

Ongoing Leadership Exploration through Mirror Work and Window Work

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Introduction

Leadership growth is not merely a phase; it is a continuous journey. As leaders navigate through diverse work environments, understanding their own styles and recognizing the dynamics of their teams become crucial for success. This white paper identifies two essential types of exploration that leaders must engage in regularly: Mirror Work and Window Work. These introspective practices enable leaders to reflect on their personal leadership style while concurrently evaluating and adapting to the needs of their team.

The Two Types of Exploration

1. Mirror Work

Mirror Work represents the introspective component of leadership development. It is a continuous process of self-reflection and self-awareness where leaders contemplate their behaviors, attitudes, and overall impact on their teams. Key questions leaders should ask themselves include:

- What kind of leader would my employees describe me as?
- How do my actions align with my leadership values and objectives?
- What feedback have I received, and how can I incorporate it for improvement?

This ongoing self-assessment helps leaders recognize their strengths and weaknesses and understand how their behavior influences team dynamics. By leveraging strengths, leaders can enhance their effectiveness and better support their team's development.

Models for Mirror Work:

Mirror Work is essential for leaders as they engage in self-reflection and improve their understanding of their behaviors and leadership styles. Several established models can help leaders gain insight into their personal tendencies and how these affect their interactions with their teams

1. **DiSC Personality Profile:** This model categorizes individuals into four distinct personality types—Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. Understanding where you fit within this model can help you recognize your natural tendencies in communication, conflict resolution, and team dynamics. By knowing your dominant traits, you can reflect on how they might influence your

leadership style, and the perceptions others have of you. For instance, a leader with a high Dominance score might be assertive, which can drive results but may occasionally overlook team cohesion.

2. **Discovery Insights Profile:** This assessment is similar in its goal of enhancing self-awareness, but it focuses more on how individuals relate to others and their motivations. It highlights four color energies—Fiery Red, Sunshine Yellow, Earth Green, and Cool Blue—each representing different emotional drivers and ways of working. By exploring your color energy, you can gain insights into how your natural preferences influence your leadership style, including collaboration, motivation, and feedback delivery.
3. **Communication Style:** This model influenced by Blake & Mouton focuses on the leader's behavior from the intersection of assertiveness and responsiveness. Leaders who are assertive take initiative in expressing ideas and making decisions, while those who are responsive prioritize listening and empathizing with team members. Understanding where one lies in this spectrum can reveal how communication preferences shape team engagement and collaboration. Leaders can leverage this insight to enhance conversations, promote open dialogue, and foster a more inclusive environment.
4. **Conflict Style (Thomas-Kilmann Inventory):** The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) analyzes a leader's preferred approach to conflict resolution by assessing their levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness. The five conflict styles identified in this model—competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating—reflect different ways of handling disagreements. By understanding their own conflict style, leaders can adapt their approaches to different situations, promoting a more positive resolution process that can be tailored to the context and needs of their team.
5. **Prioritization Style (Eisenhower/Covey):** These models examine the intersection of urgency and importance for various tasks. Leaders can categorize responsibilities based on whether they are urgent or important, thereby sharpening their focus on what truly matters. By prioritizing effectively, leaders empower their teams to concentrate on strategic goals rather than getting lost in less significant tasks.
6. **Risk Assessment:** This aspect analyzes decision-making through the lens of probability and impact for each task. Leaders must evaluate the likelihood of various outcomes and the potential consequences of their decisions. By understanding their own risk tolerance, leaders can better assess how their decisions affect their team and the organization, allowing for more informed and balanced approaches to risk-taking.

By integrating these models into their Mirror Work practices, leaders can cultivate a deeper understanding of their behaviors, preferences, and their effects on team dynamics. This self-awareness enables leaders to adapt their strategies and enhance their effectiveness, creating a more cohesive and engaged work environment.

2. Window Work

Window Work focuses on external observation and analysis, allowing leaders to better understand their team's environment. It involves evaluating the context in which the team operates and asking critical questions such as:

- How is my team currently functioning?
- What are the prevailing morale and engagement levels?
- What conditions exist that either promote or hinder peak performance?

This type of exploration highlights the need for leaders to be adaptable and responsive to their team's needs. By engaging in Window Work, leaders can cultivate an environment where team members feel valued and supported, fostering creativity, collaboration, and optimal performance.

Models for Window Work:

1. **Decision Making:** Utilize collaborative decision-making techniques based on feasibility and importance and observe team input while making decisions.
2. **Strategy (SWOT/TOWS):** Regularly evaluate team strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and then use them to strategically create actions that will leverage strengths and mitigate the weaknesses.
3. **Change Management (Four Door Model):** Recognize various responses to change based on what is changing and what is staying the same. Then the leader can adjust approaches to effectively guide the team through transitions.
4. **Stakeholder Influence-Attitude Matrix:** Understand various stakeholders' position of influence and attitude surrounding the change and leverage key influencers to enhance the change efforts among their peers.
5. **Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model:** This model posits that effective leadership depends on the readiness level of the team members, essentially their ability and willingness to perform a specific task. As a leader, your role is to adjust your style (from directing to coaching, supporting, or delegating) based on the development level of your team members. This adaptability is key to fostering high performance.

For example:

- **Directing** is appropriate for team members who are new and lack the skills or confidence required to perform tasks independently.
- **Coaching** is ideal for individuals who have some competence but still require guidance and support.
- **Supporting** is best suited for team members who are competent but may lack confidence or motivation.
- **Delegating** works for those who are both competent and confident, enabling them to take ownership of their tasks.

By understanding where each team member stands within this model, you can make informed decisions on how to lead effectively. This approach not only enhances team performance but also supports individual growth and development, creating an empowered and engaged workforce.

Dynamic Nature of Leadership

The interplay between Mirror Work and Window Work emphasizes the dynamic nature of effective leadership. Leaders must recognize that neither self-reflection nor environmental assessment is static. Instead, these components function on a continuum, where leaders must be willing to flex and adapt their behaviors according to the circumstances and needs of their teams.

The importance of adaptability cannot be overstated. Leaders must navigate rapidly changing environments and be responsive to the evolving motivations and needs of their team members. This continual adjustment is not about changing one's core identity but rather about leveraging inherent strengths alongside those of others.

Conclusion

The ongoing exploration of leadership through Mirror Work and Window Work is crucial for developing well-rounded leaders who can effectively guide their teams. By prioritizing self-awareness and environmental understanding, leaders can not only enhance their own performance but also foster a collaborative, effective work environment. The intersection of various leadership models provides frameworks through which leaders can continuously assess and adapt their approaches, ensuring they are equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow's dynamic workplaces.

Through this holistic view of leadership development, leaders can cultivate a culture of growth and resilience within their teams, ultimately driving better outcomes and fostering a thriving organizational environment.

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