

Psychoagilical – Unravel the Leadership Blind spot

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Abstract –

“ You are the most difficult person you will ever lead” [1]- so any change which is expected out of the team needs to begin with the leader and any leader puts people above things. Agile also follows the same concept. In general Leadership has always been a contemplated topic. Great philosophers like Plato , Plutarch etc have pondered on the question :“What makes an individual a leader?” In Agile it is crucial to get an answer to this question, as we are dealing with various members of the team, where in each of them take on the leadership role as and when situation demands, and also that Servant Leadership is being followed as an Agile practice. Being an adaptive, situational and people centric leader is the need of the hour. A Scrum master, product owner or an Agile Coach needs to fulfill these needs as they are looked upon as the servant leaders in an agile rich organization. A leader is one who is constantly interacting with the team, understands their skills, positives, their deltas, and assign the task accordingly. They parallely enable them to work through their weakness and make a robust team to succeed. A leader’s emotional quotient is the key to the success of the team, as he works through upskillig himself and encourages the team to improve on a continual basis. As part of a paper under the research topic Psychoagilical- this paper is an attempt to touch upon the Psychological aspect of leadership using Transaction analysis concept of “Frame of reference”.

Key words : *Agile, Leadership, Psychoagilical, frame of reference, transactional analysis.*

I. INTRODUCTION

“If you want to be a leader the first person you have to lead is yourself”[2] as said by Mike Scioscia and the first value of Agile states Individuals and interactions over Processes and tools, leaders are individuals who have the capability and potential to lead people. There are many theories which have been devised on leadership, for the purpose of this paper, we would be looking at 2 main theories 1) Integrated Psychological theory and 2) Transactional and Transformative leadership theory.

The first theory of integrated psychological theory of leadership is an integration of older theories with newer elements. The integrated psychological theory was in limelight only after James Scouller’s book ‘The Three Levels of Leadership’ was published. Wherein he explains that leaders must maneuver three levels to refine their leadership behavior, which are personal, private and public leadership. Public and private refers to behavioral levels. [3] These are types of behaviors designating what Scouller calls ‘the four dimensions of leadership’. These dimensions are: (1) a shared motivating group purpose, (2) measures of progress and results, (3) collective unity or team spirit, and (4) individual selection and motivation. Public leadership concentrates on 34 aspects that are influenced when two or more people are simultaneously involved. Private leadership incorporates 14 behavioral patterns that are necessary to influence individuals. The third level (personal leadership) refer to the internal state of an individual which can be developed in order to have a stronger leadership role and greater presence, know-how, and aptitude. Personal leadership consists of two aspects: (1) technical know-how and ability, and (2) developing the correct attitude towards others—which is considered the foundation for authentic leadership. Scouller argues that inner self-control is the key to trusting relationships, making it possible to eliminate limiting dogmas and habits.

Eric Berne (1964) did a research on the relationship between a leader and the group lead by him in relation to achieving the goals and completing their tasks. He stated that transactional leaders rewards achievement of certain tasks or sanctions for non performance of the employees. The transactional leader is provided with instrument of power by the organization and the employees have to follow order to achieve objectives. Transactional leader’s primary characteristic is ‘Management by objectives’. Hollander (1958) in his model of idiosyncrasy credits details that employees acquire “Credit-points” by conforming to norms, and also work their way up in the corporate ladder to a leading position. Once he moves his way up, the power is not challenged and conformance reduces compared to others. The extent to which the non-conformance is allowed despite the reinforcing reward culture is a million dollar question. Transactional leadership is followed by transformational leadership adding a dimension which increases trust, respect and admiration shown to a leader. Here the leaders are looked upon as a role model. They transmit a connection, challenge the employees into critical thinking, coach for better performance and work their way towards aligning employees goal to organisation’s objective. Employees are aware of their contribution to fulfilling the organization’s mission and the impact of their actions, and in the course of their interaction with their transformative leader, experience pride, appreciation, and confidence (Burns 1978).

A leader has to reflect upon his own vulnerabilities and work on his emotional quotient to maintain the balance and bring in the best out of the team. For this he or she should be able to identify their current ego state and alter it based on the ego state of the person he/she is dealing with.

Transactional Analysis [4]: An idea fundamental to Transactional analysis is that of Ego States. Berne suggested that human personality is made up of three elements, which he coined it as Parent, Adult and Child. These familiar words were used by him to describe states of 'self' or states of mind, which he believed gave rise to their own individual patterns of behavior.

- i. **Parent Ego State:** Parental Ego state is a carbon copy of how one responds to a situation from his parent or parental figure who would have responded exactly in terms of thoughts, feelings and behavior.
- ii. **Child Ego State:** While the content get recorded in the Parent Ego state, parallelly another recording happens, in which a young child's actual reactions to what is going on in his world gets recorded. Harris (1973) refers to this response, making the point that a child has no verbal capability in the very early years, so experiences are recorded as feelings and can be evoked at any time in adult life, and often the individual concerned is unaware that the response is an pre-recorded one.
- iii. **Adult Ego State :** When a person is in terms with the current reality and relationship in the present based on the data points he has got, he is suppose to be in Adult Ego state. The feeling attitudes and behavior patterns are unique to the individual. Like the Ego in Freudian Theory, the Adult ego state represents reason and common sense. It is that part of the personality which can authentic, autonomous and free from parental influence, or strong feelings emanating from the Child ego state. The Adult ego state is characterized by objective, logical thinking, and an ability to make independent judgments and decisions in any situation. A reality testing is done by the individual when in Adult, so that realistic choices can be freely made. Every so often the material stored in the Adult ego state is reassessed and updated, to be synchronous and adapt to the constant changing environment.

Frame of reference:

Everyone has got a way of perceiving the environment around themselves. A typical scenario might, be when a family discusses about theatres, one of the parent could say about how the transformation of theatres had happened from childhood till today in various aspects in terms of amenities, cleanliness, fresh air where the doors were open, cost and other aspect where they would travel 20 miles to see a movie. On the other hand the other parent would think of going to theatres as an experience of time spent with the family, memories of all the pranks they did during their childhood as fresh as it just happened a few days ago. Its all about an individual perceiving the experience what they have. And that's how frame of reference of one might be same, similar or different. This explains , why the siblings born to the same parents might have different approaches to life.

The frame of reference is defined by the Schiff as "the structure of associated responses which integrates the various ego-states in response to specific stimuli". [5] To explain this in detail he also states that this concept as a "Filter on Reality". In the previous use case which we discussed above, the first parent filtered about the experiences spent with the family and focused on the physical attributes, whereas the emotional attributes was the primary aspect for the other parent. The scenario is the same, what someone takes out of it is an unique experience.

Frame of reference and ego-states:

While making an attempt to understand the relationship between Frame of reference and Ego-states, Schiff [5] suggest that it can be thought of as a 'skin that surrounds the ego-states, binding them together'.

As an individual when one perceives their environment according to their unique frame of reference, they make my own unique set of ego-state responses to that perceived world. It's in this way that the frame of reference 'integrates the different ego-states'. As the parent looked at the theatre, he got into Adult and made a comment on attributes, facilities, color, and facts that he/she in the here-and-now. The other parent were in Child, re-playing happy memories of family scenes like this which you had enjoyed in his / her own childhood. Having made these ego-state shifts internally, we communicate with each other externally from the ego-states we had decided to exhibit. Each one's frame of reference provides the patterns in which we integrate our ego-state responses so as to express the individual's overall personality.

The Parent ego-state plays significant part in the formation of the frame of reference. This is because our frame of reference consists of definitions of the people, environment, things, world and self. It is from our parents and parent-figures that we originally learn these definitions. Depending on the age at which we receive them, they may be filed away as part of the content of our own Parent ego-state (P2) or of the Parent in the Child (P1).

Each one of us has a personal set of Parental definitions of what is fair, unfair, right, wrong, bad, good, scare, easy, cleanliness, dirty, happy, sad, and so on. It is on this set of definitions that we base our perceptions of self, others and the world. We choose our reaction and responses to situations accordingly.

Frame of reference and the script :

What is the relationship between the Frame of reference and scripts? script forms part of the frame of reference and they go hand in hand. The frame of reference in total is made up of a different parameters and Scripts forms one of them. The script consists of all the

definitions in the frame of reference which entail discounts. When someone is going through his script, he is ignoring features of the here-and-now situation which would be relevant to the solution of a problem. He is discounting. In doing so, he is replaying outdated definitions of the self, others and the world which include those discounts. For instance, as a child someone may have received messages from their parents stating that "Men don't cry". Now suppose that as a grownup, he is going through a loss of someone close in the family. If he gets into script at this point, he begins internally replaying the old Parental definition of self that says: Men don't cry! Agreeing with this in my Child ego-state, he accept the discount of his own ability to cry and grieve the loss of the kith and kin, which is appropriate at that moment. In an attempt to show that he's strong he distorts the reality and gets into script as his frame of reference.

Nature and function of redefining :

We can take a scenario, where someone has the capability to Think. In believing the old definition of himself which was injected on to him that he was unable to think, he had distorted his perception of reality so that it fits into his script beliefs. This process is called redefining. As a child we make script decisions as it is the most safest way to survive in a Hostile environment.

In his Child ego-state during the growing up phase, he may hold onto those early decisions, because it is necessary for the survival of the self and protect from the environment. Probably even the hostile environment would have changed, the hostile people would have changed, but the individual fails / afraid to adapt to the new system, as he feels its not safe for him to adapt. Thus is some aspects of life seems to conflict with his script decisions, he would defend his belief system against it strongly. If we have to say it in Schifffian Language, we say "we say: when my scripty frame of reference is threatened, I defend against the threat by redefining"

During early childhood in the forming stage, he accepted his parents' definition of him as 'unable to think'. He made this script decision and believed it was the only way he can avoid the wrath of the parent or parental figures to enable his survival in the society and getting his needs met. In the here and now when he gets into script as an ful fledged grownup or adult he replays this old strategy of survival. He redefines the reality by discounting his own ability to think.

This does not resolve the problem for him to pass the examination. But outside his awareness, in his Child ego-state, he started having a motive that seems more important than any examination could be That is: to challenge against the unspeakable disaster I fear may happen if I challenge my parents' definition.

How does Frame of Reference affect Leadership?

Leaders are as well humans who have gone through a childhood either good or bad. Over a period of time there have been injunctions and permissions that they are loaded with. Injunctions are parental messages that is given to them for ex: You can't think, Don't get drenched in rain and you will fall sick, Don't run around you might fall. Don't laugh a lot you will cry later. It could also be to do with a particular dress, smell, environment, darkness, with which a person is injected with Parental messages over a period of time. And to be complaint with the parent(s) and get the needed attention in terms of love and care the child in the person starts accepting the Injunctions without any inhibition.

In Contrast there are permissions or permissible feelings within the family. For ex, In a Typical Traditional South Indian Family, the Father is generally the authoritative figure, and what he had learnt and pass it on to the family is to have Anger as a permissible feeling. So immaterial of Sadness, Illness, Love and especially fear would be showcased as Anger. And this would be the permission what the child also imbibes into its belief system.

Now the interesting part, when such a person grown in such a Hostile environment, would be mentally framed to show only anger as the predominant feeling. That would be his frame of reference. So when a situation that stirs fear in his mind, for ex his child falls down, without doing a reality testing and understanding the magnitude of the solution, he would show anger towards the kid, where as ideal response would be fear if he would have operated from Child Ego state or being more practical would operate from Adult Ego state and make an attempt to see the severity of the injury and take the kid to the doctor. Now such repeated instances where he distorts the reality to show Anger as the primary feeling against any other feeling, that becomes a part of his self. So at a later point of time whenever his authentic feeling is challenged like a delay in the Project, an injury to a team member, or another instance that stirs fear in him, he would find instances from his past, would show it as anger instead of an appropriate behaviour. Even he being calm externally, would feel internally stirred up and that would spill out at an inappropriate time that reinforces his belief system about the self and the world.

II. CHALLENGES & LEARNINGS

While we were researching for this Theoretical paper, we found that involving psychological aspect coupled with Agile Leadership was first of its kind and we need to make inroads through this. And Transactional analysis is a Galaxy of knowledge to bring it to the scope of this paper was challenging. To make a study on leadership models, relating it to the inner experience one goes through an individual and his frame of reference from child hood that might impact his personality was a great learning experience. What we have tried to address is a drop in the ocean. We got more scope to bring about other aspects of various Models that might impact the Leadership aspects.

III. CONCLUSION

The theoretical research was based on how the Frame of reference could have an impact as a Blindspot in Leadership arena and create a "Bundle of Biases" in terms of decision making, his interactions and interpersonal relationship with the team and his

environment. Scripty behavior is all about that triggers the belief system about self, people around him which was stored in him as a survival mechanism.

Ideal would be when the person has a conflict in terms of situation that drives the scripty behavior or a familiar feeling, which triggers something from the past, he has to do a reality testing and device a strategy to rebuild or course correct himself at each and every point of his life. The more it is getting delayed it might have an impact on the others leaving a pay-off like I'm no good, I can't think or I can't do better and reliving the injunctional imprints that was left on him from childhood. If it has to be reiterated he has to be in his Adult Ego state, where he objectively arrives at a decision with the data points of the here and now. Does it mean, he can't refer to the past experiences? Absolutely not, anything that is relevant in terms of experience or a success strategy in terms of interpersonal relationship / professional decision making, he has to own it and as the time progresses update the belief system which is appropriate for the time and age, just like a transformation from sending a message through an individual few hundred years ago to getting used to digital media today. He has to strike a balance between the Classical Legacy system and a Robust Techno base with a win-win scenario for the self and others, contributing towards the success of the team, project and more importantly the inner self.

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