


Available online at www.sciencedirect.com
ScienceDirect

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/orgdyn


Multi-domain leadership: A whole person approach to leading in the workplace...and beyond[☆]

Gretchen Vogelgesang Lester, Michael Palanski,
Michelle Hammond, Rachel Clapp-Smith

INTRODUCTION

What was your first leadership experience? Was it when you were already a member of an organization, trained in your field and ready to embark upon your career? Was it when your organization sponsored a leader development program to shape you into the employee/leader they expected? Probably not. In fact, you were probably hired into your organization specifically due to some leadership experience documented in your resume.

So, what was your first leadership experience? Was it the time your parents trusted you to babysit your siblings? Was it the first scouting badge you acquired? Was it the first team sport you played? Was it at your place of worship where you led a reading or a song?

The point here is that leadership happens everywhere. Many leadership development opportunities arise outside of work and help to shape individuals into the types of employees organizations value. In fact, the changes and challenges in one's personal life help individuals change and adapt to newer and bigger workplace challenges. Yet, organizational researchers have often looked past this interaction amongst multiple domains to focus mainly on the workplace domain when thinking about leader development. Over the past few years, our research with executive and professional MBA students and working adults has highlighted the need to examine leadership development beyond the workplace. The personal stories used throughout this article highlight

the value gained from approaching leadership development from a multi-domain perspective.

WHY IS MULTI-DOMAIN LEADERSHIP IMPORTANT?

Researchers typically study leadership and leadership development in a specific work context. Most of this research focuses on the traits, skills and abilities that predict leadership emergence and effectiveness, or on how to develop better leaders in specific professions, how to inspire followers to become leaders, and how to lead organizations towards success. As context may dictate the type of leadership that will be successful, different disciplines have winnowed leadership research down even further, into educational leadership, nursing leadership, leadership in the military, leadership of high reliability organizations, political leadership, etc. What is missing from all of this research is the idea that leadership should also be discussed in other domains beyond the workplace or profession.

Yes, a large percentage of one's adult life is spent in the workplace, but individuals also typically have a leadership role of some sort in their family and circles of friends, and sometimes an additional leadership role in a community-based organization. Often, these multiple leadership roles are regarded as creating conflict for the individual, and are viewed as a challenge to be overcome. However, there is a more positive side to the story as well; namely, the leadership roles an individual plays in these various situations are important, because these roles combine to create a whole-person leader. We suggest that focusing on one domain only (usually the work domain), or thinking of these separate

[☆] This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

domains only in terms of a problem to be solved, leads to missing out on an important, naturally occurring opportunity to understand how leadership behaviors are developed in the other areas of life. Indeed, as Indra Nooyi, Chairman and CEO of Pepsico, has said, her organization's mission can be fulfilled when leaders "bring the whole self to work." But who is this "whole self" when it comes to being a leader? A whole-person leader is one who incorporates leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities across domains into a behavioral repertoire that can be adapted to varying challenges, allowing the leader to be effective in any domain. A multi-domain approach to leader development can help to explain how a leader can use roles outside of work to enrich his or her leadership.

DEFINING THE MULTIPLE DOMAINS

Consistent with other researchers, we make a distinction among three primary domains: work, community and friends/family. These domains capture the primary social domains most relevant for leadership as a social influence process in both a public and private context. Work is the well-established "home" of leadership studies, community includes personal "life" activities that are done largely in the public eye (e.g., leading a project for a local not-for-profit), and "family" includes personal "life" activities that are largely done privately (e.g., being a parent or influencing a group of friends).

Work

The work domain consists of the time, effort, and pursuit of goals in support of an organization. As technology continues to blur the lines between "work time" and "off time", the need to consider multiple domains increases. Indeed, a whole-person approach can help leaders integrate these domains so that they enrich one another rather than create conflict. Over the course of the last two decades, the work domain has become a larger share of overall time, a limited and finite resource. In the work domain, perceptions of leadership are often linked with positions of leadership or management, however, leadership is not limited to formal positions. Peter was promoted to a leadership role in his organization from his recognized technical expertise, but did not consider himself to be a leader. He felt he lacked leadership skills, but through a multi-domain approach, he was able to apply his leadership skills he developing through coaching sports teams.

Family/Friends

Family and friends consist of the people with whom one associates when not in pursuit of an employer's goals. These are the people one chooses to see in time away from work. Recent research has found that early life experiences with family can have a significant impact on adult leadership behaviors at work. We might also expect, then, that continued family experiences impact how one approaches the worker role at different stages of life. As individuals mature, family roles also change. Jane, for example, considered herself to be more of a leader in the family domain. As

the oldest child in her family, she often had to lead by example and be a team player.

Community

The community domain is defined as the larger group of people with whom individuals interact. The community domain includes interactions revolving around service to non-work public or private organizations (e.g., serving on the board of a not-for-profit agency or coaching a little league team) and affiliations with religious organizations. There is very little research on how the community domain can develop leadership abilities. However, in our research, we have seen leadership development occur in community domains which cannot be reproduced by the work or family domain. Take Paul as an example: he did not consider himself to be inspiring or visionary and did not have the opportunity to hone such skills in his workplace; but he knew this would be an important skill for his career progression. After participating in a 360-degree leadership assessment and receiving feedback from raters in all three domains, he learned that followers in his faith-based community domain viewed him as very inspirational, affording him an opportunity to acknowledge that the skills do exist, have been practiced, and are ripe for incorporation into his leader identity.

HOW MULTI-DOMAIN LEADERSHIP ACCELERATES OUR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Individuals who embrace the idea of multi-domain leadership can accelerate leadership development by recognizing challenges and overcoming such challenges in all facets of their lives. Instead of partitioning off work from home from community, one can approach each leadership opportunity, wherever it occurs, as a way to develop into a whole-person leader. In this manner, the individual sees the multiple domains as enriching the quality of leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities he or she possesses.

Spillover

The idea that one's experiences in one domain of life have an impact in another domain of life is not new. However, we typically look at this in a negative light, where demands from work impinge upon family time, or spending time with friends hurts one's work productivity. However, there is evidence that embracing one's familial role (particularly that of fatherhood) actually has a positive impact on perceived managerial effectiveness. We suggest an individual can take this positive relationship further by embracing what leadership looks like in various roles in order to better define leader effectiveness. As the lessons learned from one domain spillover into others, the leader develops a depth and breadth of leadership abilities that were not present before.

Depth of knowledge, skills, and abilities

Leaders who have cross-domain depth are those who welcome new leadership challenges and apply lessons learned

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5035372>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5035372>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)