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The Unconventional Leadership of Corporate Leaders in the 21st Century

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Abstract- This paper discusses the various traits that modern corporate leaders of the 21st century that have adopted a different approach towards leadership and have guided their company to newer heights. Amongst the leaders discussed in this research paper is, Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg and Larry Page. The purpose of this paper is to explore the decisions and choices that these revolutionary leaders have made and what made them different. At the end of this paper, we will learn of what are the good ideologies or practices we can take from them.

I. Introduction

This research paper will discuss on how many CEOs and company founders of the recent decade has utilized a type of leadership that seems to be effective yet unconventional and rarely used. I will also be discussing as to why despite its almost-guaranteed success that not all company's leader are using it. Later in my discussion I would also be using examples of different company leaders that have utilized such an unconventional leadership and have proven success to their companies. What is it that this company leaders are doing that others are not doing that makes them different? What made Steve Jobs choose the quote "think different" (Taube, 2014).

II. Leadership Skills

A key company that we can really towards for innovative unconventional leadership can be found in Google Inc. Google Inc. renowned for their infamous HR actions and staff empowering efforts that makes everybody desire to gain an employment in the company. Ranked 9th in Fortune's Magazine in 2009 and valued at a estimate of $100 Billion USD, Google is considered one of the top few titans alongside Facebook and Apple.

Google's unconventional style of leadership was easily summarized by its Senior Vice President of Human Resource, Laszlo Bock, when he and his research team conducted on what made Google so effective, and the points listed were being a good coach, empowering the team and not succumbing to micromanaging. The key is to express interest in the team member's success and well-being. By being productive and results-oriented it drives the team to have a shared vision .Another vital skill is to be a good communicator and listen to the team. Ensuring to help the employees with career development, making sure they have a clear vision and strategy of the team. It is also crucial for the leader to have technical skills so that he can advise the team (Murray, 2011).

The listed points above are just some of the many traits that other successful leaders in the 21st century have done that made the difference in their company from being good to great. As we proceed further into this research paper, we will explore the leadership styles of Steve Jobs, Mark Zuc kerberg and Larry Page (Strock, 2015).

III. Fostering Greatness

In the words of a Titan of the 21st century in the Information technology industry, "My job is not to be easy on people. My job is to make them better", Steve Job really showed what it meant to be a leader to make the right decision not in the "Right" time, but the "Wrong Time" When things were going against the company and a series of bad decision had caused a downward plunge in the company's performance. These words were some of the highlights of actions that this legend had taken towards leadership and made the difference in the company he left as a legacy. This believe in people is not only found in Steve Jobs but also Mark Zuckerberg, who stresses the importance of people with his words "I think as a company, if you can get those two things right--having a clear direction on what you are trying to do and bringing in great people who can execute on the stuff--then you can do pretty well"(Walter, 2014).

When Steve Job muttered those words after making the decision of denying 3 of the Original Apple staff stocks in 1981 because he deemed them no longer critical assets to the company's growth, it seemed to be every resource manager's worse nightmare and the most controversial of its time. Denying a long-term and loyal staff compensation in such a form was a big no-no. Despite such criticism, Steve Job continued with the decision, under the defense that, he did not believe in the mediocrity in staff, that his heartless actions were not of personal hatred but for the betterment of the employees, His unique approach of fostering greatness is one of the aspects that made him stood out as an exceptional leader. This belief in people is also found in the words of Larry Page, "fostering a supportive working

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environment in which employee morale is high" (Davis, 2013).

IV. Pursuit of Passion

Another aspect of what made up this great leader was his tenacity to pursue passion. Quoting the great man, "If you don't love something, you're not going to go the extra mile, work the extra weekend, challenge the status quo as much." , Steve Job has great insight as to what justifies a good employee, an employee that actively pursue their passion were the quality of people Steve Job chose to nurture. He constantly encourage employees to pursue their dreams and let Apple Inc. help them achieve their dreams, and in such he is able to merge passion with work and thus producing employees that were loyal and high achievers by loving what they do. Mark Zuckerberg in this aspect has also put in words saying "Find that thing you are super passionate about. A lot of the founding principles of Facebook are that if people have access to more information and are more connected, it will make the world better; people will have more understanding, more empathy. That's the guiding principle for me. On hard days, I really just step back, and that's the thing that keeps me going"(Walter, 2014).

Leaders in the 21st century that have made great companies all have a common pursue of passion that has driven them to bring their companies to great heights and Mark Zuckerberg has taken his passion from a dorm room project to a company that is now worth more than $200 billion USD. This really highlights what the difference is in the unconventional leadership approach (CNN, 2014).

V. Perseverance

The pursuit of passion was just one aspect that Steve Jobs & Mark Zuckerberg pursued; the other aspect to it that is equally crucial was the Perseverance part. Steve Job was commonly associated as being a heartless leader for the tough calls he made on staff. An example of such an exhibition was when he terminated one of Apple's best programmer on the spot for telling Steve Jobs that his request for some certain specification to be installed in the new Apple II could not be done. Steve Jobs had a low tolerance to people who did not share the same vision and the perseverance in attaining it, and he made sure that his staff knew what it was and to stay true to it. His signature quotes "If you don't share our vision…then GET OUT!" Another example of perseverance can also be found in Larry Page's initiatives to aunch what has become Google Maps with Street View. "I had the camera in my car and took a bunch of video," he told the Google Faculty Summit in 2009. After convincing himself it would work, he kept working on convincing others (Elmer, 2011).

VI. Valuing Creativity

Another aspect that strongly distinguishes an unconventional leader is the choice to hire creativity instead of hiring the ones that followed strict Standard Operating Procedures. Steve Jobs made a shout out in a PC convention once saying "Here's to the crazy ones — the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently…the ones that change things." As accordance to this saying, the Apple's slogan is "Think Different", he encouraged creativity by not just hiring any other computer scientist with the credentials but also those that had different perspectives that thought out of the box and had a mind other than just computer science. He believed it was that craziness that made the difference to making things that changed the world. In Google, they have a policy of recruiting only class-A employees and giving them the freedom to exercise their creativity (Manimala, 2013). Employees are encouraged to pursue creativity and in such, all form of innovation is contained within the company instead of venturing out into competitors. There is a 70-20-10 norm about time allocation by employees: 70 percent of the time should be devoted to Google's core business of search and advertising, 20 percent to off-budget projects related to the core-business, and 10 percent to pursue ideas based on one's own interest and competencies. There are also generous rewards and awards for implementing innovative ideas (Manimala, 2013). In the words of Larry Page, "Pay attention to your crazy ideas and cultivate the best of them" (Elmer, 2011) .Elaborating Page's focus on Creativity and new ideas, he told graduates in Michigan "When no one else is crazy enough to do it, you have little competition"

VII. Taking Risk

The discussion to become an unconventional leadership now brings us to another aspect, the Ability to Risk Failure. With this quote, "The greatest artists like Dylan, Picasso and Newton risked failure. And if we want to be great, we've got to risk it too" he listed out a number of great figures in history who dared to explore the risk of uncertainty and challenge themselves to be great. Likewise it is shown in his actions when he would stake the company's growth just to pursue a new product or vision, only reflecting his decision he did as a youth to stake all that he had to start up Apple. Inc . This form of leadership encourages staff to go beyond their comfort zone, to be more than who they currently are and pursue growth rather than just being stagnant. It highlighted our point earlier of fostering greatness in employees (Elmer, 2011).

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VIII. Serving a Purpose

Another aspect of unconventional leadership is the encouragement of serving a purpose. To work not just for the money or the profit but for the greater good of the product or for the company were what Steve Job pushed for. In his words, "If you keep your eye on the profit, you're going to skimp on the product. But if you focus on making really great products, then the profits will follow" (Elmer, 2011), the emphasis on such words really highlighted how Steve Job wanted to encourage his employees to see a purpose, share a vision, a common goal and not just to simply work for the paycheck but for the changing of the world, changing of the perspective of things in life. This encouraged staffs to stay long-term and to see a future with Apple Inc. which explains why the turnover of staff at Apple Inc. is so low.

Another such example of serving a purpose is also found in the unconventional leadership of Mark Zuckerberg which is highlighted in his quote" At Facebook, we're inspired by technologies that have revolutionized how people spread and consume information. We often talk about inventions like the printing press and the television-; by simply making communication more efficient, they led to a complete transformation of many important parts of society.

They gave more people a voice. They encouraged progress. They changed the way society was organized. They brought us closer together"(Walter, 2014).

IX. Simplify

Another key to an unconventional leadership is the pursue to Simplify things for the masses. Steve Job used an impressive tagline in his first marketing brochure and the tagline was "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication" (Elmer, 2011). And this really highlighted the essence in leadership. What differentiates an unconventional leader is the ability to let the masses or the people under you absorb and understand the vision that the company leaders have and not make it complicated and ridiculously procedural. Steve Job made it so that his products were all approached in a minimalistic way and that they were not to be an absurd amount of features that staggers decision-making. Such an example can be found in Google's Slogan in 2008 where it states "You can be serious without a suit." (Morrow, n.d). Another quote by Google's former CEO, Eric Schmidt, "The goal is to strip away everything that gets in our employees' way. We provide a standard package of fringe benefits, but on top of that are first-class dining facilities, gyms, laundry rooms, massage rooms, haircuts, carwashes, dry cleaning, commuting buses – just about anything a hardworking employee might want. Let's face it: programmers want to program, they don't want to do their laundry. So we make it easy for them to do both" (Morrow, n.d). This really illustrates the action to simplify work to ensure productivity and focus on what employees have to do.

X. Challenge Reality

Another visionary aspect that unconventional leaders present is the ability to Ignore Reality. The pursue of their vision and dreams for their company has brought them to distort their own perception on reality and enable them to find the means to achieve the vision and make it a reality. Steve Job possessed such a skill and it was called his Reality Distortion Field, he challenged his staffs to do what they thought was impossible but nonetheless pressured them and in the end each of them were able to achieve what was seemingly impossible and at the times even more than was expected. (Elmer, 2011).

The difference that unconventional leaders take is the step to dream bigger, to envision the future, to think of things that are yet to be relevant and make it relevant. This is what it means to set trends for other companies to follow. Likewise, Google has demonstrated such a trait by introducing many job titles that were seemingly irrelevant but now is vital to the competitive advantage of the company. Google also employs managers in unique positions that other companies may not have known they were missing. Google hired a Chief Culture Officer, Stacy Savides Sullivan, in 2006 to help maintain their characteristic start-up atmosphere (Mills, Meet Google's Culture Czar, 2007). They also have a Chief Internet Evangelist and a Distinguished Entrepreneur on staff to help identify and enable new technologies. These managers ensure Google stays innovative (Morrow, n.d).

XI. Discussion

As we divulge into this research of all the qualities that are demonstrated by this leaders, there is a sudden realization that this leaders practices habits and thought systems that are at times very controversial, making decisions that are out of the norm and are normally criticizes by media for being ruthless or unwise. But yet it is such choices, words and decisions that this leaders have made that brought their companies to such heights and to be able to be branded legends in the 21st century.

As I studied further into the topics of such leaders I realized that although the commanded a lot of respect they were not entirely popular. For instance, Mark Zuckerberg entered into multiple lawsuits with former colleagues and Steve Jobs was forcibly removed from the company at one time. The aspect that still intrigues me is to whether it takes such "ruthlessness" in decision making for them to be such a success. Would it be possible for them to breach the gap of unpopularity and be a servant-leader rather than the portrayal of such

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ruthlessness, in this aspect, Larry Page of Google has indeed shown what it is like to run an employee-driven company.

If we were to dissect the 3 companies that were discussed in this research paper, Larry Page's Google is probably an example of leadership that focuses on Employee motivation and Satisfaction, Steve Job's Apple is the sort of leadership that emphasize less on employee motivation and satisfaction but rather a more active pressure into pushing the employee beyond their limits and achieving the impossible whilst Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook has a more wholesome approach to both of this aspect.

In the end, this leaders were able to make the call in tough times, to pull their company through situations where the company would be a stake. The qualities that these leaders cannot be doubt and no doubt, is an example for everyone to follow if they wish to pursue such a successs

XII. Conclusion

To adapt to changing times, leaders of corporation must evaluate their management styles and question themselves as to whether the style they are currently pursuing is the best style there is and whether the style they are employing is effective or not. Taking the examples of IT titans in the recent decade, many have chosen an approach to leadership that is seldom taken and have learned that the value of employee is really the lifeblood of the company. Companies like Apple, Facebook and Google have paved the way as to how unconventional leadership has brought about a change to the company that has made it what it is today, a giant in the corporate world and all of which is worth more than $100 billion USD.

The ever-changing industry in this age of innovation has spurred the growth of many new companies that are adopting different perspectives towards the management of staff. The emphasis of creating leaders instead of bosses is what makes the current age differentiate from the previous age of hierarchical leadership. The ability to lower themselves and yet take the responsibility of others is the essence of what today's leader is pursuing.

In conclusion, the 9 aspects to an unconventional leader of the 21st century is merely a guideline as to what needs to be pursued if success is the destination anyone is heading. To have essential leadership skills that foster greatness, encourage the pursue of passion, educate on perseverance, encourage creativity, to dare to take risk, to give a purpose to others, to simplify the hardest of things and to challenge reality is the essence of what it takes to be a great and revolutionary leader in this day and age.

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Early View

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