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## ***Transforming Leadership: An Assessment Tool***

*By Dr. Jule D. Scarborough*

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Dr. Jule Scarborough is a Full Professor of Industrial Management at Northern Illinois University. Her research specialties are management and leadership. She received her BS in Industrial Technology from Appalachian State University and has a MAE from Ball State University and a PhD from Ohio State University.

# Transforming Leadership: An Assessment Tool

By Dr. Jule D. Scarborough

## Introduction

Several modern leadership theories seem to fit the leadership needs of business today and for the future as company structures, infrastructures, operations, and strategies change much more rapidly than ever before.

Andersen Consulting (1999) engaged in a series of studies involving CEOs of major Fortune 100-1000 companies. These studies brought forth a serious concern that today's leadership standards and styles are not keeping pace with the needs of today or the future. Corporations are becoming larger and more complex; the competition for all companies is more intense and the competitive environment is very turbulent; in addition, today's stakeholders are more demanding. Therefore, the need for strategic and capable leaders is greater than ever, and the search for these individuals is becoming more rigorous. To compound the situation, individuals with leadership potential are still being overlooked, because the accepted wisdom that leaders are born, and not made, is very slow to change. The premise of this initiative is that potential leaders are being overlooked at every level in manufacturing organizations; and, that an assessment instrument could assist companies in identifying who might have potential and is yet untapped, those who desire to be developed as leaders and have leadership capabilities once trained and educated, and to determine the existing attitudes across ranks about leadership within the company culture. This researcher engaged in a study with manufacturing CEOs (Scarborough, 2001) to study the status of transforming leadership in manufacturing. Two companies involved in that research were interested in the development of an instrument that would assess the perceived status of leadership and development

opportunities in their companies. The instrument would also assess the desire of employees across all levels to lead. The researcher worked with a panel of manufacturing professionals and developed and tested the two instruments presented here.

As companies move from a power/control culture to a culture of participation, development of human resources, and shared decision making, it has become very important to focus on leadership development at all employee levels in all divisions and departments. Influence, not authority, has become the model for progressive companies who are flatter, more networked, knowledge-based, and partnered with many other similar and dissimilar types of firms. Andersen Consulting's research (1999) identifies the following characteristics of effective organizational leadership:

- Create/communicate a compelling vision which will provide direction and guidance]
- Treat employees as business partners to secure informed cooperation and to tap knowledge and experience
- Use information technology positively, making the leader the center of a human intelligence network, not a bureaucratic controller
- Develop leaders' and potential leaders' realistic knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. (p. 14)

Companies are building interdisciplinary self-led project/product teams and moving away from a functional structure to the functional matrix or projectized organizational structure. As they become more globally involved, effective leadership beyond the executive levels, the identification of untapped leadership potential, and the

development of that potential become absolutely critical. In addition, the sharing of leadership is critical from another perspective. The demands made upon leaders of today's companies are so great that shared leadership has become necessary. Mergers, acquisitions, technological collaboration, partnerships, and alliances have created a variety of points of leadership need. Therefore, companies must:

- Recognize where sole leadership is dangerously stretched
- Design shared roles with care, specifying areas of authority, responsibility, and accountability
- Design and communicate governance mechanisms, decision support, etc.
- Specify leadership requirements for each role
- Help leaders develop the new competencies required and a deep personal insight; give them experience in team co-leadership, alliances, and partnerships
- Publicize success and rewards (Andersen Consulting, 1999, p. 14)

Developing technological competency has become another area of critical focus. Some leaders feel that they can safely rely on a specialist for technological leadership, but this reliance weakens the ability to arrive at particular technological solutions. The top management team needs to be technologically savvy, and because the new leadership model is to lead by influence rather than authority, leaders require excellence in communication which also requires technological savvy (Andersen Consulting, 1999). Beyond communication, leaders must understand what technology will benefit their companies, how best to implement it, how much to invest in it, and what its limitations may be. Thus, leaders are advised by Marshall Goldsmith (Andersen Consulting, 1999) to:

- Accept that technology is critical to their research, as well as to the success of their companies
- Hire advisors who have technical talent, business knowledge, and skill in human communication

- Be aware of how technology will affect their business
- Be prepared to learn by trial and error
- Constantly reassess and readjust the corporate position (p. 15)

For example, in a study performed by Scarborough (2001) of executive leaders in manufacturing, one CEO created a new corporate position for a communications expert with the skills listed above.

Many leaders are experiencing leadership issues that are a direct result of generational differences. Technological prowess has imposed leadership responsibilities on young employees who are technologically savvy but inexperienced in leadership and under the management of employees much older than themselves who may be marginalized by technological change. However, it is important to remember that experience in itself is not a qualification for leadership because often those experienced have lost imagination, flexibility, and initiative; thus, experience can sometimes be an impediment to developing new leadership styles as research shows that it is more difficult to unlearn than to learn (Andersen Consulting, 1999). Therefore, it is also critical to acknowledge that changes in all the forms mentioned above, from new partnerships to technology, can upset generational balance and become an obstruction to communication and cooperation among employees, hindering leadership. It is important to value each generation for its immediate and potential contributions (energy, imagination, wisdom, technological savvy, and experience) and to value and reward these contributions. Mentoring and training programs can go far toward bridging the gaps created by generational imbalances and helping cross-generational groups to learn from and value what each other has to contribute, often realizing that together they are greater than one individual. Creating an open culture based on personal relationships rather than seniority and intentionally strategizing to mix generations in teamwork will serve to reduce tensions

and build respect. Scarborough (2001) interviewed manufacturing CEOs and executives regarding the values, attitudes, and perspectives of younger employees. Those interviewed expressed concerns as to how to become more adept at working across generations who often have differing values, attitudes, and perspectives. To become more adept at working across generations, one CEO engaged in direct and personal behavior modification.

Finally, and probably most important, the Andersen Consulting study (1999) addressed the shortcomings of leaders who had inadequate value sets. Another executive in the Scarborough (2001) study mentioned this as well, that executives become so removed from the processes they oversee that they often develop "blind spots" in their value systems because their personal growth has failed to match their advancement in the company. The Andersen Consulting team (1999) indicated that executives often become egotistical and so destructive, even though they are smart and charismatic, that they overlook subtle aspiration and behavior patterns in their staff, that they stop learning, that intellectual standards begin to fall short of the needed requirements, and very often they lack respect for other cultures. This aspect of leadership was also explored in the Scarborough (2001) study. Some of the executives and their colleagues were struggling to work across cultures, genders, and races. That study identified a great need for those leaders to make changes in this area. For making value shifts, John O'Neil, one of the researchers in the Andersen (1999) study, recommends that values have changed and the command and control model will no longer be effective. Executives today are strongly encouraged to build upon ethical values and to offer guidance, to connect the development of employees to rewards, and to develop a culture with supportive systems that value and deploy knowledge, support technology, and develop relationships with all partners, e.g., customers, suppliers, etc. Therefore, the Andersen Consulting study (1999) and the Scarborough

study (2001) are in tandem from the perspective of what the important issues in leadership are and what values, characteristics, and strategies are critical to leader success in any company today and in the future.

So, how would a company begin to assess and understand its leadership culture? How do employees feel about leaders, access to leadership development, the opportunity to lead, and how do they learn to lead? This author worked with a group of manufacturing engineers and managers to develop an assessment instrument for the purpose of learning how employees across a manufacturing company feel about leadership and leadership development and opportunity. The questionnaires are presented in the Results section below. However, before presenting the them, it is important to understand the current theories best suited for the leadership challenges described above.

### **Leadership Theories Appropriate for Today's Companies**

Because of today's focus on moral and ethical leadership, Burns's (1978) definition of transforming leadership is one of the most appropriate theories for today and the future.

*When one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality . . . power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for [a common purpose] . . . transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both . . . the leader takes the initiative in making the leader-led connection; it is the leader who creates the links that allow communication and exchange to take place. . . . Leaders . . . will have the major role in ultimately carrying out the combined purpose of leaders and followers . . . and address themselves to followers' wants, needs, and other motiva-*

*tions, as well as to their own, and thus they serve as an independent force in changing the makeup of the followers' motive base through gratifying their motives. (p. 20)*

*The ultimate test of moral leadership is its capacity to transcend the claims of multiplicity of everyday wants and needs and expectations, to respond to the higher levels of moral development, and to relate leadership behavior—its roles, choices, style, commitments—to a set of reasoned, relatively explicit values. (p. 46)*

Burns (1978) also defined transactional leadership as

*when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things. The exchange could be economic or political or psychological in nature: a swap of goods or of one good for money; a trading of votes between candidates and citizen or between legislators; hospitality to another person in exchange for willingness to listen to one's troubles. Each party of the bargain is conscious of the power resources and attitudes of the other. Each person recognizes the other as a person. Their purposes are related, at least to the extent that the purposes stand within the bargaining process and can be advanced by maintaining that process. But beyond this the relationship does not go. The bargainers have no enduring purpose that holds them together; hence they may go their separate ways. A leadership act took place, but it was not one that binds leader and follower together in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose. (pp. 19-20)*

Transformational leadership is yet still different from either transforming or transactional leadership. Bass (1985) modified Burns's definitions and proposed that "transformational leadership augments the effects of transactional leadership on the efforts, satisfaction, and effectiveness of subordinates, e.g., Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Kennedy

did not shy away from being transactional as well as transformational. They were able to move the nation as well as play petty politics" (p. 53). The most critical aspects of these particular definitions are the moral and ethical components. For example, Hitler is considered a transformational leader because moral and ethical components are absent; he is not considered a transforming leader because of the moral and ethical requirements in that definition. Ciulla (1995) feels that the real debate about leadership is not what leadership is, but what good leadership is. If ethics are ignored, could one simply trace great leaders by the quality of changes implemented? Wilson (1993) believes that it is important to look at the disparity between what leaders say they are doing and their actual behaviors.

When considering what "moral" and "ethical" mean, the following definitions have been chosen in tandem with the leadership theories presented. Toffler's (1986) definition of "moral" has been chosen: "relating to principles of right and wrong or arising from one's conscience or a sense of good and evil" (p. 17). His definition of "ethics" has also been chosen for our purposes: "rules or standards that govern behaviors" (p. 10). Therefore, morals could be viewed as the foundation for ethical procedures or behavior. It seems that almost all leaders engage in transactional leadership, possibly in conjunction with either transforming or transformational leadership. Beyond these definitions, it is important to recognize several other leadership definitions very appropriate for today and the future that might be considered additional levels of depth or extensions of these theories.

The SuperLeadership Theory (Sims & Lorenz, 1992) is a relatively new leadership construct based upon social learning theory. It focuses on the development of self-leaders, a process where leaders help followers to develop into leaders themselves or self-leaders. The superleader models self-leadership behaviors by teaching/influencing followers to be responsible, competent, capable, and self-disci-

plined. The ultimate result is empowerment; self-leaders are capable of functioning in self-managing teams, etc. The theory is grounded in social learning where modeling is a form of teaching and influencing. Therefore, if ethical and moral behavior is modeled, then followers become more ethical and moral as well. It seems that this construct also fits well into a genuine empowerment environment where leaders or managers actually “give up” power by empowering others with real authority (power) to make decisions.

Briefly, the social learning theory of modeling (Bandura, 1977) involves how people learn directly from observation or by vicarious observation. In organizational settings, behavior modeling provides an opportunity for vicarious learning whereby new patterns of behavior are acquired and existing patterns altered through three types of modeling effects: (1) members learn what is acceptable behavior and then modify their own behavior accordingly; (2) members observe negative or positive consequences of others’ actions, what is rewarded or punished, and change their behavior accordingly; (3) behavior is cued, whereby a real problem is used to remind members what they might have learned in a workshop, etc., stimulating them to use what they learned in solving real problems leading to indirect facilitation of the learning process through indirect observation (Sims & Manz, 1982). Modeling can affect ethical or moral behavior changes in followers because when leaders practice ethical and moral behavior, members learn and assume the same behavior, especially if it is perceived to lead to rewards (Trevino, 1986).

Moral talk or dialogic leadership is another type of modeling behavior that leads others to change their behavior (Bird & Waters, 1989). Moral expression can bring about feelings and connections to moral action and can influence others when dialogue is used to “identify problems, consider issues, advocate and criticize policies, and to justify and explain decisions” (p. 82). It brings about memory and assists leaders

to reinforce and build upon “tacit as well as explicit agreements and promises . . . and connect feelings of self-worth to moral compliance” (p. 82). These theories and definitions served as the basis for making decisions about items for the assessment instrument(s) (inventory) presented below.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this endeavor was to focus on (1) the need of the researcher to learn about transforming leadership at a deeper level and (2) to collaborate with local manufacturing industries to develop an assessment tool that would assist them to determine the current attitudes toward company leadership and practices, to identify untapped potential leaders, and to identify who desires to engage in leadership across all employee levels. There are myriad instruments available to assess leadership from a variety of perspectives; however, the results and use of information obtained from assessment instruments are often better received by employees if representatives from their organization participate in creating the instrument. In addition, one aspect of the focus of this instrument is somewhat unusual in that its focus is to seek information about how employees across levels feel about leadership, particularly the status of transforming leadership in the organization, access to leadership development, and the opportunity to lead in their companies. In other words, the development team desired to create an instrument to assess current attitudes across a variety of employees, e.g., team leaders, supervisors, managers, executives, and nonsalaried employees to determine how they feel about leadership development opportunities, access, and quality, and finally, how they feel about being provided opportunities to lead, to stretch and learn through leadership experiences.

The leadership development team consisted of 12 engineers and managers employed by the following manufacturing companies and local business council: Rockford Products, Woods Equipment, Woodward, Rockford Process Control, Daimler Chrysler,

Motorola, Ingersoll Cutting Tools, the Rockford Council of 100 (Chamber of Commerce), and the author. This mix of companies and individuals provided an acceptable representation of types, sizes, structures, and ownership of manufacturing companies and individuals with a range of education, experience, backgrounds, and both genders.

### **Design and Methodology**

The author began the development process by identifying “transforming” statements, concepts, and questions from approximately 400 exemplary sources, including major leadership books by leaders and researchers on the topic, various foundation sources, leadership conference and workshop sources, etc. Those sources are far too many to list in the bibliography; however, the author may be contacted to receive a copy. To initiate the process and to maximize the industrial participant’s time, the author generated a question/statement bank of 450 items by reading and analyzing the sources, often using directly quoted statements. After the team was informed about transforming leadership and clearly understood its parameters by concluding that transforming leadership included development and opportunity aspects, they began a process of determining which questions/statements were appropriate to include in the assessment instrument as well as identifying gaps—categories of information they desired information about but for which there were no questions or statements in the bank. Thus, over a period of several meetings of approximately six hours each, they compiled an inventory bank, then rewrote or added items, ending with 154 questions including the demographic items. This validated the final list of questions/statements from an industrial perspective regarding the wording and meanings of the questions/statements, resulting in Instrument 1. Once this phase was completed, Instrument 1 was tested for reliability and time to complete. See the Results section and Table 1 for further discussion of reliability results and exact items included.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW TABLE 1](#)  
(*Microsoft Word document*)

At the point of considering using Instrument 1 in a particular company, the company representatives wanted to revise it from their own perspective. Therefore, a second team of five individuals from that company of various roles, responsibilities, and education revised Instrument 1 for their potential purposes. They reevaluated the instrument in content, meaning, and wording, and reconsidered its length they shortened it somewhat. This became Instrument 2.

Instrument 2 was also tested for reliability and time to complete. See the Results section below and Table 2 for further discussion of reliability results and exact items included.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW TABLE 2](#)  
(*Microsoft Word document*)

## Results

Instrument 1 was administered twice, one month apart, to 23 respondents who were a cross-representative group from the companies above and several other manufacturing companies in the Rockford, Illinois area. However, only 22 instruments were used because one individual during each testing time did not complete the instrument during the other test time; thus,  $N = 22$ . The average test time was 29 minutes. The SPSS-X procedure CORRELATION was used on 149 items, those nondemographic and non-open-ended in nature. One hundred eighteen items showed statistically significant Pearson product-moment correlations. The remaining 31 items were not correlated between the first and second administrations/responses. Variables were then created to indicate the direction of the difference in response to the same item between the first and second administrations. The codes were: agreement between the first and second responses, second response lower than first response, and second response higher than first response. The FREQUENCIES procedure was run and a code book created. The percentage of agreement

ranged from a low of 32% to a high of 86%. The TABLES program was then employed to create a series of bivariate tables for the 149 statements, breaking the responses down by the age group of the respondent and years with the company. The companies involved specifically requested that these variables be examined. Other demographics would have been considered as well, but were not due to insufficient variance in response categories, e.g., race, gender, and ethnicity. A CROSSTABS procedure and the chi-square statistic were used to check the statistical significance of the differences in responses between the categories of the two selected descriptors. Few differences were noted.

Instrument 2 was also administered twice, one month apart, however to only 11 respondents. These respondents were different individuals but provided representations similar to that of Instrument 1. Although a higher number of respondents was preferred, 11 was deemed acceptable as a viable test for reliability because the instrument was very similar to Instrument 1 and because the test group was so homogeneous. The same process and statistical analyses were employed as described above. Of the 131 nondemographic and non-open-ended statements, 120 showed statistically significant Pearson product-moment correlations. The remaining 11 items were not correlated between the first and second administrations/responses. As with Instrument 1, variables were then created to indicate the direction of the difference in response to the same item between the first and second administrations. The codes were: agreement between the first and second responses, second response lower than first response, and second response higher than first response. The FREQUENCIES procedure was run and a code book created. The percentage of agreement ranged from a low of 27% to a high of 100%. No bivariate tables were created due to the smaller number of respondents and the lack of variance in the responses to the demographic items. The response time approximated that of Instrument 1.

Generally, both instruments performed fairly well in testing reliability. Seventy-nine percent of the items on Instrument 1 were significantly correlated. In analyzing Instrument 2, each multiple-choice question was broken down into individual items and analyzed separately; thus, 383 items resulted. However, if one of the multiple-choice responses correlated significantly, then the whole item was considered significantly correlated. Therefore, 66% of the items on Instrument 2 correlated significantly.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The two instruments are presented for consideration by those industries interested in assessing the status of leadership and employee feelings and attitudes about leadership development and opportunities to learn by leading. The response time was perceived as reasonable. If a company were to use either of the instruments, there are several possible conclusions to consider. Thirty-one items in Instrument 1 and 11 items in Instrument 2 were not correlated due to insignificant correlations. These items either need to be dropped or rewritten and retested for reliability. The types of bivariate tables analyzed were limited because of insufficient variance. If a company desires to consider differences between age groups, years in company, gender, race or ethnic background, for example, then the population tested must have large enough groups for variance to show up in the analyses. A homogeneous group will limit such analyses. It appeared that the structure and quality of questions are better on Instrument 1 than those rewritten by a second industrial team for Instrument 2. It is interesting to note that the changes made to Instrument 2 by the second industrial panel were revisions back to the style presented in the author's original bank of questions. For example, questions 124-133 on Instrument 1 are individual climate items, whereas in Instrument 2, item 130 provides a multiple-choice response opportunity. When analyzing these types of items, each response is treated as a separate analysis item,

which sometimes causes reliability to seem lower; however, if one item has a significant correlation, then the item is considered reliable. This same change can be noted for items 134-141 in Instrument 1 about attitudes toward one's manager or supervisor, whereas in Instrument 2, these questions were condensed into one multiple-choice question. When considering these types of changes, both instruments seem to be reliable enough to generate useful information about transforming leadership, leadership development, and opportunities to lead. However, it is recommended that any survey be validated internally and tested for reliability with a company-specific test group before being used by that company. Another factor to consider about the reliability testing of these instruments is that the tests for both instruments were administered one month apart. For the more sensitive questions about leaders (supervisors, managers, etc.), one month is a long time between tests 1 and 2 when intervening events could easily change a respondent's feelings. Although, to test well for reliability requires a greater time period, especially for the more sensitive questions, it may have been better to administer the two tests more closely together. When considering this factor, the instruments performed well, especially Instrument 1. Respondents reported that the nature of the items seemed to indirectly inform participants about the positive aspects of transforming leadership versus the traditional power and control model. When discussing the instruments with the respondents after each of the two administrations, it was interesting to note that participation in the instrument testings resulted in significant realizations about leadership and which practices, attitudes, perspectives, philosophies, etc. existed in their companies and which ones did not. Thus, the instruments seemed to serve an educational function. Some comments included: "Oh, this is how we should be doing things," "Oh, this is not how we are treated; we should strive for this kind of leadership," "Oh, we could do so much more with our

employees; I wish there were more leadership development opportunities available to us," "I wish my manager would consider my leadership potential; I wonder if we could use this instrument in our company; can we get a copy of this to use?" Clearly, some of the companies where these individuals work have administered leadership inventories and many have leadership training programs; yet, as mentioned in the Scarborough (2001) study and the Andersen Consulting (1999) study, a focus on the development of untapped leadership potential has not become a priority where it has reached far enough into the organizations to have made a major impact. The CEOs in Scarborough's (2001) study indicated that leadership development across employees and divisions and at levels well below the executive level is one of their greatest and most critical challenges.

### ***Implications for Industrial Technology (IT) Programs***

Although the focus of this active research was to work with industry to develop instruments that would be directly applicable in their manufacturing context, there are also implications for both IT departmental leadership and program content. It may be important for administrators to consider some sort of similar assessment activity, for this author believes there is great, yet untapped leadership potential within the faculty ranks of IT programs that may never be realized without a focus on leadership training and development. As one of the researchers of Andersen (1999) mentioned, the old attitude that leaders are born, not made, is reversing and today's philosophy is to develop leaders. Because leaders develop and learn best through real leadership experiences, it is very important to identify leadership challenges for employees at all levels, including faculty. Each faculty member, as a highly educated and knowledgeable individual, should be challenged and engaged in some type of significant "make a difference" leadership activity. That practice will go far towards influencing and model-

ing leadership to our students so that when they leave us to go into the industries that we serve, they will expect to lead, understand how to lead, and possess mental models of successful leadership. Departments have a direct responsibility to incorporate knowledge about leadership within the overall program content, as well as learning activities which engage students in leadership. Professors have a direct responsibility to lead, not only for the sake of the students and the industries they serve, but for the sake of their institutions. After all, universities and their faculties are often thought to be leaders of change, the generators of new knowledge, and the persons responsible for preparing the future leaders of the country and the world. That responsibility means that we should model effective leadership and formally teach about leadership, thereby developing new generations of leaders. As a result of the new demands on industrial leaders (Andersen Consulting, 1999), and because the overall goals of the IT programs are to develop supervisors, managers, and leaders for industry, the Industrial Technology curriculum must reflect leadership education about the best theory and practices as well as active learning experiences.

Finally, as companies (IT stakeholders) struggle to identify leadership models that will result in a supportive and productive corporate culture, and as they struggle to apply the modern leadership theories mentioned here, they are providing a wealth of research and consulting opportunities for IT professionals.

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