



University of Wales Trinity Saint David

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Module: Leadership and Management,

Theory and Practice, Walmart Inc. - Assessment 1

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Module Lecturer:

Dr Mushfiqur Rahman

Anita Nan

Prepared by student:

Name: Reneta Ivanova

ID: 1906323

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Introduction

According to the instructions given in the assignment brief, in this paper, the experience of leading people at Walmart will be critically reflected. Managing and leading people in organisational contexts is a complex thing. In different contexts of leadership, it is important to apply different theories. These all will be reflected in this assignment (Dean, 2014). Additionally, an action plan will be developed as a part of reflection to develop leadership skills further, so that the attributes of leadership can assist in meeting current and future organisational needs. The action plan will be added in the appendix section of the document.

Information about Walmart, UK

Walmart is one of the most successful multinational retailer business organisations. It was established in 1962 in Rogers, Arkansas, United States of America (Stankevičiūtė et al., 2012). Sam Walton was the founder of the retail industry organisation. It operates worldwide with 10585 stores in different locations. Walmart has 2,300,000 employees currently. Walmart entered the United Kingdom in 1999. In the last fiscal year, Walmart earned £572.8 billion in revenues by managing global operations.

Theories and models of leadership and management

Recently I have worked in a group at Walmart as the leader. So working in a group of 12 people in Walmart helped me to gather various experiences in leadership. There are different theories of leadership, which I acknowledged before accepting leadership. While working at Walmart, I have learnt the meaning and values of transactional leadership, transformational leadership, behavioural leadership and trait approach to leadership.

Transformational theory

Transformational leadership is a kind of approach to leading people by encouraging, motivating and inspiring people to bring long-term changes in the behaviour and skills of the individuals and systems of working. The success of transformational leadership depends on the skills of the leader and the changes that the leader brings through the application of this theory. There are four pillars of transformational leadership; idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual

consideration (Ghasabeh et al., 2015). I applied this theory to support employees and help Walmart to achieve its goals through the contribution of my group.

Transactional theory

Transactional leadership theory does not believe in the pillars of transformational leadership. The theory of transactional leadership instructs the leader either to offer rewards to the employees or punish them for their activities to achieve the desired performance of the group or team. The theme of transactional leadership is that people work for different types of incentives besides the basic wages (Shah and Hamid, 2015). So, by punishing or rewarding people, leadership goals can be achieved. But this theory of leadership is directly linked with the value of money, but all the employees do not work for money, as far as I know. So, I did not apply the transactional theory of leadership.

Behavioural theory

The behavioural theory of leadership believes that the effectiveness of leadership depends on the behaviour of a leader rather than his skills and natural attributes. So the leader needs to know how to respond and why to respond to the subordinates in each situation to get the best output from the employees. Behavioural theory suggests that leaders improve their behaviour by observing the behaviour of other leaders and people in the workplace (Bhattacharyya and Jha, 2018). I applied the behavioural theory, as it was necessary to maximize efficiency and achieve the objectives set for my group by the Walmart organisation. I was new and the application of this theory let me know different pros and cons of successful leadership.

Trait theory

The trait theory of leadership is a leader-centric theory of leadership that values the inborn qualities and approaches of the leader. For example, the personality, characteristics, intelligence and behavioural patterns of a leader enable him to lead in different situations according to the trait theory (Colbert et al., 2012).

The knowledge of different theories, styles and approaches helped me to actively participate in the leadership role. But I mainly applied the transformational theory and the behavioural theory of leadership.

Critical evaluation of the impact of leadership at Walmart

Leadership impact Walmart directly by modifying the practices in the workplace and the behaviour of the employees. There are different leaders in Walmart, who guide the employees working in the organisation. Because of the differences in leadership approaches, the impacts of leadership become different.

The transformational leaders inspire the people working in Walmart and work to change their behaviour. But it is not possible to advocate for all the employees and change their behaviour to enhance the productivity of the organisation. Transactional leaders punish and provide rewards to the employees to keep them motivated. There is a bad effect of transactional leaders on employees. If the justification process is non-transparent or partial, then employees can be demotivated. Some leaders in Walmart are naturally genius and they use their personalities to influence people in the organisation. But all the leaders do not have this quality (Rickards and Moger, 2017). Hence, all of Walmart's leaders cannot lead by applying the trait theory. Behavioural leaders direct employees support them, participate in group work, make effective decisions and find ways of influencing the behaviour of the employees and it helps to inspire the employees in the long-term.

Walmart gets high performance from the employees, competitive advantages and becomes able to achieve different objectives of the organisation according to the mission and mission statements in the UK by the directions and decisions of different types of leaders (Rickards and Moger, 2017). It helps the multinational company to go forward with excellent plans for operations and management of different processes and people.

Contemporary leadership and management development issues

The goals and objectives of the group have been achieved under my leadership, so I am happy about this. The power of leadership gives control of the employees, processes and the authority for decision-making to the leader. I was glad when I was given these duties and responsibilities by the retailer organisation. But in practice, I found it stressful to play the roles and responsibilities of a leader in large business organisations e.g. Walmart. I was confused in some areas of leadership to make

decisions immediately, but I was required to make immediate decisions and inspire others according to those decisions to perform. Besides I was also instructed by Walmart to support the employees in good or bad times as long as they are working under my leadership (Gray et al., 2022). This made the situation very critical for me, as I had no previous experience of leading people in organisational contexts. Although I was not afraid of the leadership roles, I had to work with different problems and uncertainties.

The application of the transformational leadership approach helped me to remain open, ethical and honest with my followers. Besides, it enhanced my skills of critical thinking and encouraged effective change management in working patterns, which made the employees happy. Literally, I utilised the happiness of the employees as the factor of motivation to focus on the bigger picture and achieve the best outcomes for the group. But one of the problems of the transformational leadership approach is that it increases pressure on the members included in the group and they frequently get frustrated and demotivated (Lin et al., 2019). I found this as my weakness that I was failing to keep the employees constantly motivated and I was required to frequently motivate the employees. So, until the goals were achieved, I was very confused about what to do next and how to prove my accountability as the group leader.

To reduce the confusion, I applied the behavioural theory of leadership and it was very effective to teach me different approaches to leading people and making effective decisions. I learnt from the employees and applied different techniques through external and internal learning to change the mind of the employees to innovatively achieve the aims and objectives of the group. I had not punished an employee for poor performance, rather I inspired the employees as a whole to keep them working and satisfied with my approaches to leadership. This inability to punish or reward anyone can be referred to as a weakness of myself as a leader (Bratton, 2020). But I did not do that, as I learnt from my teachers that it is not easy to change the mind of the people and influence them and not every time they will listen to the leader. So I tolerated it.

Own experience of leadership and areas for development

Working in a large organisation like Walmart is always exciting and it gave me the scope to learn different issues related to leadership and management of people in the group by the application of transformational and behavioural theories of leadership.

The application of transformational leadership theory enabled me to inspire and motivate people in my group. I knew that creativity is one of the basic principles of leadership and I was creative and supportive to all the members of my group while leading them to achieve the best results (Rickards and Moger, 2017). I communicated with my group members frequently to support them and organise the activities properly to achieve the outcomes of the group for Walmart. The application of transformational theory helped me to influence people to work hard and merge the outputs of the group members to compile the findings in documents using the knowledge and skills of *Microsoft Office* e.g. *MS Word* and *MS PowerPoint*. It was a great experience when I saw that, I have been able to meet the goals of my group within the allocated time using the resources supplied by Walmart, despite different obstacles and challenges.

However, while working with the group members I applied the behavioural theory of leadership. I learnt from my teachers that, it is better to learn from each other and by reading the aspects of behavioural theory, I understood that this theory help to share the experience with other people and learn new things to achieve the best (Brown, 2015). So, I applied this theory successfully.

At the end of the project, the executives of Walmart praised me, as I was successful in meeting all the goals and objectives of the group work within the deadline and maintained quality strictly for all the tasks assigned to me as the leader of the group. It makes me feel proud, as I have been successful to prove my intellectual skills of leadership as a leader of a group of Walmart, UK. I have executed the knowledge and skills learnt from my institution and I am initially very happy with my performance.

I had no professional experience in leading people in organisations. So I am considering these experiences of leadership as the beginning of my professional leadership journey. As the very first experience, I am overall but I had different weaknesses which I have found in the evaluation section of the reflection. This makes me disappointed. I have learnt one thing from the leadership experience at Walmart that experience is a very important thing to lead people besides the knowledge and skills of leadership to properly utilise different knowledge and skills to make decisions and lead people. Different knowledge, skills and experience in leadership help the leaders and managers to identify and meet different needs of an organisation to keep the organisation current and prepare it for the future (Ashford and DeRue, 2012).

By participating in the evaluation and analysis of my recent leadership experience in this reflective assessment, I have found different weaknesses and I am determined to replace the weaknesses with necessary skills and qualities within the possible time to develop myself as an excellent leader so that I can comprehensively direct and lead people in business organisations (Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 2017). Therefore I will prepare an action plan and attach it in the appendix section of the assignment to let my tutor review my action plans and suggest to me the scopes and areas of improvement or change in the action plan, if necessary.

Conclusion

Working in the group at Walmart was the beginning of my learning leadership in action, but it is not the last experience. So I am optimistic to recover the areas, where I have weaknesses. But the experience has let me learn that leadership helps to develop and grow personal and professional competencies to work in business organisations, influence people and contribute positively and excellently to the development of the organisation. A good leader needs to update his knowledge and skills by experiencing new leadership projects to compare and contrast his competencies with the current requirements of leadership. So I should not stop here, I must set a clear purpose of developing different skills of leadership and find ways of improving my qualities as a leader to get fit for professional life.

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Appendix: Leadership development plan

What are my Leadership development Objectives?	What leadership activities do I need to undertake to achieve my objectives?	Where will I develop my leadership to achieve my leadership objectives?	Target date for achieving my objectives
To improve decision-making skills	I was slow in decision-making in the last leadership project. So, it needs to learn the skills of making quick decisions. I can learn the skills of decision-making through the suggestions of experienced leaders.	At the organisation	November 11, 2022
To improve emotional intelligence	I can improve my emotional intelligence by reviewing my reactions to other people in stressful situations and controlling my behaviour using the learning from each reflective review.	At the workplace	February 13, 2023

To learn skills in stress management	By exercising stress management regularly, adjusting to different situations and improving my flexibility I can learn stress management	At the workplace	May 19, 2023
To improve problem-solving skills	By emphasising research and innovation, I can improve my skills in solving problems. Besides I am slow in solving problems. So, the development of time-based problem-solving skills is necessary.	At the organisation	July 24, 2023
To learn skills of mentoring and monitoring people	By being a good listener, communicator, problem solver, critical thinker and evaluator, I can be an expert in mentoring and monitoring people.	At the workplace	August 21, 2023