



MEASURING AND DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Purpose; to provide an outline of transformational leadership and to show how organisations can use Bass and Avolio's Full Range Leadership (FRL) model to identify, evaluate and develop transformational leadership.

Approach; to outline how the leadership behaviours, comprising the FRL model, are identified and evaluated by the associated Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ™) and how these can be used successfully in developmental interventions.

Findings; MLQ™ is widely regarded as the global benchmark measure for transformational leadership 360 survey tools, being the most researched and validated transformational leadership model in use. The transformational styles described by the FRL model and measured by MLQ™ are highly correlated with leadership success and this enables organisations to achieve cultural change through focused leadership development.

WHAT IS TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP?

The context of transformational leadership (MacGregor Burns, 1978) was based around the differences between management and leadership, linking these terms to transformational and transactional leadership respectively.

The discussion on transactional and transformational leadership gained pace when Bass (1985) set out a theory on transformational leadership and proposed that a focus on the task to be achieved (what) and the way in which the team and organisation would deliver (how) drives high employee satisfaction and performance.

Transactional leadership is seen to encompass traditional managerial styles aimed at gaining performance through compliance by offering reward (or punishment) and suited to maintaining stable situations. Transactional leadership is less useful for organisations wishing to achieve cultural change when transformational styles have been found

to be more effective through the development of a compelling vision aimed at generating high employee commitment through personal involvement.

Bass (1985) asserted that transformational leadership would result in followers performing beyond expected levels of performance as a consequence of their leader's influence in inspiring them to transcend self-interest for a higher purpose, mission and vision. Numerous research studies have shown that transformational leadership is positively related to improved employee satisfaction and to those behaviors which constitute high performance (Bass and Avolio, 1993). In line with this research Georgia Group developed their Leadership Message© methodology to enable organisations to create their own unique higher purpose.

WHAT IS THE FULL RANGE LEADERSHIP MODEL?

Based on earlier research Bass (1997) further defined the transformational behaviours that facilitate extra discretionary effort, satisfaction and effectiveness from team members.

These behaviours centred on charismatic leadership, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualised consideration, behaviours that are key elements of the Full Range Leadership model, the leadership framework which underpins the Georgia Group leadership development delivery. For ease of reference the terms are described as;

- Role Model (charismatic leadership) - transformational leaders act as role models and are respected, admired and trusted.
- Ideas Generator (intellectual stimulation) – transformational leaders encourage creativity and foster an atmosphere which encourages those around them to adopt a solutions focus.
- Motivator (inspirational motivation) – transformational leaders are enthusiastic and optimistic creating meaning, challenge and commitment within the workplace.
- Coach (individualised motivation) - transformational leaders accept individual differences and adopt communication strategies to engage their people and release their potential.

Through working with the Full Range Leadership Model over several years we have developed ways of working that focus on performance coaching being the central driver of all four transformational leadership behaviours.

Transformational behaviours change the perception of followers and associates to produce stronger extra effort, satisfaction, efficiency and productivity outcomes and have been shown to powerfully augment most traditional management or transactional leadership behaviours by upwards of 40% in impact strength on the same measurable outcomes (Avolio and Bass, 2004).

Transformational leaders not only lead but actively encourage self leadership within their teams creating positive change through encouraging people to focus on three dimensions; themselves, their teams and their organisation and, this in turn, raises the motivation, morale and performance of the group (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders transform cultures and achieve extraordinary outcomes.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO IDENTIFY, EVALUATE AND DEVELOP TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR?

A 360 multi-source feedback offers the best way to measure leadership behaviour. However the implementation of 360 multi-source feedback offers challenges in identification and selection of the most appropriate survey tool. Research indicates that when using multi-source feedback organisations should use well researched, well constructed survey models and skilled facilitators to provide feedback to participants (Coates, 1996).

The Multi-Level Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ™) was developed from the FRL model and identifies the leadership strengths and weaknesses of the organisation pinpointing focused leadership development interventions to the individual leader rather than employing a one-size fits all 'sheep-dip' approach.

MLQ™ is extensively researched and validated having been documented in numerous peer reviewed journal articles. MLQ™ is regarded as being the most widely used instrument to assess transformational leadership theory (Kirkbride, 2006); the best validated measure of transformational and transactional leadership (Ozaralli, 2003) and among the most popular leadership evaluation tests for developmental interventions (Hoffman, 2002).

Among leadership assessment methods, the MLQ™ provides the best relationship of 360 feedback data to organisational outcome.

The MLQ™ has been translated into many languages and is used all over the world for the measurement of transformational leadership. In short MLQ™ is the benchmark measure for transformational leadership in organisations.

Over the last decade, the full range model has become the most researched and validated model in leadership literature and has been proven to be an accurate guide for developing exemplary leadership in diverse cultures, organisations, and leadership positions (Avolio, 2010).

CONCLUSION

An understanding of the concept and value of transformational leadership behaviour continues to grow as more and more organisations seek to effect significant cultural change to manage the people challenges of wide ranging organisational change programmes. The FRL model and its associated 360 feedback survey tool, the MLQ™, offer a well researched evidence based methodology which can identify, evaluate and create focused leadership development interventions designed to improve transformational leadership

behaviour and achieve higher discretionary effort, satisfaction and effectiveness of up to 40% more impact strength than when adopting traditional management approaches.

The MLQ™ continues to set the pace for the measurement of transformational leadership in organisations; arguably being the most popular and researched methodology of its kind in the world today.

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