

Miracle of Leadership: great conductors make noise become music

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Abstract

The study of leadership has always been a topic of great concern in the field of management. Much of prior leadership research has focused on formal organizations in business settings. As an Israeli conductor and business consultant, Itay Talgam gave a speech on the combination of conductor and leadership. Based on his famous speech, this article puts forward leadership-related propositions about the relationship between leadership and employees. This article also provides some suggestions for empirical research.

Keyword

Authoritative Leadership, Empowering Leadership, performance

The study of leadership has always been popular, and even now many scholars are focusing on this field. There are various views on the definition of the term leadership. Winston and Patterson (2006) believed that the definition of leadership will continue to develop as scholars, researchers, and practicing leaders gain greater insight into the concept.

In the 1900s, Stogdill's Trait Theory believed that good leaders are born with good personal characteristics. In the 1960s, the theories represented by Likert's Four Styles of Leadership believed that excellent leaders have special behavior patterns. However, LPC theory and SL theory believe that the ideal leadership style is not static and should change with the situation. After the 1980s, many new leadership concepts emerged, such as transformational leadership and servant leadership. Itay Talgam explored the miracle of leadership within the workings of the symphony orchestra and created the Maestro Leadership Program. This paper builds a leadership model based on his acclaimed TED talk "Lead like the great conductors" (Talgam, 2009).

Leadership in Music

In fact, as a manager, running a business has a lot in common with conducting an orchestra. First, the leader should understand the specialties of the employees, divide the work, and cooperate with various departments to operate according to certain rules to achieve the goal. The responsibilities of each department are different, just as the sounds of various instruments in a symphony orchestra are different. However, each department must not only perform its duties but also cooperate to ensure the completion of the goal. Just like the members of a symphony orchestra make noise individually, but under the leadership of a conductor, they cooperate to turn the noise into beautiful music.

The conductor's baton itself has no meaning to the members of the orchestra. Nor can we achieve perfect harmony by making the same gestures as the conductor. A good conductor can use the baton to let the orchestra members see the meaning behind the "waving", and then jointly present a wonderful performance to the audience. It is the essence of every leader's art, vital to all who conduct business and other high-stakes enterprises far beyond the walls of the concert hall (Talgam & Bloom, 2015). Itay Talgam has experience conducting world-renowned orchestras such as the Orchester de Paris. In his TED talk, he combined his conducting and training experience, vividly described the conducting styles of

five world-renowned conductors, and demonstrated five typical leadership styles.

Five Great Conductors and Five Leadership Styles

Riccardo Muti is a famous Italian conductor. In the video (Talgam, 2009), Riccardo Muti looked down at the musicians steadily and gave clear instructions with strong gestures without missing any details. Itay Talgam thinks Muti is awesome, he calmly controls and commands. It may even seem a little bit over-clear. When Riccardo Muti was asked "Why do you conduct like this", he answered, "I'm responsible for Mozart". The only story to be told is Mozart's story. The conductor (Riccardo Muti) is the only authority and the highest representative of the composer (Mozart), and all musicians should obey his instructions 100%. Itay Talgam imitated Riccardo Muti's approach and he can control the sound of the audience very well. This seems to show that such a command method is effective. Talgam and Bloom (2015) also mentioned in their book, that Riccardo Muti had succeeded in working for the Israel Philharmonic. The one element this orchestra lacked to play like a great orchestra was silence. Under Muti's baton, the orchestra in just ten minutes reached a level better it had not attained in years. However, Riccardo Muti got a letter signed by all 700 musical employees of La Scala. The employees agree that Riccardo Muti is a great conductor but don't want to work with him because they think Riccardo Muti doesn't let them develop, and just uses them as instruments.

Richard Strauss is a German composer and conductor. He conducts the orchestra with a different kind of control from Riccardo Muti. In the video (Talgam, 2009), when the orchestra played one of his compositions, Richard Strauss looked down, somewhat withdrawn, and only occasionally opened his eyes to look very quickly and intently at a part of the orchestra. Richard Strauss wrote "The Ten Golden Rules for the Album of a Young Conductor" which can explain his conduct style. The whole idea of the list is to let it happen by itself, don't interfere. When Richard Strauss stands on the podium in front of the whole orchestra, he is transferring a strong message to the musicians "Come on guys. You have to play by the book. It's only the execution of the written music, no interpretation." Riccardo Muti himself is the only authority, and Richard Strauss believes that sheet music is the only authority. So, what these two conductors have in common is that, together with the orchestra, they present only one story, the only one that meets the criteria.

Herbert von Karajan is an Austrian conductor. Herbert von Karajan is different from the two conductors mentioned before. His control method is invisible, and it is a kind of spiritual control. In the video (Talgam, 2009), Herbert von Karajan bowed his head slightly to the musicians, listening attentively and with great concentration. Since he keeps his eyes shut almost all the time, his forehead seems to be the focal point, as if his thought process is broadcast through it, allowing all musicians to read his mind. But when Itay Talgam tried to control the audience's applause by imitating Herbert von Karajan during his talk, he failed. This made Herbert von Karajan's style of command look less effective than that of Riccardo Muti. Talgam and Bloom (2015) mentioned in the book that during rehearsals and preparations for the final product, Karajan would also clearly articulate his intentions and hand them over to the musicians to realize. Herbert von Karajan and Riccardo Muti are similar in that they are the only authority. Under the baton of Herbert von Karajan, the musicians know they have no authority to change anything. The difference with the previous two conductors is that the real music is only in Herbert von Karajan's head, and the musicians must guess Herbert von Karajan's mind. Itay Talgam (2009) suggested that musicians are also under tremendous pressure. Interestingly, Herbert von Karajan was the music director of great orchestras for 35 years, whereas Riccardo Muti was shown the way out from his equally position after

only nineteen years (Talgam & Bloom,2015). Herbert von Karajan mind-controlled the musicians, making them harder to resist. Instead, Riccardo Muti's control is directly visible and thus an easier target for resistance.

Carlos Kleiber is an Austrian conductor who is widely regarded as among the greatest conductors of all time. Carlos Kleiber exhibits a very different kind of control, he doesn't control the musicians, he immerses himself in it and creates amazing harmony with them. He controls the process and models a uniquely liberating form of control. It is not difficult to see in the speech that Itay Talgam also admired this great conductor very much. He spent the most time describing Carlos Kleiber's conducting style. In the video (Talgam, 2009), Carlos Kleiber bent over, with a joyful smile on his face, his long arms danced lightly, and his body swayed accordingly. He sometimes directed with just his fingertips, and he even could lean back and listen, almost motionless. He always looked happy, enjoying the orchestra like an audience. The joy of this performance is about enabling other people's stories to be heard at the same time. These stories can be the stories of the orchestra as a professional body, the stories of the audience as a community, the stories of the individuals, and other unseen stories (the wonderful concert hall, beautiful instruments, etc.). Carlos Kleiber not only creates a process but also creates the condition in the world in which this process takes place. All musicians have motivations and a lot of physical energy. They are also very professional. So, Carlos Kleiber and the orchestra can bring the best music to the audience. Carlos Kleiber's innocent smile is a stark contrast to the stern and domineering Riccardo Muti. At the same time, the musicians are no longer instruments to be used, they gain respect, can tell their own stories, and establish a cooperative relationship with the conductor.

Leonard Bernstein is an American conductor, composer, pianist, music educator, author, and humanitarian. Leonard Bernstein, Itay Talgam's teacher, seems to be his most admired conductor. Although there may be some subjective factors in this, we can indeed notice something special about Leonard Bernstein in the video (Talgam, 2009). He seemed to do nothing but just suffer because the meaning of the music is pain. Itay Talgam explained that Leonard Bernstein's conducting always starts from the meaning. He's the one who went beyond the great power of "music as a process", in search of music's meaning and used this search as a drive for individual and group growth and emancipation. And, to Itay Talgam, he was the ultimate exemplar of a leader who not only changes an organization for the better but improves the quality of the work and the lives of those who work on its behalf (Talgam & Bloom,2015).

Theory and Propositions

To compare the above five conductors and their leadership styles, Table 1 is constructed based directly and clearly on Itay Talgam's TED speech (2009) and referring to the book "The ignorant maestro: how great leaders inspire unpredictable brilliance" (Talgam & Bloom,2015).

Table 1

	Riccardo Muti	Richard Strauss	Herbert von Karajan	Carlos Kleiber	Leonard Bernstein
Control Target	musicians	musicians	musicians	processes	(no control)
Control Method	direct control	indirect control	spiritual control	direct control	\
Control Strength	Very high	High	High	Low	\

Authority	Conductor	Book	Conductor	Standard of process	Everyone
Instructions	explicit gesture	tiny gesture	vague gesture	body language and expression	expression
Musician status	instruments	need to be restricted	can be trusted	partner	whole person

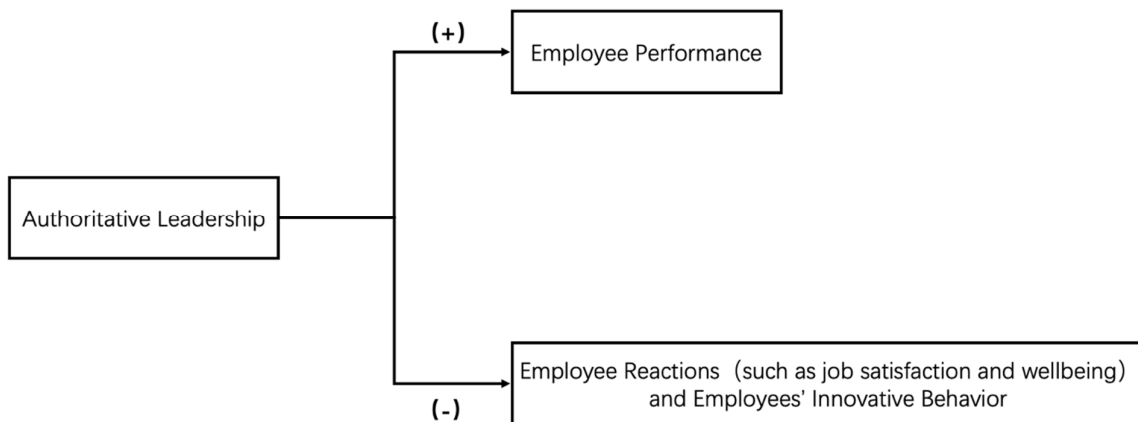
Riccardo Muti, Richard Strauss, and Herbert von Karajan all control the musicians of the orchestra. Under the control of the three of them, the musicians can only convey one kind of story. In other words, musicians are not empowered and need to follow the instructions of the supreme leader (conductor). Silin (1976) first proposed the concept of authoritative leadership. He believed that authoritarian leadership's strict control over employees is its most obvious feature, and its high-power distance is also an important manifestation. So, this article thinks that Riccardo Muti is a typical authoritative leader. Both the small experiment in the video (Talgam, 2009) and Riccardo Muti's own experience show that authoritative leadership is effective for novice employees without systematic training. Riccardo Muti, Richard Strauss, and Herbert von Karajan use different control methods and instruction. The best results are achieved when direct control and clear instructions are used. In the video (Talgam, 2009), Itay Talgam's use of Herbert von Karajan's method failed to achieve the desired effect and proved that vague instructions for immature subordinates are not effective.

Proposition 1. When employees are immature, authoritative leadership is positively related to employee performance.

However, it is worth noting that while Riccardo Muti had spectacular success in Israel, he suffered a huge failure in Milan. The musicians said Riccardo Muti didn't show them respect. They want to be the conductor's partner, not an emotionless tool. So, they don't want to work with Riccardo Muti. In addition, Riccardo Muti, Richard Strauss, and Herbert von Karajan all have strict authority, and they control the musicians to complete only one story. Musicians have no rights and opportunities to improve and create.

Proposition 2. Authoritative leadership is negatively related to employee reactions (such as job satisfaction and wellbeing) and employees' innovative behavior.

Figure 1



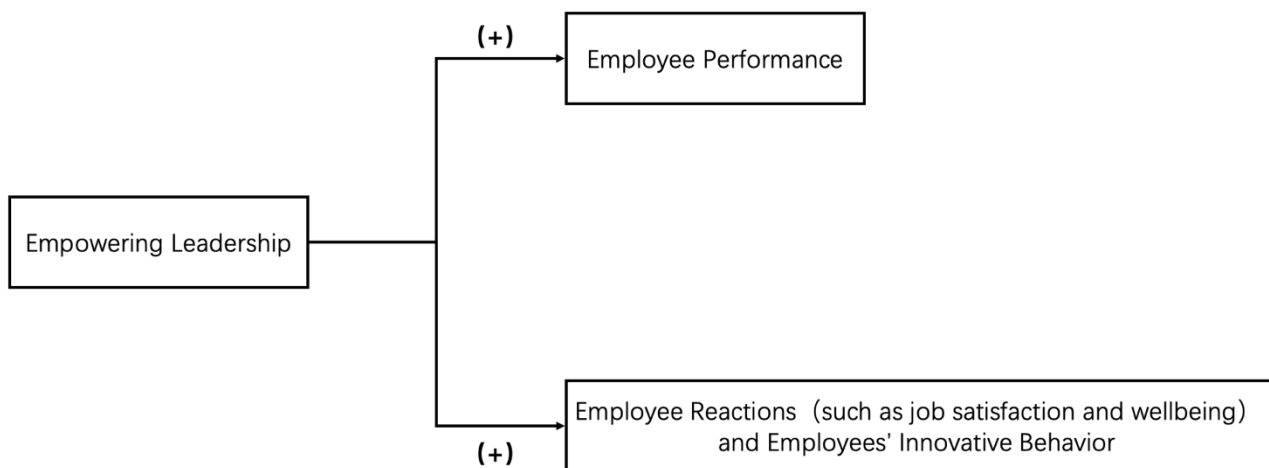
As failed by Riccardo Muti, the effectiveness of authoritarian leadership seems to diminish as followers mature. Meanwhile, new leadership styles like Carlos Kleiber and Leonard Bernstein can also work well. Carlos is a great

conductor who is widely recognized and famous in the world. Leonard Bernstein is also Itay Talgam's most admired conductor. Both conductors no longer control the musicians but give them power. Carlos Kleiber controls the process, allowing mature and talented players to fully develop. Leonard Bernstein doesn't even exercise any kind of control, starting from the meaning, he gives all the rights to the musicians and enjoys it himself. Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp (2005) pointed out in the research that empowering leadership is a relatively special leadership style, which is manifested in the leader's initiative to delegate power, give more decision-making power and participation power to employees, and stimulate employees' work initiative through trust, support, and help. This article argues that Carlos Kleiber is a typical empowering leader who invites musicians to collaborate and share responsibility professionally. So, unlike the musicians of Riccardo Muti, the musicians of Carlos Kleiber feel respected and become partners with the conductor. Everyone in the show can tell their own story in music. Therefore, the following two propositions can be put forward relative to the above propositions.

Proposition 3. When employees are mature, empowering leadership is positively related to employee performance.

Proposition 4. Empowering leadership is positively related to employee reactions (such as job satisfaction and wellbeing) and employees' innovative behavior.

Figure 2



Measures

The goal of this paper is to build a model of leadership, but in fact, there is no clear measurement of leadership effectiveness. This article provides an indirect look at leadership effectiveness by surveying employee performance, employee reactions (job satisfaction and wellbeing), and employees' innovation behavior. Employee performance can be measured using data disclosed in some annual reports, such as sales and profits. Job satisfaction can be measured with Warr, Cook & Wall's (1979) 15-item job satisfaction scale. Wellbeing can be measured using Warr's (1990) job-related well-being scale. Employees' innovative behavior can be measured with Scott and Bruce's (1994) 6-item innovative behavior scale.

Due to limited space, this article does not elaborate on the measurement of the remaining variables and the content related to the research method (such as participants and procedure).

Discussion

This article roughly divides the five conductors into two leadership styles: authoritarian leadership and empowering leadership. As shown in Table 1, there are still subtle differences between them. For example, Riccardo Muti, Richard Strauss, and Herber von Karajan have different controls. So clear instructions and strict controls are more suitable for employees with low maturity. And of the trio, Riccardo Muti seemed to be the only one who was hit back by the musicians. But Itay Talgam (Talgam, 2009) thinks that Herber von Karajan's musicians are also mature under tremendous mental pressure. Based on the theory of resource preservation, they may make corresponding counterattacks, but this counterattack is more subtle. In addition, the success of Leonard Bernstein seems to indicate that for professionally outstanding employees, intrinsic motivation (such as self-efficacy) is more important than extrinsic motivation. Due to the lack of established definitions and objective basis, this paper does not put the above conjecture into a formal model.

While Itay Talgam has high praise for the leadership of Carlos Kleiber and Leonard Bernstein, the dark side of empowering leadership is worth exploring further. Whether the success of these two great conductors can be replicated remains to be further verified. Even if Itay Talgam doesn't seem to approve of Riccardo Muti's conducting style, the interesting thing, he can easily replicate Riccardo Muti's success. Itay Talgam combines conductors and leaders to study leadership, but music as an art has a special subjectivity. The arts industry values creativity and individual differences more than many other industries. Perhaps in some other industries or occupations, it is difficult to find similar phenomena. For example, in simple and boring factory assembly line work, regardless of the maturity of employees, authoritative leaders seem always more efficient than empowering leaders.

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