# A PERSPECTIVE OF LEADERSHIP: THE CHARACTERISTICS

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**Abstract:** Leadership is not something to be perceived as alien in our narrative of life. It has been an essence which foregrounded our life where we are created by Allah as vicegerent (khalifah). In an attempt to understand the construct of leadership, one must understand the purpose of living in this world. The notion of leadership can be extended from several perspectives including administration, business, defence, spiritual or community such as family. Beekun & Badawi (1999) stated that leadership is a process where leaders seek the voluntary participation of followers in an effort to achieve certain mission. Similarly, according to Jamil (2015) leadership signifies the capability of an individual to provide guidance for a group of people, followers in attempting to achieve completion of a certain specified objectives. An individual who possesses strong characteristics of leadership can bring a huge victory to its team or followers. The terminology leadership is also derived from the word lead and lead is one of the fundamental essences in leadership. Thus, this paper discusses the author's perceptions of leadership and its' characteristics.

**Keywords**: Leader, Leadership, Management, Organisation.

## INTRODUCTION

From the classical point of view, lead or *"pimpin"* in Malay language means to hold another person's hand intimately and lead him toward the direction determined by the holder. It is not easy to be a leader or to lead. From the perspective of Islam, the act of leading and giving guidance have been frequently highlighted in the glorious book of Qur'an: "… And whatever the Messenger has given you – take; and what he has forbidden you, refrain from. And fear Allah…' Qu'ran [59: 7].

From the verse, we are obliged to take Prophet Muhammad *p.b.u.h.* as a leader who was trying to guide and lead us to adhere to the commandment of Allah S.W.T. Some people were born with characteristics in which had placed them in a place to be able to guide in nature while some people ought to have the characteristics to be a successful leader. There are eight (8) characteristics in the principle of lead in which this paper intends to highlight.

## CONCEPT OF LEAD

In this writing, the concept of leadership is translated into the model of a leader as a manager or director in a business organization, or department. Some authors have created a thin line of distinction between a leader and a manager. Zaleznik (1997) as cited in (Prevodnik & Biloslavo, 2009) viewed the manager sees the objectives as necessities while leaders see them as a reflection of their own visions and beliefs.

Today, manager's roles have been varied since with the advancement of technologies and become challenging and complicated at times. Most of the time, they must be flexible to adapt with the environment at a fast pace and creating a vision on how the organization looks like in the future with consideration from all parties. Not only that, it is their responsibility to create strategies and techniques to develop the company or department while building a strong coalition among the workers in creating a teamwork environment Zielnicki (1997) in (Cie, 2007). Failure in establishing harmony among the workers might affect the process of achieving a particular set of goals.

Hence, in business organization, a charismatic leader with clear vision is the most suitable candidate to be posited as the guider to lead and guide the organization throughout the ocean of the ups and downs of business endeavour.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF LEAD

### In Front

A leader must ensure that he or she is seen by the followers. In other words, to lead, we must be able to be noticed as this will act as a sign indicating the existence of a leader in any organization. The indication to express the presence of a leader in any organization is crucial by which it triggers the followers that they are under the guidance of a leader or a manager. Leaders should be seen by his and her followers when any situation or conflict arises. This is an indication to manifest the leader's responsibility to be at the front line. Consequently, the workers are more convinced and motivated to be more productive in their roles due to their leaders' significance in the company. *Imam* as a leader in the prayer "*solah*" has always been positioned in front of the followers to be a guidance and reference for the followers *"makmum"* throughout the prayer.

However, it is important to note that being positioned in front does not necessarily mean being the first. A charismatic leader should always have a strong justification to any act that has been implemented to the followers. With justification, leaders can raise awareness regarding values or lessons, or certain ethics shown or employed by the leader / manager to the followers. For example, a leader shows up at work earlier as a message to adhere to the working hours. Sooner or later, the followers will be aware of the importance of being punctual as productivity could be imitated.

## Healthy

Another characteristic a manager or leader needs in managing business and organization is the need to be fit and healthy. Fit can be defined into two, physical fitness and mental fitness. According to World Health Organization, as cited in (William G. Hopkins, 1988), physical fitness is the ability to perform muscular work satisfactorily. Leaders who possess a satisfying level of health have the tendency to have better a vision, mission, and vision for the corporation. If we are physically ill for so long, it might be difficult to concentrate on the tasks related to the company's growth. On the other hand, Elmagd (2016) described physical fitness can boost self-esteem and improve one's physical parts of the body.

When one's self esteem is high, the realization of completing the mission or goal would be even higher, or in other words, energetic. Not only that, Elmagd further described that being healthy can keep a leader to be calm, and happy. The logic is briefly described where endorphins produced from the act of exercise, will create a feeling of happiness. As a result, leaders will look energetic and fresh. In this way, leaders are more presentable and approachable to the clients or within the company's staff where more communication will trigger in which will be good for building rapport.

In an organization, a good leader can also be the source of inspiration or perhaps, role model to the subordinates by promoting a healthy lifestyle as a culture in the workplace and organization.  Even in the Qur 'an, the need to maintain health has been prescribed in many ways and one of them is through the care for diet:"O mankind: Eat of what is lawful and good on earth"' Qu'ran [2: 168].

## Vision

As we are moving towards the technical parts within the construct of leadership, one cannot neglect the importance of having a vision.  As a charismatic leader and manager in an organization, generating a compelling vision and establishing ways to achieve it have been one of the primary functions in leadership. Mission and vision are vital in the competitive world today. Vision describes the essence of the belief and values on an organization. (Anwar, Hasnu, & Janjua, 2013).

Vision assists in controlling the destiny of the organization. For a manager, mission and objective would be sorely based on the core of the vision as vision gives some insight about where the company is heading in the future ahead.  Leaders should never be bored in reminding the administration about the company's vision as vision gives an insight to each one of the organizations on their sole purpose in the business and not just for the benefit oneself but to help in solving people's problem by offering services in which they are expert in. From there, leaders who possess great vision tend to be inspirational. Inspired workers are very much likely important to create a conducive environment and work ethics.

As a result, services provided would be served at its best not because the workers must but rather, they love to. The power of making them to have a sense of belonging to the organization and having the same mission and vision altogether that make them to double their effort in terms of quality in their task because if they do not do that, they are affecting the

process of the company's venture in achieving their mission and vision. Leaders can be friendly to the workers but remain ~~in~~ professional when it comes to the matter of work quality.

## One Step Ahead

In becoming a charismatic leader as a manager in business organization, just possessing mission and vision is insufficient. A great leader must demonstrate the attitude of as to be one step ahead in promoting ideas or cultures in the company. In other words, leaders should be able to demonstrate first the idea or behaviour in which they intend to cultivate within the system. They will be perceived as a role model by the people who are working for them. This is one of the ways to create a consistency in practicing work ethics in the workplace. Simple example is where the leader themselves honour the act of being punctual in anything such as coming to work on time, completing all tasks within the time allocated and many others. Leader must begin the first step and the rest will follow.

From the perspective of business development, Agbor (2008) asserted that work processes are changing at a much faster pace while challenges occur when there is a rapid change in technology and globalization. In referring to this, the need to be "one step ahead" is indeed applicable where leaders need to be fast in identifying these challenges and becoming the proponent to offer solution. Apart from that, leaders need to be creative in attempting to be the first in discovering new ideas to vary their ability and creativity as a service provider at any sectors and niches.

Therefore, to be the first in anything should not be underestimated. Ideas will remain as an idea until it is fully implemented. Not only that the company will face positive impact from this kind of leader but also the staffs, clients and even the society will realize the importance to act fast in anything that we intend to do along the positive intention, *niat*.

## Clear Instruction

Now, it is important to stress on the importance of communication. As we know, being a leader is about guiding people to complete certain objectives and mission and having an excellent communication skill is another pre-requisite for a leader to be charismatic. Communication, according to Arsovski & Nikezić (2012) , is the process of exchange and flow of knowledge or information to the receiver or audience. To fit in the context as a leader in a business organization, a leader must have the ability to deliver a clear instruction to his or her colleagues and staff. A quality of a leader can also be perceived from the ability of the leader in sharing their vision and mission to the followers as well. This is to instil the spirit of cooperation among the workers and to incite them to act as soon as possible.

Arsovski & Nikzic 2012 also stated that from the study, most of the leaders spend about 70-90% of their daily basis with communication. They need to communicate with many people including the clients and investors to find or exchange ideas, expanding their business and their networking system among the key people within the field. It must bear in mind that communication also encompasses knowledge transmission of information, skills in speaking and writing depending to the audience level, and ability to motivate and provide a continuous support to its members.

Therefore, communication skill is undeniably a significant feature where leaders should possess. Furthermore, the skills should also be highlighted among the members in the company to ensure better communication skill as an attempt to make it as a culture for the workplace to practice effective communication and avoid miscommunication.

**Empathy**

Everyone is fighting for a battle that we know nothing about in daily basis. It is a privilege to have a leader in a business organization that is being considerate in certain matters towards his / her followers. This is also known as the act of empathy, in which I perceive as an important feature for a leader to lead. Marques (2010) in (Wan Abdul Rahman & Castelli, 2013) defined empathy as a skill of understanding people's feeling and predicaments. Managers / leaders that are practicing the act of empathy may assist them to have better understanding about peoples' perspectives in an attempt to create a more productive work environment.

Workers' productivity might also be affected from disturbed emotion, and this could affect the company's progress. It is suggested for leaders to get down and reach the workers regularly with the offer of compassionate listening to allow them to express their care towards the workers and make them feel appreciated. It would be even better to offer help or solution pertaining to the troubles and problems raised by them while expressing sympathy. Apart from that, leaders can be considerate towards the workers by taking their suggestions or recommendation seriously or at least to show interest upon receiving them. Great leaders and managers should make the staff love the leaders first before making the customers to love their products or services.

In short, empathy and being considerate as a manager within the organization does contribute in strengthening the concept of "employee – leader relationship" and also to ensure the company stays competitive in the market for the long run. The benefits of being empathic is not merely felt in the context of management but also it helps in shaping a positive attitude of an individual to confront the people in public.

**Systematic**

As a manager, managing a business company does not come easy. There are numbers of items to be studied, revised, and adapted every day for the sake of the betterment of the company. In referring to this, being well-organized should be a priority among the managers/leaders in leading the company. Systematic is an action done or completed according to a fixed plan or system. In the context of as a manager, they must prepare a systematic plan or strategy in ensuring the sustainability of the company. As we know, plan does not ensure success, but success begins with systematic strategies taken by the leaders and practically implemented together with the workers.

If the first plan does not work, second plan should be implemented, and the act will continuously be going. Not only that, being a techno savvy can also be perceived as systematic leader. Leaders are urged to have foresight on the advancement of the technology to be utilised within their organization to ensure speedy progress with systematic programs. For example, today, online marketing has been booming since the society has turned to the gadgets every

day. As a result, many companies today are utilizing online marketing tools to promote their product and services to get themselves noticed by their targeted prospects while some companies are still in conservative method of marketing ~~in~~ which is more time-consuming and less appropriate.

Systematic leaders usually have their own way in selecting new staff for employment. They have listed the criteria that they expect these candidates to possess ~~it~~ because they themselves have been practicing the art of being systematic in everything they intend to do. Systematic leaders will also produce more systematic workers too. Consequently, company's objectives can be easily achieved when systematic rules and technologies are being integrated by charismatic leaders and workers.

**Confident**

For leaders, having a strong level of confidence is a must at times. Bandura (1977) in (Greenacre, Tung, & Chapman, 2014) stated that self-confidence generally relates with a belief in one's own ability to perform a certain task. As a manager in a business cooperation, a leader must have confident towards their abilities and skills in managing the business. It has also been found in several studies that the role of self-confidences has a strong reflection towards the characteristics of good managers. Managers look versatile in communication and interaction to other people when they believe in the skills that they possess and the kind of service they can serve. This is very crucial especially when they must ~~confront~~ deal with the clients, investors and without enough confidence expressed, it can be a negative indicator that reflects the company's ability according to the clients.

Not only that, strong confidence manifested by the leaders will also contribute to the ignition of motivation among the workers within the company. However, bear in mind that confident alone does not ensure productivity but with the integration of knowledge. Charismatic leaders will never cease to upgrade themselves with knowledge primarily related to their expertise and niche as service providers. From there, the sense of confidence will emerge practically throughout the whole period of learning.

**MODEL OF LEAD**

To effectively lead, someone who wants to lead must ensure to possess these eight (8) characteristics.

Figure 1Eight (8) characters of lead

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, to be a successful manager in any business organization, one must possess sufficient skills to lead. There are 8 characteristics that have been highlighted for a leader to practice in order to be successful as the leading role in the organization. Adding into that, it must be aligned with discipline and consistency throughout the whole period of leading. It seemed to be useless if leaders fail to exercise consistency in practising these characteristics. Finally, it is a must to have strong intention *"niat"* for anything that we want to achieve in this temporary world and the purpose of us in doing it.

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