

# **Servant Leadership: An Imperative Leadership Style of Managers for achieving organizational change successfully**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

There is a disturbing trend among business leaders today. While problems are obvious, the challenge is systemic. For too long organizations have enabled and empowered egotistic employees with the “win at any cost” mentality and an emphasis on their personal success over that of their staff, customers, organization and its stakeholders. These self-centered managers, mistakenly dubbed as leaders, often produce great short-term results, through hard-driving, fear-inducing and domineering tactics. As a result of these tactics, short-term benefits are often achieved in organizations but in long term they failed to achieve organizational excellence by implement organizational changes successfully.

The world is crying out for ethical and effective leadership that serves others, invests in their development and fulfills a shared vision. Existent leadership theories can't effectively motive employee in the quickly changing environment. Leadership in organizations is important in shaping workers' perceptions, responses to organizational change, and acceptance of innovations. Several organizational theorists witnessed that organizational change management practices are failing today because they are missing people as a human factor and giving importance to them in their strategies of change management in the organization. Managers or leaders are facing difficult situations in implementation of changes in the organizations. Unfortunately, many organizations do not realize there is a better solution called servant-leadership.

Among the many leadership styles (i.e. authoritarian, benevolent dictatorship, participatory, etc.) the one that best represents the ideals embodied in the human factor (HF) is servant-leadership. Traditional model of leadership shows organizational members serving their leaders, while an “inverted pyramid” model shows leaders as serving the enterprise in direct opposition to the pyramid model, the inverted pyramid calls for leaders to be located at the bottom of the organizational pyramid in order to serve the organization. Consequently, the inverted pyramid model is the essence of servant leadership-that is, leadership emphasizing the good of followers over the self-interest of the leader.

This paper suggests that servant leadership incorporates and extends existent leadership theories by providing the motives behind leaders' practices, altruistic love, meanings, and spiritual survival. Servant leadership gives effective motivation among the employee to accept and learn new challenges and tasks in this uncertain age. Servant leadership focused mainly on achieving the organizational excellence through developing up to their full potential of his people to accept new responsibilities and changes in the organization.

**Key words:** servant leadership, organizational changes organizational excellence.

## 1.INTRODUCTION:

As the world economies develop, nation states are coming out from agrarian & industrial age moving into information age. Contribution of services in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of various economies in the world is increasing. In many countries, it is more than the contribution by manufactured goods & agricultural produce. Hence organizations of 21st century are expected to serve both who produce goods & services those who consume or use them (Banutu-Gomez, 2004). Hence it means that service factor of the economies is surpassing the growth & volume of other factors of economies in the world.

In current times, change is the only constant. Pace of change is quickening every day & impacts entire humankind. Developed nations have exhausted their resources or have costlier internal resources; exhausted internal markets & are looking towards emerging & less developed nation states for reduced product & services costs, growth & increased influences in world economy. World has moved from agrarian economies to industrial economies to economies based on information & innovation.

Contemporary organizations are facing intense pressure from two fronts. Externally, organizations are now operating in an environment that has become increasing complex and much more dynamic. The dramatic globalization of economic activity during the last twenty years and the democratization of technology have been the fuel driving the changes. Thus, organizations must now compete in a boundary less economy with worldwide labor markets that are instantly linked with information. These changes call for new organizations that are more agile.

To confront the external challenge contemporary organizations must create work environments that will help them attract, keep and motivate a team of high-performing employees. The creation of work environments that provide a sense of challenge and meaningfulness for employees has become a priority. The creation of such a work environment may very well be the strategic imperative of the new millennium. This perspective has been articulated by Whetten and Cameron (1998) who concluded that 'good people management' is more important than all other factors in predicting profitability

Times are changing and so are our views on leadership behavior. In view of the current demand for more ethical, people-centered management, leadership inspired by the ideas from servant leadership theory may very well be what organizations need now. Concern about the society we live in has increasingly become a matter of company policy. It may be that paying attention to all stakeholders is the key to long-term profits. At present, innovation and employee well-being are given high priority and so leadership that is rooted in ethical and caring behavior becomes of great importance.

In the relatively new field of positive organizational behavior, leadership recently has been suggested as a key factor for engaged employees and flourishing organizations (Quick, & Cooper, 2009). During the past few years, leadership studies have clearly moved away from a strong focus on, most notably, transactional, transformational leadership toward a stronger emphasis on a shared, relational, and global perspective where especially the interaction between leader and follower are key elements (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).

On a worldwide scale billions are spent on leadership development each year (Leonard & Loew, 2012). However, many organizations report having only a handful of good leaders in their midst (Hsieh & Yik, 2005). While the good news is that the world is paying attention to and acknowledging the importance of leadership development, unfortunately the investment of time and money seems not to be paying off. We believe that it is because of flawed assumptions about what leadership is. To most people, leadership is a formal position or title. If someone is a CEO, President or Prime Minister, this person is automatically considered a leader. We argue that someone with a big title and position of authority does not make that person automatically a leader. Perhaps that person is entitled a boss, but needs to work hard to earn the leadership status. First and foremost the leadership is an art of creating a better future for others. It is this pursuit (of creating a better future for others) that makes someone a leader, not his formal position or title (Wall Street Journal, 2012). The dilemma is, creating a better future for others often involves countering a lot of resistance.

The contemporary concept of servant leadership is the best suited for above mentioned problems in organizations. These practices are summarized in the works of Robert Greenleaf (1977; 1998). For Greenleaf, the servant-leader is servant-first, an attitude that flows from a deep-rooted, natural inclination to serve. The conscious choice to lead comes after the desire to serve. Servant leadership is a type of leadership which comes under the democratic style. Leader and servant are opposite terms. But the practice of servant leadership takes place when the characters of these two paradoxical terms are incorporated in leadership style. In servant leadership, a leader is called to serve the group members or followers when he leads the team.

In 1970, retired AT&T executive Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) coined the term servant leadership and launched a quiet revolution in the way in which we view and practice leadership. Three decades later the concept of servant leadership is increasingly viewed as an ideal leadership form to which untold numbers of people and organizations aspire. In fact, we are witnessing today an unparalleled explosion of interest in, and practice of, servant leadership. Leadership researchers and writers such as Bass (2000), Blanchard (2002), Collins (2001), Covey (2002), DePree (1995), Northouse (2001), and Senge (1990,1997), have either anecdotally or prophetically referenced the idea that servant leadership should be considered by the leaders of today's organizations. Bass and Buchen (1998), Greenleaf(1970), Stone, Russell, & Patterson(2003) have specifically recommended servant leadership as a way to counter balance organizational change and resistance in a prosocial manner for serving and developing others, and for the good of the organization .

Servant leadership style has been practiced all over the world in many successful companies. An increasing number of companies have adopted servant-leadership as part of their corporate philosophy or as a foundation for their mission statement. Spears (2004) give a list of a number of companies that include the principle of servant leadership in their mission statement and corporate philosophy. His list contains firms such as the Toro Company (Minneapolis, Minnesota), Synovus Financial Corporation (Columbus, Georgia), ServiceMaster Company (Downers Grove, Illinois), the Men's Wear house (Fremont, California), Southwest Airlines (Dallas, Texas), and TD Industries (Dallas, Texas), Wal-Mart is a company which practices the concept of "servant-leadership" (Berq Dahl, 2004), in India N.R. Narayana Murthy, the founder of Infosys in India, is a practicing servant leader (Management Profiles, 2010, Annette Barnabas , Joseph Anbarasu D. , Clifford Paul s 2010)

## **2.Characteristics of servant leader:**

Spears (1998) identified ten characteristics of servant-leadership: (1) listening, (to self and others) (2) empathy, (understanding) (3) healing, (search for wholeness of self and others) (4) awareness, (of self and of others) (5) persuasion, (building consensus) (6) conceptualization, (dreams and of day-to-day operations) (7) foresight, (intuitive ability to learn from past and see future consequences of actions) (8) stewardship, (holding institution in trust for the good of society) (9) commitment to the growth of others, (personal, professional, spiritual of self and others) , (10) building community (benevolent, humane, philanthropic, to benefit others) . Russell and Stone (2002) added (11) justice (e.g. honesty and trust) and (12) practical support (e.g. modeling and empowerment)

Servant leader is opposed to the command-and-control type of autocratic leadership. There is now a clear consensus among modern management theorists (Avolio, 1999; Bennis, 1990; Hammer & Champy, 1993; Rinzler & Ray, 1993; Senge, 1990) that autocratic leadership needs to be replaced by leadership that empowers workers. In today's environment, command-and-control leadership no longer works, because leaders must earn people's respect and trust. Servant leaders are free to be flexible and situational (Blanchard &



Hodges, 2003; Wong, 2003), because they are no longer imprisoned by their own need for power and pride. They are willing to employ different kinds of legitimate power to facilitate worker development and accomplish organizational goals. Servant leadership places the interest of followers before the self-interest of a leader, emphasizes personal development, and empowerment of followers. The servant leader is a facilitator for followers to achieve a shared vision (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1998; Spears & Lawrence, 2002; Laub, 1999).

A servant-leader is someone whose primary focus is on serving the interests of the employees, clients and community. He or she is not focused on power, hierarchy and status. From the desire of serving others, the servant leader aspires to start leading. The servant-leader may take huge personal risk and may make sacrifices and be willing to take such hardship upon him / her in order to improve the future for others. According to Trompenaars and Voerman (2009) servant-leadership is multi-dimensional and enhances more than ever before the human and ethical factor in organizations. Traditional leaders tend to be focused on tasks, control and processes in organizations whereas servant-leaders are connected with people in an ethical way, reconciling dilemmas and empowering them as team members, employees, customers, students or citizens. The servant-leader often is not a single operating leader; compare the post-heroic leader (Wall Street Journal, 2012) or the Great Man Theory (Hirsch, 2002). Moreover the servant-leader will rather co-create in a leadership-team; such a team is keen to contribute value to other people to let their talents grow. The served people become healthier and more autonomous. They are more likely to develop a sense of responsibility to others. Servant-leaders are no holy saints, and will learn from their mistakes for the sake of the organization and their people. Major positive attributes of servant-leadership can be found across cultures and moreover, contain an ethical and sustainable dimension (Keith, 2011, Nuijten 2009, Spears 2000, Thakore 2013, Trompenaars and Voerman 2009). The concept of servant-leadership includes several dilemmas. Servant-leaders serve their employees by creating a better future for them. At the same time the servant-leadership team is accountable for the performance of their organization.

### **3.ROLE OF LEADERSHIP DURING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE:**

Organizational change refers to a “relatively enduring alternation of the present state of an organization or its components or interrelationships amongst the components, and their differential and integrated functions totally or partially, in order to attain greater viability in the context of the present and anticipated future environment” (Ott, 1996). In other words, organizational change can be defined as a reconfiguration of components of an organization to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Organizational change is the movement of an organization away from its present state and toward some desired future state to increase its effectiveness.

Change is an ongoing natural process. For a successful organization, change is meant to be implemented at three different levels, i.e., individual, group and organization. At every level of change, leadership plays different role as it's the virtual duty of a leader to manage the people and make their efforts to be at their best in favor of change for an organization. Change management is an essential area of concentration for the healthy growth of any business, it is important even for the survival of any organization in today's business world. Successful change in any organization is impossible without the active participation of management. Every living creature is reluctant to change, whether it's a planned change or accidental change. Respondents of change are affected by both external factors (outside the organization) and internal factors (inside the organization); study reveals that internal factors are actually the management style and leadership that influence the process of change (Chirimbu, 2011).

Smith, 2005 considered the inherent conundrum of organizational change: that people, the human resources of organizations, are both an essential factor in organizational change and, at times, the biggest obstacles to achieving change. Therefore, it is concluded that important element for a successful change in any organization is "Leadership". Leaders are known as 'Champions of Change' as it is the top management of any organization who keep the process of change going on and maintaining the operational reliability of the organization (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). Most of the organizations are forced to construct changes in order to survive for a longer period of time. They are required to respond rapidly to the local, national and global uprising of new technology and competition, if they want to survive. Everyone knows that change is not going to take place at once. In fact, few organizations meet their stated objectives (Anderson, 2011). Change management has highly focused on people, identity and the patterns of human interaction. Lack of leadership concentration on the complexity of change, poorly developed strategy and structures, last but not least attention towards people behavior towards change make the process of change management ineffective. For an effective change management process, it is required by the leaders to pay notice towards identity formation of the people in an organization (Karp & Helgo, 2008).

For a successful change, the study reveals that leadership is important. It is strongly correlated (positively) with change implementing behavior, monitoring of anticipators, management level, and department connection (Michaelis, Stegmaier & Sonntag, 2009). According to Noer (1997), the leader, as a person, is the most important tool for change. The leader's spirit, insight, wisdom, compassion, values, and learning skills are all important facets in the capabilities to lead others to embrace change and redesign. The leader who prompts change within a firm is often subject to approximate thought (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). It is the leadership's behavior that makes the change situations more effective (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). Darling & Heller (2009) stated that the managerial leaders' attitudes, and the commensurate thoughts and feelings communicated to the universe, both inside and outside of their organizations. Study further reveals that leaders must have to understand the reasons for the

failure of change in any organization. They have to develop capabilities to be a successful change agent (Manikandan, 2010).

Change management has highly focused on people, identity and the patterns of human interaction. Change management will be the core competency of the business leaders in twenty-first century. Therefore being visionary change agents, leaders will be required to be more skillful and motivational. Discontinuous changes make worst affect on the capabilities of leadership (Nadler, Shaw & Walton, 1995). Even after implementation of change, the duty of leader does not end. Change is the one constant, one can easily anticipate. But in business, it's vital that organizations build up a change management approach through which they can rely on to diminish both expected and unexpected changes. That way, they can meet any challenges head-on and not be derailed by whatever changes come their way (Gans, 2011).

Organizations operate within an increasingly volatile environment and are in a state of constant change. The pressure to change stems from a variety of internal and external sources such as political, economic, social and technological factors (Boojihawon & Segal-Horn, 2006). Leana and Barry (2000) posit that organizational change is aimed at adapting to the environment, improvement in performance and changes in employees behavioural patterns at the work place. For the sake of survival, growth, and having a competitive advantage, organizations have attempted to anticipate and adapt to changes through strategies including organizational redesign which often embodies changing the very culture of the organisation (Gilmore, Shea & Useem, 1997). Even though change is implemented for positive reasons (to adapt to changing environmental conditions and remain competitive), employees often respond negatively toward change and resist change efforts. This negative reaction is largely because change brings with it increased pressure, stress and uncertainty for employees (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). According to Judge and Douglas (2009) the reasons for the failure range from a lack of understanding surrounding an organization's capacity for change to other human factors, such as employee resistance toward organizational change (Martin, Jones & Callan, 2006). In addition, Bovey and Hede (2001) cited numerous studies including resistance to change as the most common problem faced by management in implementing change due to lack of appropriate leadership practices or strategies or styles. Many studies show that most change initiatives fail because lack of trust among employees over leaders of change (Burnes & Jackson, 2011; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kotter, 1995; Pettigrew, Woodman & Cameron, 2001).

Existent leadership theories can't effectively motive employee in the quickly changing environment. Leadership in organizations is important in shaping workers' perceptions, responses to organizational change, and acceptance of innovations. Several organizational theorists witnessed that organizational change management practices are failing today because they are missing concept that employee excellence is organizational excellence. As Senge (2001) noted, the word 'change' means several, often contradictory, things. Sometimes it refers to the external world of technology, customers, competitors and such like. Sometimes it refers to internal changes such as practices, styles and strategies. Higgs and Rowland (2010),

who explicitly investigated the relationship between leadership and successful change, found that leaders who have certain blindness to their organizational systems and/or who focus too much on their own ego and needs are likely to fall in certain traps. This consequently, damages the success of a change intervention. On the contrary, successful change efforts were in that study associated with leaders that displayed a range of behaviors that demonstrated high levels of self awareness, an ability to ‘work in the moment’, and an ability to remain in tune with the overall purpose of the change. He proposed servant leadership solves above problems.

#### **4. Why servant leadership:**

Servant leadership is very different from other leadership styles. The servant-leaders are genuinely concerned with serving, while other types of leaders are more concerned with getting followers to engage in, and support organizational objectives followers (Greenleaf, 1977; Graham, 1991). A servant-leader is thus honestly interested in how his /her personnel feels about a change, instead of being motivated to increase change readiness, since this would be in the best interest of the organization. Moreover, servant-leaders do not focus primarily on the organizational (or their own) goals (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004), but they are more focused on their followers. Keith (2008) states that servant leadership is about identifying, and meeting the needs of others. Based on this, it could be assumed that in times of organizational change (in which employees who feel insecure, anxious or do not comprehend the change), this attention for their needs could significantly contribute to an increase in change readiness or a decrease in the resistance to change.

Servant-leadership is different from other leadership styles is that servant leadership is a way of being (Marinho, 2006; Spears, 1998). Consequently, the behavior of servant leaders is potentially more consistent and credible over time, than that of others. This could contribute to the level of trust employees have in their leaders, which is very important for an employees’ readiness to change. Servant leaders recognize their moral responsibility not only to the success of their organizations but also to their followers (Ehrhart, 2004; Greenleaf, 1977). By enabling followers to become more self-actualized in order to achieve a shared vision, servant leaders work to enhance the well-being of their followers and the overall organization

Servant leadership theory argues that the prime directive of leaders is to abandon self-interest in favor of service to others. These “others” not only include upper management, board members, and shareholders, but peers, subordinates, and the larger community as well indeed, servant leaders are concerned with the well-being of organizational stakeholders, not just shareholders. It has been suggested that servant leaders are concerned with employees’ well-being, with the well-being of the organization being a subordinate goal, while this focus is reversed for transformational leaders (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003). The servant leader’s altruistic, ‘others-first’ (as opposed to “organization-first”) mindset (Stone 2003). And because transformational leaders may have a propensity for coming off as insincere or manipulative (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999), servant leaders may be more desirable in engendering trust and affective commitment in employees.



## **5.SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE:**

Change management is an essential area of concentration for healthy growth of any business, it is important even for the survival of any organization in today's business world. Change management has highly focused on people, identity and the patterns of human interaction. Change management will be the core competency of the business leaders in twenty-first century. Therefore being visionary change agents, leaders will be required to be more skillful and motivational. Discontinuous changes make worst affect on the capabilities of leadership (Nadler, Shaw & Walton, 1995).

Employee acceptance towards change becomes a critical challenge in front of organizations. The organizations today are struggling with devising the best possible human resource policies which help them retain the skilled workforce to achieve competitive edge. Apart from the changing expectations of the employees, global competitive pressure also forces the organizations to take necessary steps in building trust and confidence in their employees and provide them leadership support, so that they remain working with them for longer. At the same time, in the dynamic business environment and confidence shake in business leadership, the traditional theories of leadership are emerging on the surface to help organizations improve superior subordinate relationships to attain better performance. One such theory is the theory of Servant Leadership (SL) which is characterized by teamwork, involving subordinates in decision making, helping people grow and creating the caring organizations (Spears, 1996, 2010).

The essence of servant leadership hinges on greater mutual power and influence, emphasizes collective and collaborative follower participation, promotes high levels of follower learning, and emphasizes significant follower empowerment (Covey, 2006; Hamilton & Bean, 2005; Pepper, 2003; Rowe, 2003; M. Wheatley, 2004; J. T. Whetstone, 2002). Servant leadership appears to have established its roots in complexity and chaos theory in which leadership emphasize decentralization, differentiation of tasks, collaboration, flexibility and adaptability of structures and processes, participation, and autonomy. The servant leader sometimes strives to instill a mutual acceptance, understanding, and appreciation of a shared vision and/or goal (J. T. Whetstone, 2002). Moreover, the servant leader makes every effort to teach leadership to their followers (Banutu-Gomez, 2004; Covey, 2006; Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

At a very basic level, that servant leadership is needed in retaining followers' hearts and minds throughout the organizational change process because the ethics and integrity inherent in servant leadership (Ciulla, 1995; Toor & Ofori, 2009) . Recent research Loi, Lam, and Chan (2012) found that when employees reported higher levels of justice and ethics in leadership, they also reported lower levels of job insecurity. This suggests that servant leaders who create workplace atmospheres of ethics and justice may also be helping their employees cope with the stress of employment uncertainty. An effective servant leader understands that people typically find change terrifying because of the number of choices and the uncertainty

involved in making the choices (Banutu-Gomez, 2004). Thus, the servant leader focuses on overcoming this fear through creating shared meaning throughout the organization. Banutu-Gomez (2004) states that people need structure, order, and predictability to avoid a feeling of powerlessness in the organizational setting. There are so many paradoxes among the employees while implementation of organizational changes such as insecurity, performance, benefits and motivation.

The servant leadership is the key to overcoming this paradox in the organizational change process by challenging each person to become self-sufficient by tapping into their intelligence, spirit, creativity, commitment, and uniqueness (Banutu-Gomez, 2004; Covey, 2006; Rowe, 2003; M. Wheatley 2004). Servant leader insists that followers confront their fear of conflict with one another in order to avoid the dissatisfaction (Rowe, 2003; M. Wheatley, 2004; J. T. Whetstone, 2002). The central role of the server leader is establishing sustainable strategic vision for the organization or community in a convincing and inspiring fashion. Servant leaders are able to inspire hope and encourage followers to by adhering to their convictions, facilitating positive images, and by giving hope, love, and encouragement (Banutu-Gomez, 2004; J. T. Whetstone, 2002).

During the organizational change process, a servant leader envisions the future, takes initiative, clarifies goals, facilitates a shared vision, shares and releases power, shares status, and promotes others (M. Wheatley 2004). The servant leader strives to implement change by creating a culture that can add value to groups and members by allowing them to focus on goals, take initiatives, and be who they are in group situations (Banutu-Gomez, 2004). Also, the servant leader makes every effort to create a workplace environment in which followers feel comfortable to be themselves. In addition, there is a focus on shifting the organizational culture toward one of exemplary followership that “has a sense of direction, drive, and intensity”. Again, the servant leader must instill direction and support toward developing an environment in which follower motivation is self-evident. To develop follower skills, a servant leader must focus on developing a learning organization in which followers are allowed to learn new skills, grow intellectually, and develop additional expertise (Banutu- Gomez, 2004).

## **6.CONCLUSION:**

Servant leadership was introduced by Greenleaf since 1970 and conducted in a quiet way by supporters and then established its legitimacy as one field of leadership research in the late 1990s. Servant leadership is an approach to corporate goals by making organization members' individual growth needs a priority. Therefore, under this flow, servant leadership became an approach to corporate goals by taking into account of organizational subordinates' individual growth needs in priority and combined corporate missions and relations within one framework. It is a new perspective on organization management that did not focus on the role of leader who simply led subordinates but achieved corporate goals through horizontal consensus building and serving of leader based on mutual

trust. In this rapidly changing management environment today, utilizing servant leadership in a strategic way can play an important role in improving organizational performance. Existence leadership styles are challenged by socio, cultural and people expectations changes in organizations. So, servant leadership will have a potential value as alternative leadership style to achieve organizational excellence through human excellence.

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