

Leadership Philosophy and Action Plan
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My leadership philosophy is guided by the trait approach to leadership and authentic leadership theory. Through assessment and reflection, I identified strengths such as empathy and communication that frame my leadership philosophy. Forming respectful and honest connections with others is very important to me, and empathy can help foster those relationships. Strong communicative skills will help me maintain personal relationships while providing the opportunity for team members to contribute and feel heard. Being educated and mindful about diversity will also aid in my ability to connect and work with others. In order to be an effective leader, I need to be cognizant of the many components that influence successful relationships among the team.

The Trait Approach

A few aspects of the trait approach to leadership resonated with me. Northouse (2016) identified major leadership traits as intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (p. 23). Integrity and sociability are two of the five traits that I most identify with. Northouse described integrity as being honest, trustworthy, and dependable (p. 25). I believe in any type of successful relationship (family, friend, professional, significant other), integrity is a core component. Results from the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) confirm that I not only value and possess this trait, others seen it in me as well (see page 9 for results). Additionally, a leader with strong sociability skills is someone who is “friendly, outgoing, courteous, tactful, and diplomatic” (Northouse, p. 26). Having a personal connection with staff members helps solidify that strong relationship between leader and “follower”. In the LTQ results, the characteristics of friendly, outgoing, sensitive, and empathic received some of the highest average rater scores (5, 4, 4.8, 4.6, respectively). Another one of the highest scores was for “conscientious”(4.8). The lowest scores from the raters and from myself were “self-confident” (average rater: 3; self: 2) and “self-assured” (average rater: 2.6; self: 2). Self-confidence

is discussed later in this paper, both when referring to assessment results and exploring gaps in leadership skills.

Authentic Leadership

There are many definitions and viewpoints for authentic leadership, including two different approaches: practical and theoretical (Northouse, 2016, p. 197). Because the Authentic Leadership Self-Assessment Questionnaire includes concepts from the theoretical approach, that approach will be the focus of this section. Self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relationship transparency are the four components of the theoretical approach to authentic leadership (Northouse, pp. 202-03). My results from the Authentic Leadership Self-Assessment Questionnaire are as follows: Self-awareness 13; Internalized moral perspective 16; Balanced processing 16; Relational transparency 16 (see page 11). Northouse stated that part of self-awareness is “being aware of and trusting your own feelings” (p. 203). I am not surprised that self-awareness was slightly lower as I tend to frequently second-guess myself. Despite this, I try to make decisions that are still true to who I am, which incorporates the component of internalized moral perspective. Northouse defined that component as “a self-regulatory process whereby individuals use their internal moral standards and values to guide their behavior rather than allow outside pressures to control them” (p. 203). Even though I may ask coworkers “What would you do?” in a certain scenario, I always consider how their feedback aligns with my values before moving forward.

The trait approach and authentic leadership theory center on how a leader treats others, how the leader feels about him or herself, and what positive qualities the leader portrays. Similar concepts are also identified in transformational leadership. For example, one factor of transformational leadership is idealized influence, which is described as leaders who have “very high standards of moral and ethical conduct” (Northouse, 2016, p. 167). Another transformational leadership factor is

individualized consideration, where leaders listen carefully to their followers and like to provide a supportive environment (Northouse, p. 169). These factors align well with authentic leadership, where leaders “understand their own values, place followers’ needs above their own, and work with followers to align their interests in order to create a greater common good...” (Northouse, pp. 206-07).

Researchers Avolio and Gardner (2005) agreed with these similarities. They noted, “Authentic leadership can incorporate transformational, charismatic, servant, spiritual, or other forms of positive leadership” (Avolio & Gardner, p. 329). Alternatively, transactional leadership has different core components than the previous mentioned “positive” forms of leadership. Transactional leadership is very focused on what is most beneficial for the leader while not providing much support or positive feedback for their followers (Northouse, p. 171). This is a vast difference from the trait approach and authentic leadership, where the leader emphasizes positive personal connections. I am more drawn to the positive form of leadership because I would aim to emulate those characteristics in my role.

I believe there are fundamental qualities that help individuals become impactful, positive leaders. For example, Coach John Wooden is arguably one of the most successful college basketball coaches of all time. Coach Wooden thought of character as a core component of leadership. “Character was the central focus of Wooden’s teaching. To reach success, players had to maintain a willingness to do what is right” (Docheff, 2013, p. 30). I believe a strong leader must truly care about the people he or she works with—and Wooden certainly accomplished that. Additionally, Avolio and Gardner (2005) stated, “...all leadership is relational at its core...” (pp. 332-33). This again emphasizes my notion that strong personal relationships are the backbone of leadership. Finally, I believe leadership must include one of the components that Northouse (2016) explained about transformational leadership. He mentioned the idea of leaders serving as strong role models for their followers (Northouse, p. 175). Regardless of context, I believe effective leadership must include building relationships, caring about followers, and portraying strong role model behaviors.

Sometimes I assume that people in leadership roles are fully acclimated and comfortable in their position, and while they may feel stress, they probably know how to handle it. However, I realize this is not an accurate assumption to have. Like any other job, one of the ways leaders learn is through experience, asking questions, and the support of others. Just because someone is in a leadership position, it is not an unwritten rule that he or she must have all the answers. Instead, if the leader is willing to seek out the appropriate support and resources, that further demonstrates their positive traits, such as determination.

When applying these beliefs and assumptions to an organizational setting, I have to keep a few things in mind. First, not everyone will have the same values or strengths as I do. This is true in any context in life and it is always important to be mindful of these differences. However, it is especially necessary to consider ways to not let those differences impede how I may work with others in a professional setting. For instance, one of the characteristics that I received a high score on the LTQ was conscientious (thorough, organized, and controlled). I know not everyone operates in the same way I do (writing daily and weekly to-do lists or tracking data on color-coded spreadsheets). As a leader, I wouldn't need to regulate the ways in which my team stays organized. Allowing that autonomy helps foster a positive environment and trust between team members and myself. However, I may need to address a concern if a team member misses a deadline more than once. Then, we could have a conversation, but even at that moment, I wouldn't want to impose my own way of doing things on someone else. Just as I want to stay authentic to myself, I want to provide my staff that same opportunity.

Leadership Action Plan

A few strengths emerged after completing the leadership assessments. I am empathic, organized, and communicative. Likewise, as part of a recent professional development activity at work, I

completed the Gallup StrengthsQuest. My top five strengths were discipline, empathy, responsibility, individualization, and developer (“Strengths Insight,” 2017). Not only do these strengths provide insight into my personality, but they coincide with some of my strengths from the leadership assessments. All these qualities can be applied in an organizational setting through the way I form personal relationships, my ability to complete tasks thoroughly and on time, and my eagerness to ensure everyone is involved in conversations and have their voices heard. More specifically, in the future, if I am a supervisor I will most likely need to conduct performance evaluations with my staff. I can take a strengths-based approach when having these discussions to best incorporate positive feedback and suggestions for improvement. By using this framework, I can still demonstrate care and concern while communicating in a supportive manner.

One of the common themes in my leadership assessment results was my lack of self-efficacy in overall abilities and decision-making. As mentioned previously, the two categories with the lowest scores on the LTQ were self-confident and self-assured. When I was in first grade, I remember my teacher telling me, “Carly, I don’t want to hear you say ‘I can’t’” so this has been an ongoing challenge. To be truly confident and effective in a leadership role, I would like to feel more comfortable in these deficit areas. I recently started a book titled *Self Esteem: A Proven Program of Cognitive Techniques for Assessing, Improving, and Maintaining Your Self esteem* by Matthew McKay and Patrick Fanning. This book is quite relevant to the areas of leadership I’d like to improve upon. One way to help foster these attributes is to complete the book exercises and reflect on the processes, especially the sections about accurate self-assessment, the pathological critic, and cognitive distortions (Fanning & McKay 2016). Through more intentional reflection, I hope to continuing improving in these areas.

When considering the interplay between diversity and leadership, it is important to be cognizant of existing differences. Northouse (2016) suggested that effective leaders be competent in their ability to work with others from different cultural backgrounds (p. 430). This includes various environments

(physically, politically, culturally), perspectives, and ways of communicating (Northouse, pp. 427-28). Perhaps most importantly to my leadership philosophy is “they [leaders] need to learn to relate to people from other cultures from a position of equality rather than cultural superiority” (Northouse, p. 428). This concept directly ties in to leadership ethics as well. Northouse explained the principles of ethical leadership as respect, service, justice, honesty, and community (p. 341). Furthermore, “respect means that a leader listens closely to followers, is empathic, and is tolerant of opposing points of view” (Northouse, p. 342). As a leader, it is vital to allow others the space for their opinions to be heard, which can also help model respect and understanding for team members. These principles of ethical leadership are invaluable to forming successful relationships with others. One way I can help ensure that my actions align with my values is to further develop my cultural self-awareness. For example, Cumberland, Herd, Alagaraja, and Kerrick (2016) suggested that self-awareness is the core of global leadership (p. 309). They explained that self-awareness “is developed by having participants identify and reflect on their own values, attitudes, and behaviors as a means to discover cultural roadblocks” (Cumberland et al. 2016). This process would help me better understand myself and how my values, attitudes, and behaviors impact my leadership approach regarding cultural differences.

Another area of diversity to be mindful of is gender and leadership. According to Northouse (2016), “Women are faced with the problem of needing to bolster their leadership competence with appropriate ‘femaleness’...” (p. 411). This presents a few issues. If women feel as though they need to act a certain way in their role, those behaviors may conflict with their own authentic leadership style. Similarly, Northouse explained, “Developing a more androgynous conception of leadership will enhance leadership effectiveness by giving people the opportunity to engage in the best leadership practices” (p. 408). This would certainly help foster a more authentic leadership style in individuals by not limiting behaviors historically tied to a certain gender.

By assessing and reflecting upon my own approach to leadership, I have identified strengths that I will continue to build on and a few gaps in my skills that I would like to further develop. Moving forward, both professionally and academically, I am more informed of what positive leadership entails, ways I can apply these qualities, and am more cognizant of how to best work with different groups of people. I can use the components of the trait approach and qualities of authentic leadership that most resonate with me as I continue in CCHE program and in my professional life. I look forward to learning more about developing as a leader while using my leadership philosophy as my guide.

Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ)

Instructions: The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure personal characteristics of leadership. The questionnaire should be completed by the leader and five individuals who are familiar with the leader.

Using the following scale, have each individual indicate the degree to which he or she agrees or disagrees with each of the 14 statements below.

Key: 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

The following responses are for the self-assessment. I did not include the five other rater's responses (except in the chart on the next page.)

1. Articulate: Communicates effectively with others	1	2	3	4	5
2. Perceptive: Is discerning and insightful	1	2	3	4	5
3. Self-confident: Believes in oneself and one's ability	1	2	3	4	5
4. Self-assured: Is secure with self, free of doubts	1	2	3	4	5
5. Persistent: Stays fixed on the goal(s), despite interference	1	2	3	4	5
6. Determined: Takes a firm stand, acts with certainty	1	2	3	4	5
7. Trustworthy: Is authentic and inspires confidence	1	2	3	4	5
8. Dependable: Is consistent and reliable	1	2	3	4	5
9. Friendly: Shows kindness and warmth	1	2	3	4	5
10. Outgoing: Talks freely, gets along well with others	1	2	3	4	5
11. Conscientious: Is thorough, organized, and controlled	1	2	3	4	5
12. Diligent: Is persistent, hardworking	1	2	3	4	5
13. Sensitive: Shows tolerance, is tactful and sympathetic	1	2	3	4	5
14. Empathic: Understands others, identifies with others	1	2	3	4	5

LTQ Results

Scoring:

1. Enter the responses for Raters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the appropriate columns.
2. For each of the 14 items, compute the average for the five raters and place that number in the "average rating" column.
3. Place your own scores in the "self-rating" column.

Characteristic	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	Average	Self-Rating
1. Articulate	5	5	4	4	5	4.6	5
2. Perceptive	4	5	4	5	5	4.6	3
3. Self-confident	4	2	2	3	4	3	2
4. Self-assured	3	2	2	3	3	2.6	2
5. Persistent	3	5	4	5	5	4.4	3
6. Determined	3	2	4	4	5	3.6	3
7. Trustworthy	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
8. Dependable	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	4
9. Friendly	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
10. Outgoing	3	4	4	4	5	4	3
11. Conscientious	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	5
12. Diligent	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	5
13. Sensitive	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	4
14. Empathic	4	5	4	5	5	4.6	4

Scoring Interpretation: The scores you received on the LTQ provide information about how you see yourself and how others see you as a leader. The chart allows you to see where your perceptions are the same as others and where they differ from others.

Authentic Leadership Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Instructions: This questionnaire contains items about different dimensions of authentic leadership. There are no right or wrong responses, so please answer honestly. Use the following scale when responding to each statement by writing the number from the scale below that you feel most accurately characterizes your response to the statement.

Key: 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I can list my three greatest weaknesses. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. My actions reflect my core values. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I seek others' opinions before making up my own mind. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I openly share my feelings with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I can list my three greatest strengths. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I do not allow group pressure to control me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I listen closely to the ideas of those who disagree with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I let others know who I truly am as a person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I seek feedback as a way of understanding who I really am as a person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Other people know where I stand on controversial issues. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I do not emphasize my own point of view at the expense of others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I rarely present a "false" front to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I accept the feelings that I have about myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. My morals guide what I do as a leader. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I listen very carefully to the ideas of others before making decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I admit my mistakes to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Scoring

1. Sum the responses on items 1, 5, 9, and 13 (self-awareness)
2. Sum the responses on items 2, 6, 10, and 14 (internalized moral perspective)
3. Sum the responses on items 3, 7, 11, and 15 (balanced processing)
4. Sum the responses on items 4, 8, 12, and 16 (relational transparency)

Total Scores

Self-awareness:	13
Internalized moral perspective:	16
Balanced processing:	16
Relational transparency:	16

Scoring Interpretation

This self-assessment questionnaire is designed to measure your authentic leadership by assessing four components of the process: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. By comparing your scores on each of these components, you can determine which are your stronger and which are your weaker components in each category. You can interpret your authentic leadership scores using the following guideline:

High = 16-20

Low = 15 and below

Scores in the upper range indicate stronger authentic leadership, whereas scores in the lower range indicate weaker authentic leadership.

References

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