

Nelson Mandela as a transformational leader

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Executive summary

Nelson Mandela is one of the most respectable personality in world history. He is recognized as a role model for leaders because of his dedication, commitment, self-confidence and compassion towards the people. Therefore this report will be discussed the leadership skills of Mandela, why he is so admired as a leader, what organization level leaders can learn from Nelson Mandela and how to be a transformational leader in corporate level.

Introduction

Arguably Nelson Mandela is the most influential political leader of the recent past. Mandela won the Nobel Peace prize in 1993 for his commitment to bring peace to South Africa. He did many scarifications to bring rights of native South African and finally he spent 27 years of imprisonment time in Robbin Island. He was a president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. He gave many example as a leader for many generations after his time. In this study, it is discussed that leadership skills of Nelson Mandela and what corporate leaders can learn from Nelson Mandela.

Nelson Mandela as a transformational leader

Mandela has shown both charismatic and transformational leadership skills. He has many charismatic leadership skills such as high level of confidence, public speaking skills, body language, humanity and compassion on people. However he can categorized as a transformational leader due to impact he made to life of South Africans. Transformational leaders are those inspire to followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and inspire them to develop their leadership capacity (Riggio and Bass, 2006). Mandela led to abolish South African apartheid government and bring democracy to the people. It made a huge impact not only South African and also world politics. There can be identified four elements of transformational leaders.

- Individualized consideration
- Intellectual stimulation
- Inspirational motivation
- Idealized influence

Individualized consideration

Mandela represented common desire of the all native South Africans. They didn't have their civil rights under apartheid government. As a main leader of African National Congress (ANC) he fought against the government for all the common people. According to Shelton. E (2012), Transformational leaders are paying attention to all followers' requirements and support their growth as a mentor. Mandela did many scarification to achieve their common goal. As a lawyer, he had opportunity to spend comfortable life but he choose difficult path to fight for South African common people. In his imprisonment time, he taught political science to his fellow prisoners as a mentor.

Intellectual stimulation

Transformational leaders encourage innovation of their followers. Mandela used his creativity to get support from international community. Even he used his imprisonment time to promote their struggle and he became a symbol of their fight. And also after became a president, he used creative ways to reconciliation process. 1995 Rugby world cup was a big moment of South Africa and Mandela could able to bring all South African to one purpose.

Inspirational motivation

Transformational leaders act in a way that inspire and their followers by giving meaning to their follower's works (Avilio and Bass, 1994). His inspiration for South Africa which value right of every citizen equally could not break even he had to spend 27 years in prison. In 1976 and 1984, apartheid government try to release him with agreed conditions to make him silent, but he refused both times. Even in very difficult conditions, he never gave up his fight and inspired his followers.

Idealized influence

Transformational leaders need to be role model to others (Riggio and Bass, 2006). Mandela was a main leader of their fight and sacrificed 27 of years in prison for their struggle. However once he was selected as president of South Africa, he chose forgiveness and kindness rather than hatred. He refused all kind of racism even black domination.

How did Nelson Mandela's leadership role change as his circumstances changed?

Mandela's leadership role can be categorized under three time period; before the imprisonment, imprisonment period and after the imprisonment. His inspiration and his concept on reconciliation was never change throughout these three situations. But strategies he used to reach his target were change with a time. Nelson Mandela used nonviolence methods to get attention of international communities such as protest and campaign like "stay at home" protest, sabotage campaign etc. However African National Congress also had warfare movement too. Mandela mentioned in his autobiography that "Nonviolent resistance is effective as long as your opposition adheres to the same rules as you do. But if peaceful protest is met with violence, its effectiveness is at an end". (Mandela, 1994).

Once he was in prison, he was an example for his followers by not giving up and he became a symbol of their struggle. This led to get attention of international community to them. Then International communities put pressure on South African government to introduce new reconciliation and stop the violence against native African people. At that time he started to negotiation with government representative. His wife Winnie and some of party members had moved to extreme violence movements against the government. But he started negotiation with government since he believed that nonviolence is the only way to freedom. Even though some of his followers criticized him he continuously did what he believe since he has self-confidence on what he is doing. This prison time specifies Mandela's determination and self-confidence.

After he released, he spread the message of forgiveness. Right after he was released, Mandela visited widow of Hendrik Verwoerd who introduced apartheid policies and was assassinated in 1966 by native African. He had able to win his opponent hearts by spreading message of peace, love and forgiveness. He had ability to bring both white and black people who fought each other to one platform.

Reasons for Nelson Mandela is so admired as a leader.

Mandela is one of the most respectable personality in world history. Everyone respect him since his determination which brought freedom to South African people. He was realistic and flexible to negotiate with the government that put him in prison. While he fought against white authority he was also against black domination. In his autobiography he has mentioned that sometimes he

had to fight against both white and black domination. Since this view, he was accepted and admired by everyone as their leader. Further in 1995 he used Rugby world cup to bring everyone together. His determination, inspiration, humanity and his creative approach caused to make him one of most respectable and admirable personality in world history.

How Nelson Mandela is similar or different from other world leaders?

Mandela has once said that he was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Jr) both used nonviolence method to win rights to their people. Some calls Mandela as “Lincoln of Africa”. Compassion to their people and high level of determination to achieve their targets are similarities of all these great leaders. And all these leaders had speakers so they had ability to spread their message in their society more effectively. Gandhi’s view on Hindu and Muslim problem in India was similar to Mandela’s view on his country. Gandhi’s moderate view on that issue caused to assassinate him by ultra-religious group. But Mandela had ability to convince to his followers the importance of reconciliation. Mandela had ability to win the hearts of his oppositions too. However Gandhi and Martin Luther both were assassinated.

Things we can learn about leadership from Nelson Mandela.

There are many lessons that can be applied to corporate world from Mandela Even though he was a political leader.

Persevere – Mandela sacrificed 27 year his life in prison. But he never gave up or changed his goal to bring freedom to his people. Therefore he had a purpose driven attitude throughout his life.

Self-confidence – Even though some of his party members criticized him and accused him as a traitor, he continuously fought for what he believed. When he released, he said “I had no exact confidence except that our cause was very strong and it was winning more and more support”. It revealed that level of self-confidence that he had on himself and their cause.

Sympathy – He fought against the authority since he see the suffering of his people. Good leaders can understand the situation of their followers’ perspective too. It lead to strengthen the relationship between leader and followers.

Values and attitudes that need to be developed to be a transformational leader

Becoming a transformational leader is a result of long time process. As corporate leaders, to make a significant difference in organizational level, leaders have to practice many qualities.

Leader should be a mentor or a coach to his followers rather than being a boss. Leaders need to build up good relationship with every member of the team and need to guide them to success of their corporate and personal life.

And also leader need to delegate responsibilities to his followers and build up confidence of them. Leaders should encourage the creativity among their followers and give them freedom to come up with innovative ideas. Transformational leaders are willing to take risk and they take failures and mistakes as learnings. Further leaders should guide to their follower by setting long term vision. And they should be inspired and motivated to achieve those goals. And also leader should be a role model to his followers by being an example from his life how to achieve bigger things. Nelson Mandela is an ideal to follow as a role model for young professionals.

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