EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF LEADERS DURING CHANGE AND ADAPTATION: THE RISE OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS IN COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENTS

by

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Introduction

In any group setting, a leader serves as the constant foundation of guidance and support for subordinates to follow. As Randy Hirokawa (2003) explained, “Leadership is crucial for effective group action. Seldom does a group or team do well unless someone in the group directs and coordinates the various activities of group members” (p. 169). By recognizing the truth in Hirokawa’s statement, one can begin to understand the importance of leadership styles and communication. In recent years, the field of communication has experienced a state of change with the inclusion of social media networks. With such industry-wide change comes the need to assess the styles and practices of leaders caught in the middle of this transition. Leaders that lack adequate communication skills can ruin an organization and the employees that have been assigned to complete tasks. Because leaders set the tone of appropriate behaviors and practices, it is imperative for leaders to not only provide necessary guidance but also provide support and motivation to their employees.

Columnist Dale Dauten (2007) explained in The Corporate Curmudgeon that leaders that do not lead impede. Impedership is defined as the art of de-motivating employees (Dauten, 2007). Taking concepts from business writer Tom Peters, Dauten said managers that hire motivated, eager, hard-working people and then de-motivate them by a lack of encouragement, direction, and guidance ruin a person’s desire to work. Peters’ (1982) two-step model was the inspiration for this concept. First, in order to have a prosperous company, managers should hire motivated people. Employees who lack motivation will not be interested in working hard to make the organization grow and develop. Second, Peters advised that leaders often de-motivate employees with a lack of motivation and effective communication. Such circumstances not only
negatively impact the production in an organization but also hinder the interpersonal relationships found within the departments of an organization.

Because leaders spend approximately 70 to 90 percent of their day communicating with others, the need for effective communication is crucial for operating organizations (Eccles & Nohria, 1991; Mintzberg, 1973). Barrett (2006) said that it is through communication that leaders are actually able to lead. A lack or inexistence of communication prevents individuals in leadership positions from building trusting relationships with those they are supposed to lead. Communication acts as the bridge that helps to link management and subordinates. As identified by Bowman, Jones, Peterson, Gronouski, and Mahoney (1964) without communication tasks cannot be completed, relationships cannot be developed, and organizations cannot thrive. With such a significant emphasis on communication between leaders and subordinates, it becomes necessary to examine miscommunication. Miscommunication occurs when the message transmitted by someone does not properly translate as intended by the sender. In order to avoid miscommunication and impedership, leaders and subordinates must form relationships and a common understanding with one another. Above all else, clear, concise, and appropriate communication is needed to effectively lead employees to complete a task. The ability to adapt communication to a specific situation and audience is a key element of organizational success.

To analyze the leadership style necessary for a public relations professional in a nonprofit organization facing industry-wide change, what follows is a hypothetical case study. This case study provides a framework for assessing a number of leadership approaches and then offering a recommendation for guiding employees through change. As Peter Northouse (2009) suggested “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a
common goal,” (p. 3). In an ever-changing industry, public relations professionals in nonprofit organizations must understand the importance of adapting and responding to change in order to meet commonly shared goals.
Case Study

Penelope Smith is a middle-aged public relations director for the Greater Kansas City area Down syndrome Guide (KCDSG). She is, by nature, highly organized, confident, and embraces change head-on. Smith is trained and skilled in both military relations, as well as civilian public relations. Her experience with military personnel assisted in establishing her directive, yet teambuilding (collectivist) leadership style. Although Smith strongly believes that the leader of a unit sets the tone and stage for her followers, she also has seen the power that comes with a highly synergized team strategically embracing tasks. Therefore, Smith works hard to instill respect in the teams she oversees. She stresses the importance of open and honest communication. Smith believes in the power of practicing interpersonal communication in her department as the nature of her organization is centered on building and maintaining relationships, doing so has led to successful reactive and proactive public relations efforts for KCDSG.

Smith has been working at KCDSG, a nonprofit organization, for three years and currently oversees the communication department. The organization was founded in the 1980s with the hope of providing a supportive atmosphere for families and friends of children with Down syndrome (DS). KCDSG has grown over the years and currently has about 900 members. While this number is higher than it has been in past years, the staff of KCDSG feels they can improve their membership numbers. Smith’s small department of three employees works hard to plan and promote KCDSG activities while also raising awareness about DS in the Kansas City area. Essentially, the communication department handles all internal and external communication efforts for the organization. Some of KCDSG’s annual tasks include promoting and planning the
Ups and Downs Camp, Prom, and educational seminars for young people with DS. Although the working conditions can be stressful with a limited number of staff, employees at KCDSG possess passion for meeting the needs of DS children and their families. Smith and her department hope to unite more DS children, their families, and friends with other DS families. She has seen the power of a unified community joining to share life’s greatest gifts and challenges. In order to provide a stronger and easily obtainable support system, Smith believes KCDSG should establish smaller DS groups throughout rural and surrounding Kansas City communities.

Smith’s department has seen the recent boom in using social media networks for both profit and nonprofit organizations. While KCDSG does have a Facebook page, the staff currently does not utilize the medium to its fullest. The Facebook profile was created quickly and with little preparation. With only 800 Facebook followers, the page receives little attention from KCDSG participants and affiliates in the area. Because a large number of people can stay connected so easily, Smith knows she and her team need to start developing more awareness of KCDSG through Facebook and other social media networks such as Twitter and even blogs. Although the original goal when KCDSG was founded was to provide support and activities for rural families with Down syndrome children, in actuality, the organization struggles to connect with such families. With busy schedules, gas prices rising, and ever-changing weather conditions in the area, a large number of DS families are unable to participate in the annual activities. The summer has proven to be the most active time for KCDSG; however, Smith and her team of two full-time staffers recognize the need for more frequent activities and staying connected more regularly.
In order to accomplish a stronger and more consistent communication between DS families and friends, Smith has proposed a plan that combines social media networks with old fashion community involvement. Essentially, Kansas City would act as the main host for DSG but the communities that fall under KCDSG would operate more locally with other DS families. Kansas City DSG would provide the framework for creating such small group chapters allowing DS children and families to get involved in their own communities. For example, families in Raymore might decide to establish a bowling league for DS children and family members. The Warrensburg community might have swimming lessons for just DS children.

Such an addition provides a way for community members, families, and friends to come together and be involved in one another’s lives on a regular basis (rather than only annually). Families in these communities can play active roles in the lives of children with DS, stay connected, and educate others through media such as Facebook, Twitter, and the DSG community blogs. Families can build their support systems quickly and stay in tune with one another on a daily basis. Another important reason for using social media networks is that KCDSG can build its volunteer and donor community. One reason that DSG is successful is because of volunteers and donor support. Such support is crucial for making the events for DS families possible. By encouraging more local and hands-on support, DSG can continue to grow in its volunteers. Volunteers and donors can not only stay connected to what is going on in the various communities using Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, but they can also play an active role in making future events a reality.

Several months ago, Smith and her team were introduced to a photographer from Naples, Florida at a DS convention. The photographer, Kelle Hampton, has become a spokeswoman and
inspirational speaker for DS children and their families. A year ago, Kelle gave birth to a little girl who has DS. Kelle did not find out about her daughter’s condition until she was born. Her blog, *Enjoying the small things*, has created a community for DS followers. On this blog, she writes about what it is like to have a child with DS. Her blog has not only provided a forum for better understanding and communicating about living with DS children, but it also has helped raise overall awareness about DS. In addition, Kelle’s blog helped raise nearly $100,000 for the National Down’s Syndrome Society. Smith thinks Kelle has used social media networks in an inspiring and strategic way to shed light on DS by providing an outlet for friends and families to grow together. Smith has stumbled across a number of successful nonprofit organizations that use social media networks to build a community of support, engage stakeholders, interact easily with volunteers, and reach target audiences (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Luca, 2009). While there is a likelihood of successful results when using social media networks, Waters et al. (2009) caution public relations professionals to properly and adequately plan when incorporating social media networks into an organization. With this in mind, Smith hopes to revamp KCDSG’s Facebook profile and use such ideologies to establish an active position in the market.

While the addition of social media communities makes sense, Smith knows that she will face some challenges. First, as mentioned previously, Smith’s current communications department only has three staff members. If this plan were to be passed by the board, Smith would have to add a few members to her communications team. Currently, Smith’s team includes herself, Janis, and Mary. Janis is a veteran media relations consultant, providing services to Children’s Mercy Hospital for the majority of her career. Janis retired from Children’s Mercy Hospital in 2005 but decided she wanted to continue working with organizations that supported children. In late 2005, Janis’ daughter gave birth to a little boy with
DS. In an effort to familiarize herself with DS and other DS families, Janis decided to apply for a position with KCDSG. With her years of experience, Janis has been a valuable addition to the DSG team. Although Janis has a wealth of knowledge in media relations, she has limited knowledge about using social media networks as a public relations and marketing tool. Luckily, Janis is a fast learner and thrives on teamwork.

Mary, Smith’s second employee, graduated from college in 2002 with a bachelor’s degree in corporate communication. Mary has spent the last several years as head event coordinator for KCDSG. She is the lady behind the scenes making most DSG events come together successfully. While Mary is excited about the possible addition of the social media department, she fears families associated with KCDSG will stop coming to the annual events that have become a cornerstone for the Kansas City community. Events such as Ups and Downs are a great way for the community to come together a few times a year and share in DS. Mary wants to be sure that the incorporation of DS Small Groups will not take away from the knowingly successful KCDSG annual events. Both Janis and Mary have worked closely with Smith for the last three years and trust the other’s judgment. Smith is hoping the strong interpersonal skills developed over the years will be valuable for helping successfully launch the new social media department at KCDSG.

With a very strict budget to follow, Smith will have to work hard and be creative in order to find both volunteers and interns to help make her plan a reality. Smith has been told she will be allowed to hire an additional paid employee to help with the program; however, the budget cannot afford to hire more. The ideal candidate for this position would have a bachelor’s degree in public relations with experience using online resources. Smith hopes her new employee will
be well-versed in new public relations and marketing trends as to help others in the organization see the relevancy of social media networks. In addition to the new hire, Smith will turn to local colleges to recruit two undergraduate student interns and one graduate student intern. All students will need to have a major focus in the field of communication and have a general understanding of social media networks. One major task of getting the social media networks for KCDSG started will include reestablishing the organization’s presence on Facebook, setting up Twitter accounts, and beginning an online blog. Therefore, all staff in the communications department of KCDSG will need a small degree of knowledge about how to complete such tasks. Smith recognizes that her staff will need training and guidance in order to successfully accomplish desired tasks; however, she is hoping to find interns with a general knowledge of social media networks.

Another challenge Smith might encounter is convincing some of the older board members of the significance of social media and its influence on nonprofit organizations. Smith has been actively researching the power of such media in nonprofit organizations. She found that by using social media networks, families with DS children are able to share their stories and experiences with others, thus making DS more widely understood and accepted. Rather than the public seeing DS as a strange or difficult experience, families and their friends can express the joys of their lives. Using social media networks also allows people with no direct connection to DS to easily get involved and join in community activities. Of great significant is the number of people that can join Facebook and Twitter accounts to follow the organization. If KCDSG were to join the world of social media networks full force, it could not only reach more DS families, but it could also reach the public as a whole providing greater awareness and opportunities for people to participate in events.
The organizational structure of KCDSG is fairly typical of a nonprofit organization with the board of directors, various committees, the president, various department heads, and assistants. Although KCDSG’s president, Mr. Lucas Ray, sees the relevancy in starting a social media division, some of the committee members and other board members question how useful it will be to DS families, friends, and surrounding Kansas City communities. They believe media like Facebook do not have a strong place in the professional arena. Fortunately for Smith, she answers directly to Ray. Smith and Ray’s greatest challenge will be in showing the power that social media networks have on businesses. Both Smith and Ray are trained in the field of communication and hope not only to show, but also allow the board to experience the powerful impacts of social media networks in organizations.

In order to prepare for an upcoming meeting with the board, Smith has been researching the role of social media networks in business settings. Although nonprofit organizations operate differently than traditional businesses, the latest public relations and marketing trends are applicable to KCDSG. According to Qualman (2009), social media networks have become “the world’s largest referral program,” (p. 241). This concept means that today, more than ever, people rely on the judgment of people they know and trust before purchasing a product or getting involved in certain activities. Social media networks provide a forum for friends and family members to stay connected and share valuable insight about products, organizations, and what is happening in the world. Organizations, both for profit and nonprofit, that wish to stay afloat must recognize the potential of social media and work toward adapting and incorporating such interactive techniques. Today, the public is driven and determined to be a part of something big and do something greater than the status quo. Such a desire fits nicely into the goals of KCDSG. Smith believes that her organization is a perfect and natural fit for a public that wants to be
involved in organizations and experience life together. After all, KCDSG was created to provide a community of support. Support can come from family members, friends, neighbors, local businesses, and volunteers. Therefore, in order to be a part of the “largest referral program,” KCDSG must put itself in the forefront of social media networks (Qualman, 2009, p. 241).

As Smith was researching, she started thinking about how well social media networks could meet the needs of KCDSG. She began wondering if using social media networks would help provide a face and name of those with DS. Smith has found that it is easy for the people to ignore organizations that do not directly relate to them, especially special needs organizations. If KCDSG started using social media networks effectively, then more people would be exposed to the faces and stories of people directly impacted by DS. This act not only could prove to be successful for educating communities about DS, but it has the potential to bring in more donations and contributions from people. Another exciting thought Smith had was that people from all over the United States can experience a community of support, which only strengthens the cause and gives even more exposure to DS organizations. As Smith found in various articles and online resources, social media networks can make a difference in nonprofit organizations especially if proper planning and preparations are considered. Smith hopes to take her findings, ideas, and vision to the board in order to communicate the relevancy of using social media networks as a public relations and marketing tool at KCDSG.
Leadership Approaches

As social media networks continue to rise and expand in usability among organizations, it becomes necessary to understand the leadership approach that might prove successful for launching a social media network division within an organization. As Qualman (2009) explained, the news is now finding the public, where once the public sought out news stories. Now, more than ever, people rely on social media networks to understand the world and also themselves. People use social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, and various blogs to support their beliefs and to receive information about up and coming trends. As more and more profit and nonprofit organizations continue to incorporate the latest social media networks into the information distribution sections of an organizational department, understanding the type of leader necessary for launching such a profound addition is necessary. To determine the leadership approach best suited for such an endeavor, the pages that follow will assess transactional and transformational styles, The Leadership Challenge, concepts from Jim Collin’s book *Good to Great*, and situational approaches to leading.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership

Originally presented by sociologist Max Weber (1947), the transactional leadership approach, as the name suggests, looks at leadership as a transaction between leaders and subordinates. Weber explained that a leader is able to use his or her position within an organizational structure in order to accomplish tasks and see results. In the 1980s researcher, Bernard Bass (1985) took transactional leadership even further to explain the concepts: contingent rewards and management-by-exception. First, Bass explained that contingent rewards are a form of negation between leader and subordinates. Here a leader might negotiate a raise if a
certain amount of tasks or duties are accomplished. Similarly, if employees complete a job well, they might receive bonuses or extra days off for good work. Bass further explained a concept called management-by-exception with both passive and active attributes. Transactional leadership involves corrective criticism, negative feedback, and negative reinforcement (Bass & Avolio, 1990).

Active forms of management-by-exception include leaders that closely observe employees behaviors in the workplace. Bass and Avolio (1990) explained that if such behaviors are problematic the leader would then take steps to quickly correct and improve the employee behavior. The researchers found that passive forms of management-by-exception include a leader giving an employee negative feedback without ever addressing such behaviors with the employee. Here, Bass and Avolio said that leaders use avoidance tactics in such situations by unfairly targeting employee behaviors.

While Weber (1947) provided the groundwork for transactional leadership theories, James MacGregor Burns (1978) further examined this theory by considering its contrary style, transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that focuses on building relationships with employees and inspiring them to be the best they can be. James MacGregor Burns first coined this idea, like transactional leadership, in 1978 as a result of studying characteristics of political leaders. Bernard Bass also further developed this theory. Bass (1985) said transformational leaders value emotions, long-term goals, individual talents, needs, and individual vision by focusing on the needs of followers, rather than leaders. As discussed above, people using a transactional leadership style experience an exchange between leaders and followers. With this type of leadership, workers rely on leaders to reward behaviors.
This might lead to a feeling of “us” vs. “them.” Transformational leadership on the other hand, focuses on creating a bond or relationship between workers and leaders. Bass argued that the goal of this leadership style is to empower employees with relational connections that raise morale and motivate them to do their absolute best at work or in performing a task.

Bass (1985) identified transformational leaders as being charismatic people. Charismatic people are unique and able to lead others with their personality traits. They are strong role models, competent, have the ability to share moral ideologies, have high expectations of employees, and empower their employees. Bass identified certain ideals that transformational leaders possess: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence concerns the charismatic qualities described above (strong role models, highly respected, provide a vision for followers). Inspirational motivation leaders communicate high expectations and inspire employees to become a part of a shared vision. When people have a personal, invested interest in their work, they perform better. Intellectual stimulation involves encouraging employees to be creative and innovative with their work. This type of leader appreciates new ideas and visions from their workers. Individualized consideration involves listening and carefully coaching employees to make the best decisions in their work. Bass also stated that by utilizing the factors above, employees in organizations experience a family-type atmosphere of encouragement and reinforcement. Transformational leadership has proven to be successful because it provides a way to empower and nurture employees. Leaders must exhibit strong moral values, be a role model, and express their ideals and passion about what they are trying to accomplish. Bass argued that transformational leaders put time and energy into identifying and encouraging their employees’ individual qualities. Goals and individual talents are encouraged, allowing people to invest in their own self-interests.
and worth. Transformational leaders work to establish cohesion among their followers and are submerged in the vision and values of others.

Bass (1985) explained there are several strengths of practicing transformational leadership styles. First, it is versatile and can be used by many different companies and organization; people can adapt the style to fit their specific company. It is easy to understand, making leaders and employees willing and able to practice its tenets. Third, it is a process that occurs between leadership and employees; therefore, employees become a part of the leadership process. Lastly, this style focuses on the needs and values of employees, rather then focusing on leaders. When managers create value for their workers, it allows workers to go out and create value for the tasks to be accomplished. This act seems to have a cause and effect relationship.

Besides Weber (1947), Burns (1978), and Bass (1985), Bennis and Nanus (1985) and Kouzes and Posner (1987, 2007) also have researched aspects of transformational leadership. Bennis and Nanus asked leaders basic questions about their companies and leadership styles. They found that transformational leaders had a clear vision for their organization’s future, created a shared meaning for people in the company, created trust in the company, and, lastly, focused on strengths rather than personal weaknesses. These findings showed that companies had an overall more positive work atmosphere. Kouzes and Posner interviewed people about their best experiences as leaders. They created a model with the behaviors that were found to be most important: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. These concepts emphasize practices of leaders that help improve employee behaviors. Kouzes and Posner’s The Leadership Challenge will be discussed in depth in the next section.
Aside from the research mentioned above, there have been other lenses used to understand transactional and transformational approaches of leadership. For example, Blake and Mouton (1964, 1978, 1985) used ideas from these approaches of leadership as a foundation for their (Managerial) Leadership Grid. This grid uses intersecting axes to examine leaders concerned with achieving goals and leaders concerned with building relationships. Using a 9-point scale, a number of leadership styles are illustrated based on the level of concern attributed either to the task being completed or relationships being built. These styles include authority-compliance, country club management, impoverished management, middle-of-the-road management, and team management (Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1978, 1985). Blake and Mouton (1964, 1978, 1985) found that a significant point to this stylistic approach is that leaders behave a certain way based on the task level and relational level of the group. For example, a leader might be directive when completing a certain task, but then might also be more focused on relationship building at other times. The Leadership Grid can be used to understand how both dimensions of leadership work in varying circumstances. If Smith’s staff at KCDSG has trouble understanding the process of completing the task after initial training, then Smith will need to take a more directive approach that can be seen in transactional leadership. However, if Smith’s employees grasp concepts easily and are able to work without little direction, then she can take a more transformational approach, where she focuses more on building and strengthening relationships with her staff.

*The Leadership Challenge*

As mentioned previously, *The Leadership Challenge* is a leadership model that examines five key components to being a highly effective leader. Its creators, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner (2007) used transformational leadership as the basis for their studies. They sent out
questionnaires to thousands of people in a variety of occupations. The questions sought to understand what characteristics are associated with being the best kind of leader. Kouzes and Posner were not interested in interviewing known great leaders. Rather, they decided to interview employees from a variety of organizations to understand what employees defined as the best type of leader. Although the stories and experiences in their studies differed, the leaders considered to be the best possessed similar characteristics and qualities. These findings provided the data for arguments made in *The Leadership Challenge*. Highly influential and effective leaders model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) said the first practice of a great leader is to model the way. This idea maintains that great leaders provide an example for employees to follow. Leaders outline how employees should be treated and treat them accordingly. The best leaders also create goals for the company and employees. Because it can be difficult for employees to adjust and change or meet larger goals, leaders should set smaller goals to meet along the road to success. Kouzes and Posner believed this practice allows employees and managers to accomplish small victories while working to accomplish the big goals. People who model the way act as a mentor—a person that people can communicate with easily and comfortably. Essentially, employees need a leader that has the experience to lead the way and provide a path for growth and expansion. This leader acts as the shepherd that guides the sheep (employees) along the path to success.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), the best leaders also inspire a shared vision. That is, they believe in their company, mission, and communicate that great things come with great work. Kouzes and Posner found that leaders who have a vision for the future of their
company and industry are able to come together and rely on one another more. This vision allows the entire organization to come together and rely on one another. When leaders express their visions, they should offer the opportunity for employees to join in taking steps towards making the vision a reality. Vision sharing leaders create unique and innovative ideas for their companies and energetically inspire their employees to become a part of the vision.

The next practice outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2007) was challenging the process. This practice involves taking risks and stepping outside of a company's comfort zone. Leaders that challenge the process recognize the importance of being flexible and growing during times of change. They also understand that with taking risks come defeats along the way. Kouzes and Posner encourage leaders to remember that defeats should be taken as learning experiences, not total failures. When considering the task of creating a new department within an organization, the ability to adapt accordingly is highly important. For example, as social media networks continue to grow as a communication tool, it is important to take steps to welcome this change and take risks. As a leader and person willing to challenge the norm, the manager must be willing to take the initiative to create new ideas, practices, and goals. Although change is scary, companies have the ability to improve and expand in the industry if leaders of the company provide the initiative to do so.

Great leaders believe in the power of teamwork and synergy; they enable others to act. Organizations and businesses are comprised of individuals—all with unique qualities and strengths in their field. Recognizing these traits and utilizing them to the fullest is important for having a successful company. Leaders understand that an individual's unique attributes can make the organization more successful because everyone is using their talents to the fullest. Leaders that enable others to act will encourage and provide opportunities for people to grow as vital
elements to the industry. Sharing the goals and vision of the company and inspiring employees to utilize their best qualities is not only beneficial for each individual, but it is important for the success of the company and industry.

The final practice Kouzes and Posner (2007) identified in their studies is exemplary leaders encourage the heart. Great leaders care about their employees and recognize that they need to be rewarded for their hard work. Leaders that encourage the heart do so by celebrating the accomplishments of their workers. They communicated the impact employees have on the company. This practice encourages and motivates employees to continue their hard work. Great leaders inspire their employees so that they can inspire their customers. People who are continually shown negative treatment and behaviors lack the motivation and inspiration that is required to work hard and maintain customers. Encouraging the heart will satisfy leaders, employees, and clients. If Smith has trouble motivating or showing her staff the benefits of taking a risk and adding social media networks to KCDSG then she could easily utilize concepts from Kouzes and Posner.

By modeling the way through personally researching, using, and scanning social media, Smith can show her employees how to incorporate social media into KCDSG. Because KCDSG’s mission is very personal and works to provide a community of support for DS families, its employees also must share in the vision and believe in KSDSG’s purpose. In doing so, employees can motivate one another to be a part of the mission for which the organization strives. Through her actions, Smith can show her staff how to take on challenges and strive for a brighter future.
Concepts from Jim Collins’ *Good to Great*

American author and business consultant Jim Collins provided several leadership concepts throughout his book *Good to Great*. These concepts are universal ideas that can be followed by any organization. In order to assess what made a good company great, Collins (2001) and his research team searched for organizations that performed below others in their respective industries for 15 years, experienced a transition, and then outperformed the competition for 15 years. Collins’ explained that the transition period just before seeing excellent results was important for understanding what led these organizations to be successful. In all, Collins and his team found 11 companies that fit the specified criteria. Once selected, these companies were then studied in great length to determine what exactly took them from being below average to above excellence. In order to assess such progress, comparison groups were selected in the same industries as the good to great companies, one good to great company paired with one comparison company in each industry. This group allowed Collins and his team to evaluate companies that shared the same opportunities and similar resources when the transition occurred. A second comparison group, known as the “unsustained comparisons” was also established (Collins, 2001, p. 8). This group consisted of organizations that went from good to great for only a short period.

From their research, Collins (2001) and his team identified seven concepts that led companies to achieve great and lasting results: Level 5 Leader, followed by First who… then what, confront the brutal facts, the Hedgehog Concept, a culture of discipline, technology accelerators, and the flywheel and the doom loop (Collins, 2001, p. 12). The most important lessons to be learned from the good to great process are that a Level 5 leader, the right people,
facing the facts, discipline, accepting change as a reality, and slowly turning the flywheel are all important for reaching greatness. The main premise that was identified by Collins and his team was how those businesses labeled as “great” got through a rough industry transition that majorly affected the company. The ability to go beyond a potential breaking point was one of the biggest differences between the good and great companies. A major theme throughout the book focused on the type of leadership good to great companies had. Although it is not necessary to mention all of the concepts presented by Collins here, there are a few that have a beneficial presence when discussing approaches to leadership.

The main lesson learned from Level 5 leaders is that hard work, dedication, and the ability to take a leap of faith are necessary for truly being great. Level 5 leaders are not concerned with showing off their greatness; rather, they are humble and work hard behind-the-scenes to achieve success. They are not intimidated by the competition but rather have the desire to prove they are better by continual preparation and work. In short, Level 5 leaders have strong personal work ethics and willpower to reach established goals. As Collin (2001) explained, “…fully developed Level 5 leaders embody all five layers of the pyramid,” (p. 21). These layers include being a highly capable individual, contributing team member, competent manager, effective leader, and a Level 5 executive.

A few leaders mentioned in the book that possessed all five of the characteristics listed above include Darwin Smith of Kimberly-Clark, Colman Mockler of Gillette, Charles “Cork” Walgreen of Walgreens, and Admiral Jim Stockdale of the United States Navy. All of these men led with a humble heart and provided a profound example of stewardship. When faced with brutal realities and making hard decisions, they remained humble servants in order to lead their
organization to great accomplishments. For example, knowingly eccentric and down-to-earth Kimberly-Clark CEO Darwin Smith worked his way up the ranks. Smith often was scorned by those unfamiliar to him because he was so simple, and as Collins (2001) explained, found friendships with plumbers and electricians. Smith did not let the hype of his success change who he was at his core, a simple farm boy who loved the outdoors. Collins explained that such humbleness is a key characteristic of leaders who achieve Lever 5 leadership. Although a majority of leaders evaluated during the transition from good to great were seen as weak in their day, the opposite could not be truer. Such leaders are grounded and do not lose track of the vision simply because a little fame and fortune come along.

Another concept that takes a company from good to great is the ability to confront the brutal facts about the reality of a situation without losing faith. Although it might seem easier for Smith and her team to operate KCDSG as they always have, there comes a point where facing industry-wide change is necessary. Collins (2001) and his team found that the comparison companies (the mediocre to only good companies) often ignored when products/services were not meeting the demands of customers. These companies often fell below the great companies because while dreams crumbled, they refused to get up, dust off the failures, and keep going. The great companies, conversely, were able to lay the brutal facts out, assess the possible causes, and debate about the actions that could help change such a failing situation. Collins and his team identified four basic practices for allowing the truth to be heard and better understood when a company accepts that they may be less than perfect: lead with questions, not answers; engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion; conduct autopsies, without blame; and build “red-flag” mechanisms (p. 74-78).
When trying to assess what is causing a business to lose profit and customers, it is important to first ask questions—questions that might help leaders understand what specifically went wrong. When people use questions to understand the brutal reality of a situation, they do so to gain understanding. Leaders that ask questions want to better understand the opinions and insights of others to help formulate direction for the future. By engaging in dialogue and debate, leaders allow others to express areas of concern without being timid or worried about repercussions. When concerns are laid out and objections can progress, then an organization is able to set egos aside and really focus on the concerns of the organization. Doing so assists in getting through organizational storms and getting back on track towards meeting future goals. When leaders perform “organizational autopsies,” they are analyzing and assessing what exactly went wrong that caused the company to fail (Collins, 2001, p. 77). Here, there should be no blame, only realizing and accepting the facts of a situation. For example, if an idea that was supposed to be brilliant failed, then that reality needs to be analyzed but blame should not be placed on any one person. Collins (2001) said this method leads to a trusting environment where people will feel safe and comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings about organizational concepts. Finally, Build “red-flag” mechanisms is a concept that Collins identified as having information that cannot be ignored. He said that companies that are great have important information that cannot be ignored, and once this information is shared, people will jump at the opportunity to be involved in its progression.

Another theme throughout Good to Great is the role of technology. The book evaluates organizations that rose above the competition and made it through trying economic and industry times. As with most things in life, changing times bring the need to adapt and react to advancements. The role of technology is one that can either make or break an industry. Collins
(2001) explained that technology should be used to enhance a product or service but should only be used after much assessment. He identified several competitor companies that jumped quickly when new technology became available. Rather than really analyzing how the technology could make an already sturdy organization better, these companies simply jumped. Great companies, conversely, researched and anticipated how technology would accelerate current business endeavors rather than simply hoping technology would bring success.

Level 5 leaders must anticipate possible change and how that change can help advance a business. Collins (2001) explained that technology alone should not be seen as an agent of change. Rather, technology should be incorporated into an organization to make an already great concept even better. Here, the Hedgehog Concept becomes important. Collins identified the Hedgehog Concept as the coming together of three specific intertwined circles: an area of being the best at, understanding what drives the economic engine, and discovering an area of great passion (p. 96). In the center, where all three concepts meet, is where a leader will find a great idea. Collins explained that organizations should not go outside of the three circles simply because a new technology has been created. Rather, leaders should assess their company’s Hedgehog Concept and identify areas where technology can be used to accelerate great ideas inside these circles. Proper assessment and time are necessary for really preparing for such advancements. This was evident in comparison companies such as VisiCalc, Lotus 1-2-3, and Osborne (Collins, 2001, p. 158). Collins explained that these companies were the first major industries in their fields but are virtually unheard of today. The main reason they are unknown is because they jumped too fast at the idea of technology and quickly failed—leaving their initial ideas to become great by companies like IMB, Dell, and Sony.
Collins (2001) identified a final theme called the Flywheel and Doomloop. To understand these concepts, Collins explained that the great companies identified in *Good to Great* possessed all of the concepts mentioned throughout this assessment. With these concepts in place, it then becomes very simple to steadily turn the “flywheel” toward success. Here, organizations understand what needs to be done to achieve greatness and they simply do it. By slowly, but continually, turning this wheel toward greatness, the companies remained consistent. This consistency eventually led to great success. Where some companies try to jump in and quickly achieve success, those who take the Flywheel approach are well-prepared, informed, and simply make it to the point where success will be inevitable. In this approach, an organization sticks to the three circles of the Hedgehog Concept while turning the Flywheel. Those companies that do jump in too quickly will eventually face the Doomloop, where a plan is started but then changed and restarted. Situations like this only lead to failure because of inconsistent and ill-prepared planning. Comparison companies identified in *Good to Great* overwhelmingly faced the Doomloop because they did not stick to the plan.

A large number of organizations do end up on the Doomloop route to failure. This is primarily because the themes identified by Collins (2001) and his team were not taken. For example, a leader that lacks passion cannot instill passion into the culture or employees of an organization. An inability to do this creates unmotivated people who do not follow a properly prepared and assessed Hedgehog Concept. Without a properly followed (and prepared) Hedgehog Concept, organizations often jump at technological advances prematurely hoping that a new advancement will help their organization “take off.” In most cases, however, these actions will only further harm a less than great company. Organizations that lack the concepts mentioned throughout the book inevitably will lead to either good companies that are unable to reach
greatness or companies that will continue to fail in an industry. Either way, the Doomloop is a dangerous route for organizations. Each component presented in *Good to Great* is needed to reach true greatness, as identified by Collins and his team. The Flywheel is the next natural step to take when the concepts identified by Collins are in place properly.

All of the themes presented in this book can be used to build a lasting company. Although it might seem difficult to achieve greatness in an organization, the truth is that greatness is not that much harder than achieving “good.” The main problem with an organization failing to become great is they simply settle for being good in an industry. Collins (2001) explained that “Good is the enemy of great,” (p. 1). In this, he explains that in society we have “good” things that prevent us from having “great” things. In order to achieve greatness, the shift of expectations needs to shift from good to great.

Organizations should always strive for greatness because without such a goal a company will stop advancing. As Collins (2001) pointed out, “good is the enemy of great,” mostly because it tends to breed contentment, which leads to mediocrity (p. 1). When a business or any organization stops advancing then it will ultimately face the Doomloop. Therefore, businesses should strive always to be better and achieve greatness. If Smith hopes to achieve success with the addition of social media at KCDSG, she could apply concepts presented by Collins (2001) in *Good to Great*. Through actions of stewardship, Smith can lead her employees with a level 5 leadership approach. She could also follow Collins’ (2001) insight about incorporating technology into an already established and well-prepared plan. Once KCDSG understands and accepts the role of social media in the organization then it can get back on track with the original goal and plan of helping provide a community of support for DS families. Smith can easily use
this advancement as a tool for assisting KCDSG and DS families rather than as a way to simply save or change the company.

Situational Leadership

The majority of the leadership approaches mentioned in this section focus on overarching, universally linear concepts. Often such approaches seem to ignore that in any given organization the people within the organization, the experiences, the development, and the task-related processes vary significantly. Because this is true, leaders often struggle to follow and maintain just one leadership approach. For example, trying to use a transformational approach on an ill-experienced group of individuals could prove detrimental to the overall success of the group as well as the task at hand. One leadership approach that attempts to recognize that professional tasks, leaders, and followers vary significantly and are based solely on the situation of a given circumstance is Situational Leadership presented by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard (1982).

The situational approach of leading looks at both the direction and support leaders provide to employees. In doing so, Hersey and Blanchard (1982) explained that the style of leadership needed for successful organizational operations depends on the situation at hand. Different situations require different approaches to leadership. Before a leader can adapt best to his or her employees, the task and nature of the situation must be considered. Hersey and Blanchard said that once a leader understands what needs to be accomplished and how complex this task is, then he or she can assess employees. From here leaders can match and modify a style of leadership to best meet the needs of employees. Rather than using one specific type of leadership style for all occasions, Hersey and Blanchard argued that leaders must recognize that
the style of leadership used will alter and adapt depending on the task to be accomplished and also the level of experience of the employees. Specifically, the competence and commitment of employees must be considered when deciding the type of leadership to be used to complete a task. In order to meet the changing needs of their employees, successful leaders will match a leadership style to the needs in focus.

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) divided the situational leadership approach into two categories. The first category focuses on four leadership styles, while the second category looks at the development levels of employees. By considering both, leaders can make the best decision when leading a group to complete a task. Hersey and Blanchard explained leadership styles as high directive-low supportive, high directive-high supportive, high supportive- low directive, and low supportive-low directive. The high directive-low supportive style, abbreviated as S1, focuses on achieving an intended goal while providing very little support to employees. Here, precise directions to complete a task are essential for accomplishing a goal. Typically, supervision is fairly rigid because it is likely that employees have little experience with the task. Therefore, leaders are more concerned with directing rather than building relationships with employees.

The second type of style presented by Hersey and Blanchard (1982) is high directive-high supportive, or S2. The term “coaching” is commonly associated with this approach to leadership because leaders focus on both the task being accomplished and emotional support. Hersey and Blanchard explained that followers provide input for best completing a task; however, the leader is still very much in charge, providing necessary guidance to how the task will ultimately be completed. One might consider the relationship between an athlete and coach when thinking about S2.
High supportive-low directive, S3, is the third style of leadership in the situational approach. This approach is similar to transformational leaders. In this style, employees are encouraged to use individual skills and talents to complete tasks. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) found that listening, words of encouragement, and positive feedback are all necessary for employee success. High levels of autonomy are incorporated in order to provide employees with the freedom to complete daily tasks. Leaders that use the S3 approach value creative, free thinkers; therefore, little structured guidance is used to accomplish activities.

The final situational leadership style provided by Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) research is low supportive-low directive, S4. This style is known as “delegating.” With this approach, leaders have very little focus on supporting or directing employees. Rather leaders trust employees to make decisions about tasks to be accomplished and allow them to decide how such tasks will be completed. A delegating leader intervenes very little and has very little influence on employees. In order to use S4 successfully, employees must be highly trained in their professional field. If employees are not fully experienced, then such a leadership style could be problematic to the success of an organization.

The second category, which was further developed by Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Zigarmi (1985), identified the different levels of development for employees. Again, the development of employees considers the competence and commitment necessary to complete a given task. Leaders must consider whether or not employees have low or high levels of experience with a given task and whether or not they are motivated to get a job done. By considering the developmental level of employees, leaders can then match a style of leadership to best meet the needs of employees and complete a task. Blanchard et al. (1985) explained that people with high
development are interested in and confident about a task to be completed. Individuals with low development have little skills, but are motivated and confident about completing a task. As mentioned above, workplace atmospheres, expertise, and motivation all vary depending on a given situation. Understanding the developmental skills of employees is necessary for leaders to do.

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) and Blanchard et al. (1985) broke the development levels into four groups. Newer employees can usually be found in the low competence-high commitment, D1 group. Here employees are willing and able to complete a task but may have little to no knowledge about how to complete a task. The second group identified by researchers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Blanchard, Zigarmi, Zigarmi, 1985), included employees that have started to learn how to complete a task but have lost motivation or excitement to actually finish the task. This grouping is called D2, some competence- low commitment. In this group, employees might have transferred to a new section within an organization and became bored trying to complete a task. Employees that are nervous about completing tasks alone are found in D3, high competence- low commitment. These individuals possess the skills needed to complete a task, however, lack the confidence or motivation to complete the task alone. Such employees might prefer working in groups or as a team. Finally, D4, high competence-high commitment includes employees well-versed in completing a task and also possess a strong level of motivation. In a professional setting these employees are ideal for finishing tasks.

Recent research concludes that Hersey and Blanchard’s situational leadership approach is practical in a variety of professions and industries. For example, Vecchio, Bullis, and Brazil conducted a study looking at situational leadership in military settings. Despite preconceived
notions of the leadership style of choice for military professionals, in the end, traits of situational leadership seemed to be used and accepted by both military leaders and subordinates. Farmer (2005) also found that Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) approach can be useful in both traditional and nontraditional workplace interactions. In her research, Farmer looked at the leadership styles necessary for health care professionals that use online resources to communicate with employees. Her results confirmed that assessing the development of employees as well as the tasks to be accomplished is necessary when determining the type of leadership approach to take in a given situation.

In *Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations*, Dym and Hutson’s (2005) explained that the situational approach to leadership is effective in nonprofit organizations because it can be learned and then practiced by leaders. Because nonprofit organizations often have employees and volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and professions, it is important to be able to learn concepts to manage people with differing skills, experiences, and personalities. Lastly, the situational leadership approach can be found in a number of leadership training techniques. The Center for Learning Studies is an organization that provides training seminars for businesses in order to teach individuals to lead effectively. It focuses solely on Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) concepts and applies them to real-world settings in actual businesses. As depicted above, the situational approach to leadership can be incorporated into a variety of professions and organizations. This approach can be learned and further developed by leaders, making it valuable for leaders to use.

Leaders that follow the situational approach understand that employees vary in competence and motivation levels for different tasks and at different times. Because this is true,
such leaders strategically modify leadership styles to match employee developmental levels. For example, if Smith, from KCDSG, has college interns work in her social media department, it is likely they will be younger and have little professional experience. Although these interns might lack experience, it is likely that they will possess high levels of motivation and commitment. In order to effectively lead such a grouping of people, Smith would probably use high directive-low supportive approaches to leading. In doing so, she would provide the necessary guidance and instructions for completing a task. Because this group of people is committed, Smith would not need to spend time motivating individuals as much as she might with others. As the situational approach suggests, each situation is met with its own variables; therefore, recognizing the need for flexibility is key for using the situational approach to leadership successfully. Another example might include a group of individuals who have little experience and high commitment, but worked in an environment that offered low to no wages. In such a situation, leaders would need to incorporate these variables into the leadership style selected. In this situation, Smith might decide to use more of a coaching approach to leadership. She would provide the guidance necessary for completing a task with little initial training while also providing an emotionally supportive atmosphere. Such flexibility and understanding of the styles presented in the situational approach are necessary factors for effective leaders.

Recommendations

Penelope Smith’s goal for KCDSG is to build a stronger, more constant communication between DS families and friends. In order to do this, she wants to improve KCDSG’s social media outlets. Smith wants KCDSG to operate more locally through the Kansas City area rather than in just downtown Kansas City. By using Facebook, Twitter, and community blogs, DS
families can stay connected more easily and regularly. The inclusion of social media can also strengthen and expand the volunteer and donor support for KCDSG. This support allows DS families more opportunities to interact. In order to see this plan through, Smith must not only guide the DS community but also guide her own staff and organization through the transition. In order to guide her staff, Smith will need to adopt a situational approach of leadership.

As explained in the previous section, the situational approach offers a realistic outlook of behaviors that leaders are likely to encounter. The approach then offers direction on how to adapt to certain variables in given situations. Leaders following this approach strive to understand their staff at the individual level by considering specific variables such as personality traits, professional experience and development, and also the tasks to be completed. Because such variables are unavoidable, it becomes necessary to assess and adapt to each situation on a case-by-case basis. Leaders do so by matching the best leadership style to the needs of employees. Smith can easily use the situational approach to leadership during the transition of including social media into KCDSG. She can also continue to use this approach as the organization changes as a result of incorporating social media networks. Because her situation comes with a number of variables, this approach will suit the circumstances appropriately and offer Smith guidance for effectively communicating, directing, and interacting with her staff.

One of the most beneficial aspects of using the situational approach to leadership is that leaders use a flexible style of directing and guiding employees. Leaders consider the variables involved in leading certain people in specific situations. With that in mind, leaders can incorporate aspects of other leadership approaches into a given leadership style. For example, while using guidelines of the situational leadership approach, Smith can use concepts from
transformational and transactional leadership, *The Leadership Challenge*, and *Good to Great*. Concepts presented by the researchers of the latter approaches appear, at times, to be linear where if X occurs then Y will automatically follow. Because communication and human beings are nonlinear, such tactics do not always adapt to different situations or leaders. However, when looking at leadership from the situational perspective, leaders can use aspects of more linear ideas in conjunction with the situational approach (when considering style and development levels). Doing so allows leaders to tailor their leadership style to fit necessary conditions.

Given the situation Smith faces with two experienced KCDSG employees, hiring a new paid employee, and the inclusion a college interns, she will have to be highly flexible in the direction she provides. Although Janis and Mary have been with KCDSG for a number of years, they still lack experience with using social media. Janis and Mary are aware of the change that will occur in order to use social media at KCDSG. Although Janis is excited about the new direction the organization is going, Mary is a bit apprehensive about what social media will do for KCDSG. As mentioned in the case study, she worries this new addition will take away from the success of other programs offered by the organization. Because of this hesitation, Smith will have to be cautious but firm when training Mary. As identified by Hersey and Blanchard (1982), Smith might consider using the high directive-high supportive (S2) approach when training Janis and Mary about using social media at KCDSG. Although they do have experience in promoting and marketing the organization in the traditional sense, they lack experience using social media as a promotional tool. This style would also be beneficial because Smith will need to foster her relationships with Janis and Mary during the change that their once small department is facing. As more people are added to the department, Janis and Mary still need to feel like they are a part of the communication department and that Smith still supports and appreciates their hard work.
Smith will also benefit from using this same coaching style (high directive-high supportive, S2) when approaching the new hire and college interns. Although her younger staff might have more knowledge and experience using social media, they will lack experience working at KCDSG and in a professional setting. Therefore, Smith will need to provide adequate direction for working at a nonprofit organization like KCDSG. In her direction, Smith will need to instill the vision and goals of the organization with her inexperienced staff but will also need to establish a relationship with them. It is crucial for Smith to build a relationship with her new hire and college interns because the wages being earned are little to none. She recognizes that unless the staff understands and feels the importance of their work, she will have little to motivate them with when stressful situations arise.

In order to prepare and adapt her leadership approach to the specific staff members, Smith should consider using the four developmental levels that were also presented by Hersey and Blanchard (1982) in the situational leadership approach. As mentioned above, the developmental and experience levels vary among Smith’s staff. For example, Janis has years of experience as a media relations consultant. Although her experience is valuable, she lacks the necessary skills for using Facebook, Twitter, and blogs at KCDSG. Despite being older and comfortable with more traditional communication tools, Janis is excited about what social media can do for KCDSG and DS families. Hersey and Blanchard would classify Janis as having low competence-high commitment (D1). Janis is willing to work hard to meet the end result; however, she will need training and guidance in getting there. Smith will have to be patient while assisting Janis through this transitional process. She will want to foster her relationship with Janis and approach the training with care as to not belittle Janis. The new hire and college interns will most likely fit into this category as well. It is possible that the new hire and college interns
will have a greater understanding of using social media than Janis; however, their knowledge will still be limited. Because this is true, Smith will have to adapt her approach slightly when working with her younger staff. She may not have to be as technical with them but will still need to provide training for incorporating social media into KCDSG. Also as Hersey and Blanchard explained, newer employees have a higher level of commitment and motivation to complete tasks. This aspect will be beneficial for Smith when it comes to working with her new hire and college interns because they are excited to get involved and complete tasks.

It is likely that Smith will have to work harder to motivate Mary. Mary is apprehensive about including social media into KCDSG because the current programs are successful with traditional promotional and marketing efforts. Mary thinks social media will take away from the successful events and worries this will hurt DS families in the long run. Although she respects Smith and wants the best for KCDSG, Mary cannot help but see social media as an unnecessary endeavor for the organization. Because Smith is aware of Mary’s feelings, she will have to approach Mary a little differently than Janis and the new staff. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) would classify Mary as low-to-some competence-low commitment (D2). Smith will have to show Mary the importance and relevance of social media. She will also have to direct and train her the same as she would the other staff. One way Smith might further motivate Mary is by deepening their relationship, encouraging Mary more, and showing her that social media is necessary for KCDSG.

With Smith using the situational approach of leadership as a foundation for guiding her staff and organization through this transition, she can also incorporate aspects of transformational and transactional leadership into her style. Smith is a natural leader, firm, and
values teamwork. At times she does forget about the importance of building and nurturing relationships. She works very closely with Janis and Mary and they have established a good relationship. As her department faces a great deal of change, Smith will need to stay committed to maintaining her interpersonal relationships and strengthening new ones. As mentioned above, wages are limited in her department; therefore, Smith has to build and maintain close relationships with her direct staff, staff from other departments, her boss, and board of directors, volunteers, sponsors, and DS families in the community. These relationships are essential for promoting and marketing KCDSG events. Smith can also work to build these relationships using Facebook, Twitter, and the community blogs. Because this is the focus of adding social media to KCDSG, Smith can strive to strengthen the organization’s virtual communication. By empowering others to be a part of the vision at KCDSG, Smith raises morale and people can become even more connected using social media to make the vision a reality for DS. In so doing, she can consider concepts from transformational leadership. For example, Smith can encourage her staff to utilize their individual talents and creativity more, share personal insights about the progress of social media at KCDSG, and provide a more family-like atmosphere. KCDSG strives to provide a supportive environment for DS families; therefore, Smith can incorporate this vision into her own department.

While strengthening relationships is a crucial element for KCDSG’s success, Smith is still the leader of her department and her staff still looks to her for guidance and direction. This necessary guidance is especially needed during transition within the organization. For example, if staff members were unwilling to learn about using social media at KCDSG, then Smith would have to respond to such a situation. She would have to address such behaviors and, as the leader, provide feedback. Smith could use concepts from transactional leadership in order to adapt her
situational approach more effectively to her staff. Despite building relationships, there is still a task at hand that has to be accomplished. A leader must juggle both and communicate efficiently through the multiple variables presented in a given situation. Utilizing concepts from various leadership approaches can enable leaders to take hold of their position and reach success.

Smith might also consider concepts from *The Leadership Challenge* when communicating with her staff and organization about incorporating social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and community blogs into KCDSG. Because more and more nonprofit organizations are adopting social media networks as marketing and promotions tools, it becomes necessary for Smith to guide KCDSG into this transition confidently. As Kouzes and Posner (1987, 2007) explained, leaders need to model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Each of these concepts occurs through effective communication. For Smith, where a coaching style of leadership will be used, modeling the way means setting an example for her staff to follow. As Smith specifically considers guiding Janis through the transition of incorporating social media into KCDSG, it becomes crucial to model how social media will be used effectively to reach DS families in Missouri communities. By showing her team how social media will work, Smith can address any confusion or concern early on. The nature of KCDSG is one that requires dedication and a helping heart. Because this is of utmost importance, Smith will have to inspire her staff to not only care about the events and information they produce but to care about the people they interact with, both in person and online. By working closely as a team, Smith and her staff can develop the vision and eliminate confusion through proper channels of communication. Once Smith and her staff become more comfortable using social media at KCDSG, then she can give her team more freedom to take on creative projects and explore areas of improving social media as a communication tool. Although
this will take time to reach, Smith can consider *The Leadership Challenge* when trying to encourage and challenge her staff to strive for the best.

Smith can also use concepts from Collins’ (2001) *Good to Great*. Collins and his team explained that organizations that jump into technological advancements often fail quickly. Conversely, he said that organizations that incorporate technology into a well-establish and thought out plan are more likely to succeed than organizations that use technology to get ahead. Smith, using the clearly established goals and vision of KCDSG, wants to use social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and community blogs to enhance her organization. Her goal is to make resources and support more readily available to DS families. Using social media is one way to accomplish the vision of KCDSG effectively. However, if Smith ignores social media then it is likely that KCDSG will fall behind other nonprofit organizations and DS families will suffer. In order to avoid this, Smith can incorporate lessons from Collins to avoid the Doomloop, or a quick failure. In considering Collin’s Flywheel approach, Smith can easily turn the wheel towards success in her organization. One step at a time, she can achieve her goal of using social media networks to create a more active and consistent DS community. The first step was considering the idea of social media at KCDSG; the next step is then implementing this idea, and making it a reality for DS families. Smith can also consider the inspirational stories of level 5 leaders. She can strive to be a level 5 leader, one who works hard, refuses to give up, and always respects her staff.

As identified in the previous section, the situational approach can be used in different industries guided by different leaders. This idea makes Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) concepts ideal for leaders to follow. Leaders can assess the experience and development of employees,
evaluate the task to be completed, and determine the best way to go about meeting the needs of employees. Although this approach can be used by leaders in a given industry, it is most successful when also incorporating aspects of other leadership approaches. Again, including different concepts to tailor a style to fit a specific group of employees in a given situation will provide the most beneficial leadership experience.
Conclusion

No matter what industry or organization, the need for understanding clear communication during times of change is necessary. This communication is best received when coming from a leader with a flexible leadership style. Such leaders recognize and understand that leading a group of people must be done by considering the individuals that make up the group and the varying situations they encounter. This leader also works hard to match his or her leadership style to the needs of employees. By doing so, a leader can reach employees better and assist them when faced with uncertainties brought on by change. Hersey and Blanchard’s (1982) situational approach to leadership offers the best outlook for leaders to follow while facing and responding to change. The approach offers a realistic experience for guiding employees through uncertainties while allowing leaders to incorporate various leadership approaches. When looking at leadership from a situational approach, individual leaders can adapt their style to reach employee needs and accomplish work-place tasks most effectively. Because this is true, the situational leadership approach is ideal for Penelope Smith and others in an industry experiencing change.

Leaders spend approximately 70 to 90 percent of their day communicating; therefore, without communication individuals cannot lead (Barrett, 2006; Eccles & Nohria, 1991; Mintzberg, 1973). Industry-wide change brings stress and uncertainties to the dynamics of an organization. Because this is true, employees rely on leaders to provide guidance and direction. As more organizations continue to turn to social media networks as a tool for advertising, marketing, and public relations it becomes necessary for organizations to have leaders who are confident in communicating the advantages of social media. It is also important for leaders to
take the circumstances of change and use them as an opportunity to meet the needs of employees best. Doing so will ensure a bright outcome and survival in an industry.
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