, or developed throughout life. In today's ever-changing complex world, one of the skills most useful in effective management are problem solving is personality and getting along with others through positive interpersonal skills.

By incorporating the personality tool with a specific leadership technique, managers motivate employees to produce and build long-term trust in the manager-employee relationship (Maccoby, 2004). The authors recognize these traits in their own leadership styles, and those of the managers they have worked under. Their perceptions were based on observations of others' traits, particularly if past managers had an impact on them, and their eventual use of charisma through interaction with employees.

The concept of collective personality, in conjunction with individual manager's leadership style, has either a positive or a negative effect on employee performance. Researchers find that an engaging personality has a positive effect on employee motivation, intellectual stimulation, and exerted effort at work, especially when related to collective openness, agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness (Hofmann & Jones, 2005).

Behavioral Leadership Model

The behavioral leadership theory is based on the belief that leaders can be developed, and are not just born with inherent leadership characteristics (Cohen, 1990; Northouse, 2010). This theory is rooted in behaviorism and focuses on the leaders' actions, and not on mental qualities or internal states, such as

intelligence or self-confidence. Accordingly, individuals can become leaders through teaching processes and observation of others' behaviors. The success of the behavioral leadership model depends on the leader's style through displayed behaviors and skills, and how he applies them to various workplace situations (Yukl, 2010). This model lays the foundation regarding the leader-subordinate relationship, since leadership style is based on interpersonal relationships, and leaders' actions toward employees, which is partly based on personality.

Since behavioral theory focuses on a leader's behavior, Douglas McGregor's (1960) book on manager's beliefs and related behaviors indicates that there are two types of employees—those who have to be coerced, and those who are self-motivated. Most managers, at one time, manage under the impression that workers would avoid work, and would rather be directed through coercion to achieve organizational goals (Theory X) (McGregor, 1960). At the opposite end of the managerial spectrum, employees (if committed) will be self-motivated, creative, and innovative, plus will seek and accept responsibility as part of the human condition (Theory Y).

The behavioral theory suggests that managers are primarily interested in human relationships, and employee performance via five managerial styles (Northouse, 2010), thus making someone's personality key. These styles include (1) *impoverished management*: Managers under this style exercise minimum effort to get work done from subordinates. There is low concern for employee satisfaction and work deadlines. Disharmony and disorganization prevail in the organization. Managers tend to be identified as ineffective, and their intent is to preserve their jobs and seniority; (2) *country club management*: Managers under this style provide a collegial style, and focus on employees' wants and needs. There is less emphasis on production or tasks.

Managers create a positive work atmosphere, in hopes that employees will be self-motivated to perform. Low task focus can negatively affect production; (3) *middle of the road management*: Managers under this style find a balance, taking both work requirements and people's needs into account. The manager avoids conflict, and focuses on moderate levels of production and employees' needs. This style has neither employee nor production needs fully met; (4) *authority-compliance management*: Managers under this style are more concerned with production and less concerned for people. This style is based on McGregor's (1960) Theory X of management, where people are tools to meet organizational goals. Results drive this style, and employees see the manager as overpowering, task-oriented, and controlling; and (5) *team management*: Managers under this style emphasize both tasks and interpersonal relationships, similar to McGregor's (1960) Theory Y style of management. There is a focus on teamwork and individual participation, so employees feel involved, and committed to their work. Each of these levels represent the manager's people or performance approach to management of employees (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

A leader's style and behavior, which largely is based on personality, provide a better gauge of the type and amount of output his employees will produce. From a managerial standpoint, in order to evaluate a manager's leadership style, and how he performs with relation to managing employees, it is best to determine which type of manager (X or Y) he is, with relation to McGregor's (1960) theories. Additionally, given that most managers oversee various employees and organizational operations in different places, both personality and leadership style will vary and change, depending on the circumstances, given that most managers change as needed in their managerial style, or concern for people or performance.

Contingency Leadership Model

Contingency leadership theory states that the right leadership style must be matched to the right setting (or workplace circumstances) in order to be the most effective (Michael, 1976). Contingency leadership focuses on particular variables related to the environment that may determine which particular style of leadership works best in a given situation, to include whether the manager is task- or relationship-motivated (Northouse, 2010). It stands for the proposition that no leadership style is best in all situations. Variables helping to determine success include leadership style (including personality), follower qualities, and situation aspects (Rice & Kastenbaum, 1983; Yukl, 2010). The only issue with this model is that once

the manager is in place, he or she may not be able to adjust to the circumstances, or the work situation may change, such that the manager may not be able to change leadership style. Ultimately, the situation controls the type of leadership required.

Situational Leadership Model

Situational leadership theory is similar to the contingency leadership model, but takes into account the situation first (Larsson & Vinberg, 2010). The model calls for appropriate styles of leadership types of decision-making situations. It proposes that different situations call for different leadership styles. Unlike the contingency theory, the leader (based on what his/her personality is willing to risk) can adjust his leadership style to fit the work situation, thus allowing for more flexibility, as compared to the contingency model. For example, when managers have to deal with employees with disabilities, they may have to change or adjust their leadership style to accommodate the employee (Cubero, 2007).

The situational leadership model, also known as the Hersey-Blanchard Model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), includes four different styles of leadership to match, depending on the situation. The four basic types include delegating (low supportive, low directive behavior), supporting (high supportive, low directive behavior), coaching (high directive, high supportive behavior), and directing (low directive, low supportive behavior). Each type is matched with the subordinate's competence and commitment. Under this model, it is the manager's responsibility to determine the type of employees he or she has, and how to adjust his leadership style (one of the four mentioned above), depending on style, situation, and employee needs. This model is flexible, and takes into account the two factors (employee needs and manager leadership style, which is based on personality) common in all managerial situations (Northouse, 2010). This model does not focus on employee engagement principles. Instead, it concentrates on the environmental conditions and personality primarily, which may be more applicable in current work environments and situations.

Path-Goal Leadership Model

The path-goal leadership model (House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974) indicates that employees are motivated to perform when they successfully accomplish tasks; it leads to a valued goal. Employees are motivated if they think they can perform work. Their task accomplishment will result in a certain outcome, and the benefits are worth it. Under this model, communication is the key to success from both the manager and employee's perspectives. To increase motivation and job satisfaction, the manager (under this model) clearly communicates to employees exactly what is expected of them regarding task completion. The manager also clearly articulates what rewards await employees once tasks are accomplished. The main theory behind the model is to have the manager, via a specific leadership style, provide employees a path to success, in terms of removing obstacles to opportunity and personal satisfaction. The path-goal model focuses on exchanges between leader and follower, and emphasizes rewards for work accomplished.

Under the path-goal model (House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974), managers' leadership styles and behaviors are important. The behaviors include four distinct characteristics, specifically being directive (clear guidance on performance standards), supportive (being approachable, friendly, available), participative (requesting subordinate is input in decision-making), and achievement-oriented (setting high, but realistic, standards). This model allows for some flexibility (like the situational model) to adjust the work situation, or employees' needs and desires, in that it is fluid, and can change as needed. Since flexibility may be personality based, this may affect how they deal with workplace situations and employee issues, thus leading to their individual leadership style.

Enduring Leadership/Lasting Leadership

Sometimes leadership is personality based. Although limited, the Beatles were successful and proved some valuable lessons learned with four distinct personalities. Personality also comes out of their songs and lyrics. Personality, combined with creativity, risk-taking, and raw talent, may have left a legacy for generations, not only for others to emulate their personalities and behaviors, but to also copy their musical

style and sound. It is the four different types of ordinary personalities, combined with universal factors that may reshape the leader or create opportunity and hope for others who follow.

The Individual Beatles' Personalities and Management Styles

In and of themselves, the Beatles were four ordinary residents of Liverpool, England, who grew up in typical British neighborhoods in the 1950s. They all came from middle to lower middle class families, with each one coming from normal families, some of which were musically talented. They began as amateur musicians who developed into very proficient musically talented individuals. However, it was their charismatic personalities and their British wit that carried the day, especially when being interviewed live. Their antics and quick-witted responses made them lovable and adored by fans, including parents of teenagers. It was the combination of their individual personalities and unique blend of musical talent and originality that made them leaders of a generation, and possibly leaders in music even today (Aldridge, 1990; Burrows, 1996; Bushkin, 1998; Du Noyer, 1997; Giuliano, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Hill & Clayton, 2000; Lewisohn, 1988, 1992; Linkner, 2014; Roylance, Quance, Craske, & Milisic, 2000; Sampayo, 2012; Shapiro, 2002).

Musically, as well as personality-wise, the Beatles pushed the envelope in terms of being ahead of their time (Linkner, 2014). They were unconventional in that they created a new musical sound, which was new and original, similar to Elvis Presley, but as a musical group and not only one individual singing. Their music evolved, as did their individual personalities; they were experts in their craft and became so in their personalities, thanks to the press. The Beatles had a good team around them, who took care of them and helped elevate their careers to worldwide stardom, beginning with their manager, Brian Epstein. The Beatles' empire even built a fan base unrivaled even today. Their fans ranged from the very young, to even grandparents, based on media interviews and their semi-clean-cut appearance. The Beatles were all from humble roots, and each of them cared for one another like brothers (Wonfor & Smeaton, 1995). Finally, their product was simple and made for the masses, which combined with their personalities, made them a hot commodity, even now.

John Lennon

It was John Lennon who started the Beatles and the one who was their leader, from the very beginning, on through their breakup in 1970. John Lennon also possessed the personality of the cynic and trouble maker, who could pick a fight and at the same time, be hilariously funny, but nonetheless could scold and scorn others to no limit. His personality was one of the alpha male, and the one who could provide scathing remarks toward someone or something without missing a beat. John Lennon was the one who strategized in terms of leading the group and who the media saw as the confrontational one with unique ideas, risk taker, and who possessed a high degree of jovial and sophisticated wit. He was also the deep thinker who often talked and wrote music about things in his life or events that helped shape his viewpoint and outlook on issues of the day (Bushkin, 1998; Du Noyer, 1997; Giuliano, 1993b; Roylance, et al., 2000).

Paul McCartney

Paul McCartney was known as the "cute" Beatle. He was the one who was the most musically talented and who kept the Beatles together, even when times were tough for all of them to remain in the group. He was the one who was the most nourishing of others' feelings, and the one who possessed a personality of consensus and collaboration. As a very easy-going individual, Paul McCartney complemented well John Lennon, and their personalities were polar opposites, but he too had a tough side when it came to working musical chores and recording songs and contracts. As a leader, Paul McCartney was more the team player who always had to be in a band (new musical group in the 1970s and 1980s called "Wings."). His leadership style was more transformational in that he involved others in his band and each contributed to the final product, i.e. song or performance (Burrows, 1996; Bushkin, 1998; Giuliano, 1992; Lewisohn, 1992; Roylance, et al., 2000)

George Harrison

George Harrison was known as the “quiet” Beatle or the “deep” Beatle. He was always in search of the soul and of the deeper meaning of life, as mentioned in his songs both during the Beatles era and afterward as a solo artist. His leadership style was also collaborative, in that he invited others to write and perform with him, i.e. The Traveling Willburys, Concert for Bangladesh, and having written the only Harrison-McCartney composition on record [the song “In Spite of All The Danger”]. George Harrison led other through his expertise (world renowned guitarist and song-write) and his cool, calm, and reserved demeanor. His style was more of a laissez-faire style, where he did not impose on others, nor did he dictate what needed to be done. He also did not bark out orders or threaten others to perform. (Burrows, 1996; Bushkin, 1998; Giuliano, 1992, 1993a; Roylance, et al., 2000; Shapiro, 2002)

Ringo Starr

Ringo Starr (AKA Richard Starkey) was known as the “funny” or “happy-go-lucky” Beatle. Of the three other Beatles, Ringo was the more fun-loving individual, and he was always smiling and appeared to not have a care. His leadership style is like George Harrison’s laissez-faire type, in that he did not impose on others, nor did he engage in behaviors that indicated he was a transactional leader; he was more of a collaborator and trusted others to act on their own without guidance. His personality was getting things done through charm and goodwill, as opposed to threats or coercive tactics (Burrows, 1996; Bushkin, 1998; Giuliano, 1992; Lewisohn, 1992; Roylance, et al., 2000).

Summary

Leadership is mostly defined by our perspectives of particular individuals we believe, are willing to support, and more importantly, admire. In what we refer to as a “great man” leadership perspective, leaders must appeal to religious; ethnic cultural; political; or national characteristics. We argue that the Beatles have over the years satisfied this “great man” leadership concept. Every leader has a personality, but it is how he or she uses it that makes a difference in any leadership scenario. When it comes to the leader using his or her personality as the vehicle with which to carry out a plan or get others to act, is the art and the manner in which the leader uses tools available to get things done. Indeed, the leadership style and personality type play a great role in producing the ethos of a leader. Leaders are not merely identified by their leadership styles, but more importantly, by their personalities and their awareness of others and themselves. It is therefore recommended that scholars examine and analyze deeply into the four basic Beatles’ personalities and examine why they were so loved and successful, full of intrigue, and enjoyed by all, yesterday and today. Leadership style also depends on the type of professional being led. When leading others, for example, one must take into account concerns unique to those others, such as competitiveness, and litigation in various areas of law (Muir, Douglas, & Meehan, 2004). These factors combined play a part in the leadership paradigm. It can also be extrapolated that each particular profession has its own unique concerns that influences the leadership style selected by managers.

The findings in this paper will add to the current literature about leadership and the use of personality in the workplace. This analysis may be of interest to leaders and managers in any organizations large and small. Furthermore, managers and leaders at all levels may benefit as well, thus potentially generalizing it to other organizations or similar personnel in other sectors.

Finally, this article provides a different view to the body of knowledge, by taking a well-known musical group and describing its members’ personalities, and applying them to leadership and what those personalities can do in the world of leadership and management. There is no doubt that this paper will open the door for further research, whether they are musical groups or otherwise, expanding the study of differing personalities, and thus possibly recognizing which ones work to motivate employees.

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