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Transformational Leader Profile

Terresa Fontana

University of Phoenix

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LDR711

Dr. Jim Chambers

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Abstract

Throughout the writer's life, many people have served as leaders. The most influential role model of transformational leadership currently in her life is the principal of the school in which she works and the pastor of the church that she attends. Demonstrating the actions and behaviors, practices and skills of a truly transformational leader, Pastor Vincent Manzo offers a valuable example of leadership to the church staff and school faculty. Since it has been said that "The only real training for leadership is leadership" (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. [WFI], 2006), following such a leader will allow the writer to more fully develop her personal leadership style, becoming a transformational leader within her organization and beyond.

Transformational Leader Profile

While the writer has known a number of people who have been very influential and provided role models of leadership throughout her life, Vincent B. Manzo, pastor of City of Hope International Church and principal of Kearny Christian Academy in Kearny, New Jersey, is currently the most influential leadership role model in her life. Although she has only known Pastor Manzo for approximately five years, he has been the pastor of the church for over thirty years, through a variety of staff, membership, and organizational changes, and the principal of the school for twenty-six years. Abraham Lincoln has been credited with saying “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power” (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. [WFI], 2006). Pastor Manzo’s character has been tested many times throughout the years, and his leadership skills and abilities have grown and flourished through the many trials and tribulations he has had to overcome. The influence he has had on the writer’s personal leadership abilities and the behaviors he has modeled to her throughout the past five years have lead her to become the leader she is and is becoming today.

Transformational Leadership Actions, Behaviors, Practices, and Skills

“Transformational Leadership starts with the development of a vision, a view of the future that will excite and convert potential followers... The Transformational Leader thus takes every opportunity and will use whatever works to convince others to climb on board the bandwagon” (ChangingMinds.org [CM], 2006). Approximately twenty-seven years ago, Pastor Vincent Manzo developed a vision of a school that would address the ever-changing needs of students and families while also upholding the Biblical truths that had shaped him into the pastor and leader that he had become. Within a short time, the school was established and had become one of the primary ministries of the church, which provided a great deal of the school’s funding

and resources. What was once a very small school that utilized a couple of rented rooms in an office building has now become a thriving Christian academy in the New York City Metropolitan area. The school continues to grow by leaps and bounds, straining at all three stories of the cinder block walls of its current location to contain its more than one hundred students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The original vision has been realized to a certain degree, while Pastor Manzo continues to “sell the vision” (CM) and constantly looks for ways to improve the school’s ability to teach and reach the children of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

Throughout these many years, Pastor Manzo has worked to develop trust between himself and his followers. He continues to use his natural charisma to engage church staff and school faculty members while also exhibiting “honorable character” and “selfless service” (Clark, 1997) to both the church and school. Additionally, he maintains an environment of open communication between himself and his followers, establishing regularly scheduled staff and faculty meetings, and making himself available for individual appointments as necessary. “People want to be guided by those they respect and who have a clear sense of direction. To gain respect, they must be ethical. A sense of direction is achieved by conveying a strong vision of the future” (Clark). Pastor Manzo has fully realized these needs and has developed his leadership abilities accordingly. His followers are fully aware of his vision and constantly strive towards the realization of the goals he has set for both church and school, inspired by the unending enthusiasm and encouragement that he communicates.

Environmental Influences on Leadership Practice and Style

Growing up in a large Italian-American family in the New York City Metropolitan area, Pastor Manzo had many influences of strong leadership throughout his life. From his father’s

rather over-powering, autocratic leadership in the home, often characterized by the manipulation that is seen in an alcoholic parent, to the nurturing, yet sometimes blind, loving leadership exemplified in his mother, young Vinnie experienced many trials during his youth that helped him to become the leader he is today. During his teen and young adult years, he turned to chemicals and substances to help alleviate his fears and emotions, following the types of leaders known to encourage codependency, while also becoming a leader of the same nature. Finally, the years spent in seminary after becoming a follower of Christ and realizing the calling placed in his heart began to further develop Vincent's charisma and the leadership qualities that are still embodied within him today. Learning to become a true follower of Christ was, quite possibly, the most influential relationship on Pastor's leadership abilities, bringing him from the brink of death and destruction to the highly admired and respected position of leadership in which he finds himself today.

Pastor's Influences on the Writer's Personal Leadership Style

Working with and for Pastor Manzo over the past five years has allowed the writer to develop her leadership abilities in ways that she would have never foreseen. The ability with which he is able to guide and direct others while standing back and allowing them to creatively and freely adjust and adapt to the various obstacles thrown in their paths has been a true inspiration. The ways in which he communicates with all staff and faculty members has shown the writer the need for ongoing and open communication between leader and followers. Pastor's ability to constantly motivate and encourage his followers to strive towards the realization of the church and school visions and goals inspires her to become a transformational leader who, in turn, will be able to transform her followers into leaders themselves. Finally, the ongoing commitment that Pastor exhibits in continuing to work and develop his leadership skills, his

obvious dedication to research, and his enthusiasm for personal growth were all influencing factors in the writer's decision to continue her education into the doctoral study of Educational Leadership.

Conclusion

“Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. Leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership attributes, such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills” (Clark, 1997). Additionally, “the Transformational Leader seeks overtly to transform the organization... there is also a tacit promise to followers that they also will be transformed in some way, perhaps to be more like this amazing leader... In some respects, then, the followers are the *product* of the transformation” (CM, 2006). The transformational leadership actions, behaviors, practices, and skills demonstrated by Pastor Vincent Manzo continue to develop and grow as he continues to lead both the City of Hope International Church and Kearny Christian Academy. Through his transformational leadership, the writer has personally become a more transformational leader and continues to develop her leadership style by following his example. According to Reverend Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, “My goal is not to be a 'well-rounded' leader, but rather to focus on the unique gifts that I can bring, and then make certain that the strengths of others bring all that is necessary - including the things that I lack - to our work” (WFI, 2006). It is obvious that Pastor Manzo has realized this goal as well, striving to pass this belief on to his followers, and transforming them into leaders themselves.

References

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