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Leadership and Management Theory and
Practice

A case study on Sainsbury's

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Introduction

Leadership is a vital aspect of a business es that determines its overall success. It and involves outlining the organisation's goals and objectives; allocating various resources (human/financial); and chalking the correct path and directing/motivating people to work towards the goals/objectives (Northouse, 2018).

This report analyses various key leadership theories and models such as the Traits theory, Behavioural theory and Situational-Contingency Leadership theory. Various leadership styles such as autocratic, transactional, transformational, Laissez-Faire, participative and bureaucratic styles are studied along with each style's benefits and drawbacks. The report discusses about important leadership qualities/behaviour and theories/styles in the context of Sainsbury's, a leading UK-based retail organisation. A leadership development plan that specifies essential initiatives to improve own leadership skills/attributes is developed based on insights obtained from personal experiences as regards leadership.

Sainsbury's – Company Overview

Sainsbury's is an eminent player in the UK food retail market that operates more than 600 supermarkets and nearly 815 convenience outlets in addition to an online store (Sainsbury's, 2022). The company, which began operations in 1869, chiefly aims to provide premium-quality delicious food at competitive rates. Sainsbury's sells clothing under Tu brand and home-ware and cookware under Sainsbury's Home and Habitat brands. The company also offers consumer electronic products and has a presence in the banking sector providing services to several customers through Sainsbury's Bank. Argos, another Sainsbury's brand, ranks as the third highest visited retail website in UK (Statista, 2021). Sainsbury's inclusive work culture is

characterised by fair treatment and respect towards its employees across its various business activities and supply chains.

A Review of Leadership and Management Theories/Models

Leadership refers to a manager's ability to encourage their team members/subordinates to work with enthusiasm and confidence towards the organisation's mission/goals (Drucker, 2020). Leadership is a crucial aspect of organisations and good leaders can enable companies to attain maximum productivity/efficiencies and accomplish business goals and objectives by influencing the behaviour of their employees/teams. The various aspects underlying the importance of leadership to organisations include:

Leaders initiate action in an organisation; they initiate the work by communicating about the organisation's plans and policies to their team members (McGiboney, 2018). Leaders motivate the organisation's employees with financial or non-financial rewards, thus getting the work done by the team members. They not only supervise their subordinates' work but also provide guidance and direction, which involves the ways in which the team has to carry out the assigned work/responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. A good leader creates confidence among his/her team members by clearly explaining about their role and responsibilities and providing them with guidelines on how they can effectively attain the pre-specified goals. Listening to the concerns/issues faced by the subordinates and working at addressing them is an important trait of an effective leader. Morale denotes the employees' willingness to perform their work efficiently (Gartland & Sweeney, 2018). Good leaders can help boost their subordinates' morale by gaining their cooperation and trust, which would enable them to perform to their best ability to accomplish the goals. A good work environment is paramount to building and maintaining a productive workforce, which is vital for organisations to attain a competitive edge and growth and ultimately realise their goals/objectives. As such, leaders should ensure that they maintain warm and friendly relationship with their subordinates and treat them well by listening to and addressing their issues and concerns.

There are several leadership theories and models that explain the important attributes/qualities of successful leaders; key factors, which were considered in these studies, include the traits,

actions, environment, situations and decision-making abilities of the leaders (McGiboney, 2018). Some of the leading theories of leadership include:

The Great Man Theory, which originated during the 1840s, assumed that great leaders are born with specific inherent qualities and that leadership is not built (McGiboney, 2018). Good leadership is attributed to these particular qualities; the theory does not place importance on situational elements.

The Trait Theory of leadership claims that individuals are born leaders; they possess specific ideal characteristics/traits such as motivation, intelligence, flexibility, achievement drive, persistence, initiative, stress tolerance, energy, maturity, confidence and social skills, all of which render them successful leaders (Gartland & Sweeney, 2018).

The Behavioural Theory of leadership emphasises on specific behavioural patterns of leaders that might result in greater satisfaction for their followers (Roe, 2020). Leadership behaviour can be of two types, namely, Employee-focussed leaders who are concerned about their employees and strive to build supportive workplace relations; and Task-focused leaders who primarily aim to attain the organisation's tasks/goals.

The Situational-Contingency leadership theory claims that there is no specific leadership style that is ideal for all situations and that the leaders are required to adapt their style as per the situation (Northouse, 2018). The theory highlights that leadership styles vary in accordance with the situations and is contingent on different considerations such as supervisors, subordinates or tasks.

The Managerial Grid theory assumes that there are two basic leadership behavioural patterns, namely concern for people and concern for production (McGiboney, 2018). The managerial grid evaluates the leadership behaviour on basis of these two scales and the styles range from "Impoverished Management", which stands for leaders that lack in people- and task-related considerations, to "Team Management", which is an ideal style that represents leaders scoring highest on both (people- and task-based) considerations.

John Adair's Action-Centred Leadership model asserts that good leaders should focus on the overlapping areas of addressing individual requirements (by identifying actions necessary for catering to each employee's requirements), task completion (entails identifying/executing

actions necessary for attaining specific goals) and promoting team unity (implementing team-level initiatives, which promote excellent teamwork and team cohesion) (Gartland & Sweeney, 2018).

Leadership Styles/Models

Various leadership style/models suit various organisational environments:

Autocratic leaders have good power/control over their subordinates/team members; the followers do not have the power to comment or make recommendations in the leader's decision-making process (Bratton, 2020). This leadership model is advantageous in crisis situations where quick decisions have to be taken. Autocratic leadership's drawbacks are that it might cause followers to feel dominated and can lead to greater absenteeism.

Transactional leaders reward their subordinates/followers for good performance and punish them for bad performance (Arenas, 2019). Benefits of transactional leadership are that it involves a fair approach; entails greater managerial power; and followers can observe their performance's impact on the business. However, this leadership style does not emphasise on building relationships and stifles creativity.

Transformational leaders are motivating and charismatic individuals that encourage critical thinking among their followers (Arenas, 2019). The benefits of this style are that it can provide outstanding efficiencies and results; drive change; and reduce turnover costs. Nonetheless, the leadership style involves certain disadvantages, namely, it potentially emphasises heavily on the bigger picture and thus can overlook details (example: administrative work); further, the style calls for continual communication and might be disruptive.

Laissez-Faire (Delegative) leadership denotes a hands-off style, which permits followers/subordinates to carry out tasks in a manner that they think as fit (Murphy, 2019). The leader would check the subordinates' performance and provide feedback regularly. Although this style promotes individual growth/innovation and faster decision-making, it might cause lack of leaders' involvement and responsibility as regards their teams; the leaders might fail to recognise the employees' efforts and this can discourage followers.

Democratic/Participative leadership involves considering the opinions of followers in decision-making (Bratton, 2020). The style's benefits include a highly satisfied and productive workforce as it allows the employees to showcase their talent and creativity. Nonetheless, this style is not appropriate in situations that require fast decision-making.

Bureaucratic leadership entails motivating team members to perform well while conforming strictly to the rules/regulations and pre-specified processes (Murphy, 2019). This style is ideal in companies that have dangerous/hazardous work environments but is inappropriate for companies where higher flexibility and creativity are vital. The style's benefits are that it involves clearly-defined roles with a good leadership style; however, it can potentially limit creativity and render it tough to adapt to change.

Application of Leadership Theories/Models in Sainsbury's

An organisation's performance relies heavily on the effectiveness of the leadership styles adopted by its leaders/managers (Khajeh, 2018). My previous work experience as an employee in Sainsbury's has provided me with a good insight about the different effective leadership practices followed by the company's management and its impact on creating a well-satisfied, productive workforce that has delivered exceptional performance over the years.

Sainsbury's has attained its strong position as a leading supermarket chain in UK owing to its heavy emphasis on innovation in its processes and delivering novel products to its customers (Sainsbury's, 2022). According to the Situational-Contingency leadership theory, there is no single leadership style, which is perfect for the various situations faced by organisations and that leaders have to adapt in accordance with the situation (Northouse, 2018). Sainsbury's' managers were observed to adopt the democratic/participative leadership style most of the times. This leadership style provides the organisations with multifarious benefits including the ability to build a well-satisfied, motivated and productive workforce considering that the managers allow employees to show their creativity and talent (Hahn & Kelly, 2019). Allowing employees to partake in key decisions helped motivate the employees and make them feel empowered and valued by the organisation. For example, Sainsbury's' store managers discuss with and solicit suggestions from their team members concerning innovative ways in which they can improve customer service. Team meetings were being held where each member was allowed to voice his/her opinion. This leadership approach helped bring forth several viewpoints; facilitated better problem-solving; improved employees' commitment levels;

fostered team spirit and employee relations; and boosted employees' job satisfaction and morale. Sainsbury's' positive/cordial work culture is characterised by effective leadership, which ensures that there exist good/open communication channels between the managers and their subordinates; team work; mutual respect among employees; and sharing of responsibilities.

However, in certain situations such as crisis where quick decisions should be taken, the autocratic leadership style was found to be more appropriate (Bhaduri, 2019). For example, in difficult scenarios such as financial crisis, managers in Sainsbury's were observed to adopt the autocratic leadership style which facilitated quicker decision-making.

The Transformational leadership style is based on the premise that the followers learn from their leaders and transform into good leaders for other individuals (Ezeobah, 2020). In Sainsbury's also, leaders and their subordinates were found to work with each other to attain heightened motivation levels and improved morale. The Chief Executive Officer of the company along with the top management inspires employees to adapt their expectations, perceptions and motivations to strive/work towards a common mission/goal. The leadership style has been found to boost employees' engagement levels as each team member feels that they fit into a specific role in the organisation. In cases of major change processes such as the acquisitions carried out by Sainsbury's, transformational leadership has helped in convincing the employees to believe in the proposed change and its benefits; this has enabled to encourage employees to become an integral part of the change rather than resist the change and work to their full potential.

Review of Own Experience of Leadership and Identifying Areas that Require Development

The transformation process from a follower/employee to an effective leader calls for developing specific skills and capabilities. My previous work experience as a part of Sainsbury's has enabled to provide a clear perspective of the various key aspects of effective leadership. The experience has helped me realise the skills and attributes that I should build to improve my leadership strengths.

My observation of leadership practices followed in Sainsbury's has helped me infer that I should change my leadership style from being a transactional leader (who mainly focuses on rewarding good performance and punishing poor performance) to a participative leader. Unlike transactional leadership, participative leadership helps promote creativity/innovation and boosts employees' job satisfaction/morale and productivity (Bratton, 2020). Further, leaders in Sainsbury's were found to adopt the autocratic leadership style in crisis situations, where quick decisions have to be taken without consulting the subordinates or team members. This observation shows that I should be able to adapt my leadership style (participative/autocratic) in line with the situation in hand faced by the organisation.

Reflecting upon my experience of working with successful leaders/managers in Sainsbury's has shown that I possess certain key leadership traits such as excellent communication skills, adaptability, confidence and problem-solving and analytical skills (Murphy, 2019). I am capable of clearly communicating and expressing myself either to individuals or groups without causing confusion. My other strengths include managing responsibilities well; tackling high work pressure; and executing complex tasks. Considering that modern organisations have to undergo rapid changes, my adaptability can be a major strength as a leader.

An analysis of my experience shows that my weaknesses include lack of experience especially as regards strategic planning and difficulties in formulating guidance/direction for my followers/team members, which are highly vital qualities for a good leader. The Appendix 1 includes a leadership development plan that outlines important steps that can help improve my leadership skills and attributes. The key objectives of the plan are to address the areas/capabilities that I should develop further to become a successful leader.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Personal Leadership Development Plan

Leadership Development Plan to Improve Own Leadership Skills and Capabilities

Objectives for Leadership Development	Actions to be Taken to Achieve the Objectives	Place(s) Where I would Develop my Leadership Abilities	Target Time Period for Achieving the Objectives
To improve my skills and capabilities in formulating direction/guidance for the team members	Observing how the leaders at my workplace formulate direction and guidance for their team members.	Workplace	Three months (by 10 th July 2022)
	Delegating tasks to members in my team and providing them with appropriate guidance and direction. Obtaining their feedback concerning any confusion regarding the direction/guidance provided.	Workplace	Five months (by 10 th September 2022)
To improve my strategic decision-making skills.	Observe and learn from my organisation's leaders on how they take strategic decisions and what aspects they consider in making key decisions.	Workplace	Three months (by 10 th July 2022)
To gain a broader insight and knowledge about leadership	Attending leadership development programmes and seminars.	Leadership seminars and programmes organised by various institutions	Six months (by 10 th October 2022)
	Attaining knowledge by reading academic publications (books and journals) about leadership	Libraries	Five months (10 th September 2022)

Table 1: Source: Made by Toni Koleva (2022), Adapted from Roe (2020)