
Different Approaches Of Leadership Style

In my essay, I will be discussing the importance of implementing the correct leadership style and the role it plays in contributing to the success of organisations. I will be focusing on two hugely successful leaders, Richard Branson and Steve Jobs. Richard Branson is the founder of Virgin group which was founded in 1970 originally as a mail-order record retailer. Now it has expanded with over “60 virgin companies worldwide, employing approximately 71,000 people in 35 countries” (Virgin group, no date). This highlights the magnitude of the Virgin group which Richard Branson is responsible for. Richard Branson is a transformational leader, able to adapt to constant changes in the internal and external environment. “Apple was cofounded on April 1, 1976, by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak” (Weinberger, August 2018) and Steve Jobs played a significant part in Apple's success, notably with the revolutionary invention of the iPhone. These two leaders have contrastingly different leadership styles. An autocratic leadership style is one where the leader has individual control over all the decisions with small input from other group members (Cherry, 2018), whilst a democratic style is one whereby “members of the group take a more participative role in the decision-making process” (Cherry, 2018). Richard Branson implements a democratic leadership style whilst Steve jobs implemented an autocratic style. With both styles being complete opposites in regard to the spectrum, it highlights the fact that both styles are proven to be effective. Taking this into account, business leaders must carefully adopt the correct leadership style in order to achieve success.

As Richard Branson implements a democratic leadership style, employees are encouraged to come up with new creative ideas through incentives. This is essential as it increases innovation within the business and also motivates workers. We can relate this to Herzberg's two factor motivation theory of which highlights the importance of “job enlargement, job enrichment, and empowerment” (Jim Riley). As Richard has an autonomous leadership style, employees are given large amounts of freedom to work on projects. This in turn increases productivity as workers feel a sense of self-actualization, therefore taking more pride and becoming dedicated to their job. This therefore, satisfies the ‘empowerment’ element of Herzberg's two-factor motivation theory. As a result of this, the ability to use autonomy makes a good leader as it makes workers feel significant and motivates them, this, in turn, increases productivity contributing to the success of the virgin group. Furthermore, another thing that makes Richard Branson a good leader is his philosophy in which he states that “if the staff are happy, customers will follow. It can't just be me that sets the culture when we recruit people. I have a really great set of CEOs across our businesses who live and breathe the Virgin brand and who are entrepreneurs themselves.” (Ruby Lowe, no date). This idea suggests that Branson acknowledges the fact that it is important that his staff are satisfied with their jobs and enjoy participation. This positive working culture set by Branson has been proven to be effective and a study also found that “happy employees are up to 20% more productive than unhappy employees” (SGROI, 2015). Moreover, the relationship between an employee and the boss is heavily linked to employee turnover (Cooper, 2011) and the quality of exchanges between employees and their boss has been shown to be an important predictor of whether people leave or stay in an organization (Griffeth et al., 2000). Furthermore, Branson has shown good leadership skills by reducing labour turnover through the good treatment of employees.

Steve Jobs was a hugely successful leader who had a very different approach to Branson as

discussed in the introduction. He had a more autocratic leadership style in which he had a meticulous eye for detail, and “surrounded himself with like-minded people to follow his lead” (Branson, 2011). With Steve Job’s autocratic leadership style, it enables him to retain high control of the business in terms of decision making. This is beneficial as it means that decision-making is much quicker, allowing Steve Jobs to respond faster to changes in the external environment, this is seen as a big advantage for an autocratic leadership style, as it means it is very efficient.

We can use the Blake mouton grid model to assess Richard Branson’s leadership style. The Blake mouton grid is a model which highlights 5 different leadership styles. Richard Branson satisfies the ‘team management’ section in which has a high concern for people and a high concern for tasks (Nikezic, 2013). This in my opinion is the most effective leadership style in the long term because it ensures that all employees are taken into consideration with decision making and feel more valued. In summary, the ability to focus highly on ensuring staff are closely involved with decision making makes a good leader and this is a very popular method with Richard Branson implements within the Virgin group. On the other hand, Steve jobs can be placed within the ‘Task management’ section in which there is a high concern for tasks but a low concern for people. This is due to the fact that Steve Jobs often only cared about the end product and result rather than the well-being of his workers. Some may view this leadership style as a tough but effective style whilst some may also find it slightly unethical due to the lack of empathy for workers. However, some may also argue that Steve Jobs could be placed higher in terms of his concern for people as he was seen as a very inspirational figure by his employees which led to them being inspired to work harder.

In conclusion to my essay, both autocratic and democratic leadership styles are very effective in their own ways, therefore leaders must find the most appropriate level, suited for the employees so that the organisation can operate to its full potential. There are many different factors that have an influence on which leadership style should be used and it is essential that the correct leadership style is implemented. For example, an autocratic leadership style may suit a business that employs low-skilled workers to ensure standards are kept to a satisfactory level. In Apple's case, Steve Jobs was seen by apple employees as an inspirational figure, which meant his autocratic style worked well as it inspired many of his workers. However, from an autocratic leadership style, some may argue that in the long-term labour turnover and absenteeism may increase due to workers becoming frustrated with the lack of freedom they have in the workplace. Furthermore, a democratic leadership style may suit a high skilled workplace in which a variety of different opinions and ideas may result in successfully innovative plans. In addition, the delegation element of the autocratic leadership style motivates staff as the increased freedom and power make them feel more dedicated to the brand. However, a downside of this is that decision-making may cause take longer and confusion may arise, therefore causing inefficiency. In summary, I think that leaders play a very significant role in the success of an organisation and must find the correct balance between focus on task and people.