

## LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE IN THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION AT PRESENT TENSE

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**Abstract:** *Management and nowadays form of leadership are omnipresent topics of debates in the academic, business and, especially, military environments. Moreover, it provokes intense controversy when juxtaposed to the subject of performance. Most approaches to the latter focus on its components, systems, processes and less on people. In this respect, it is our firm belief that, in general, an organization's performance and the performance of the same organization's leaders, in particular, are rendered by the people who are part of it and by the sum of their individual performance. Thus, people make organizations relevant, worth and valuable; they are the ones who keep them in motion.*

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**T**here have been and there will be complex discussions on the *relationship between leadership and performance*. The obvious and simple reason for these is the continuous evolution of humankind and, as a result, the unavoidable and invariable changes in the human needs related to work, and more specifically to the interpersonal relationships emerging as a result of that both at institutional and personal level. However, what is really important beyond the endless lectures or merely theoretical discussions are the concrete applicable results that can actually lead to realities that almost instantaneously integrate into people's lives.

Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that one action or another can be different in the absence of an understanding of how systems and/ or processes work. As a result, a full, partial or step by step diagnosis is

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necessary as a first step. *To diagnose is to understand*, and in order *to understand* people use their own mental models built as a result of education and training. Attention! This mental model should not be taken for reality. It emerges from the capacity to articulate personal thoughts under the stimuli of reality. In this respect, the renowned strategist George E. P. Box said: “*All models are wrong, but some can be useful!*”. Consequently, the conclusion is that models in general, not only mental ones, must be analyzed and evaluated based on their usefulness for people. Any addition can be a gain for the model, that is, it leads to an increase in its utility and invariably and constantly results in additional dependency on it; naturally, we should also not forget the ancient teaching called “*Occam’s razor*” according to which “*Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate*”, namely “*additions should only come from necessity*”.

All of the above considered, the current article overviews the theories of modern leadership that can be applied in the military organization and also underlines the necessity of the leadership to continuously adapt and readapt to the always changing requirements of society with a view to achieving performance targets. People by their nature are the main actors within society, organizations, groups and any other forms of human establishment. Thus, as such, they are the object of the studies on the way to be taken by leadership to achieve performance. That becomes even more important for the military organization where people are the most valuable, followed by systems, structures or processes and technical means. The latter are easier to quantify, rectify change or improve and that is the reason for which many theoreticians in the field of leadership prefer these in their analyses and theories. What they fail to observe is that ultimately it is the people who set these in motion and make them valuable. People cannot be changed but they can be trained and educated. Consequently, the greatest challenge, possibly the ultimate challenge of a commander, is to create and apply the vision that can inspire, motivate, incite and manage subordinates so that their present and future actions guarantee the success of their endeavours. Thus, the supreme test for commanders is to perfectly align vision with action, namely to synchronize ideas with execution. As a result of such an endeavour subordinates will gain the necessary and sufficient capacity to put the commander’s ideas into practice.

All of the above considered organizations work through people. As a result, organizations do not need people: people make organizations. Hence, employees' skills depend exclusively on the well-functioning of organizational mechanisms. Not all employees are the same: some are very good and reach all their performance targets, whereas others are weak. The reality is that most employees are between the two limits. Consequently, most of the employees follow directions and therefore, it is the role of the commander to establish goals, objectives and set the courses of action, itineraries, the pace, the time and resources available to reach organizational performance goals. Thus, the subordinates need guiding, corrections and stimuli. Complex ethological studies lead to the same conclusion: *every group of beings needs leadership, and especially high standards leadership*. In their turn, leaders juggle with and among people and the realities of their time, of organizations in general, of the external professionals and social environment as part of an indissoluble whole thus offering subordinates enticing bonuses: *"To know how to lead is not to know how to dominate, but how to convince people to work towards a common goal"*, said Daniel Goleman.

Thus, leadership is essentially about human actions and its sole goal is to set a group of people who has chosen and assumed a common goal in motion. What makes a group, and especially a military one survives and fight to succeed, namely to reach the performance targets characteristic for the military environment, it this capacity of the commanders to influence and guide subordinates' behaviour through their personal power to determine and motivate their actions. Such a power is beyond the premises offered by their hierarchical position.

Actually, when commanders make decisions, they themselves undergo transformations in line with these decisions. More specifically, leaders change their behaviour in accordance with the envisaged effects of the decision, namely they act as if they had already achieved the desired goals and thus, they influence their subordinates. In the end, the sum of wills directed towards one goal will lead the group/team towards the envisaged result with maximum benefits. Such a result is characterized by excellence, which is the target of high standards leadership. When performance goals are achieved, more subtle approaches to the theory of organizations and human resource management are necessary. Organizations focused on performance, like the Japanese ones for example,

begin to identify with their members and organizational and human needs become identical. In such a case, organizations act like their constituents. The formal authority of leaders becomes more and more diluted and they impose themselves through their operational and functional capacities.

The level of performance most definitely depends on leaders' performance level and only after that on the capacities of group members' capacities. A good leader projects and obtains good performance levels, while a weak one projects and obtains diminished results. However, a leader will always obtain better results with a highly cohesive team rather than with one consumed by internal conflicts, even though the latter's members may be better professionally speaking. And this is the hallmark of the military organization. Thus, the goal of every military leader is to reach performance targets and, in the subsidiary, to reach, develop and maintain the cohesion of the group. This is actually the main goal of military leadership actions. For a military, a united, harmonious, efficient structure is the best development means and the organization reaches its performance goals and missions in an efficient and effective manner. Highly cohesive organizations are characterized by clear goals and directions which are assumed as common targets by their members. The latter show enthusiasm, are highly and honestly committed, focused on accomplishing their missions and ambitious goals and requirements, have humour and good mood and are open towards their own development. At the same time, they help one another so that they develop their strengths; drive one another towards accomplishing their tasks and finding optimal and swift solutions to the changes and challenges triggered by the work environment. The essential values that determine group cohesion and govern human relationships in a cohesive group are: openness, honesty, mutual respect, trust and transparency of actions.

The evaluation of the performance level in military groups should not only be the means to make a hierarchical appreciation of their result, but an opportunity to analyze in a balanced and honest manner, at a formal and informal level, the results obtained. Moreover, the end of such analysis is to obtain real conclusions that are unanimously accepted by all the people involved. An analysis whose goal is to observe and quantify performance needs to be seen as a dialogue with the well-defined goal of identifying and delineating clear, concise, unanimously accepted and constructive conclusions concerning the development of the members of the

organization, as well as the means and directions towards improving their actions. Consequently, the entire process of managing leadership performance needs to comprise all subsumed and individual processes meant to obtain and maintain the performance of the military organization. In other words, all organization members along with the leadership must be included in the process if the principle according to which performance is the sum of an organization's members' performance is to be applied. What is more, that is another means to increase commitment with every result that is obtained, to renew the *psychological contract* between the members and the organization and to review the importance paid to individuals as members of the organization. In the end, it is people and their behaviours that generate results. Machines, weapons, computers, processes, procedures and systems are only tools that make work easier, facilitate results and shorten the time needed to obtain these results.

The conclusion is that high standards leadership is rooted in the power granted by the subordinates and its plenary manifestation is the latter's acceptance of a leader's right to lead them, as well as their commitment to that and to the organization itself. Therefore, valuable leadership does not mean thinking, deciding and acting instead of the subordinates. It is the art to inspire them to dedicate themselves to the vision of the commander, to gain their total trust, to trust them, to give them the chance to make their own work-related decisions, to allow them to take responsibility for their actions and to create and ensure the environment for their actions. In this respect, leaders must establish a solid and durable strategy and should allow subordinates to establish their own tactics within this given strategic framework. In order to reach such a goal, it is the task of high standards leadership to identify and generate the necessary and sufficient conditions for the subordinates to use their remarkable qualities and abilities in harmony and by completing one another.

The optimum means to accomplish this desideratum is for the leader to take responsibility and delegate tasks. Delegation is a necessity and not an option because the decision-making process at top level needs to be smooth and should not run into a stove-pipe, nor should it lead to demotivation among subordinates, lack of commitment or risk aversion. Should the above be the case, then the *psychological contract* becomes null and void.

All of the above considered, we reiterate the absolute importance and priority that need to be given to the human factor in studying the military organization in general and leadership and its performance in particular. People are the only elements that set an organization and its parts in motion and render value to the performance goals that are reached. As a result, maintaining the high level of performance is based on the continuous adaptation and re-adaptation of leadership to the reality of the present, but also to the near future realities. The capacity of the leader to accomplish in a timely manner the correspondence between ideas and execution with a view to guiding and correcting the actions of the subordinates in line with the vision adds to this beneficial outcome.

Moreover, it is worthwhile remembering that the performance of leadership is directly proportional to the skills and constructive will of the leader to influence and motivate subordinates' behaviour in order to obtain the envisaged performance. All of the above is accomplished by taking a step outside the requirements imposed by the military hierarchy. Two other factors contribute to leadership performance: accomplishing and strengthening group cohesion and task delegation. These generate clear, unique and unanimously accepted directions for action, and also contribute to making subordinates responsible.

Thus, the permanent modelling of leadership adapted to the necessities of the moment and to those envisaged for the near future becomes the status quo. The adaptation of the leadership style needs to lead to modelling subordinates' behaviour and organizational climate in order to obtain individual performance which, when added, generates group performance.

