

Daft, R. L., & Lane, P. G. (2008). *The leadership experience* (5th ed.). Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning.

Reviewed by Gregory Haines

Introduction

The fifth edition of *The Leadership Experience* is a comprehensive collection of research lending to an inclusive definition of leadership, providing perspectives on leadership theory, outlining qualities of effective leaders, describing qualities of and relationships with effective followers, and specifying the roles and responsibilities of ethical leaders. In this revised edition, Daft explained new and existing leadership concepts and theory in relation to the current social climate. This practical connection helps leaders navigate and transcend the turmoil of the world's rapidly-changing conceptualization of what effective leadership truly means and how it can be applied. Each chapter of the book successfully correlates leadership concepts to relevant and timely information from today's professional (i.e., business, political, and academic) world, making the content both comprehensible and practical for current and emerging leaders.

Daft includes new sections within the fifth edition that challenge the reader to think outside the theoretical framework and to apply the idea to real world examples. These sections often conclude with reflective prompts that encourage the reader to understand what the concept means not only in theory and in relation to the example provided, but to the reader herself. New to the fifth edition is a "Turbulent Times" icon that draws the reader's attention to quickly-evolving or controversial true examples that require intent and provocative reflection. Other features resurrected from prior editions include an "In the Lead" box in every chapter that discusses exemplary individuals or groups in the context of the chapter's main ideas; a "Consider This!" box that generally expands on the chapter's discussion with some philosophical perspective; a "Leader's Bookshelf" section that offers a review of outside literature that is relevant to the current chapter's content; an "Action Memo" that often requires self-reflection on the reader's behalf and typically points the reader to the "Leader's Self-Insight" section where self-assessments can be taken to understand individual biases, strengths, weaknesses, and perceptions; with a conclusion for each chapter that involves an extensive "Student Development" section which includes discussion questions, activities for practice, appliance, and reflection. The extent to which Daft inspires reflection and draws on contemporary examples do well in helping readers truly understand and apply the ideas within the book.

Theoretical Frame

Within the current collection of leadership literature, the fifth edition of *The Leadership Experience* fits in as a resource to help leaders with various levels of experience understand the evolution of the demands and expectations of effective leadership in the most current state of society. Effective as a beginner's guide to the history and development of leadership research and theory, the book provides thorough and comprehensive definitions to all key terms introduced throughout. This collection of key terms is compiled in a glossary toward the end as yet another built-in resource. Experienced leaders will also benefit from the attention paid to connecting concepts to modern dilemmas in effective and ethical leadership.

This edition of *The Leadership Experience* also acknowledges and delineates the evolution of leadership theory from the early great man theories—those that claimed to identify inherent skills within leaders—to the more contemporary relational theories that are being deployed in student leadership development programs nationwide such as transformational leadership. Casting the book’s overall discussion in the context of the evolution of these theories assists the reader in understanding how generational and organizational differences may and do occur between various professional environments. Daft also provides resources for understanding how to work with and through these differences toward a more effective leadership style.

Elements of the Book

Preface

The preface to the fifth edition underscores the need to rethink the way we practice leadership. Daft outlines his vision for the newest edition as one intended “to give students an exciting, applied, and comprehensive view of what leadership is like in today’s world” (p. xiii). Citing factors such as globalization, virtual networking, and evolving organizational structures, the author emphasizes the significance of modernized applications and ideas in ways we teach and practice leadership. Daft cites this edition of *The Leadership Experience* as a great resource for self-assessment and personal development for students. A very general outline of the book is then provided which includes the five main sections of the book: Introduction to Leadership, Research Perspectives on Leadership, The Personal Side of Leadership, The Leader as a Relationship Builder, and The Leader as Social Architect. The features of the book (as outlined above in the introduction to this book review) are then described in detail with reason provided for their inclusion and justification of their applicability within this source.

Part 1: Introduction to Leadership

The first chapter, perhaps the most in-depth in the book, defines leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes” (p. 5). Leadership is described as having six essential elements that are required for all leadership transactions: (1) influence, (2) intention, (3) personal responsibility and integrity, (4) change, (5) shared purpose, and (6) followers. Without any one of the listed elements, a relationship between people or characteristic of an individual person cannot be classified as one involving leadership. In this definition, influence is understood to be multidirectional—meaning both the leader(s) and follower(s) impact one another—and noncoercive.

A paradigm shift is also noted in the way society expects and perceives leadership. The old paradigm is said to support qualities such as stability, control, competition, uniformity, self-centeredness, and heroism; while the new paradigm offers a new perspective on each of these angles by supporting change and crisis management, empowerment, collaboration, diversity, a higher ethical purpose, and humility. The major underlying theme in this section contains an idea of respect and appreciation for all ideas and individuals. Supporting this diversity in leadership education literature as Daft has done promotes the concept of globalized leadership that was discussed in the preface.

The distinction is then made between management and leadership. In the definition of management, the focus is on the accomplishment of organizational goals and task achievement; whereas leadership emphasizes providing a shared vision, building relationships, understanding and utilizing personal strengths and qualities, nurturing and developing personal weaknesses, and creating an environment of change with integrity.

Finally, the evolution of leadership theory is outlined. Daft's understanding of this evolution led to an outline where the Great Man Theories began leadership research, theory, and understanding with the idea that *men* were born with heroic leadership traits. From there, leadership theory evolved through the 1920s with Trait Theories which recognized specific traits and characteristics that leaders exhibited. The early 1950s began the movement toward Behavior Theories which looked at what leaders did and how they responded in relation to followers and other leaders. Contingency Theories were beginning to form next and are still embedded in contemporary leadership theory. These look at the ways in which leaders analyze their situations and tailor their behavior to improve effectiveness. Influence Theories also began to develop around this time and also remain in contemporary leadership theory. These theories study charisma and its relationship to effective leadership, the necessity and use of a shared vision, and the way the relationship between the leader and follower affects the plan and action for change. Finally, Relational Theories are accounted for as those which began to surface in the 1970s. Relational Theory looks at the way "leaders and followers interact and influence one another," "understands leadership as a "process that meaningfully engages all participants and enables each person to contribute to achieving the vision," and provides a foundation for transformational and servant leadership (to be looked at more in-depth in chapters 12 and 6, respectively) (p. 20).

Part 2: Research Perspectives on Leadership

In chapter two, Daft deconstructs the evolution of leadership theory into its three main components: traits, behaviors, and relationships of leaders. As traits were the first element studied when looking at leadership, research attempted to understand what these traits were. Traits are defined as "distinguishing personal characteristics of a leader" (p. 38) that are displayed through patterns in behavior. Interdependence between individuals (leaders and followers) is identified as the key to effective leadership.

Leadership is finally broken down to an understanding of interactions between individuals in one-on-one relationships. A leader may have an operational, vertically-oriented, and controlling relationship over a subordinate; a collaborative, horizontal, influential relationship with a subordinate; or an advisory, guiding, and supportive role to the subordinate. Different relationships can take place with the same leader in various specific relationships.

Contingency theories represent an idea that leadership styles, methods, traits, and characteristics are contingent upon specific factors within the various unique situations a leader will face. The most effective approach to leadership requires leaders to consider a wide variety of factors within any specific situation that they encounter. These factors are referred to as conditions and are unique to every single situation. Two basic meta-categories of leader behavior are identified as task behavior and relationship behavior; and within any situation, a leader can exhibit high to low levels of either task or relationship behavior resulting in four total broad categories that describe ways in which a leader may respond.

A path-goal theory is introduced "in which the leader's responsibility is to increase subordinates' motivation by clarifying the behaviors necessary for task accomplishment and

rewards” (p. 77). This can be done by the leader doing one of two things: help the subordinate identify and learn behaviors that will lead to successful task accomplishment and organizational rewards, or determine which rewards are most important to the subordinate and provide these rewards upon successful task achievement. In a path-goal relationship, a leader may be supportive of the follower’s well-being and needs, directive of the follower’s desired behaviors, participative with the follower in constructing decisions, or achievement-oriented with the follower to set clear and challenging goals.

Situational variables are also given definitions that would deem the leadership style unnecessary (substitute), counteract the leadership style and prevent the leader from displaying certain behaviors (neutralizer), or have no effect on the leadership style. In this context, the leadership style is understood to be either task-oriented or people-oriented, and the situational variables fall into a category of organizational variables, task characteristics, or follower characteristics.

Part 3: The Personal Side of Leadership

Part three includes chapters that focus on the individual characteristics and qualities of leaders and followers. Chapter four focuses on the leaders attitudes, values, behaviors, and personality types. Chapters five and six look at the “mind and heart” of the leader explaining the significance of emotional intelligence, respect, morality and care in leadership. The final chapter in part three explains the role of followers and the similar qualities that leaders and followers share within any organization.

Individual differences between leaders and followers affect the leader-follower interaction; personality, attitudes, values, and the ability to understand those of others affect the ability of an individual to effectively lead. Personality is defined as “the set of unseen characteristics and processes that underlie a relatively stable pattern of behavior in response to ideas, objects, and people in the environment” (p. 100). Five general personality dimensions are identified that describe the overall way in which an individual approaches the world: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience.

Individuals fall between two points on scales of two major personality attributes that helps to understand the ways in which they behave. First, where individuals place the primary responsibility for what happens to them is described in terms of being internal—from within—or external—from outside forces—and is called the locus of control. The points on the second scale describe the authoritarianism of individuals and describes to what extent they believe that power and status differences should exist within an organization.

Individuals are encouraged to consider and understand their attitudes and values in order to positively affect behavior in leadership roles. These attitudes branch beyond perceptions of external concepts and into the internal understanding of the self-concept that individuals have about themselves. Attribution theory provides two options to describe where responsibility lies for a certain observed behavior. Internal attribution refers to something personal about an individual, and external attribution refers to a situational factor that affected the behavior. Attribution is based on three factors that may or may not affect the observed behavior: distinctiveness or regularity of behavior, consistency or history of behavior, and consensus or behavior of others within similar situations.

Capacity refers to “the potential each of us has to do more and be more than we are now” (p. 134) and competence refers to the level of skill each of us currently possesses. Chapter five focuses on capacity with the goal of inspiring a deeper understanding of and emphasis on

reaching one's full capacity of both heart and mind. In order for leaders to expand on their capacity, they must have an understanding of their mental models—something similar to a worldview—that are defined as “theories people hold about specific systems in the world and their expected behavior” (p. 135). The combination of mental models that a leader holds will affect the way they respond to people and situations. Assumptions held by an individual are a major part of the mental model and must be understood in order to reach one's capacity.

Being an effective leader means learning who you are and what you stand for, and having the courage to act on your values. Moral leadership is quite similar to the concept of servant leadership in that the emphasis and the reward are based in doing for others. A leader serves using an ethical foundation which is then adapted and acted on by followers within the organization. Elements of ethical leadership are outlined including whistleblowing on illegal or immoral activities taking place within an organization; sources of courage that inspire leaders to perform to high ethical standards; courage itself which gives individuals the ability to work through fear; and the ability to overcome what is called the Abilene Factor in order to voice true thoughts despite perceived resistance to the thoughts.

Without followers, leadership is nonexistent. Followership and leadership are fundamental roles that share similar characteristics and allow for movement in, though, and out depending on various conditions. The influence of a follower on a leader is described in context of transformational leadership theory. Like a leader, a follower must have the courage to assume responsibility and to challenge in order to affect positive change. Followers seek clarity of direction; frequent, specific, and immediate feedback; and coaching to develop potential from their leaders.

Part 4: The Leader as a Relationship Builder

Part four opens with chapter eight which describes methods of motivation and empowerment that leaders can impart upon followers. Chapter nine explains effective methods of communicating vision, goals, and ideas throughout a group. The next two chapters explain the roles of individuals within teams, the value of creating teams, and the impact of diversity within teams. Chapter 12 closes part four with ideas on ethical and positively influential leadership.

Inspiring motivation and empowerment are key parts of effective leadership. Individuals must feel valued in order to “arouse enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action” (p. 226). Leaders can increase the way followers feel valued by promoting individual and unique intrinsic rewards over system-wide extrinsic rewards. Maslow's hierarchy is used to describe the level of needs individuals should have satisfied in order to reach the next step toward fulfillment. Four types of reinforcement are defined—positive, negative, punishment, and extinction—with examples provided of when each might be acceptable to use. When leaders empower followers, they demonstrate their confidence in the followers' ability to achieve tasks independently.

To lead individuals means that effective communication is being utilized to inspire the performance of “actions that further common goals and lead toward desired outcomes” (p. 262). Communication is a systematic process in which values, goals, objectives, and ideas are transferred between multiple people. Feedback is a crucial element of the communication process. Leader communication varies from management communication in that it consists of relaying a common, ethical, and positive vision toward which change can be directed. Leaders are empowered to ask the right questions in the right situations to fully understand circumstances

and the most appropriate direction toward which the organization must work. Persuasion is often needed to vest others into a particular plan or path.

Teams are a growing part of organizational culture as with the advancement of technology and appreciation of diversity. Individuals often face specific and unique challenges in working with a team; while teams may reject individuals based on incompatible characteristics or a clear understanding of the desired goal. Teams are characterized by size, diversity, and interdependence. These characteristics often improve productivity, creativity, and innovation in problem solving. A team leader is responsible for building a shared purpose and consensus, admitting mistakes when made, and providing developmental support and coaching for team members. Teams often compete within themselves or with other teams when in competition for scarce resources or when responsibilities become unclear.

Diversity is a fundamental part of a team, but an appreciation for diversity is what allows a team or any organizational body to thrive by accepting and using individual strengths and values to maximum effectiveness. Diversity refers to differences among people in a multitude of terms and contextual arrangements. Individuals have a tendency toward ethnocentrism, but challenging one's own assumptions can assist in overcoming these detrimental barriers. Diversity training helps individuals in the process of accepting diverse values and cultures and leads the way toward cultural intelligence.

Only with an acceptance of diversity can true transformational leadership take place. With transformational leadership, followers are developed into leaders, psychological needs of followers are addressed, followers are encouraged to serve in the best interest of the group or of others, and a common vision is clearly painted for all individuals to work toward. Charismatic leaders may motivate people through awe and submission and rely less on position power. Coalitional leadership engages others as allies working toward a shared vision. Soft power is rooted in the relationship the leader has with the follower, while hard power relies on the leader's position to promote task accomplishment. Depending on the relationship with the leader, a follower may choose to comply with, resist, or commit to the leader's vision and direction. Personalized leaders focus on fulfilling self-centered needs, while socialized leaders act in ways that benefit the whole group.

Part 5: The Leader as Social Architect

“One of the most important functions of a leader is to articulate and communicate a compelling vision that will motivate and energize people toward the future” (p. 396). The leader is responsible for ensuring the construction of a shared vision that determines the direction of the group. The group establishes a mission to define who they are as an entity. The mission guides the strategy the group uses to reach the vision, and specific mechanisms for execution direct immediate responses to situations and concerns. The vision should unite where the group presently stands to where it wants to be and should create excitement among its members to work in that direction. Members should feel motivated, inspired, and reinforced by the vision.

As groups should share a vision, they will often share a “set of key values, assumptions, understandings, and norms” (p. 428) referred to as their culture. Culture can manifest itself visibly through artifacts, environments, and slogans, or invisibly through expressed values, assumptions, and beliefs. Individuals who are being introduced to a new culture should be integrated into the systems in order to feel commitment and ownership within the group.

Leaders should be equipped and prepared to handle change in today's world. Resources are available to aid leaders in facilitating transitions through change, but a leader must display

confidence and competence in face of evolving expectations to project stability and security onto others within the organization. Individuals are encouraged to use appreciative inquiry to reflect on the positive outcomes of certain efforts and learning from their success.

Best Target Audience

This text would be best suited for individuals prepared to receive a broad yet thorough overview of the essential ideas and components in leadership theory. Undergraduate students preparing for leadership roles would find the content to be very useful.

Because of the breadth of the topics covered and the attention paid to the evolution of leadership theory, the text is most applicable to individuals with beginning or intermediate leadership experience. Daft made the point that the timely examples provided reflecting the statuses of many organizations may help put leadership into a more contemporary perspective for those with more experience; however the application and practice exercises may become tedious, monotonous, or may seem somewhat elementary for an individual with too much experience.

The target audience, like the intentions of the text, is clear, and any reader would benefit from all or part of its contents. Undergraduate students with a future in leadership positions—especially as student leaders—are likely to take away the most practical knowledge for personal growth and development.

Use of Text in Practice

Daft provided a functional and practical definition of leadership with real examples that would help readers apply concepts with even very little guidance outside of a classroom structure. Readers would benefit from having encountered leadership—either as a follower within a group or directly as a leader—in order to make use of the self-assessment instruments and reflections offered throughout.

Because of the amount of engaging activities offered throughout the book, readers could reflect and apply the material on their own outside of a classroom. This text would be best suited for a co-curricular leadership development program and not necessarily for a classroom environment, as the text will not require a structured curriculum to support and explain it. The history and overview of the evolution of leadership theory, the acknowledgement of every major component of leadership, and the emphasis on relationships and diversity throughout the text provide an exceptional foundation on which individuals can begin to develop their own leadership abilities.

Critique

The Leadership Experience is a comprehensive text with valuable, relevant, and inclusive information that individuals with any level of experience might find useful. The text does, however, lack prescriptive guidance for individuals who may benefit from some sort of strategized plans to confront and overcome conflict. Different examples of conflicts are provided throughout the text in relation to the subject matter (e.g., diversity, teamwork, followership), but little attention is paid to the actual development of a plan for overcoming these conflicts.

Overall, *The Leadership Experience* is a phenomenal resource for anyone searching for a strong foundational understanding of leadership theory. Many of the application and assessment practices would be extremely helpful for an individual learning in a more self-guided process; but may become superfluous for more experienced individuals.

Reviewer

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