

Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership is the process by which leaders inspire their followers to reach their full potential. Transformational leaders act as role models, motivate others to work toward a shared vision, encourage innovation and acknowledge the individual needs of their subordinates.

Development and Components of Transformational Leadership:

- First mentioned by Downton in 1973, but first introduced as an approach to leadership by James MacGregor Burns in *Leadership* (1978)
 - Linked the roles of leaders and followers
 - Distinguished between transactional leaders (exchange between leaders and followers) and transformational leaders (connection between leaders and followers)
 - Determined that both leaders and followers gained enhanced levels of motivation and morality when leaders supported the followers by considering their needs and motives
- Robert J. House published his *Theory of Charismatic Leadership* in 1976
 - Similar to Transformational Leadership
 - Suggests that Charismatic leaders display behaviors that cause followers to feel strong emotions and affiliation with the leader and leader's goals
- Bernard Bass (1985) bases his theory of Transformational Leadership on the previous two with some revision
 - Sees Transformational and Transactional leadership as a single continuum
 - Identifies four factors of Transformational Leadership which influence followers to exceed expectations

Bass observes that transformational leaders possess the following behaviors:

- Idealized Influence - Leaders act as strong, role models who are admired by their followers
- Inspirational Motivation - Leaders establish high expectations and motivate followers to work toward this shared vision
- Intellectual Stimulation - Leaders encourage followers to think in innovative ways, challenging accepted beliefs
- Individualized Consideration - Leaders act as coaches and advisors to address the individual needs of followers

Strengths vs. Weaknesses

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Researched from different perspectives2. Intuitive appeal3. Process that occurs between followers and leaders4. Broader view of leadership/ augments other5. Emphasis on followers' needs, values, and morals6. Empirical evidence of its effectiveness | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lacks conceptual clarity2. Measurement/Assessment issues3. Ascribed vs. Achieved Trait4. Lacks evidence of causal link to individual/organization change5. Opinion it is elitist and antidemocratic6. "Heroic Leadership" bias7. Potential for abuse |

Applications of Transformational Leadership

Northouse provides three case studies to demonstrate applications of transformational leadership.

- Case Study 9.1 (Manufacturing Industry) is a failed application during an executive leadership change, where new leader did not demonstrate the Four I behaviors.
- Case Study 9.2 (Archeological Dig) is a successful application that shows self-assessment and leader development, showing examples of the Four I's.
- Case Study 9.3 (Pharmaceutical/Research Center) shows initial success and then issues due to organizational growth. A transformative leader in a start-up, but could not adapt to the changing environment and apply the Four I's.

Source: Northouse, P. G., (2013). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.