USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Information technology has been widely used to promote organizational improvements including increasing business efficiency, enhancing business decision making and organizational communications. However, information technology has not yet reached its potential to improve leadership capabilities. This paper studies the potential applications of information technologies for leadership enhancement.

Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory of leadership classifies leaders into four styles. In this model, a leader is categorized based on the two dimensions of task focus and relationship focus. A leader with low task and low relationship focus is classified as a delegating-style leader. A leader with low task and high relationship behavior is classified as a participating-style leader. A leader with high task and high relationship is classified as a selling-style leader and a high task with low relationship is referred as a telling-style leader. Each category of leadership style demonstrates different strategies in supervision and decision making and different organizations may employ different types of leadership styles to achieve their goals.

We propose that the effectiveness of leadership is influenced by five forces including

1. Internal Environment (organizational structure, constitution, formal or informal groups)
2. External Environment (government policies, economics and international law and legal environment)
3. Resources (employees, capital, equipment and technologies)
4. Mission (vision and mission statement and corporate strategy)
5. Information technology (application software, web based applications)

Among these forces, information technologies provide mechanisms to enhance the quality of leadership.

Information technology has long been viewed as a tool to improve business efficiency and provide data for better decision making. This technology has seldom been seen as a tool to enhance the quality of leadership. In this study, we propose a model to demonstrate how different information technologies provide the tools to enhance each leadership style.

Information technology can be classified based on the leadership dimensions of task and relationship focus. We argue that each information technology including application software or a web-based application could be classified based on these dimensions. For example, GDSS is designed to perform a particular task for decision making among a group of participants and also provide better communication channels so that participants are enabled to reach an informed consensus. Therefore, this application is a good tool to enhance the leadership with high task and high relationship behavior or

selling-style leadership. In other words, a leader classified in this category will benefit by using GDSS. A web-based social media application such as Facebook or Twitter provides a good tool to facilitate social connection and improve the relationship with other people without achieving a particular task; this is beneficial to the leadership with low task and high relationship style or participating-style leadership. Project management software is designed to achieve a task for project scheduling and management and this application does not facilitate and relationship between users. Therefore, this application is applicable to benefit leadership style of high task and low relationship or telling-style leadership.

We argue that each type of software has different degree of the task component and relationship component. A particular function could be achieved by integrating and utilizing these two components. By identifying the leadership style, we can implement different types of software to improve the performance of leadership to accomplish a business goal.