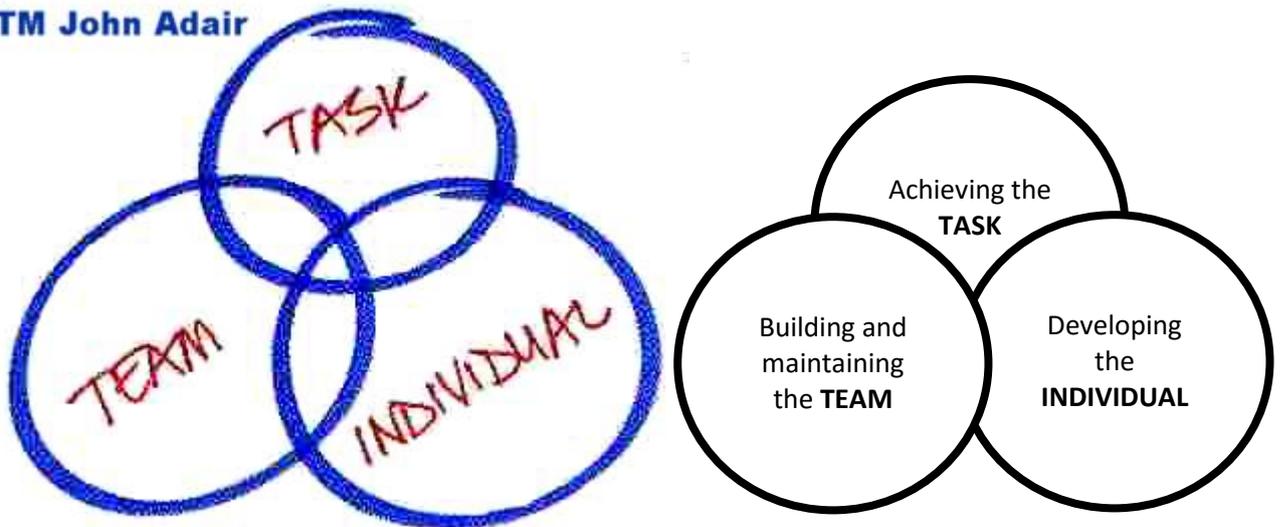


ACTION CENTRED LEADERSHIP

TM John Adair



Professor John Adair, narrowed down the actions required of a leader to be those in the diagram above. He also concluded that the balance between the three areas determines the success of the leader, and that if they are out of balance for any length of time there are likely to be adverse consequences.

Managers today must be leaders and all must accept the three areas of responsibility:-

1. **Planning** – (achieving the task), the responsibility for determining how the teams objective will be achieved.
2. **Team building & training** – (building the team), the responsibility for ensuring that team members are selected, developed, trained and carry out their tasks to a pre-determined standard that will allow the objective to be achieved.
3. **Performance management** – (developing the individual), the responsibility for motivation, performance and personal development of individual team members so that the objective is achieved.

To be effective managers we have to ensure that we are effective in each of the three interdependent areas and to keep them in balance. It is a matter of learning to use a range of techniques in an appropriate manner: techniques we can all learn, which are not difficult to apply, and which are based on common sense and understanding of why people do things.

Achieving the Task

A manager's primary function in the organisation is to achieve the aims and objectives for which the team exists. Any manager who consistently fails in this area will not remain a manager for very long. Often, in their desire for goal achievement, managers will be tempted to do the job themselves. Whilst they may be more capable, or even qualified, it is not the job of the leader. When it arises that the manager is in the position of performing the job/task on a regular basis, they should stop and ask themselves why.

Effects of concentrating on the Task

Whilst one benefit of concentrating on the task will be high productivity, this must be balanced with the possible downsides of:

- Low commitment from the team towards the job
- Leaders loss of respect once the team realise efforts are met with higher demands, rather than recognition
- Quality of work will suffer, particularly in manager's absence
- The manager runs the risk of being overlooked for promotion where the organisation recognises that management must have an ability for developing people

Actions to focus on Task:

- Identify aims and vision for the group, purpose, and direction - define the activity (the task)
- Identify resources, people, processes, systems and tools (inc. financials, communications, IT)
- Create the plan to achieve the task - deliverables, measures, timescales, strategy and tactics
- Establish responsibilities, objectives, accountabilities and measures, by agreement and delegation
- Set standards, quality, time and reporting parameters
- Control and maintain activities against parameters
- Monitor and maintain overall performance against plan
- Report on progress towards the group's aim
- Review, re-assess, adjust plan, methods and targets as necessary

Building the Team

With most organisations made up of smaller groups or units it is the role of the manager to develop these groups into an effective team. This means directing and co-ordinating the efforts of all of the team members towards the achievement of the goals of the team and organisation. This in turn means obtaining the commitment and loyalty of the members, fostering a sense of pride in belonging to the team and working together as a team.

Effects of concentrating on the Team

- Initially good team spirit
- Low productivity
- Leader can be seen as one-sided by the company, working against company interests
- The team will perceive leader as weak and begin to resent their authority
- The manager will be unlikely to take "corrective action" as they will be too closely identified with the team
- Low standards of performance from team, ie task/objectives not achieved
- In the long term morale will suffer as they become increasingly disillusioned

Actions to focus on Team:

- Establish, agree and communicate standards of performance and behaviour
- Establish style, culture, approach of the group - soft skill elements
- Monitor and maintain discipline, ethics, integrity and focus on objectives
- Anticipate and resolve group conflict, struggles or disagreements
- Assess and change as necessary the balance and composition of the group
- Develop team-working, cooperation, morale and team-spirit
- Develop the collective maturity and capability of the group - progressively increase group freedom and authority
- Encourage the team towards objectives and aims - motivate the group and provide a collective sense of purpose
- Identify, develop and agree team- and project-leadership roles within group
- Enable, facilitate and ensure effective internal and external group communications
- Identify and meet group training needs
- Give feedback to the group on overall progress; consult with, and seek feedback and input from the group

Developing the Individuals

As it is the individuals that work for the team that ultimately provide success or failure, it is incumbent on every manager to continually develop each individual in their team. To do this everyone must know what is expected of them and believe they are making a significant contribution to the task/job and receive recognition for their endeavours.

To grow and develop requires a challenge which means individuals need to be stretched but not too far, as failure will have a negative effect on their confidence. A manager needs to obtain the trust of an individual and develop their own coaching skills to give that person the confidence to attempt something new to them.

Effects of concentrating on the individuals

- Low productivity
- Leader may be seen to have favourites ie, “high flyers”
- Morale within the team can suffer as resentment builds
- Low commitment from some members of the team and teamwork will suffer
- Standards of performance will suffer, which results in task/objectives not being achieved

Actions to focus on Individuals

- Understand the team members as individuals - personality, skills, strengths, needs, aims and fears
- Assist and support individuals - plans, problems, challenges, highs and lows
- Identify and agree appropriate individual responsibilities and objectives
- Give recognition and praise to individuals - acknowledge effort and good work
- Where appropriate reward individuals with extra responsibility, advancement and status
- Identify, develop and utilise each individual's capabilities and strengths
- Train and develop individual team members
- Develop individual freedom and authority

Self reflection

What are your examples of your best and worst practices regarding the Task, Team and Individual circles?