

A GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR IN PROBLEMATIC AND NON-PROBLEMATIC SITUATIONS

Rajendra Khandekar, College of Business, Campus Box 78, MSU Denver, Denver, CO 80217-3362 303-556-3242, KhandekR@msudenver.edu

ABSTRACT

A review of leadership literature reveals that (1) leadership process involves goals which indicate the presence of problems; (2) leadership theories address problems of transformation at increasingly complex levels of systems from individual to relationships to groups to organizations and finally societies; (3) leadership theories address task and emotional processes which means the leader deals with task problems as well as emotional problems; and (4) a leader is expected to be visionary. Literature also reveals that effective leaders adjust their behaviors to fit the situation. It is proposed that if situations are viewed as problematic and non-problematic, we can hypothesize effective leader behaviors that fit the situation. The Zeroth P is a generalized problem-solving framework to describe four different types of problematic and non-problematic situations that cover all contingencies. It is proposed that effective leadership behaviors may be categorized into four types, viz., Celebratory, Boundary-clarifying, Rebellious, and Transformational. The appropriate combinations are - Celebratory behavior in a non-problematic situation when what is happening is what should be happening; Boundary-clarifying behavior, in a non-problematic situation where nothing undesirable is happening and why it should not be going on; Rebellious behavior when what is going on is undesirable and should not be going on; and Transformational behavior when the leader envisions a better world or situation that does not yet exist, but should exist. The paper illustrates application of the framework at the individual and group level.

THE ZEROTH P (ZP) FRAMEWORK

A problem is said to exist when the actual situation or state of a system is different from the desired situation or state of the system. We can visualize our reality by separating what is going on from what is not going on. An ideal or desired situation demands what should be happening, and other things that should not to be happening. This gives us a two by two matrix to visualize four types of situations, two problematic and two non-problematic.

Figure: ZP Framework for Visualizing Problematic and Non-problematic Situations

	What is happening	What is not happening
What should be happening	(Non-problematic Situation) Quadrant Q1 What is happening is what should be happening, therefore no problem	(Problematic Situation) Quadrant Q2 What should be happening is not happening, therefore there is a problem.
What should not be happening	(Problematic Situation) Quadrant Q4 What is happening should NOT be happening, therefore there is a problem.	(Non-problematic Situation) Quadrant Q3

Quadrant Q1 represents a non-problematic situation, because what exists in this situation is exactly what we believe “should be” going on. Similarly, if things that should not happen are not occurring, as in quadrant Q3, then again there is no problem. Quadrants Q2 and Q4 represent problematic situations. In Q2, something is not happening, but it should be happening, thus there is a gap. In quadrant Q4, something is happening that *SHOULD NOT* happen.

ZP FRAMEWORK FOR SITUATIONS AND EFFECTIVE LEADER BEHAVIORS

When everything is going as it should (Quadrant Q1), or nothing is happening that should not (Quadrant Q3), the leader can reinforce the on-going, desirable behaviors and processes through Celebration, or by EXPLICIT Boundary Clarification and Reiteration. When there are things going on that should not be happening (Quadrant Q4), the leader has to engage in Confrontation, Opposition, or Rebellion depending on whether the leader is in power or without power. When there are things that should be happening but are not happening, the leader can engage in Visionary Leadership by sharing his or her ideas about what he / she “sees” should be happening. Visionary leaders, therefore, CREATE problems first and then lead by discussing ways to solve the problem, first through dialogue and later through action projects.

Figure: Effective Leadership Behaviors in Problematic, Non-problematic, and Issue-ridden Situations

	What is happening	Unsure if this is happening or not	What is not happening
What should be happening	(Non-problematic Situation) Celebration Q1	(Issues of ambiguity of information) Factual Clarification	(Problematic Situation) Visionary Leadership Q2
Not sure if this should or should not be happening	(Issues of ambiguity of values) Values Clarification	(Issues of ambiguity of values AND ambiguity of information) Values and Factual Clarification	(Issues of ambiguity of values) Values Clarification
What should not be happening	(Problematic Situation) Confrontation, Opposition, or Rebellion Q4	(Issues of ambiguity of information) Factual Clarification	(Non-problematic Situation) Boundary Clarification and Reiteration Q3

CONCLUSION

This paper utilizes the Zeroth P framework to define problematic and non-problematic situations, as well as issues which are undefined problems. Irrespective of the level of the system, this framework hypothesizes effective Leader behaviors in problematic and non-problematic situations of different kinds. The leader must use technical and interpersonal skills in solving the problems depending on the level of the system he or she is trying to transform. Quadrant Q2 in the framework provides an interesting idea of “vision as creating problems”. This redefines a leader’s job as first creating problems, and then solving those problems with people. The leader’s skills in managing change process for individuals, relationships, and groups will come into play for effective achievement of goals.