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THE SOPHOMORE CADETS' IMAGINATION OF THEIR OWN LEADERSHIP STYLE

A MÁSODÉVES KATONAI VEZETŐI SZAKOS HALLGATÓK ELKÉPZELÉSE SAJÁT VEZETŐI STÍLUSÁRÓL

The author publicizes the results of a research that was tried among the sophomore cadets of the University of National Defence. Throughout the research the leadership attitudes of 20 respondents were studied.

Using the Hershey-Blanchard situational leadership style questionnaire, 60% of the respondents were able to identify the requirements of the situations and accordingly choose the correct leadership style. The other 40% should enrol in further training or conduct self training, for they cannot properly put to use the leadership methods. The author points out that this knowledge must be further developed, since a modern army cannot exist without the essence of a modern leadership.

PREFACE

REQUIREMENTS TOWARD THE MILITARY LEADERS

The past wars usually put the human aspect of the military leader in the center. This concludes a decisive, bold, creative commander with high initiative, who's proficient in both allied and enemy technology, well-trained and fit, and has become a hero with respect to his personal traits or the circumstances. However, reality is much more complex. The army consists of different purposive units, organizations, technology and equipment. At the same time, the source of every single result (be that success or failure) is the human being, the soldier. The victory itself is the result of well-coordinated efforts. It doesn't belong to a single hero, but to the subordinates, who:

- are organized into units, subunits;
- have their own faith, values, commitments, goals;
- require the commanders' care, in order to sustain their battle potential, which is provided by their abilities and skills;
- are committed to their comrades, commanders, subunit and the army's ideology;
- know, what word "Motherland" means;
- are ready to make sacrifices;
- are required to recognize and solve not only personal, but organizational problems and conflicts.

The era of the mass armies had been ended, which is testified by today's smaller or larger scale armed conflicts. Under the proper technological circumstances, the professionalism with its high efficient training, the commitment and the up-to-date knowledge enable us to gain victory. The wide spectrum of the organizational knowledge comes within these cognitions. Besides the highly developed military technology, a professional military leader must possess a whole array of knowledge that enables him/her to convince, command, lead and motivate his troops. He must know those leadership methods, procedures that allow him/her to bring the top-notch out of his subordinates so as to successfully complete the task. He must be aware of the principles of human behavior and the basics of psychological functioning.

RESEARCH EXAMPLE

I've evaluated the questionnaires of 20 undergraduate sophomore cadets of the Faculty of High Command at the University of National Defense during the spring semester of 2009. The questionnaires were filled out in the framework of the Self-efficiency training session.

RESEARCH METHOD

The Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership style questionnaire was applied to gain an understanding of the respondents' leadership styles. After the questionnaires were filled out, a small group discussion took place in order to analyze the results.

THE HERSEY-BLANCHARD SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE AND ITS RESULTS

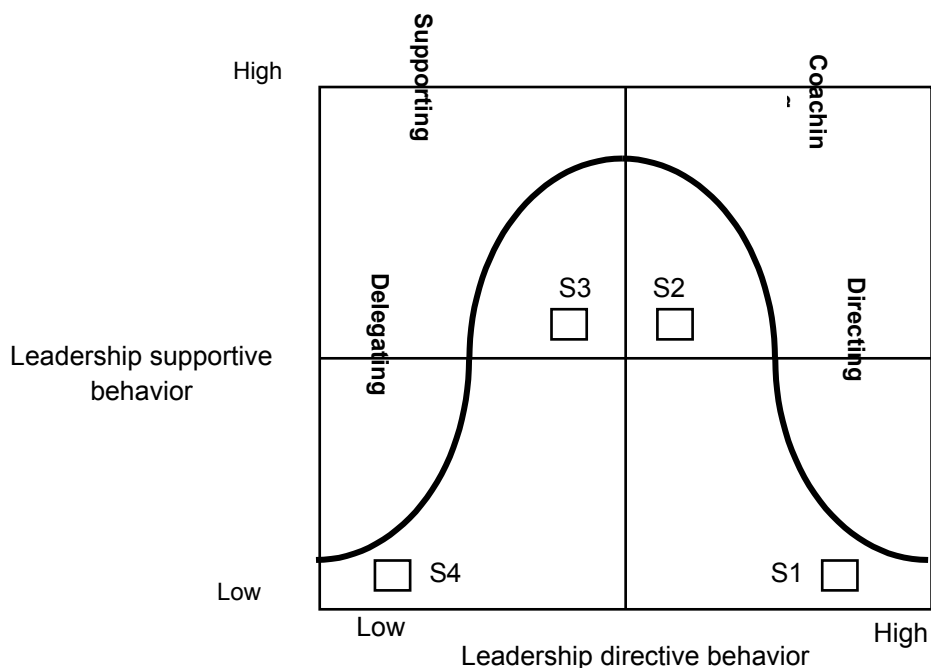
According to the situational leadership theory, a perfect method to motivate others doesn't exist. Most of the surveys show that the leader's behavior is a set of combinations of task- and relationship-orientated elements. Effective leadership is said to address a special situation, which is encountered by the leader at a given time. Leadership is a two-dimensional model. The first dimension is the leader's relationship-oriented behavior (it's directed toward the subordinates, and expressed in encouragement, support, recognition etc.) We count here openness, good communication skill, helpfulness. The other dimension is the task-oriented behavior, which touches upon the commander's role as a leader (ability to command, organize, execute). We use this style whenever we issue orders, assign goals to others, or determine our organizational role. Thus we can say that everybody's leadership style is a mix of relationship- and task-oriented behavior.

Each of the four leadership style presented in the model (diagram 1) can be effective. Effectiveness requires the usage of each style at the right place in the right time.

Factors that should be taken into consideration when we attempt to chose a leadership style:

- the subordinates' intentions, abilities to complete the given task;
- the nature of the issued task;
- the work atmosphere;

It doesn't matter, what the leader think about the given style. What matters, is the perception, thoughts and experience of the subordinates.



Directing S1:

Here, the leader plays the main role, by keeping the subordinates under strict supervision, telling them what to do and reinforcing the acceptable behaviors. Our goal is to make sure that the subordinates acquire the necessary skills to cope with the requirements. Recognitions are due when they're deserved. It's essential to make the subordinate understand that for us it's imperative to help him properly and effectively carry out his share of the work.

This style is advantageous when:

- a new/inexperienced subordinate arrives;
- the subordinate lacks of motivation;
- the subordinate lacks of self-confidence;
- the subordinate's performance is rather poor.

The style is inefficient when:

- the subordinate is a professional/experienced worker;
- the subordinate motivated;
- it's not possible to measure the results in the short term;
- deadlines are not important at all.

Table 1 shows the results that were scored by the cadets.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	3	15,0	15,0	15,0
	1	6	30,0	30,0	45,0
	2	8	40,0	40,0	85,0
	3	3	15,0	15,0	100,0
	Total	20	100,0	100,0	

Table 1.: *Directing S1*

According to tables 4 and 5, by comparing them to the others, it can be concluded that the cadets scored relatively low here, which means they are either not familiar with this kind of style or they don't prefer it.

Coaching S2:

This behavior concentrates on the interactions, while also not losing focus on the problem solving ability's development and the commitment's strengthening. The leader has to explain "why" and "how" the task should be solved. He should give recognition for a job well done, and signal average requirements towards the subordinates.

This behavior is advantageous when:

- the subordinate has the necessary skills and experience, but has a low outcome;
- if the leader has any prestige, deriving from his own knowledge or status in front of his subordinate,
- a share of responsibility exists between the leader and the subordinate.

The behavior is not appropriate when:

- the subordinate well-trained and experienced;
- the subordinates are highly motivated to complete the given task;
- the subordinate doesn't require the involvement of the leader in order to achieve victory;
- in the context of the given job, the subordinate is not proficient or has a lack of self-confidence.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	2	10,0	10,0	10,0
	5	1	5,0	5,0	15,0
	6	6	30,0	30,0	45,0
	7	1	5,0	5,0	50,0
	8	7	35,0	35,0	85,0
	9	2	10,0	10,0	95,0
	10	1	5,0	5,0	100,0
	Total	20	100,0	100,0	

Table 2.: Coaching S2

According to the results of the 2nd and 5th tables, it can be concluded that it's by far the most popular behavior among the cadets. The scores were twice as many as of the second highest.

Participating S3:

This behavior aims the nursing of the subordinates' self confidence, and the growth of their abilities, thus ensuring the independent and outstanding completion of a task. The leader achieves this, by giving recognition, and by providing the subordinates the opportunity for decision making and problem solving in line with the task at hand. This requires two-way communication and listening from the leader.

The behavior is advantageous when:

- the subordinate possesses all the necessary abilities and experience required by the nature of the work;
- the subordinate is motivated and takes responsibility for his acts;
- there is more than one way to solve the problem;
- the subordinate's outcome is adequate or above the average on the long run.

The behavior is disadvantageous when:

- the outcome is below average;
- the subordinates don't possess the appropriate knowledge and experience about the work, and their control is essential;
- the subordinate lacks the initiative in line with an objective;
- the subordinate is not able or doesn't want to take responsibility.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	15,0	15,0	15,0
	2	9	45,0	45,0	60,0
	3	1	5,0	5,0	65,0
	4	4	20,0	20,0	85,0
	6	2	10,0	10,0	95,0
	7	1	5,0	5,0	100,0
	Total	20	100,0	100,0	

Table 3.: Participating S3

According to tables 3 and 5, by comparing them to the others, it can be concluded that the cadets scored here the 2nd highest. So they are familiar with this style, they prefer it.

*Recognition -occasional**Delegating S4*

Basically, the task is issued to the subordinate, who is left to solve it alone. The leader conducts check-ups once in a while to receive information about the process, and gives support if it's necessary. The leader is only concerned about the successful accomplishment of the organizational goals. An opportunity is presented to the subordinate in order to let him independently chose the course of action in the problem solving process. This behavior is less based on interactions and much more relies on mutual trust, which emphasizes that the subordinate can tend to his work without any interference from the leader's side.

It's advantageous to use this style when:

- the subordinate possesses all the vital skills and experience, which are required to the success;
- the subordinate is highly motivated, and takes maximal responsibility for his actions;
- the subordinate is proud of his outstanding performance at a given field;
- each time the subordinate is stimulated to act by the given task.

It's inappropriate to use this style when:

- the subordinate's outcome is under average;
- the necessary skills and experience are missing, thus control is an important issue;
- the subordinate cannot demonstrate the crucial initiative for the problem solving;
- the subordinate is not able to or unwilling to take responsibility.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	12	60,0	60,0	60,0
	1	6	30,0	30,0	90,0
	2	2	10,0	10,0	100,0
	Total	20	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.: *Delegating*

According to tables 4 and 5, by comparing them to the others, it can be concluded that the cadets scored here the 2nd lowest, which means they are either not familiar with this kind of style or they don't prefer it. The divergence from the average score is here the lowest, mirroring an understanding that this particular behavior is not useable, not efficient in military environment.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Directing	20	0	3	1,55	,945
Coaching	20	4	10	7,00	1,654
Participating	20	1	7	2,95	1,761
Delegating	20	0	2	,50	,688
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Table 5.: *Descriptive Statistics*

THE STYLE-CHOOSING ABILITY

The style-choosing ability is an important data, which shows to what extent the leader is able to influence others. Furthermore it encompasses the leader's capabilities to put these styles to use. The leadership styles showed,

which style is applied by choice in the first and in the second place. Conversely, the style-choosing ability answers to what extent the leader is able to change his style in order to adapt to the subordinates' preparation level in the given situation. The test measures this indicator, answering the extent of flexibility; the difficulty for the leader to change when he recognizes the necessity. The sophomore cadets achieved following the results (table 6).

N	Valid	20
	Missing	0
Mean		23,55
Median		24,00
Std. Deviation		3,316
Minimum		16
Maximum		29

Table 6.: Style-choosing ability

The value of the style-choosing ability can range from 0 to 36. The values between 30 and 36 indicate a high flexibility, which enables to quickly adapt to the environment (recognize the subordinate' abilities, and choose the leadership style accordingly). None of the cadets got into this range. Those who achieved 24 to 29, typically use only their most preferred style, disregarding all other styles. It's shown on the 2nd diagram that 60% of the cadets belong here; thereby they have a formed leadership style, but only use one style regardless of the situation. The rest 40% needs further development, because of their lack of ability to determine their subordinates' level of preparedness and motivation.

Stílusválasztó képesség értéke

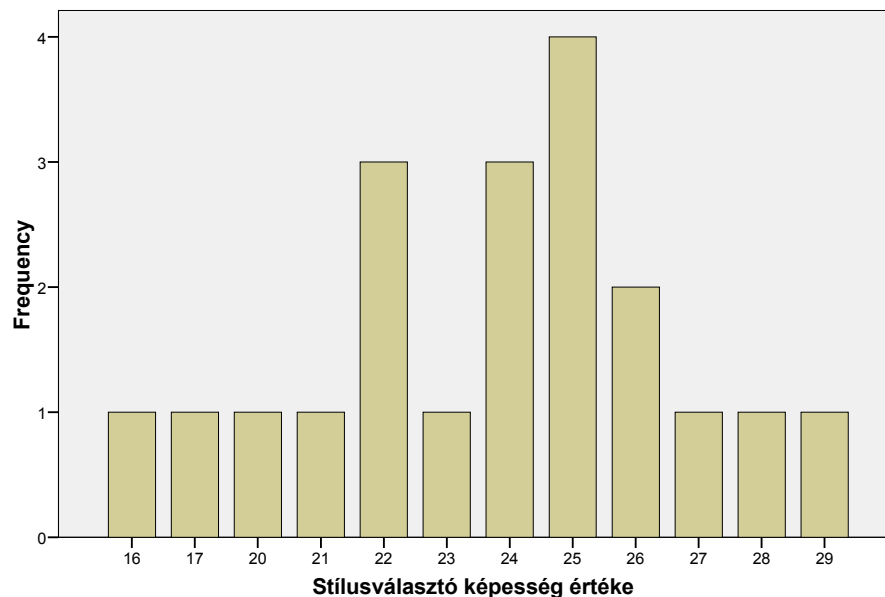


diagram 2.: Style-choosing ability

RESULTS AND LESSONS

Throughout the conversation with the cadets, it became clear that the achieved results might give a solid basis for further development, but these very results also point out several inadequacies, which elimination should be incorporated into the cadets training. It's admirable that the cadets greatly prefer the leadership style, which is

based on interactions and consultation. However, the cadets' recognition shouldn't be disregarded that the style is rather time consuming, since it requires regular consultation. The professional military leadership style can only be a flexible, quickly adaptable behavior. In the sophomore cadets' opinion, up till the end of the 4th semester, there hadn't been enough opportunities to encounter certain situations, which in return would have made for the cadets possible to shape their own leadership abilities. This shortage broadens out to the the necessary routine as well, which would make the distinction easier among the styles. The whole research was meant to follow by annual check ups so as to keep a track on the cadets' development.

The self-development is vital in order to continuously live up to the expectations. In our rapidly-pacing era, the desire for personal growth and the desire for being suitable to the organizational needs lead us to the satisfaction of these ever increasing expectations. Professionalism doesn't stand for exceptions. An army, which professes this scale of values, raises unambiguous expectations toward his members. Concessions can be made only temporarily if somebody falls behind. Thus the training in modern leadership styles is imperative, which can become a weapon just as lethal as any conventional.

Keywords: cadet, leadership style, research, The Hershey-Blanchard situational leadership style

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