



Transformational leadership and the dissemination of organizational goals: A case study of a telecommunication firm

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Abstract

We examined how the leadership style of top and middle-level managers in a large telecommunications organization was related to their effectiveness in conveying strategic organizational goals. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, we found that transformational leaders perceived organizational goals as prospector oriented and were rated as more effective communicators by their direct reports. We examined research questions regarding the methods by which transformational leaders disseminate organizational goals. An exploratory analysis indicated that managers who reported to transformational leaders tended to have higher agreement on the strategic goals of the organization. Leaders who were effective communicators had direct reports who were more familiar with the goals of the organization. We discussed implications for linking transformational leadership with the strategic roles of leaders.

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1. Introduction

“Although the market situation is tough... we are in the hottest field... We even have a great workforce, but it is lost [not utilized effectively]. If we... provide a clear message to employees we

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can be on the right track. However, managers can not provide direction to their employees, when they get unclear messages from the top”.

VP of Activity 1, interviewed for this study

A core responsibility for organizational leaders is to direct followers towards achieving organizational purposes by articulating the organization’s mission, vision, strategy, and goals (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001). Leaders at all levels are responsible for the dissemination of strategic organizational goals, as well as for convincing their constituents to effectively implement those goals. Cannella and Monroe (1997) indicated that transformational leaders form relationships with followers that may make it easier for them to disseminate and implement strategic goals. In this study, we explored how transformational and transactional leadership styles, communication style, and goal articulation were related to the dissemination of strategic goals across several organizational levels in a large complex telecommunications company.

The effectiveness of strategic goal implementation depends on how well leaders in an organization perceive and clarify the goals, translate them into more specific goals tied to respective units, and then encourage an open learning environment to facilitate the pursuit and successful completion of the goals (Gillen, 2000; Goodman, Lerch, & Mukhopadhyay, 1994). Previous authors (e.g., Avolio, 1999) have argued that transformational leaders articulate a strategic vision that helps guide followers to focus on and learn what is essential to implementing the vision and mission at their level, as well as at subsequent levels within the organization. They encourage followers to question assumptions, methods, and the goals to discover better ways to understand and translate them into specific actions and deliverables. By creating an open learning environment, they help foster a climate that promotes a deeper understanding of the goals, mission, and vision, which is likely to foster greater alignment, identification, and strategic focus throughout an organization (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Gillen, 2000).

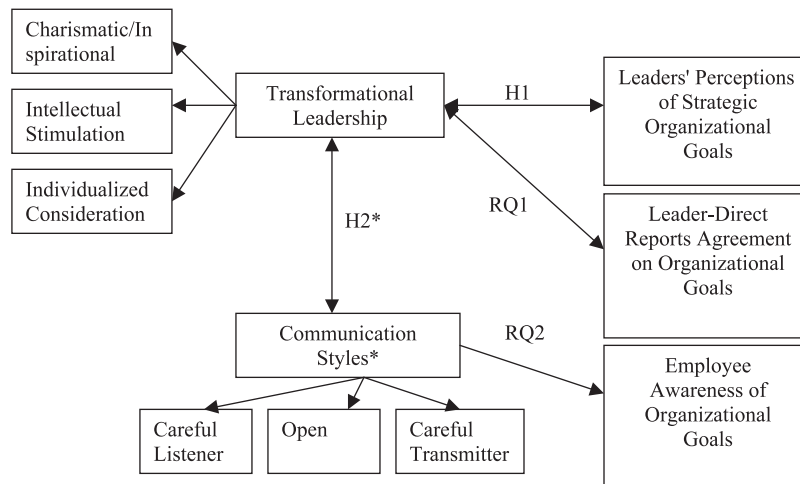


Fig. 1. Guiding research model. RQ—Research question. *We tested potential moderators of the leadership–communication correlations, such as education and tenure, and found no significant moderating effects. **We refer here to Communication Styles as a heuristic category and not as a variable.

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