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The significance of transformational team members

Tihana Babić*, Zvonimir Musa*

*Algebra University College, Zagreb, Croatia

tihana.babic@algebra.hr, zvonimir.musa@racunarstvo.hr

Transformation is a new reality in the global economic system and thus every organization. Companies and consequently educational institutions face the challenges of constant knowledge sharing and continuous improvement of competences, skills, and expertise whilst trying to achieve performance levels that just a few decades ago would have been unimaginable. A need for learning while doing and accepting new knowledge from our team members has become indispensable. Only when a team has a shared belief in 'psychological safety', team members can create, increase efficiency, and make a transformational positive culture. Performing at the highest level seeks transformational positive team members who possess a transformational characteristic. Transformational characteristics provide their owners not only the ability to make data-driven decisions but to work through challenges in a way that they make others better in the process. Because of their qualities to increase morale, to promote cooperation and harmony, which directly and indirectly increases job performance, they not only do their job excellently, they help other team members do their jobs better.

Keywords – digital transformation, transformational leadership, transformational team, transformational team member, STEAM

I. INTRODUCTION

Today's economy, based on creating new services, new solutions, new inventions and fine-tune of product or service to the needs of customers and clients, is moved into the Conceptual Age, which demands to be ready to understand high concepts, coupled with high touch, as stated by Daniel Pink. High concepts thinking relate to identifying patterns and opportunities, appreciating artistic and emotional beauty, and combining what appear to be unrelated ideas into strong innovative actionable ideas. High touch deals with being empathetic, understanding the nuances of human interaction, experiencing the joy in others and one's self; and stretching beyond our everyday approach to doing things with a stronger focus on our purpose or meaning for life[1].

To be successful, specialists, scientists, engineers, and all others need to be practically creative and put their knowledge and experience into creating new things, services, or products continuously during their time and work. The majority of businesses, institutions, and academic teams need to be able to function 'outside of the box', implement new creative solutions, and very often create solutions and products that have never been conceived before.

This is not only common to everyday business, but also academic institutions, public service, and all other parts of society. Continuously changing the way we do business, the way we teach, constantly challenging the existing, and trying to think of a better way of doing things. High level of creativity and holistic approach to everything that is done – the relationships, the work, the passions[1] requires more than just adequate educational background. It requires a way of functioning on an everyday level that enables an individual to continuously produce new solutions to problems and situations that have never happened before, but moreover “to live a more abundant life, helping others do the same”[1].

Therefore, teamwork becomes our inevitability[2], and team members who can contribute to their teams through their work, influence, and impact, and create value not only in a form that they successfully deliver what their team is set to deliver, but can help other team members to bring more value and bring the whole team closer to its goal, are of inestimable importance.

II. TRANSFORMATION IN BUSINESS

A. Digital transformation as a business reality

The term ‘transformation’ became widely regarded in the business community as a term encompassing a necessity to survive in constantly changing circumstances of business reality. Application of digital technologies that impact all aspects of society and business often referred to as digital transformation (DX), can be defined as the remaking of every aspect in a way that everything is being rethought, simplified, and improved[3]. Companies, institutions, and other forms of entities, often need to make adjustments to their processes and organization of everyday work. These adjustments were usually regarded as reorganizations, which very often resulted in several organizational units being compacted into one or some bigger ones being divided into smaller ones. These changes provided the organization short-term agility, necessary to respond to a certain situation that came along.

Companies and businesses needed to drastically change a significant array of their internal and external processes, bring new products to the market and implement new business solutions that all together require such a significant change of current setup, which resulted in the fact that the newly setup company only resembled the pre-transformation one. With a completely reorganized structure, new processes and fundamentally changed the way the business is done. This meant that the company was reorganized, but in nature, it was transformed into a new

one. These kinds of endeavors required a high level of creativity from employees on all levels and especially the leadership structure. Very often, it is done with help from outside experts and implementation of solutions that were gathered from other similar situations.

“The New Reality” study, based on a series of 50+ interviews with leading experts from the charity, third sector, commercial, and digital technology worlds, predominantly aimed at established organizations[4] summed way to achieve digital transformation, and stand out as the main four aspects to digital transformation: *mindset, people, process and tools*[5].

B. Transformational leadership

Style of leadership in which the leader identifies the needed change, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change with the commitment of the members of the group[6], and involves a process by which a leader appeals to followers’ values, needs and aspirations to elevate their morality and motivation to achieve their fullest potential is the transformational form of leadership[7]. According to Burns, who first introduced the concept of transforming leadership, transforming leadership is a process in which “leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation”[7]. In contrast, Burns suggested that the transactional form of leadership is based on an exchange relationship between leaders and their followers, such that each party’s needs are met via workplace transactions (e.g., followers help to achieve the leader’s objectives; leaders reward followers with a salary, bonuses, or other benefits)[8].

Bass extended the work of Burns, by helping to explain how transformational leadership can be measured and how it impacts follower motivation and performance. Also, he used the term “transformational” instead of “transforming”[9].

The transformational form of leadership is superior to the transactional form as it is positively related to followers’ satisfaction with their leader overall job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work motivation, and supervisory ratings of leader effectiveness[10]. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders[11].

Sosik and Jung assert inactive leadership is the most passive and ineffective form of leadership, transactional leadership is somewhat active and effective, and transformational leadership is the most active and effective form of leadership[12]. Howell and Avolio[13] noted that the difference between management by exception—active and management by exception—passive is in the timing of the leader’s intervention:

- *active leaders* - monitor followers’ behavior, anticipate problems, and take corrective actions before the behavior creates serious difficulties;
- *passive leaders* - wait until the behavior has created problems before taking;
- *leaders who score high on laissez-faire leadership* avoid making decisions, hesitate in taking action, and are absent when needed action, laissez-faire leadership is the avoidance or absence of leadership, actually nonleadership[14].

The Full Range Leadership Development Model concerning taken actions and achieved effects, according to Lindsay and Woycheshin, adapted from Bass and Avolio, is presented in Figure 1[8].

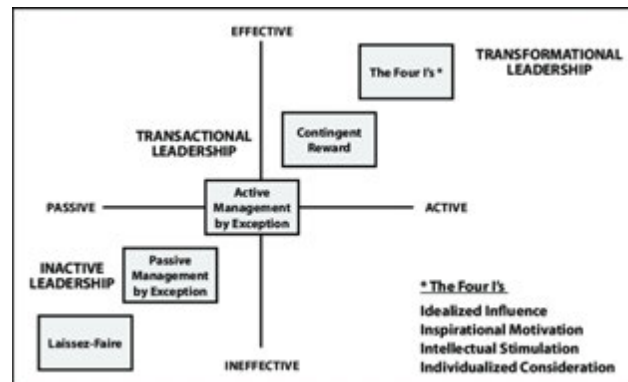


Figure 1. The Full Range Leadership Development Model concerning taken actions and achieved effects (source: Lindsay and Woycheshin, 2015 adapted from Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Transformational leaders (TL) are leaders who “transform” groups or organizations, focus on followers, motivating them to high levels of performance, and in the process, help followers develop their leadership potential. There are four elements of transformational leadership, also known as the 4 I’s: *charisma or idealized influence (II)*, *inspirational motivation (IM)*, *individualized consideration (IC)*, *intellectual stimulation (IS)* [9][15][16][17].

According to Sosik and Jung[18], who further elaborated those elements, while contingent reward may be effective in motivating followers to reach targeted goals, that approach is limited in achieving success in the innovation-based economy of today, because people need to have both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to succeed. They stated five needed components (5 I’s):

- *Idealized influences (behavior)* – TL often seek authenticity (as Mohandas Gandhi advised his followers to ‘*always aim for complete harmony of thought, word and deed*’), by displaying high levels of moral behavior, virtues, and character strengths, as well as strong work ethics.
- *Idealized influences (attributes)* – the idealized leader’s role modeling of high levels of performance and ethics, adding to the idealized influence followers attribute to a TL. The result is followers strongly identification with a leader and their high levels of trust and commitment to the leader.
- *Inspirational motivation* – a leader behavior that involves developing and articulating a vision, an example of positive vision Dr. Martin Luther King’s “*I Have a Dream*” speech. When articulating a clear vision of the future, with confidence in their team synergy and collective success, inspiring leaders increase followers’ willingness to excel.
- *Intellectual stimulation* – while inspirational motivation triggers the followers’ emotions,

intellectual stimulation increases the rationality and intellect of followers, who become more creative, innovative, and more willing to change for the better.

- *Individualized consideration* – TLs’ ultimate aim is to develop followers into leaders themselves by spending time listening, coaching, and teaching for followers' development. When leaders treat followers as individuals with different needs, abilities, and aspirations, they are displaying individualized consideration.

The Full Range Leadership Development Model concerning leaders influence followers according to Stafford, adapted from Burns, 1998 and Sosik, Jung, 2010, is presented in Figure 2[19].

Laissez-Faire	Transactional		Transformational				
Hands-Off Leadership	Management by Exception (MBE)		Contingent Reward (CR)	Individual Consideration (IC) Caring	Intellectual Stimulation (IS) Thinking	Inspirational Motivation (IM) Charming	Idealized Influence (II) Influencing
	Passive MBE	Active MBE					

Figure 2. The Full Range Leadership Model according to leaders influences followers (source: Stafford, 2015 adapted from Burns, 1998 and Sosik, Jung, 2010).

C. Transformational characteristics

According to Bass[15], transformational leaders encompasses the following aspects:

- *raise awareness of moral standards;*
- *highlight important priorities;*
- *increase followers’ need for achievement;*
- *foster higher moral maturity in followers;*
- *create an ethical climate (shared values, high ethical standards);*
- *encourage followers to look beyond self-interest to the common good;*
- *promote cooperation and harmony;*
- *use authentic, consistent means;*
- *use persuasive appeals based on reason;*
- *provide individual coaching and mentoring for followers;*
- *appeal to the ideals of followers;*
- *allow freedom of choice for followers[21].*

Transformational leadership is value-centered; leaders and followers share visions and values, mutual trust and respect, and unity in diversity[22]. Bass and Steidlmeier, while questioned the morality of transformational leadership in paper *Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior*, stand out that “ethically, values may be imparted directly to followers by authorities whom they respect and trust, and from whom they want guidance: priests, physicians, parents, and teachers. If the values espoused are immoral, then the authorities are pseudo-transformational”[23].

Bass and Steidlmeier as evidently stated that to be truly transformational, leadership must be based on moral foundations. The four components of authentic transformational leadership (4 I’s) stand in contrast with pseudo-transformational leadership based on:

- (1) *the moral character of the leaders and their concerns for self and others;*
- (2) *the ethical values embedded in the leaders’ vision, articulation, and program, which followers can embrace or reject; and*
- (3) *the morality of the processes of social ethical choices and action in which the leaders and followers engage and collectively pursue[23].*

D. The authentic, integrative and virtuous person as transformational

Bass and Steidlmeier, concluded that in leadership, as in life, character matters, and that from the literature on transformational leadership, it is clear that there are many points of congruence between the “authentic moral sage” and the “authentic transformational leader”. Critics attribute manipulative, deceptive, and other such devious behaviors to so-called transformational leaders. But it is pseudo-transformational leaders who are deceptive and manipulative. They stated that self-aggrandizing, fantasizing, pseudo-transformational leaders can be branded as immoral, but authentic transformational leaders, as moral agents, expand the domain of effective freedom, the horizon of conscience, and the scope for altruistic intention. Their actions aim toward noble ends, legitimate means, and fair consequences.

“Leaders are authentically transformational when they increase awareness of what is right, good, important, and beautiful when they help to elevate followers’ needs for achievement and self-actualization, when they foster in followers higher moral maturity, and when they move followers to go beyond their self-interests... Pseudotransformational leaders may also motivate and transform their followers, but...they will encourage ‘we-they’ competitiveness and the pursuit of the leaders’ self-interest instead of the common good.”[15]. Bass and Steidlmeier concluded that engaged as authentic transformational leaders are in the moral uplifting of their followers, in the sharing of mutually rewarding visions of success, and in enabling and empowering them to convert the visions into realities, they should be applauded, not chastised[23].

Integrity presents a mature person who *“behaves in accordance with his beliefs, does not say one thing and does another; publicly expresses his moral beliefs, even when those beliefs are not popular; takes care of others and their needs; speaks the truth and takes over responsibility for what he thinks, feels and does; does not act in front of others; is honest and has an inner sense of moral consistency; lives honestly and authentically and does not pretend to be something he is not”[24].* As Vig highlighted, values such as *courage, prudence, optimism (faith), perseverance, humility, and modesty* make a person a complete or complete person, ie a person of integrity[25].

III. TRANSFORMATION IN TEAMS

A. Transformational organization culture

Before discussing the conditions needed for the team to be transformational, it is important to understand the transformational environment. Kerzner stated factors that

influence the transformational environment include: *work in a multinational setting and interfacing with different cultures; alignment to broader business objectives; an environment conducive to change; overcoming employees resistance to change; understanding (co)worker sensitivity to the change; winning (co)worker support for changes; assess to what helps the need to achieve the changes; making people believe that they are not being manipulated; making sure that people can cope with the changes; diffusing emotional feelings; face-to-face meetings to verify that people understand the need for the change; workshops when necessary; providing training for the changes; managing bad news effectively; managing unprecedented scrutiny by stakeholders; and managing scrutiny by the media*[26].

In an environment where ‘change’ is an everyday reality and projects are tended to be performed in a transformational way, the skills needed can be significantly different than traditional project management skills.

To increase the overall business performance of a company, both financial and non-financial, its business should be based on building ethical organizational cultures[25]. Organizations with positive, virtuous ethical cultures enjoy bottom-line and top-line benefits, including *higher employee job satisfaction, increased legal compliance, and rule-following, increased organizational, commitment, increased cooperation, increased change management success, increased attraction of high potential talent, lower turnover, lower health care costs, and lower legal risk*[27].

B. Transformational teams

“Teamwork” means different things to different people[28], and some of the key components of highly successful teams are:

- *Work importance* – Pink[29] identified that the three main things that drive people in work are *autonomy, mastery, and purpose*. There is a deeper meaning behind the work that people do and it should go beyond profit and making money. It also should be communicated to the team members.
- *Clear personal values* - values are the things that matter the most in the way people live and work. Team members must know what their values are and how they connect to the larger story of their company.
- *Clear goals and defined role on the team* – goals can be short-term or long-term, but each team member should be clear what their role is on the team or the project.
- *Trust* - is a foundation element for highly effective teams. Every positive interaction helps in creating that foundation of trust.
- *Confidence to share a new idea or take a risk* – team members mustn't embarrass, reject, or punish other team members. The concept of ‘*psychological safety*’[30] is the belief that the team environment is a safe place to share ideas and take risks. This requires practice and courage and has an immensely positive impact on teams when achieved.

As contemporary companies have a constant need to transform themselves and the way they operate as a whole; similar is required from specific organizational units and teams. Not only leaders, but all internal participants need to be able to adjust and upgrade the way they operate, the way they produce results, and eventually change the product or service they provide. These changes require all team members to implement new practices, acquire new knowledge, and develop new skills. One of the consequences of this situation are phenomena like lifelong learning and need to acquire new knowledge every day, increase the span of expertise, improve competences, and sharpen present skills.

This situation is even more tangible in teams where a high level of creativity and expertise is needed for adequate performance. To put creativity into production, team members have to, alongside their educational background, be able to receive new knowledge, challenge the existing methods of working and put in practice the newly acquired cognitions in the most efficient way. Therefore, learning and the ability to learn is becoming more and more crucial for the everyday performance of many individuals. The dynamics and speed of changes that happen during our new working lives are of such intensity, that usual educational methods are not proving to be sufficient, which brings up the importance of on the job training and learning by doing.

C. Transformation to an adequate team member in practice

As a consequence of all mentioned, the importance of team members who can critically assess the performance and practices of other team members, define new knowledge that needs to be acquired by them, and communicate effectively those elements to their colleagues, has become a foundation of modern teams. Those team members who can help their colleagues to acquire new knowledge and the new practices and effectively implement them in the everyday process can be defined as ‘*transformational positive team members*’.

Transformational positive team members are those team members who have mastered the skills and knowledge specific for the operation of the team they work in. Also, they maintain a high level of their performance and, above average, communication skills in combination with emotional intelligence level, usually found in teachers and trainers. As the complexity of processes and operations performed in a team rises, the significance of the above-mentioned elements increases. For example, this highly comes into effect with teams operating in research and development areas, medical services, IT, or mission-critical engineering like space exploration and other areas.

One of the crucial issues that all organizations, and especially the above-mentioned ones, face is the induction of new team members into the existing teams and processes. This issue is even more tangible in situations where new team members are new graduates coming out of the education system and entering the professional environment. The induction period, consisting of activities that enable to do their work in a new professional role, represents a significant investment for the organization because the costs of new employees’ salaries and working infrastructure are immediately present from the first day of

their engagement, while their full productivity is something expected to happen in the future. The challenges can be even deeper if the newly induced team members cause damage due to their inexperience and lack of on the job training. Even if the new team members are experienced professionals, in a new professional environment they are still not fully acquainted with accustomed processes and practices that prevail in the existing team and organization. Therefore, shortening the induction period is of great importance for all teams and organizations where the cost off mistakes can be extremely high or even measured in human lives.

Military teams are an example of training and constant on-the-job-learning teams, especially those who operate on complex technical systems or special tactics. The complexity of these systems and the potential, unwanted damage they can cause to human lives and infrastructure, makes them extremely sensitive to human error. Thus, every member, before joining those teams, undergoes an intensive training program followed by constant practices and drills. These activities are imposed to ensure that every team member is highly acquainted with all technology systems and correct procedures for doing the job the right way. A crucial element of training programs are team members who can see and recognize unwanted behaviors, lack of technical knowledge, or even a personal attitude that has consequences on performance of the individual and maybe the team in general. The transformational team member has a valuable influence to transform their current contribution to the team from insufficient to one that can bring value to the team, or just prevent the damage.

Also, in medical teams, a positive and transformational role of senior team members, who can help new colleagues in gaining extensive practical knowledge span in the shortest period, can make a difference between life and death. For example, a senior surgeon inducting a group of residents surgeons can, by fulfilling his transformational role, shorten the time of the induction, transfer a vast array of experience and make the new doctors ready to perform more complex surgeries, with a higher level of expertise, and subsequently, avoid usual beginners mistakes in a larger scale.

D. Transformational positive team members

Contemporary transformational leadership theories and practices are concentrated mainly towards team leaders and exploring their abilities to lead their teams and make them able to achieve more and to reach higher levels of potential that they have originally conceived. In light of the immense changes in the everyday workplace on all levels, transformational leadership as such is not always enough to bridge the gap between current and required level of performance of each team member individually, and at the team altogether. Especially in types of teams mentioned earlier where lives can be in danger.

Therefore, transformational team members are necessary to transfer the knowledge and improve not only professional skills but also the “life skills” of team members, without assuming a team leadership position. By creating a team environment in which a team leader is leading a team through sharing knowledge and improving

capabilities of his team members and at the same time, having other team members improving the performance and skill levels of their colleagues, especially as moral agents uplifting the entire team, the team can develop more quickly and in a shorter period can reach its full operational potential, and even surpass it in near future.

This is not limited only to practical performance improvement but also on elevating personal values and moral standards. Without morality, people are doomed to the consequences of the misuse of freedom, but also of knowing the consequences of the misuse of freedom, responsibility and ultimately even the knowledge and skills they possess, which Dostoevsky portrayed through the words of his hero: “*You are guilty in front of others because you could have been the only lighthouse in the darkness, and you were not*”[31]. The importance of high personal values and moral standards of team members is essential for establishing a positive transformational culture, where trust and understanding among team members are enabling the knowledge transfer and its implementation.

IV. TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION

Educational systems face ‘new reality’ challenges, as they represent a link between students and the labor market, preparing them to be full shareholders of modern business. Thus, the knowledge that is being transferred to students is changing constantly in order to keep up with contemporary trends in areas for which the students are being prepared. More and more the old fashion ex-cathedra lectures are being replaced with practical case studies and assignments, which require active students’ participation and very often, within a team.

Not only that students acquire a more adequate level of expertise, but at the same time they practice the teamwork, which they will encounter in real-life situations once they embark the professional life. The majority of expertise that is being taught within the current education system, especially for IT, design, engineering, and business, learning methods that are being used, like case studies and practical hands-on learning in teams, is giving new significance to transformational team members.

Under the influence of digital transformation, students benefit from STEAM skills (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math content areas) if learning includes problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, as well as the most important features of teamwork; communication, collaboration, and conflict management. With the rise of the STEAM teams, the practical implementation and development of transformational team members have taken one of the most important roles in team learning and acquiring knowledge of complexed materia, positive personal values, and high moral standards.

It is of crucial importance not to ignore, as Žitinski pointed out, that “*Education is a Moral Concept*” because it is above instrumental values. The specific goal of education is the expansion of human knowledge and cognition of what is ‘right’, and therefore correct. “As a rule, A MAN WITH THE RIGHT EDUCATION BECOMES GOOD[32].

V. CONCLUSION

Although leaders are primarily expected to be role models, congruence is 'conditio sine qua non' and this requirement to '*always aim for complete harmony of thought, word and deed*' stands in front of each team member. Thus, not only leaders should have transformational characteristics, but every team member should strive to achieve, develop, perfect them. In real life team situations, team members very often have a huge impact on other team members. That impact can be positive or negative, it is rarely indifferent or status quo.

Adjustments that support a transformational environment should not include only readiness for change, and the meaning of education is not only to provide a solution for long-lasting and structured learning.

It is of particular importance to strengthening students in becoming transformational positive team members, as morally aware members of society, who aim actions to noble directions of the future.

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