

Could Chris Hadfield have led the Israelites out of Egypt? Could Moses have commanded the ISS?

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Two world-changing events in history; two key historical leaders. In one event, after 430 years of bitter enslavement in Egypt, through the guidance and divine hand of G-d¹, Moses orchestrated the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery to become a self-determined free nation. In the other event, after a lifetime of training and preparation, Canadian astronaut Colonel Chris Hadfield commanded the International Space Station. Cmdr. Hadfield's appointment not only advanced Canada's and the international space program, but his public outreach integrated space exploration into the mass population's mindset and imagination ("Forbes Welcome", 2017). Could each of these leaders have achieved the others' success, or were their individual leadership styles unique to their particular accomplishments?

By examining some leadership actions of these two leaders, at their respective points in history and in the context of two leadership theories: Situational Leadership and Transformational Leadership, this paper will endeavor to answer the opening questions: Could Chris Hadfield have led the Israelites out of Egypt? Could Moses have commanded the ISS?

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership describes a model in which leaders adapt their approach to leading based on their followers' readiness for engaging in a variety of tasks (Blanchard, Zigarmi and Nelson, 2016). It requires a leader's astute awareness of the level of capability, both tangibly and emotionally, of their employee, follower or group being led. It requires the ability to match management method to follower's level of development in

¹ According to Jewish law, the name of the Almighty cannot be written in full form in any text that may be destroyed, deleted or otherwise erased; thus, outside of holy texts, which, when necessary, are disposed of through burial in accordance with Jewish law, the Name is represented as G-d rather than fully spelled out.

order to move followers towards success and up the ladder of their own leadership abilities. For example, a “newbie” to a certain task will not be successful if the direction they receive is too broad and lacking specific guidance. In a simple analogy, do not send a first-year law student into a complex trial and expect a win. Conversely, an independent experienced follower who, though pragmatically able to complete “newbie” tasks, will not be engaged nor fulfilled and will likely swing towards resentment, if not underperformance, if micro-managed.

Situational leadership focuses on identifying one of four task-specific developmental (**D**) levels of team members, namely, in increasing levels of performance outcome: **D1** - low competence and high commitment; **D2** - low competence and low commitment; **D3** - high competence and low or variable commitment; and **D4** - high competence and high commitment (See Figure 1).

Within this leadership style construct, successful leaders match those developmental levels with one of four appropriate task-specific leadership or supervisory (**S**) styles, namely: **S1 - Directing**, in which the leader defines the roles of the individual or group and provides detailed direction on the steps to task completion; **S2 - Coaching**, where a leader, while still providing direction, at the same times allows some autonomy in the details of how to complete a task; **S3 - Supporting** a follower in making their own decisions about how to complete a task; and **S4 - Delegating** or passing the responsibility of the task fully to the follower while stepping back to a monitoring role (Blanchard, Zigarmi and Nelson, 2016) (See Figure 1).

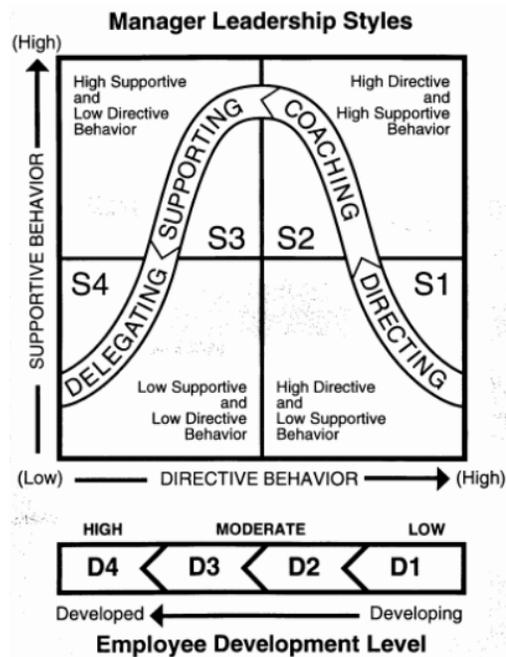


Figure 1. Citation: Situational Leadership® After 25 Years: A Retrospective. Kenneth H. Blanchard, Drea Zigarmi, Robert B. Nelson. Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies. Vol 1, Issue 1, pp. 21 – 36. First published date: September-14- 2016

So, faced with a new task, an individual may initially be highly committed to completing it although have little skill or knowledge of what is required to achieve success. Through clear and detailed direction from a leader, that individual will begin to gain competency but at the same time may experience varying levels of confidence as they become more aware of what they don't know and the difficult road to achievement. Ultimately, when the individual is fully capable of successful task execution, the leader can adopt a delegating management style propelling their team member into a position of high commitment and competence. Imagine, though, the converse: an S4 leader assigning a project to a D1 learner, and the consequence is understandably one of a low-performing follower and a frustrated, unaccomplished leader. Similarly with an S1 leader who charges a D4 follower with a task, complete with all the details of how to go about accomplishing each step: the result, a disengaged staff member and a frustrated leader/follower relationship.

Through the effective application of situational leadership's principles, leaders enable individuals to move along the continuum of the four developmental levels through a descriptive pattern of gaining competence and

increasing commitment (though not always in a clear linear pattern as the balance of confidence and commitment fluctuates until inevitably reaching high levels of both in the D4 stage.)

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is concerned with providing motivation and inspiration to lead people to high performance with a shared vision and mission. A transformational leader begins as a role model and through establishing connections with employees/followers and understanding their needs, helps them reach their full potential, contributing, ultimately, to good outcomes for the organization or group as a whole (Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010, p.495).

There are two views of transformational leadership in research literature, that differ in their assumption of whether or not the goal, or vision, of the group pre-exists the completion of group tasks, or whether that goal grows out of the activity of the group (Salem, 2015 for the former vs Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010 for the latter). Regardless of the interpretation, however, because this model is more visionary than other leadership theories, it necessarily involves an aspect of ethics and morality and is concerned not just with the final outcome, but how a group gets there. Six common characteristics of transformational leaders are described by Fitzgerald & Schutte (2010, p.496):

- 1) the ability to identify and articulate a vision to a follower or group;
- 2) acting as a role model;
- 3) fostering the groups' acceptance of organizational goals;
- 4) fostering internalization of the organizational goals;
- 5) the ability to communicate high performance expectations and provide individualized support; and
- 6) the presence of a high level of charisma.

Like situational leaders, transformational leaders work not just toward the attainment of goals but are concerned with moving their followers toward the followers' own potential capacities for leadership.

One might think, because of the inclusion of ethics, morality, vision and charisma in the Transformational Leadership theory, that these are born leaders. Either one is charismatic, or they are dullards; they are naturally ethical, moral people, or lack a certain moral backbone. However, research suggests that, in fact, the skills necessary to be a transformational leader can be learned, and that training programs help leaders develop the ability to influence and inspire others through vision, motivation, modelling and attention to individual needs (Green, 2013).

How do you Influence a Despot and Deliver a Nation?

Throughout the story of the Israelites exodus from Egypt, we see the enactment of the characteristics of a transformational leader through Moses' actions. Moses was born to slaves, raised by his people's enslaver to become a national leader, rejected his assumed destiny because of his own moral imperative, and was ultimately then chosen by G-d to lead his own people out of slavery and into nationhood. He was initially a reluctant follower, arguing with G-d "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and take the children of Israel out of Egypt? (Exodus 3:11)". In fact, the biblical commentator Rabbi Shlomo Yitchaki (Rashi, 1040-1105) expounds that Moses' arguments were threefold: he considered himself lacking in skill for this mission; he was convinced that neither Pharaoh nor the Israelites would believe that his mission was of divine origin; and that the slave nation had not yet done anything to earn G-d's intervention. Moses Maimonides (Rambam, 1135-1204) further posits that over the course of a lengthy dialogue with Moses, G-d would tell him that Pharaoh would, indeed, not initially heed Moses' message and that Pharaoh's disdain would cause the Israelites to dismiss Moses' claim as an emissary on a divine mission. Moses thus had to evaluate his own suitability for the task, and initially found himself lacking. Nevertheless, with the support, encouragement and, ultimately, command of G-d to lead this mission, Moses stepped up, and his first action as a new leader was to return to his community, from which he had fled after an altercation with Egyptian taskmasters that had left him a wanted man. In enactment of transformational leader characteristic #2 above, acting as a role model, Moses took his wife and child with him in order to (according to Rambam) demonstrate his confidence, if not in his own ability, in his assuredness of G-d's protection and commitment to the mission, even in the face of his doubts about his own suitability. He mustered the confidence to model what he inherently knew as the right course of action. He became a leader to the people while remaining

a follower of G-d.

As the story of the exodus unfolds, and the biblical plagues serve only to make Pharaoh a more resolute despot and bear down on the Israelites with ever-increasing hardship, Moses is faced with the difficult task of keeping his followers engaged with the vision of ultimate freedom and mindful of the goal towards which they are moving, exemplifying transformational leader characteristics #3 and #4. Throughout this early part of the exodus story, Moses recognized the necessity of reiterating the vision, in other words, continually and consistently communicating the strategic goal to his team, and that modelling faith in G-d was key to staying on-task. Eventually, when Pharaoh capitulated and ordered the Israelites out of Egypt, the real work of nation-building began. Now it was not just incumbent on the people to listen and heed Moses, but they needed to take action themselves. On the eve of the exodus, G-d instructed Moses to speak to the people and give them a complicated set of instructions in preparation for their impending flight. For the first time in Torah scripture, G-d refers to the people as “Adat” – an assembly or congregation. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in his commentary on Exodus 12:3 posits that the use of this term implies that these commandments for communal action serve to usher in the new era of the Israelites as a nation. No longer were they observers, but they were intricately engaged with their fate and the realization of the communal goal.

Moses' final step to delivering the Israelites to nationhood was to recognize the individual leadership capabilities of his followers and provide them with opportunities at leadership. During their lengthy stay in the Sinai desert, as one generation of followers who had only known slavery died out and made way for a new generation of followers born into freedom, Moses found himself increasingly unable to provide the individual attention that this new nation of inquisitive, questioning and self-determining followers required. So, on the advice of his most trusted followers who cautioned Moses that to continue as he was would risk both him and the people becoming disengaged – “The thing that you do is not good. You will surely become worn out – you as well as the people who are with you” (Moses' father-in-law Jethro in Exodus 18:17), he appointed a judiciary to form a hierarchy of leadership. He “discerned from among the entire people, men of accomplishment, G-d-fearing people....” and appointed them “leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties and leaders of ten” (Exodus 18:21), reserving his own direct leadership for the most major matters. In other words, he devised a way to enact transformational leader characteristic #4, providing individualized support, even if he could not, pragmatically, do it himself.

What Does it Take to Command a Space Station?

Juxtaposed to Moses enactment of transformational leadership, Cmdr. Chris Hadfield's leadership style, as described in his book *An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth* (2015) typifies that of a situational leader. Chris Hadfield was not born into privilege nor groomed or divinely chosen for leadership. Instead, at an early age while growing up on a corn farm in southern Ontario, he developed an end-goal – to become an astronaut - and a strategic plan for getting there. It involved laser-focused commitment to that goal, hard work and a little good fortune. In his book Hadfield (2015) describes many of the challenges and learning stages on his road to leadership, and his pinnacle role (to date) as commander of the International Space Station (ISS) from December, 2012 through May, 2013.

Hadfield's leadership acumen was evident from the time he was first training for inclusion in space flights. He relates several stories of times during which, as part of a group exercise, he recognized the group's need for leadership and assumed the role. In one such instance, while on a mission to traverse some difficult terrain with a group of trainees and being faced with a steep cliff with no obvious path for descent, Hadfield formulated a possible plan for success. But he understood that the other team members, not seeing the plan clearly for themselves, would be unable to push forward with the climb. Rather than simply telling his group members to proceed with the descent, Hadfield first ventured out himself, plotted the route and tactics required, then returned to his group and guided them step-by-step to the bottom of the cliff. He recognized that, in this particular task, though undoubtedly committed to its achievement, his colleagues lacked the skill to proceed (they were D1s on the situational leadership matrix) and that if he could, in this instance, meet them as an S1, namely by providing them specific step-by-step (literally) instructions, they would all achieve the goal (Hadfield, 2015, p.105).

Throughout his training and early years in the space program and command of the ISS, a commitment to investing in the success of his colleagues and eventually the crew members he commanded was evidenced in the ways Hadfield worked and led. In his book Hadfield explains his own theory of the importance of knowing when to be "a plus-one or a zero" (Hadfield, 2015, p.185) – akin to knowing where to intentionally put yourself

on the situation leadership developmental and management spectrum. This intentional placement is a departure from classical situational leadership theory, necessitated by the fact that by the time a group of astronauts comes together in a space program, whether in a “routine” space flight or the ISS, there’s not much question as to the baseline skill and commitment of all the group members. What’s important to Hadfield to be cognizant of is what level of engagement any particular task or circumstance requires of each participant. Sometime it is being a “plus-one” and adding value to the team, and sometimes it is being a “zero” and just not messing anything up. Hadfield practiced this theory when first arriving at the ISS. He knew that the development level of the crew already there had to be a D4, and his job, at least initially, was to be a zero – or an S4: no-one needed him to tell them what to do or how to do it, so the best way he could lead was to let them get on with it, monitor and try not to interfere in any way that would cause disruption. In his words, the ideal entry for a leader is to “ingress without making a ripple” (Hadfield, 2015, p.185), a reference to entering the space capsule without bumping into and destroying the experimental work that has happened before you arrived.

One additional illustration of Hadfield’s adoption of situation leadership occurred near the last days of his command of the ISS when a leak was discovered on the exterior of the space station, requiring an unscheduled space-walk to investigate and repair. The decision of who was to make the walk occurred in the chain of command above Chris Hadfield, and two of his crew, but not himself, were given the task. Despite his own disappointment in not being selected for one final space-walk – potentially and likely the last of his career, he described his thought process from wanting to express his envy to his chosen crew members to realizing that they were selected because of their particular skill, and that what he needed to do at that moment was simply to “lead, direct, be involved and assume responsibility for the crew mates on the walk while at the same time to detach and let them do their jobs properly, while sharing in the risk and reward” (Hadfield, 2015, p.238).

Could Colonel Hadfield and Moses Have Changed Places?

While both situational leadership and transformational leadership theories assert that the leadership skills required to effectively work within the respective models can be learned, the two theories have significantly different applications. And both Chris Hadfield and Moses were particularly suited to apply their particular leadership style to the situation in which they were appointed for leadership. Should Hadfield have applied a transformational leadership approach to commanding a crew of astronauts on the ISS, he would have risked losing the engagement of his followers who had themselves trained long and hard for leadership roles and needed no guidance in understanding the group's goals or influencing to buy into the organizational mission. Conversely, had Moses simply stood before the Israelites and tasked them with leaving Egypt, throwing off the yolk of slavery and turning themselves into a nation, the exodus and subsequent events could not have been achieved.

Both Hadfield and Moses had elements of other leadership styles in their toolboxes. Hadfield certainly exemplified some transformational leader traits: acting as a role model as demonstrated through his actions on the cliff, and possessing a high level of charisma as evidenced through his mass popularity during his ISS mission, gained through his exceptional use of social media ("Forbes Welcome", 2017). And Moses demonstrated some traits of a situational leader in his understanding of a slave-nation's low developmental (D1) level with respect to building nationhood and matching that with S1 management through role modeling and detailed instructions for leaving Egypt. But the dominant leadership styles that emerge for Moses during the exodus from Egypt, and Hadfield as commander of the ISS are transformational and situational respectively.

With their respective dominant leadership styles, Colonel Hadfield could not likely have led the Israelites out of Egypt; and Moses could not likely have commanded the ISS. Which is not to say that each leader couldn't have learned to take on the other's role, but that each leader was uniquely suited to the role he had.

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