

Transformational leadership and innovation

How leaders can influence innovation...

Transformational Leadership is widely considered as the most popular approach to leadership today. Not only popular but also widely regarded as the most effective.

There is an abundance of research evidence that clearly demonstrates that groups led by Transformational Leaders have higher levels of performance and satisfaction than other groups led by a different type of leader.

Transformational Leaders have positive expectations and believe that their followers can do their best. They inspire, empower and stimulate followers to exceed 'normal' levels of performance.

The concept of Transformational Leadership was initially introduced by James MacGregor Burns (leadership expert and presidential biographer) and later built upon by researcher Bernard Bass. Bass proposes that Transformational Leadership can be defined according to the impact it has on the followers of a Transformational Leader. It engenders the trust, respect and admiration of followers. Bass also suggests that there are four key components to Transformational Leadership.

The Four Components of Transformational Leadership

Idealised Influence – Transformational Leaders are a role model, they 'walk the talk'. Followers trust and respect the leader, they emulate this and internalise his or her values and ideals. This in turn helps develop the follower's leadership characteristics.

Inspirational Motivation – Transformational Leaders inspire and motivate followers. They have a clear vision and are able to articulate it in an inspirational way. Their behaviour provides real meaning and challenge to the work of their followers.

Intellectual Stimulation – Transformational Leaders solicit new and innovative approaches towards the performance of work and challenge followers to be innovative and creative. They encourage solutions to problems from followers.

Individual Consideration – Transformational Leaders have and demonstrate a genuine concern for the needs and feelings of followers. Their lines of communication are open and followers feel free and at ease to share ideas that are recognised. Concern is given to the individual development needs of followers.

Whilst Transformational Leadership is not only the most popular approach to leadership today but also widely regarded as the most effective, it is easy to see the clear link between Transformational Leadership and the need to successfully foster innovation, problem solving and creativity.

Transformational Leadership is about transforming the performance and future success of a business and as such requires new approaches, new ideas, solutions to problems and innovation. It is no surprise therefore, that these qualities feature heavily in the four components of Transformational Leadership and are actively encouraged and supported in followers by Transformational Leaders.

What does it take to become a Transformational Leader?

To set yourself on a path to become a Transformational Leader, the following guidelines should prove valuable.

- Create a clear, inspirational and highly appealing vision for followers
- Make the link between the vision and the strategies to attain it clear
- Articulate the vision in an inspirational and passionate way (use colourful and emotive language)
- Consistently demonstrate confidence and belief in the vision
- Demonstrate with conviction your confidence in your follower's ability to contribute towards and fulfil the vision
- Model exemplary behaviours that reflect your total commitment to the vision and organisational values
- Recognise the success of followers
- Demonstrate a genuine interest in the needs and feelings of individual followers
- Challenge followers to be innovative, creative and to find solutions to problems

By embracing the above, you will be making a significant contribution to creating an innovative culture where great ideas can flourish and solutions to problems will be found.

About us

Passionate about thinking efficiency and productivity

We help people do their best thinking. Evolving from a 25 year background in Management Consultancy, we have developed and refined a powerful set of systematic thinking tools and processes and combine these with a unique understanding of individual and group behaviours that when 'managed' enable others to achieve outstanding results.

We work globally and across a wide spectrum of industries supporting endeavours such as innovation, creativity and problem solving (including those of a ridiculously technical nature).

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