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INTRODUCTION

The role of leadership is one of the most important factors that affects employees' performance, organisation culture and sustainable business development, especially in small businesses where the leadership role is often carried out by the owner himself (Miraglia, 2024). For me, good leadership in my UK based eyelash business is more than just providing an effective beauty service, it is establishing a great working environment, building staff ability, upholding professional levels and developing long term customer relationships. As the company expands, the need to implement proper leadership behaviours becomes more critical to the successful management of employees, delegation of duties and effective implementation of workplace enhancements.

This report assesses my leadership strength in relation to my eyelash business, critically discussing available theories about leadership and its application to my business. Firstly, it critically evaluates Situational Leadership Theory and it is contrasted with transformational leadership in terms of its impact on individual workplace performance. Secondly, it assesses my application of different leadership styles in different situations with different people, and reflection on leadership self-assessment questionnaires and actual experiences. Lastly, I am evaluating how well I can set direction, motivate, delegate and empower others in a proposed change in work place, involving the creation of a junior lash technician training system. The report is designed to bring together academic theory and reflection on the individual and how this is applicable in a business context to determine current strengths, weaknesses and future development areas of a leader.

MAIN BODY

1. Critically assess a recognised leadership model or theory in relation to its ability to impact on individual workplace performance

1.1 Situational Leadership Theory and its Relevance to Workplace Performance

The importance of being able to recognise differences among people and adapt leadership behaviours to different workplace contexts is a key competency of effective small business

leadership (Northouse, 2022). This is especially so in my eyelash UK business as employees can be influenced by technical skills, confidence, business experience, motivation and more. As the business grows and more lash technicians are added, being flexible as a leader to ensure that the quality of service is maintained and employees are encouraged to grow are essential. The assessment brief involves critical analysis and evaluation of a known leadership theory and its potential to affect the performance of employees within the workplace from a theoretical and practical perspective.

A situational leadership theory by Hersey and Blanchard can be helpful in understanding how leaders can change their approach based on situational follower readiness (Marchito et al., 2025). The theory suggests that successful leaders need to use a variety of leadership approaches and tailor the amount of direction and support they provide based on the employee's competence and commitment. The model seeks to identify four leadership styles: directing, coaching, supporting and delegating. The idea behind this is that people grow with the job and need different amounts of management involvement at various stages of their careers.

The directing style is characterised by high task instruction and supervision. This method is best used when an employee is inexperienced and needs to be given direction to work effectively. In my business, the lash technicians are all juniors who have undergone professional training, but some don't have the confidence to deal with real clients. Hence I would give clear instructions on the protocol of the application of lash, hygiene protocol, protocol of consulting with customers, after care directions etc. This level of guidance can help to minimise errors, boost confidence, and maintain a uniform in terms of quality of service provided to customers.

One of the advantages of Situational Leadership Theory is that it acknowledges that people in the workplace are not all alike and hence should not be treated in the same way with the same leadership style. It is often useful in small businesses, where staff may have varying levels of experience, and need tailored development (Koenig-Workman, 2024).

Though useful, Situational Leadership Theory has been criticised for several shortcomings. A criticism is that the model assumes that leadership analysis and selection of the suitable leadership style can be achieved precisely. In practice, a number of factors impact employee

performance from workplace relationships to personal circumstances, organisational culture and beyond. So, measuring the competence and employee commitment may not be straightforward at all times.

1.2 Critical Evaluation of Transformational Leadership Theory and Comparison with Situational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership was first defined by Burns (1978) and further elaborated by Bass (1985) who stated that effective leaders inspire their employees to put in their best efforts through changing their values, attitudes and aspirations.

Transformational leadership can be broken down into four key elements: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Ugochukwu, 2025). Situational Leadership Theory emphasises on aligning leadership behaviour and employee development level, whereas transformational leadership emphasises on establishing an organisational purpose that is meaningful to the employees and motivating them to give more than what is required in their jobs.

One of the strengths of transformational leadership is that it helps to enhance intrinsic motivation. Beauty job employees don't just value money, they may also value recognition, progress and job success. I can help to engage and commit staff by offering training, acknowledging progress and fostering creativity.

But there are other drawbacks to transformational leadership, too. The method may emphasise the personality of the leader and his or her inspirational skills. This can be a problem due to the fact that success in business could be too much riding on the shoulders of anyone. In addition, there is no substitute for the systems, quality standards and clear procedures. A great example of this is employees who feel driven by a vision, but that doesn't mean they are going to be given clear instructions on hygiene procedures, treatment standards or customer safety.

Comparing the two theories, Situational Leadership Theory offers more support for short-term employee performance and transformational leadership offers value to long-term organisation development.

1.3 Application of Leadership Theories to My Eyelash Business and Impact on Workplace Performance

Implementing leadership theories in my eyelash business illustrates the need for flexibility and direction in effective leadership. Situational Leadership Theory would back up the growth of employees by adapting the style of leadership based on employee capability (Hiebert & Klatt, 2019). For instance, new workers would be supervised more closely during training and more experienced workers would be given more freedom and responsibility. Employees can get more invested in keeping standards high by having a common vision for improved customer satisfaction, professionalism, and continuous improvement.

Empowerment can also be illustrated by the way leadership is practiced at Semco, with employees more empowered, trusted and involved in making decisions and taking responsibility. But Semler's idea of empowerment also emphasises the need for an organisation to have the right employee capabilities and conditions in place, not just to take control away.

In my business, empowerment might mean that my more experienced techs can put their ideas in, or have a say in making decisions about service improvement and take on specific responsibilities, but have quality monitoring in place (Glaser, 2023). This would boost ownership and maintain customer satisfaction.

2. Evaluate own ability to use a range of leadership styles, in different situations and with different types of people, to fulfil the leadership role

2.1 Leadership Self-Assessment Questionnaire Results and Personal Reflection

Self-awareness is an essential part of a successful leader as the ability to identify what they are good at, what they prefer to do and what they need to become better at (Naman et al., 2019). As an eyelash technician and business owner, knowing my own leadership style is important to me as I have to know not only how to give my clients beauty treatments but also how to deal with clients, how to motivate and encourage my employees, how to maintain professionalism, and how to plan for my business to grow.

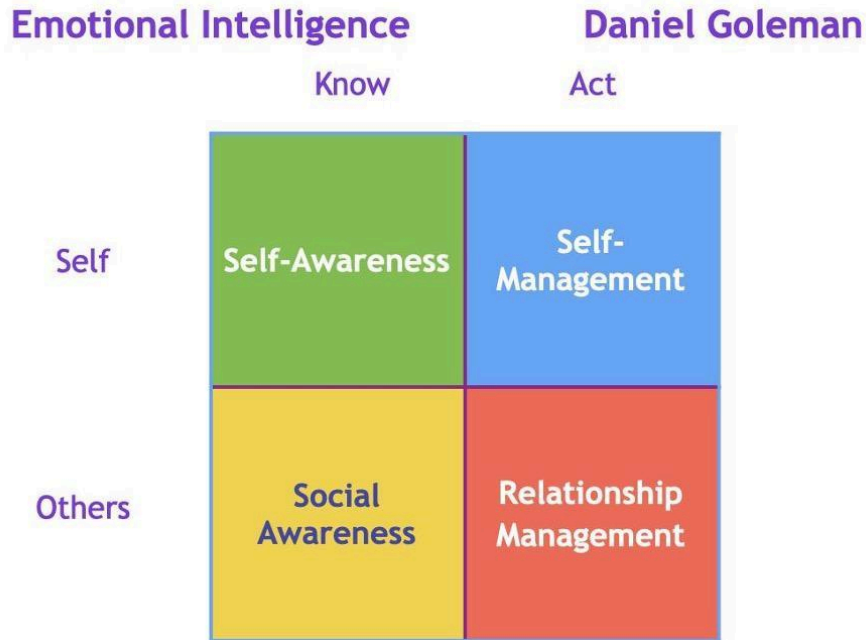
In order to examine my leadership style in an objective way, I filled out two questionnaires . These assessments helped to indicate my preferred leadership behaviours and how I lead decision making, communication and support for employees (Landry, 2019). While self-assessment tools can help to raise awareness, the results should not be taken at face value

as it may be affected by the perceptions of the individual completing the tool and is not necessarily an accurate reflection of real workplace behaviour.

The results of the questionnaire showed that my preferred leadership styles are mainly democratic and coaching based, which means that I value employee involvement, communication and development. These results are based on my own experience in my eyelash business since I like when people come to me and discuss what I want to do and what improvement I want. For instance, in discussing change, like implementing new lounge techniques, new services, or new customer experiences, I think there is a lot of value in engaging employees in the idea and making them feel a sense of ownership over that idea and the business decisions.

The answers to the questions in the questionnaire, however, are only my preferred behaviours and do not guarantee that I will be an effective leader in all situations. Leadership effectiveness relies on context and factors such as employee experience, decision urgency and organisational problems. As a result, although I am a big fan of participative styles, there are instances when I need to take a more directive approach to leadership.

This is an example of the necessity of flexibility in leadership. Goleman's model of emotional intelligence suggests that successful leaders need to have self-awareness, social awareness and be able to adjust their behaviour based on the situation (Surti, 2026). My questionnaire results give me a good starting point to reflect on, but they will require me to see how well I am performing in practice to build a more accurate picture of my leadership ability.



2.2 Evaluation of Coaching Leadership Style

Leadership that is democratic is one of my greatest preferred leadership styles since it involves the participation of employees, equality in decision making and open communication (Luckwaldt, 2025). Democratic leaders involve team members in discussions and welcome ideas. This is especially relevant in my eyelash business as the employees are in direct contact with customers and can offer beneficial information on client needs, service enhancement and operational issues.

One of the strengths of democratic leadership is that it can boost employee engagement as people are accepted, appreciated and part of the decision making process in an organisation. In the instance of a new eyelash treatment service, I would consult the team members for their needs and requirements of the service, and any challenge they may face in the process (Imran et al., 2025).

Additionally, democratic leadership fits in with the theory of empowerment as it provides staff with confidence and responsibility. In an expanding beauty salon, allowing technicians to have ideas is important for innovation and lessening too much reliance on the owner. This is essential

as small business development should be a phased process moving the responsibilities from the entrepreneur to others who can perform them.

Democratic leadership has its drawbacks, however. While participation can help to increase engagement, it can also slow down the decision making process, especially when urgent action is needed. For businesses in the eyelash industry, such as instances of customer complaints, appointment interruptions, or hygiene concerns, it is important to act fast rather than wait for lengthy consultations. Thus, democratic leaders should not be used on a continuous basis, rather there should be a balance of more directive styles when necessary.

2.3 Evaluation of Coaching Leadership Style

Another aspect of my leadership style is coaching leaders, as the eyelash business is a learning business, a technical improvement business, a professional development business. Coaching leadership is about helping employees to improve, by providing guidance, feedback and encouragement, not just instructions. This is especially useful when working with young lash technicians, who need both help and a boost in confidence.

In my business, I would use coaching leadership to watch employees work, give them feedback and help them develop their skill sets.

One of the great benefits of coaching leadership is that it helps to develop employees over the long term. Coaching does not solve all of an employee's problems, it helps him or her build problem solving skills (Koul Mirakhur, 2024). This leads to a more competent workforce and contributes to a sustainable business.

Leading by coaching does take a lot of time and dedication from the leader, however. As the owner of a small business, balancing customer appointments, marketing duties and employee training can present opportunities for conflict.

2.4 Evaluation of Authoritative and Pacesetting Leadership Styles

My preferred leadership styles are democratic and coaching but there are times that a more authoritarian or a pacesetting style is needed. Goleman describes authoritative leadership as a leadership style that inspires people to embrace a vision and pacesetting leadership as a leadership style that emphasises high performance standards. The following strategies can be beneficial in achieving quality and business goals (McPheat, 2023).

In my eyelash business a pacesetter leadership style is used when setting the treatment standards. Clear expectations are important for maintaining correct lash application, hygiene and professional customer service, for instance. Through my behaviour, I am able to set high standards for employee understanding of the standard expected within the business.

But when pacesetter is over-used it can have negative consequences for employee motivation, as the pressure to perform at high standards can lead to stress. Likewise, if employees feel a leader's vision is imposed on them, it can stifle his or her leadership.

2.5 Personal Leadership Development Reflection

My leadership style evaluation shows that I excel in communicating, building relationships and supporting employees (Landry, 2019b). My democratic and coaching practices are based on the principle that if people feel valued and involved, they will perform better. All of these are significant for a business built on the customer where employees' attitudes affect the quality of their service.

My reflection is also a critique, though. The area of development is to be able to build confidence in delegating and strategic leadership. For any business owner there is a risk of keeping too much personal responsibility since I am very close to the service delivery. By training employees to delegate, I will be able to concentrate on business development and have more employees taking ownership.

3. Assess your own ability to set direction, motivate, delegate and empower others to bring about a workplace change

3.1 Workplace Change Context: Developing a Junior Lash Technician Training System

Leadership is effective not just when it comes to overseeing what is already going on but also when it involves introducing and bringing about new and positive change in the workplace. In my UK eyelash business, I need to take my company beyond the 'owner-run' phase into a more organised model where I can delegate the duties to trained team members. When the demand for customers grows, with just my own technical work, there are some limitations in terms of appointment capacity, business expansion, and employee development. Thus, an appropriate

change in the workplace will be building a structured lash technician training and development system for juniors (Porter, 2025).

This change is to recruit and train junior lash technicians to build up the necessary technical skills and confidence to be able to offer treatments on his/her own. This change will, however, need people who can lead the way in its implementation as there will be challenges to service quality, knowledge transfer, employee expectations and building trust with the introduction of another technician. The assessment brief must include thinking about leadership approaches that help individuals to establish direction, motivate, delegate and empower others to bring about change in the workplace.

Being the owner of the business it would be my job as the leader of the business to convey a clear purpose for the change. The goal was not only to expand the number of appointments but to create a viable business plan in which staff members share in the business. To achieve successful change, strategic direction and employee needs will need to be taken into account.

3.2 Setting Direction through Vision and Shared Values

Direction setting is an essential part of leadership, as workers need clarity on goals and expectations of the organisation. In my own eyelash business, my leadership vision is to build a trusted, reputable beauty company known for premium treatments, customised customer service and professional employee training (Heiberg, 2021). It would be beneficial for employees to be made aware of this vision through communication, as they would understand the importance of their role and the impact they can make on the success of their business.

Kouzes and Posner (2012) offer a framework for leaders to set direction with five practices: modelling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. This model is significant as it defines leadership as a dynamic, influencing and developing process, not a passive, positional role.

In the first practice modelling the way, leaders need to set an example for others to follow of what they expect. In my own practice, I would display professional behaviour by ensuring regular upkeep of my practice, effective communication with clients and a commitment to learning new skills and knowledge. Staff will feel more comfortable with the expectations of professionalism if they see it modelled by their colleagues.

The second practice is to inspire a shared vision by conveying future goals to get employees motivated. For instance, instead of saying to the junior tech that he/she has a part-time job I would explain that he/she has an opportunity to be a part of a professional beauty team that provides a chance to grow and learn more about the business.

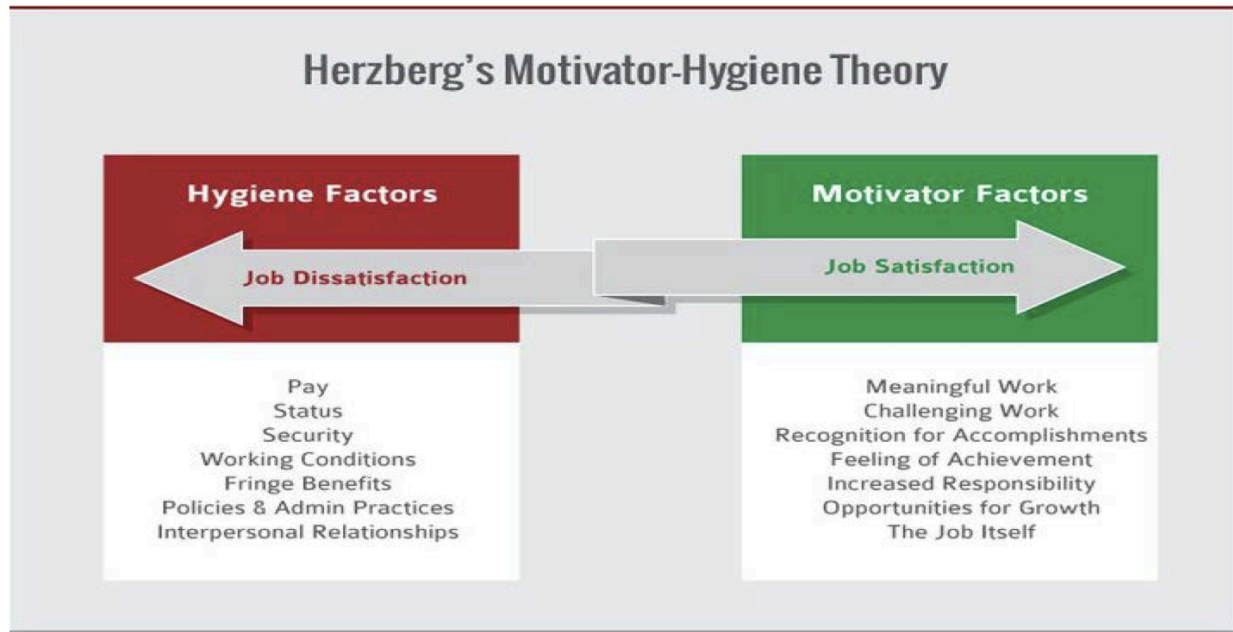
3.3 Effective Leadership Communication

In order to make change in the workplace, there needs to be motivation, as employees need to be willing to put in effort to learn new skills, and take on more responsibility. In my eyelash business, I would motivate people by recognising them and providing development opportunities and giving them meaningful responsibilities.

A framework that helps to understand employee motivation is Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Herzberg found that there were two types of factors in the workplace: hygiene factors which prevent dissatisfaction, and the motivators which increase satisfaction and thus increase performance.

Hygiene factors are those factors of the job like working conditions, salary and job security. In my business, if I can assure people they will be paid fairly, that there will be a safe place to work, and that there will be clear expectations and boundaries around their work, then there will be less dissatisfaction. But Herzberg maintains that these are not enough to engender high levels of motivation.

Achievement, recognition, responsibility and personal growth are more closely related to employee satisfaction. So, I would encourage a junior lash technician by acknowledging and celebrating their achievements, offer chances for further training and give them more responsibility as they go. Upon successful completion, the technician may be responsible for more advanced treatments, or help produce social media marketing materials for the business.



Source: (Kurt, 2021)

3.4 Delegation and Empowerment as Leadership Responsibilities

Delegation is one of the most important challenges small business owners must overcome, moving from doing everything themselves to empowering their employees to take on a significant role in their business. Delegation is not just about giving someone a job to do; it gives them responsibility, authority and support to get a job done (Lencioni, 2020). The module guidance emphasises the importance of fostering individual decision making and capability, not of controlling their tasks.

This approach is a belief in the principles of empowerment as it gives the employees the trust to make decisions within limitations. Empowerment can enhance motivation through the sense of ownership. It can also be advantageous for the business because the owner could have more time to concentrate on strategic activities like marketing, partnerships and business development.

3.5 Managing and Evaluating Workplace Change

It is important to make sure that the change does improve business performance if the junior technician training system is going to be implemented successfully, in which case it needs to be continually evaluated. As a leader, I would track staff progress and customer results with metrics.

Some of the key performance indicators:

- Customer satisfaction feedback.
- Repeat appointment rates.
- Shortened waiting period for appointments.
- Confidence and skill building for the employees.
- Gains in revenue due to greater capability of services.

The barriers that might affect the process of change might include doubts, hesitation, unwillingness to take more responsibilities, and concerns regarding quality control. For this purpose, I would use supportive communication, provide feedback on a regular basis, and encourage employees to participate in the assessment of the change process.

Another great example is the approach of Ricardo Semler in his company, Semco. He switched from control-oriented management style to a new one which emphasises employee participation, autonomy, and responsibility sharing. Even though this method increases employee participation, it shows the importance of the ability of the employees and organisational context for empowerment.

The theory I apply in my business of eyelashes does not mean abandoning control but rather combining empowerment and professionalism.

3.6 Overall Evaluation of My Ability to Lead Workplace Change

This critical evaluation revealed that I have developed several leadership skills that are important for change management in organisations, namely communication and relationship building, as well as the ability to support your people. I like democratic and coaching styles because they help grow and develop people and create positive climates in organisations.

However, it is necessary for me to develop my skills of delegation and strategic thinking as a good leader. But the business owner can be limited in his/her future success if he/she must manage everything personally (Roberts, 2023). Therefore, developing trust towards employees and creating the system of responsibility distribution will be crucial.

My ability to manage change in the workplace will depend on how successfully I will combine several leadership styles and approaches. Kouzes and Posner's framework provides some ways

of creating vision and promoting participation, while Herzberg's theory will enable us to comprehend employees' motivation.

CONCLUSION

In a small UK business of eyelashes, being a leader means influencing others rather than being an expert. This report discusses various theories of leadership. It critically evaluates these theories and comes to the conclusion that none of these theories are complete in themselves with respect to understanding performance in the workplace. Situational Leadership Theory offers great insights to modify leadership style based on employee competence and confidence and is applicable to the training and development of lash technicians that are junior. It is however, limited and emphasises the need to include more comprehensive frameworks, such as those that include the concept of motivation, vision and organisational culture.

Transformational leadership offers further value in terms of developing shared purpose and employee commitment to performance, and fostering employee development. Likewise, when I analysed my own leadership styles, I found that democratic and coaching styles match my preference of communicating, collaborating and developing employees. Reflection also highlighted the need to further develop delegation, strategic decision-making and confidence in delegation to others.

It is proposed that a new workplace structure is to be implemented, with a junior lash technician development system. This shows the significance of the combination of direction, motivation, delegation and empowerment. I can use Kouzes and Posner's theory of leadership and Herzberg's theory of motivation to construct a workplace environment that is supportive and will still uphold professional standards. Effective leadership within my eyelash business requires a balance between adaptability, inspiration and accountability, and holding employees accountable for their employee development, satisfying customers and growing my business for the long run.

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