

StratServe Leadership Newsletter

Serving Leaders of Africa to Serve

Directional Leadership Style by Micah Amukobole,

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Directional Leader

"Give us clear vision that we may know where to stand and what to stand for, because unless we stand for something, we shall fall for anything" Peter Marshall

There is a time when an organisation reaches a 'Kairos' moment (a time pregnant with destiny), a time when hard decisions have to be made as to the future existence of the organisation. Perhaps it is a time for a paradigm shift, or diversifying its operations, services, ministry or products. The organisation reaches a period in time, when it is crucial to follow the right direction until it stabilises on the right bearing.

"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to the Israelites."

Such situations demand for comprehensively unambiguous direction for the organisation. This will require focused vision and directional leadership.

Bill Hybels in his book *Courageous Leadership* describes 'the directional leader' as the uncanny, God-given ability to choose the right path at those critical intersections where an organisation starts asking hard questions.

Questions always arise at a 'Kairos moment': *Is it time for a wholesale change or should we stay the course? Do we focus on growth or consolidation? Should we start new ministries or deepen and improve existing ones? Should we add facilities or relocate? Is it time for afresh beginning?*

Studies on leadership stress the leader-followers relationship in which leader is supposed to induce to the extent of coercing the followers to act on goals that in the end will benefit the entire team or organisation. This style can be characterised as directional leadership and seems essential in institution building.

In directional leadership the leader: provides specific instructions, defines the roles and tasks of the 'follower', and closely supervises task accomplishment. Decisions are made by the leader and an-

nounced to the followers, so communication is largely one-way.

The directional leader not only recognises the opportune moment but has the capacity to choose the right path. Such moments require good, prolonged, and sustainable leadership that will take the organisation through critical intersections to face the hard questions.

Directional leader empowers a team by harnessing and driving them to accomplish predefined mission and objectives, preparing guides for staff of what they should do and how to perform it, work plans, and functional standards.

Sean Scope, Regional Vice President at Huntington Copper, explains that directional style is contingent upon five factors, without which success cannot be achieved: Purposeful Vision; Targeted metrics (key performance indicators); Defined strategies; Objective evaluation tools; and Contingency plans.

It is in this context that Peter Marshall cries out for a clearly defined vision that is to help the leader and the team to know where they stand and what to stand for; a purpose, a plan with clear guidelines.

This leadership style is about preparing guides for team, what they should do and how to perform it, work planning, and functional standards.

In organisation or nations that seek partnership; features of directional leadership converge on leaders' efforts to adjust different interests of potential participants and persuading them to join new regional institutions by setting up common goals, which can be legitimated by followers who perceive the benefits of complying with those goals.

This is validated by the hegemonic stability theory which 'holds that hegemonic structures of power, dominated by a single country, are most conducive to the development of strong international regimes'

The leader should carefully assess the values, mission, strengths, weaknesses, resources, personnel, and openness to change of an organisation - then, with remarkable wisdom, point that organisation in the right direction.

"Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses."

Joshua followed the vision and footsteps of Moses as given by the Almighty. The vision and the plan were re-stated to Joshua: Cross the Jordan and go into the Promised Land. The affirmation of the promise: I will give you every place where you set your foot. The detail of the expanse of the land was given: a sign of their strength. As any threat in times of weakness protection was sure: No one would stand before them. The Leadership style to be applied was not in doubt: Be strong and very courageous.

The detail of the plan was clear and Joshua explained to the people with assurance of the protection of the Almighty. The only condition was obedience:

"Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go."

It is the allegiance and respect of the people that gave Joshua the moral authority to directional leadership style.

Leadership is defined as influencing teamwork with the aim of securing certain goals. Managers endeavour to carry out leadership tasks in a way to affect the team whom they are in charge of and to orient their endeavours in the direction of predefined organisational goals. These managers should motivate their team in such a way that they voluntarily try to accomplish organisational goals.

Directional leadership style requires support from other leadership styles to avoid a dictator leader.

It is on this basis that the success of the directional leader depends on how these qualities are exhibited: **Passion; Decisiveness; Conviction; Integrity; Adaptability; Emotional Toughness** (allows the leader to be strong, resilient and flexible, able to weather storms and grab opportunities); **Emotional Resonance** (a leader's ability to grasp what motivates others and appeal to them effectively); **Self-Knowledge**; and **Humility**.

StratServe Newsletter is a monthly inspirational challenge to leaders in leadership

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