Leadership Perceptions in the Marketing Organization and Technological Uncertainty

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There are various aspects of marketing requiring influential leadership, including transmitting a culture of market orientation throughout the firm, new product development, and market development. However, the concept of leadership is rarely discussed in the marketing literature. The primary objective of this exploratory research is to uncover the dimensions of leadership that lead to perceptions of high performance in the marketing organization contrasted with those in other business functions such as engineering, manufacturing, and R&D. We then seek to determine how these leadership perceptions differ under conditions of technological uncertainty.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is not a well-researched concept in the marketing literature despite the fact that several key marketing initiatives require the support of leadership or upper management for effective implementation (Slater and Narver 1994; Day 1994; Jaworski and Kohli 1993; Kennedy, Goolsby, and Arnould 2003). This shortcoming in the marketing literature is understandable given that leadership is a construct more germane to the management literature and the study of organizations. However, research has shown that upper management involvement in marketing activities has a positive impact. A meta-analysis of the new product performance literature by Henard and Szymanski (2001) determined that the support senior manager's provide to project managers is central to new product success. The establishment and adoption of market orientation and a customer-focused organization takes support from upper level management (Kohli and Jaworksi, 1990; Harris and Ogbonna, 2001; Kennedy, Goolsby, and Arthur 2003). Exploratory work by (Lindgreen et al., 2009) revealed that different marketing practices, such as database and network marketing, are positively associated with different leadership styles. In sales, an area closely related to marketing, leadership behaviors have been found to impact salesperson job satisfaction, role clarity, work attitudes, and performance.

Conditions of environmental dynamism present an additional context in which leadership is critical to market decision making. The existence of environmental uncertainty makes it difficult for managers to process information and employees are concerned about their future. One type of environmental uncertainty is technological uncertainty which refers to an individual's inability to comprehend or predict some aspect of the technological environment (Song and Montoya-Weiss 2001). Managers in research and development may have decisions to make about application of new technology in uncertain times. In the marketing organization decisions must be made regarding product adoption and customer apprehension when there is uncertainty about the technology. Under these circumstances, workers will look to managers to make sense of the environment and lessen concerns. Still, the marketing literature is

relatively silent on the role leader behaviors play in the marketing organization. The present study is designed to examine the dimensions of leadership perceived important to the business function of marketing. We also examine the dimensions of leadership perceived important for high leadership performance in other functional areas, such as engineering, R&D, and manufacturing. We then consider the role of technological uncertainty on the uncovered leadership perceptions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature on leadership dates back to the early 1900's with theories characterized as the '*trait approach*'. These theories were developed with the belief that some people have innate traits that make them great leaders. Reviews by Stogdill (1948, 1974) covering almost 300 studies provided the background for the trait approach. His first review discussed various trait theories from 1904 to 1948, while his second review covered leadership theories from 1948 to 1974. He found that the main traits distinguishing leaders from non-leaders were: intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability – leadership attributes that we will record in devising a cumulative list. Although Stogdill found a common pattern among traits across leadership perceptions, the strength and relevance of them varied across contexts. Other researchers (Mann, 1959; Lord et al., 1986; Blanchard, 1985; Kilpatrick and Locke, 1991) confirmed Stogdill's trait findings and the context, or situations, in which effective leader behaviors emerged, became an area of study.

The *contingency* theories of leadership include the path-goal theory (Evans, 1970; House, 1971) and Fiedler's (1964) least preferred co-worker theory. Both approaches are well documented in the organization theory literature. The path-goal theory of leadership has been used in marketing to examine intrachannel conflict and satisfaction (Schul 1987). These theories are generally used to determine the most appropriate leadership style to motivate employees in different contexts or situations. Our review of this literature uncovered four more attributes to use in our growing list of leadership traits and behaviors: supportive, directive, participative, and achievement oriented leadership.

More recently, a new genre of organizational leadership theories have evolved, including *charismatic* leadership emphasizing leaders having incredible effects on followers and organizations (House, 1977; Bass, 1985; and Sashkin, 1988). Max Weber, a German sociologist, is credited with the first use of the term "charisma" to describe leaders in a secular setting. Weber (1922, 1924, <1947, 1963>) believed that for a charismatic leader to appear there must be a crisis and these followers are then attracted to this extraordinary individual. Other noted charismatic leadership theorists include House (1977), House & Shamir (1993), and Conger & Kanungo (1987).

Closely related to charismatic leadership is *Transformational* leadership, in which leaders transform the beliefs, values, and inspirations of their followers. These individuals have a vision, create excitement, and motivate their followers to perform beyond expectations in order to meet their collective goals and objectives. The four components of transformational leadership are: 1) Idealized Influence (behaving as a role model – formerly known as "charisma"), 2) Inspirational Motivation (inspiring and encouraging creativity), 3) Intellectual Stimulation (encouraging employees to try new things), and 4) Individualized Consideration (recognizing individual strengths and weaknesses in employees). Transformational leadership has been positively correlated with managerial performance ratings (Hater and Bass, 1988), R&D project teams (Keller, 1992), satisfied and motivated employees (Bono & Judge, 2003), and achievement of business unit financial goals (Howell and Avolio, 1993).

In contrast to transformational leadership, *transactional* leadership, first identified by Burns (1978) and later advanced by Bass (1985), is an exchange relationship, by which followers receive rewards and recognition, often in the form of wages or prestige, for complying with the leader's wishes. It is basically an approach where reward or punishment is based on performance. Transactional and transformational leadership are often viewed as separate ends of a continuum.

After researching academic theories of leadership, we considered those theories used in *industry*. Kouzes and Posner (1987) outline five practices, each consisting of two basic strategies, in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*. From their research, we added the following attributes: challenge the process,

inspire vision, foster collaboration, setting an example, and recognizing contributions. The Korn/Ferry Report (Hambrick et al., 1989) queried 1500 executives in terms of what their successor needed to be successful in the 21st century. This report added an additional 21 characteristics to our growing list of leadership attributes. A third resource, *The Dimensions of Leadership Profile* (Kragness, 1994), is used by organizations to assess and improve the leadership skills of its members. From this instrument, twelve additional traits were included in our cumulative attribute list. Table 1 displays a summary cumulative list of almost 60 attributes, traits, and behaviors derived from this vast literature on leadership along with their theoretical source.

TABLE 1
LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND BEHAVIORS

	Trait Approach					Charismatic and Transformational/Transactional				Commercial/ Industry Research		
	Stogdill (1948)	Mann (1959)	Stogdill (1974)	Yukl (1998)	Northouse (2004)	House (1977)	Bass (1985)	Conger & Kanungo (1987)	House & Shamir (1993)	Kouzes & Posner (1987)	Hambrick et al. (1989)	Kragness (1994)
Leadership Traits												
Achievement			X	X								
Alertness	X											
Ambitious										X		
Charismatic						X						
Conservative		X										
Courageous										X		X
Dependable										X		
Diplomatic											X	
Determination					X					X		
Dominance		X										
Emotional Maturity				X								
Energetic				X							X	
Extroversion		X										
Ethical\ Honest\ Integrity				X	X					X	X	X
Fair-minded										X		
Independent										X		
Intelligence	X	X			X					X	X	
Insight	X		X									X
Initiative	X		X									
Loyal										X	X	
Masculinity		X										
Mature										X		
Open-minded										X	X	
Persistence	X		X									
Physically Fit											X	
Responsible	X											
Self-confidence	X		X	X	X		X	X				X
Self-controlled										X		
Self-renewal (open to learning from mistakes)												X
Sociable	X		X		X							
Stress tolerance			X	X								

TABLE 1 (continued)
LEADERSHIP TRAITS AND BEHAVIORS

	Contingency Theory			Charismatic and Transformational/Transactional				Commercial/ Industry Research		
	Situational Approach (1969)	Path-Goal Theory (1970, 1971)	LPC Theory (1964, 1967)	House (1977)	Bass (1985)	Conger & Kanungo (1987)	House & Shamir (1993)	Kouzes & Posner (1987)	Hambrick et al. (1989)	Kragness (1994)
Leadership Behaviors										
Caring	X	X						X		
Challenges the process (willingness to change the system)								X		
Concern for individual needs	X	X				X	X			
Contingent Reward (rewards exchanged for performance)					X					
Confidence in subordinates						X	X			
Cooperative								X		
Enthusiasm									X	X
Sets High Expectations		X				X	X			
Fosters Collaboration							X	X	X	X
Inspirational/Motivational (motivates and inspires subordinates)	X	X			X	X		X	X	X
Intellectually stimulating		X			X	X	X			
Takes personal risks (to make sure goals are achieved)						X			X	
Personal Example (role model)		X			X	X	X	X		
Recognizes contributions of others								X		
Straightforward								X		
Supportive	X	X						X		
Team oriented								X		X
Uses unconventional tactics to achieve goals						X				X
Leadership Skills										
Analytic									X	
Competent / Performance						X		X		X
Creative									X	
Imaginative								X		
Intuitive									X	
Judgment										X
Organized									X	
Perceiving										X
Sensitivity to environment (readily recognizes constraints that might hinder achievement)						X				
Vision (articulates a clear vision)						X		X		

Environmental Uncertainty

Environmental uncertainty occurs when there is frequent and unpredictable market and/or technological changes in the new product development strategic planning process (Calantone et al., 2003). The literature has shown that characteristics of the environment can create considerable task demands on leaders and effect perceptions of leadership (Henderson and Fredrickson, 1996). In times of uncertainty, subordinates look to leaders to make sense of the external environment and to manage the change. When environments are uncertain organizational members often have a high degree of stress and anxiety. According to decision theory, as uncertainty increases, so does risk (Thomas and Ramaswamy 1996).

Several theoretical arguments suggest that a dynamic environment must be studied more carefully and diligently before sound strategic decisions are made (Fredrickson and Mitchell 1984, Eisenhardt 1989, Miller and Frisen 1983). During these times of uncertainty employees are concerned about their future and job security and often need additional support. We consider how the perceptions of high-performing leadership might change under these dynamic environmental conditions.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Sample and Data Collection

The sample for this study is two large multi-national companies located in the Midwest. An online survey was used to assess the importance of various leadership traits and behaviors across business functions. We sent the contact person an email explaining the study and a test link for the online survey. The survey was administered by a third party on a secured website. The link was forwarded to the contact person with an introductory email that could be sent as a letter of introduction to the respondents. The online survey opened with a consent agreement where respondents could select 'I Agree' to participate and continue with the survey, or select 'I Disagree' and opt out of the study.

The surveys were available for 2 weeks for voluntary participation, and a reminder email was sent after one week. Over 1,400 people accessed the surveys, with less than 10% opting out. The introductory email was sent from a vice-president in one organization and a marketing director in the other which prompted the high percentage of agreement to participate. We also promised anonymity to all respondents, i.e., their individual responses would not be available to their management. Over 1,000 respondents completed the entire survey. After cleaning the file (deleting responses that had severe missing data), the data used for this study consists of 943 individuals. Of these, 70% are male and 40% have been employed in their current company for more than 20 years. Employees' highest education level was distributed as follows: 8% had Ph.D.'s, 31% held master degrees, and 48% (378) had bachelor's degrees. The remaining participants had a trade school degree, an associate's degree, or a high school diploma. Respondents were insured that no identifying information would be collected, and that their individual responses would not be shared with their company.

These items were measured on a 1-7 importance scale with anchors ranging from 1 - "Not at all Important" to 7 - "Extremely Important". The directions called for respondents to think about their own business function (i.e. marketing, engineering, etc.) and consider how important they feel it is for a director/manager (leader) in their own business function to possess the particular trait listed as it relates to *high performance* in their particular business function. Sample items include: "Is Caring – Offers support and sympathy, listens and asks questions" and "Is Enthusiastic – Displays optimism and passion towards goals; sparks excitement in others. The items were presented to respondents in a randomized format. In addition to the leadership attribute, ratings information was collected on employee work environment including technological changes, industry competition, and levels of job satisfaction.

We use a technological turbulence measure provided by Day (1994) and used by Song and colleagues (2005) to tap this environmental condition. The measure was converted to a 3-level categorical variable, defined as low, medium, and high where 'low' describes technological turbulence ratings 1 standard deviation below the mean, 'high' are those uncertainty ratings 1 standard deviation above the mean and medium refers to ratings that are within 1 standard deviation of the mean.

Sample Characteristics

The three attributes receiving the highest mean ratings as to their importance to leadership are: (1) honesty/integrity (6.68), (2) competence (6.49), and (3) good judgment (6.39). The least important attributes are exhibiting unconventional behavior (4.27) and being extroverted (4.79). The 44 attributes are highly correlated as indicated by the double asterisks on nearly all of the variables. Interestingly, the only pairs of attribute variables not significantly correlated are 'unconventional behavior & competent', 'unconventional behavior & honesty/integrity', and 'charismatic & analytic'.

Given the high intercorrelations between these attributes, we factor analyzed the 44 attributes to reduce redundancy and identify any coherent underlying patterns. Principal components factoring with varimax rotation and the eigenvalue rule > 1.0 was performed on the 44 leadership attributes and yielded an eight-factor solution. After examining the results, the eight factors were labeled: 'Supportive', 'Charismatic', 'Intelligence', 'Responsible', 'Vision', 'Integrity', 'Risk Taking', and 'Challenges Tradition' (See Table 2).

TABLE 2
OBLIQUE ROTATION (PROMAX) AND FACTOR LOADINGS

Leadership Dimensions and Factor Loadings

| Supportive		Charismatic		Intelligent	
Concern for Individual Needs	0.805	Energetic	0.740	Intelligent	0.699
Caring	0.783	Self-confident	0.690	Creative Thinking	0.680
Supportive	0.729	Ambitious	0.680	Intuitive	0.664
Cooperative	0.676	Extroverted	0.672	Intellectually Stimulating	0.633
Team Oriented	0.615	Determination	0.667	Imaginative	0.622
Diplomatic	0.597	Enthusiastic	0.622	Analytic	0.608
		Sociable	0.622	Perceptive	0.607
		Organized	0.622	Competent	0.566
		Charismatic	0.561	Straightforward	0.516
Responsible		**Vision**		**Integrity**	
Self-Renewal	0.792	Role Model	0.721	Honesty/Integrity	0.640
Self-Controlled	0.784	Inspirational/Motivational	0.717	Dependable	0.638
Mature (Emotionally)	0.718	Rewards and Recognition	0.714	Good Judgment	0.615
Sensitive to the Environment	0.696	Vision	0.615	Fair Minded	0.602
Open-Minded	0.639			Loyal	0.583
Risk Taking		**Challenges Tradition**			
Unconventional Behavior	0.666	Challenges the process	0.637		
Personal Risk	0.618	Challenging Expectations	0.538		
Independent	0.523	Courageous	0.454		

The resulting factors are defined as follows:

1. **Supportive.** Supportive leaders are caring, have concern for individuals, and are team oriented. They are friendly, considerate, and help employees further their careers.
2. **Charismatic.** This dimension is defined by leaders who not only exude charisma but who are extroverted, energetic, and enthusiastic. These individuals are sociable and self-confident.
3. **Intelligent.** The intelligent business leader understands the business and takes time to learn the current operations before making organizational changes. Intelligent managers are characterized by their analytic ability, creative thinking, and intuition.
4. **Responsible.** Responsible leadership is described by self-control, self-renewal (the ability to learn from ones mistakes), emotional maturity, and open-mindedness. These leaders are sensitive to the environment and understand how resources impact their team's job.
5. **Vision**. The Vision dimension reflects the leader who can articulate a vision for the future and behave as a role model. This person inspires and motivates employees.

6. **Integrity.** A manager with integrity is honest, dependable, fair-minded, and uses good judgment. Honesty and integrity are consistently the number one most admired characteristic across studies on leadership.
7. **Risk Taking.** The risk taking leader uses unconventional behavior to get things done and does not mind incurring personal risk for the sake of the organization.
8. **Challenges Tradition.** This leader challenges the process, finds new and better ways of doing things, recognizes and supports good ideas, and has the willingness to challenge the system in order to get new products, processes, and services adopted.

Using the eight factors and their factor scores, we next determine the leadership dimensions deemed most important to perceptions of high performing leadership across the four business functions (Marketing, Engineering, Manufacturing, and Research & Development). We use multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test if the means of the resulting eight factors (leadership dimensions) differ significantly across business function. There are several significant results. We focus on the marketing area first. Marketing rates Charisma, Vision, and Challenging Tradition more important to high-performing leadership than the other business functions (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
SUMMARY OF LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS BY BUSINESS FUNCTION
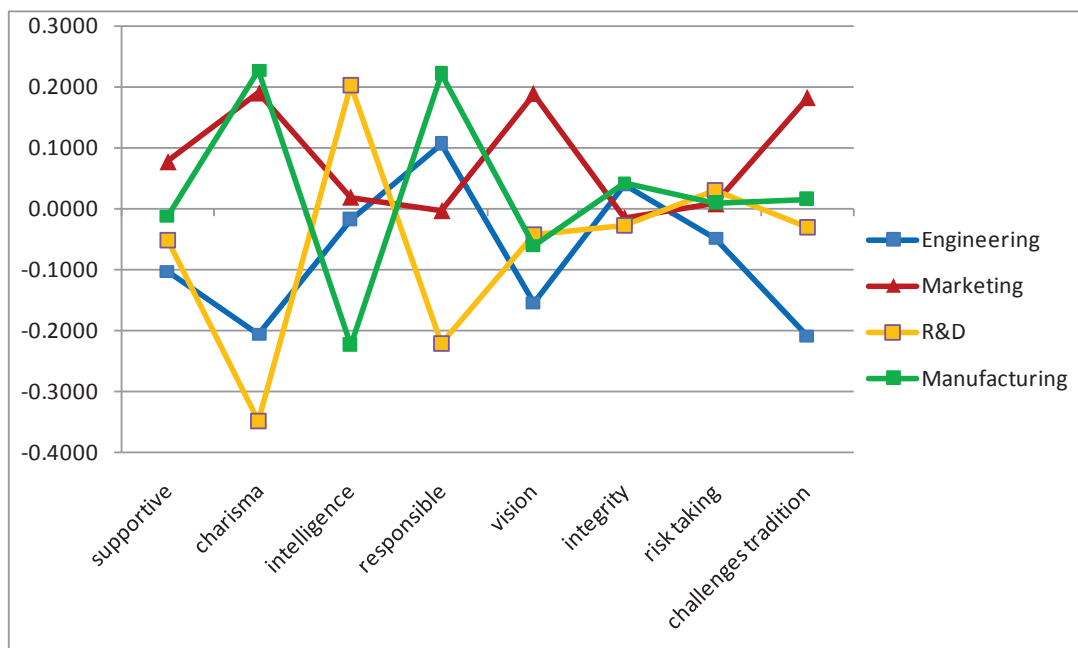
Marketing versus other Business Functions

When we compare business functions, marketing and manufacturing seem to have slightly more in common than the other functional areas. Specifically, both marketing and manufacturing agree on the importance of charisma, responsibility, and challenges tradition when it comes to high-performing leadership. Several studies have examined the link of manufacturing and marketing regarding cross-functional integration (Kahn and Mentzer 1994; Olson, Walker, Reukert and Bonner 2001; and Song, Droge, Hanvanich, and Calantone 2005). Research suggests that the goals of marketing and manufacturing are in conflict to a lesser extent compared to the goals of Marketing and R&D (Maltz and Kohli 2000). Additionally, Lawrence and Lorsch (1986) found that marketing and manufacturing have similar cultures which tend to be more formal compared to that of R&D.

Not surprisingly, marketing's perception of important leadership attributes deviates most from those of engineering. The communication problems and different "world views" between engineering and marketing are well-documented in terms of their approach to product development and handling of conflict (Fisher, Maltz and Jaworski 1997; Dougherty 1992; Gupta, Raj, Wilemon 1986; Griffin and Hauser 1996). Studies have been conducted to improve interfunctional communication between these two areas (Maltz and Kohli 1996).

Examination of Leadership Perceptions when Technological Turbulence is High

When technological turbulence was high the leadership perceptions became more pronounced (See Table 3). Recall that technological turbulence is grouped into three levels of low, medium, and high uncertainty. The result 'med/high' indicates that the finding is significant for both the medium and high group. The 'high' result indicates that only the high levels show a significant result for the particular leadership dimension. Marketing still differed significantly on charisma and vision, but now intelligence and integrity was perceived as important to the role of a market leader. R&D had a significant result for supportive and challenging the traditional way of doing things while manufacturing revealed significant results for supportive, charisma, intelligence, and risk taking under conditions of technological turbulence.

TABLE 3
RESULTS FOR LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS BY BUSINESS FUNCTION AND TECHNOLOGICAL UNCERTAINTY

ANOVA Results				
Business Function and Technological Uncertainty				
	Marketing	**Engineering**	**Manufacturing**	**Research & Development**
Supportive	--	--	*High	*High
Charisma	**High	--	*Med/High	--
Intelligence	*High	--	*Med/High	--
Responsible	--	--	--	--
Vision	*High	--	--	--
Integrity	*High	--	--	--
Risk Taking	--	--	**High	--
Challenges Tradition	--	--	--	*High

*   Significant at .05
** Significant at .01

Managerial Implications

Marketing is our primary focus in this study and from the findings here we can deduce that employees in marketing feel their leader must be equipped with 'Charisma', 'Vision' the ability to 'Challenges Tradition' in order to be considered as a high performing marketing leader. The inclusion of vision and challenging the process suggests that marketing recognizes the need for their upper management to play a leadership role not only in their functional area, but across the organization. We further determined that manufacturing thinks very highly of charismatic and responsible leadership. Conversely, R&D shows a strong desire for intelligence in a leader which is not surprising, given that half of the R&D respondents had doctorate degrees and possibly perceive intelligence to be related to academic achievement.

Engineering did not give any of the attributes very high importance ratings compared to the other business functions but they give comparably low ratings to charisma and challenging the process.

When there is high technological uncertainty marketing professionals seek a marketing leader that is charismatic, intelligent, possessing integrity and the ability to articulate a vision. The perceptions of high performing leadership held by marketing are closest to manufacturing. This is not that surprising given that marketing and manufacturing often have goals that are somewhat more congruent compared to other pairs of business functions in this study.

In summary, our findings contribute to the literature by uncovering the dimensions of leadership associated with high performance in various functional areas. As mentioned, we uncover three leadership dimensions (in marketing that are associated with perceptions of high leadership performance. These results may be used to improve leadership training programs in marketing and to better serve employees. An understanding of leadership perceptions across business functions may lead to improved management and performance of multifunctional and cross-functional teams. According to definitions put forth by Kahn (2009) multifunctional teams and cross-functional teams are made up of personnel from different departments but the multifunctional teams have more of a tie to their respective departments than to the interfunctional goal. A better understanding of what functions value in terms of leadership might help this type of functional coordination. The inclusion of the demographic and work environment variables lends itself to managing employees during times of competitive intensity or technological turbulence.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research
This study is exploratory in nature given the lack of research on leadership in the marketing organization or perceptions of leadership by functional area. Thus, much work remains to be done toward understanding what makes a marketing leader successful. The most apparent limitation of our study was the inability to obtain either subjective measures of effectiveness from study participants or objective evaluations of performance regarding their current leadership. Certainly it is important for a manager or leader to have ones followers or employees think you are effective or high-performing but it is also important to understand how this translates into improved performance for the organization. Objective measures of leadership might consider how successful the leader's organizational unit performed in relation to stated goals or profit targets. Other objective measures might include sales relative to targeted sales, market share, or return on investment.

A second major limitation with our research concerns the focus on only two organizations for data collection and subsequent external generalizability of the results. Obviously, there may be potential bias due to the type of organization under investigation, its particular competitive environment, various firmographic characteristics, etc.

APPENDIX

MEASURE: Technological Turbulence

1. The technology in our industry is changing rapidly

2. It is very difficult to forecast where the technology in our industry will be in the next 2-3 years

3. Technological changes provide big opportunities in our industry

4. A large number of new product ideas have been made possible through technological breakthroughs in our industry

Day, 1994

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