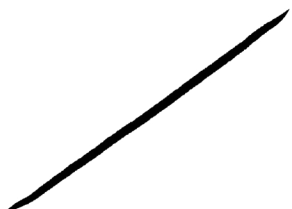


THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF FILMS CREW

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Abstract: The article illustrates the way in which leadership styles influence the performance level of the film crew and implicitly, freedom of expression, sense of security, cohesion. This relationship is part of a wider social context, whose influence acts both on the leader and crew performance. With the advent of globalization and increased consumption of film products in digital and traditional environments as well as the evolution of research in this field, the importance of the phenomenon of leadership in film crews has increased considerably. Consequently, nowadays, leadership is the key to the success of each film crew individual but also of the team they belong to, because in cinema, there is an interdependent relationship between the quality of the final product and the individual contribution of each member of the film crew.

Keywords: leadership, film crew, freedom of expression, team cohesion, performance level.

How to cite: Mititelu, Ioana (2021) "The Influence of Leadership Style on The Performance of Film Crews", *Concept 1* (22)/2021, pp. 292-300.

Introduction

The phenomenon of leadership has been a cardinal point of research of civilizations around the world since ancient times. The concept of leadership aroused a keen interest for researchers in all fields, especially after the Second World War, as they are mainly interested in the specific characteristics of leaders, but also in the factors that differentiate the leaders from other individuals. With the advent of globalization and increasing consumption of film products in digital and traditional environments, as well as the evolution of research in this field, the importance of the phenomenon of the leadership within the film crews, has gradually intensified. So, nowadays, the leadership is the key to the success of each individual, but also of the teams they belong to, because in cinema, there is an interdependence relation between the quality of the final product and the individual contribution of each member of the film crew. There are a variety of approaches to the concept of leadership, but numerous studies attest to the similarity between the phenomenon of *leadership* and a number of specific behaviours. The conduct by which an individual that we will continue to call a leader, contributes to the influence of a group of people, without resorting to force and causes members to perform voluntarily, behaviours that they would not have initiated without the involvement of the leader.

The leadership in film teams is based on interaction, cooperation and sociability, and the competent results of the leaders usually become visible, only after the active involvement in a large number of projects. The acquisition of skills specific to leadership positions is connected with the role of education, the influence of inspirational people and experience. There are several approaches in the context of leading film crews, regarding the types of leaders, but also the personality traits and personal qualities they must meet, so as not to undermine the freedom of expression. In the case of limiting this fundamental right, we witness an *authoritarian* or *autocratic* leadership, through which decisions are taken without prior consultation with members. In this context, compromising the performance of the members of the film crews and, implicitly, of the final product becomes inevitable.

Leadership styles

In order to decrease this leadership style subject to errors, it is necessary to apply Bass's theory that distinguishes between the *transformational leader* and the *transactional leader*.

According to this theory, the transactional leader focuses on the relationship between the team and its members, stimulates the members to perform their tasks through the control of rewards. Therefore, according to this operative way of behavioural control, the performed people will be praised, appreciated, promoted faster, while the members whose performance is lower, will be penalized. Regarding this type of leadership, the concept of *exceptional management* was also included, which aims at the fact that the leader intervenes only when things do not work properly, when errors occur or the group deviates from the common goal (Kuhnert, 1987, p. 548).

The leaders who adopt this leadership style either remain passive until the group is already facing problems - passive management – or constantly monitor the group's activity and act in a correct manner only in situations where errors occurred and things do not go into a favourable manner – active management (Kuhnert, 1987, p. 657).

On the other hand, the transformational leader in a film production focuses his actions on changing the attitudes and assumptions of the members of the film crew, regarding the tasks they have to perform, depending on the department. Transformational leaders are those who transform knowledge, crystallize the interests of the team and stimulate the members, leading them by their own example, to achieve common goals. The leader inspires those who follow him, guides them to achieve high standards of performance and uses symbols to focus the team's actions towards achieving common goals: making an exceptional film product and emphasizing the sense of satisfaction of team members.

The article *Identification of Transformational Leadership Qualities: An Examination of Potential Biases*, refers to the fact that transformational leaders, being considered promoters of change, achieve a performance far beyond expectations, by instilling pride, trust and communicating personal respect, while facilitating creative thinking and providing inspiration. (Lievens, 1997, p. 415). In terms of transactional leadership, Bass identified two determinants in its composition. The first is called contingent rewards leadership and refers to how leaders can transact with subordinates by rewarding their efforts, telling them what to do to receive rewards, punishing them for unwanted actions, giving them additional feedback, and promoting them for their efficient work. The second factor is the exceptional management in which leaders can also conduct transactions with subordinates, intervening only when they deviate from certain goals or expectations and providing negative feedback for non-compliance (Lievens, 1997, p. 418). The article notes that transformational leaders, unlike transactional leaders, set certain expectations following challenges and allow subordinates to achieve high levels of performance. Bass described transformational leadership as being determined by 4 distinct factors: charisma, inspiration, individual consideration and intellectual stimulation. Charismatic leadership is aimed at those leaders who act as role models. They create a sense of identification with a common vision and instil pride and trust in subordinates by overcoming obstacles. This dimension is also known as idealized influence (Lievens, 1997, p. 419). Inspiration is perceived as the power to inspire and empower subordinates to accept and pursue with enthusiasm the goals that represent a challenge. The individual consideration of the leader consists of behaviours such as communicating personal respect to subordinates,

by providing a high degree of attention, by treating each member appropriately, and by recognizing the unique needs of each. At the end of the day, the leaders who are considered to be intellectually stimulated are those who put new ideas into practice, who have original ways of adopting problems, and encourage subordinates to rethink certain actions or ideas. The results of this article highlighted the fact that new theories of leadership, especially transformational leadership, can provide answers to certain challenges and innovations that film crews face. Transformational leaders facilitate these processes of change by placing certain values on the development of a vision and inspiring subordinates to pursue that vision in order to fulfil it.

The role of leaders in a film project is to provide guidance and lead the team so that the actions taken by its members are aimed at achieving common goals. Taken as a whole, any team led by a leader is defined by numerous emerging states, resulting from the relationships and interactions of members. Emerging states are defined as properties of the group, taken as a whole, which have a dynamic character, result from the interactions of group members and depend on the context in which it operates, the inputs it receives from outside, and group processes.

In essence, they are properties that result from a dynamic process of coevolution of film crew members. The emerging states are defined as properties of the group, taken as a whole, which have a dynamic character, result from the interactions of group members and depend on the context in which it operates, the inputs it receives from outside, and group processes. In essence, they are properties that result from a dynamic process of coevolution of film crew members. They can be observed, measured and retain their distinctive character over time. They cannot be identified by analysing only the team members individually and are therefore descriptive of the group taken as a whole. Some of the most important emerging states studied in the literature are cohesion, sense of security, satisfaction and conflict.

The cohesion of a team refers to the totality of the forces that hold the group together as an entity, being a characteristic that directly influences the performance and efficiency of the formal groups in the filming teams. There are many factors that contribute to the development of team cohesion. They can be grouped into two categories: internal factors and external factors. The most important internal factors that contribute to the development of team cohesion are the normative system, the similarity between members and the size of the group. Among the external factors that influence team cohesion, the most important is the reward system and remuneration. Focused primarily on the team, not the individual, it will enhance cohesion. Other external factors that influence the cohesion of film crews are the threats or challenges to which members are exposed. Usually, when a group is attacked or threatened, its degree of cohesion increases. Regarding cohesion, the article *Measurement of Transformational Leadership and its Relationship with Team Cohesion and Performance Level* mentions that the only leadership behaviour capable of predicting high task performance and social cohesion is the one that promotes acceptance of a team's goals.

Participating in setting the goals of a team leads to their successful achievement, but also to a high degree of cohesion (Callow et al., 2009, p. 395). This can be explained by the fact that the process of being involved in setting goals facilitates their acceptance.

The results of this article demonstrated that the promotion of teamwork by the leader (e.g. executive producer, producer, director, etc.) as well as expectations about a high level of performance, acceptance of team goals and individual consideration predict a high level of cohesion. Cohesion will develop as team members are encouraged by the leader or leaders, as appropriate, to work towards a common goal. (Callow et al., 2009, p. 412)

Another emerging state described in literature is the feeling of security and satisfaction. Edmondson defines a sense of security as a belief shared by group members that it is a conducive context for taking interpersonal risks. The feeling of security describes a climate in which the members of the group feel comfortable when they express their views and opinions.

The conflict, another emergent state of significant importance, refers to the situation in which members of a film crew express different views, opinions or ideas or to disagreements and frictions that arise when the beliefs or behaviours of a team member are not accepted by others. Therefore, the conflict is a central element of teamwork of any kind, and Forsyth mentions that in more than 20% of the total duration of interactions, team members make remarks that may generate conflicts or express disagreements. Moreover, it has not been proven that these expressed differences have a negative effect on the team's performance. Jehn describes three types of conflicts, namely those related to the accomplishment of tasks (disagreements on the actions to be performed to perform the task), those related to group processes (disagreements on how and strategies the team can achieve its goals) and relational (disagreements which are based on interpersonal remarks and aspects of interpersonal interaction that are not related to team tasks). According to the approach suggested by Jehn, conflicts related to the accomplishment of the task are, in fact, beneficial for the group's performance. However, relational conflicts and those related to group processes have disruptive effects. The article *The Conflict-Positive Organization: It Depends Upon Us* mentions that certain conflicts can be constructive and essential for teamwork and its effectiveness (Tjosvold, 2008, pp. 18-28). The goal of a successful film team is to combine the energy, ideas and knowledge of the individuals within the team. Combining these elements also involves managing ongoing conflicts. Conflicts are constructive when individuals believe that the benefits outweigh the costs. Conflicts pervade all functional areas within a film crew, and when well-managed, produce effective results. The results of the article also indicate that a leader can be a successful person by establishing quality relationships. Therefore, it has the role of managing conflicts and developing the quality of relationships within teams. Quality relationships are essential in the production of a film product, because they promote constructive conflicts, which, in turn, contribute to the involvement and performance of the team. The role of conflicts is to identify threats and opportunities, but also to challenge the conventional way of thinking.

Therefore, the emergent states mentioned above influence the performance and efficiency of film crews. Sometimes associating several people to accomplish a task can be a success, other times it ends miserably, leading to poor performance. In terms of team performance, in the article *Impact of Transformational Leadership on Follower Development and Performance: A Field Experiment* the impact of transformational leadership on subordinate development and performance was tested. If we analyse its effects in the context of film

production, we notice a positive relationship between transformational leadership and performance, and this relationship is stronger than that between transactional leadership and performance. The target objectives of transformational leaders aim at the development of individuals, as well as the increase of their performance level. Therefore, leaders have a certain degree of influence on the performance of subordinates (Dvir, 2002, pp.735-744). Also, the incorporation of transformational leaders in the film crews creates a stronger social bond, thus improving the performance of the members and, implicitly, of the film product.

Goals

Investigating on how leadership styles influence the level of performance of the film crews and implicitly, the freedom of expression, the sense of security, the cohesion.

Hypotheses

In view of the above, an experimental study was carried out in order to investigate the impact of factors related to leadership behaviours on film crews. Therefore, the research hypotheses are as follows:

- The teams led by transformational and transactional leaders will register high levels of cohesion, performance, sense of security and freedom of expression compared to the team led by the authoritarian or autocrat leader.
- In the teams led by a transformational leader, a higher degree of security will be registered, compared to the one registered in the team led by a transactional leader.
- Conflicts related to the accomplishment of tasks will determine a higher performance in the case of teams led by a transformational leader, compared to teams led by a transactional leader.
- The teams led by a transformational leader will have a higher level of performance in performing tasks than the team led by an authoritarian leader.

Process

Depending on the context of the study and the way in which the independent variable was manipulated, we can say that the analysis is an experimental field study, so it took place in a natural context, and participants were not removed from the environment in which they carried out. Also, the experimental study was conducted over 7 consecutive days. Regarding the method of selection of participants, it was a randomized one. 20 participants were randomly selected, namely men aged between 28 and 55, who work in the field of cinema. The subjects were randomly divided into three teams, each consisting of 5 subjects. For the three teams, we distributed a leader with a different leadership style: a leader with a transactional leadership style, a leader with a transformational leadership style, and an authoritarian leader. Therefore, the independent variable used in this study represents the leadership style of leaders and presents three ways. In addition to the three teams, a control group was introduced, the leader of which did not receive instructions on how to lead. Therefore, the control group is not subject to the experimental situation, and the leader will not have a specific leadership style.

In order to make an accurate assessment of the impact of the leaders' behaviour on the previously mentioned emergent states, but also on the team's performance, it is necessary, naturally, to use an efficient method. Therefore, in this experimental study, observation was used as an evaluation tool, and the recording of activities was done on the basis of an observation grid, with which the data could be recorded in a way that ensures as much as possible, the objective character. In order to verify and ensure the fidelity of the results obtained on the basis of the observation, two observers were introduced in the study so that we can investigate the degree of concordance between them.

The study was carried out during the production of two fiction short films, during 7 consecutive days. The film crews did not have contact with each other, for a more efficient observation of the way each team works. Therefore, they were given the same task of managing a fictitious crisis situation, without the participants being informed of the information on the variables studied. The fictitious crisis situation imposed on the participants consisted in resolving a situation in the context of the loss of the recorded material. As mentioned above, each leader was trained on the leadership needed to adopt. The transactional leader in the production department will have the role of setting goals and objectives, will guide and control the production processes, will negotiate and will grant differentiated rewards according to performance. He will also identify and correct the team's deviations from the proposed goal – finding a solution. On the other hand, the transformational leader in the directing department, will gain the respect and trust of the team members, will show consideration to the members, will give them attention, guidance, and support. He will also have the role of intellectually stimulating his subordinates, encouraging them to learn new things and solve in a rational way, the problems they face. It will inspire subordinates and guide them to achieve high standards of performance. On the other hand, the authoritarian / autocrat leader in the production department of the second project will adopt an attitude that will not involve team members in the decision-making process, and they will not be able to make suggestions on how to solve the problem. During the study it was recorded how the different type of leadership of each leader influences the way members interact within each team, the way members express their ideas, their desire to remain in the team they belong to, the tasks undertaken by them, as well as the performance of each team, to manage the proposed crisis situation.

Results

After applying this study, the hypotheses were confirmed by the results obtained, in the sense that: the production team led by the transformational leader in which the reward system is oriented mainly to the team, and not to the individual, has a higher degree of cohesion than the team led by the transactional leader, in which the awarding of rewards is differentiated according to performance. In the team led by the transactional leader, only people with spontaneous ideas were appreciated and taken into account. Therefore, the level of cohesion of this team, was lower than that of the team led by the transformational leader. Also, team members led by the transformational leader contributed ideas at a steady pace, even in the absence of the leader, while the team led by the transactional leader made a greater effort, working harder in his presence, but not in his absence. The team led by the authoritarian leader, achieved low performance, and the team members showed high levels of dissatisfaction and low satisfaction.

In terms of sense of security and satisfaction, the results confirm that teams led by a transformational leader, have a higher degree of security and satisfaction. In this team, the communication relations were more friendly, the members freely expressed their ideas about the crisis situation, which required management. The interpersonal relationships were more open, the members freely expressing their opinions, both towards the team and towards the leader, on how to manage the problem. This aspect led to the achievement of the proposed goal, in an efficient and fast way. The conflicts related to the accomplishment of tasks determined a higher performance in the case of the team led by the transformational leader. As members were able to express their ideas freely and resolve the crisis in a rational way, the results of the team under the coordination of such a leader constitute a high degree of performance. On the other hand, the transactional leader only identified and corrected the team's deviations from the proposed goal and their orientation towards a faster solution of the problem. Regarding the performance of the teams led by the transformational leader, he obtained faster, efficient and qualitative results.

Conclusions

In conclusion, based on the results of this study, we notice how the desire of members to be part of a team, is more pronounced given that the reward is directed to the team and not just to the individual. In the situation of the existence of a transactional leader, it was found that the people were appreciated more, but there was not enough involvement in the relationship with the team members. As for the authoritarian or autocratic style, as mentioned above, it is correlated with a low level of performance. Consequently, the adoption of this leadership style in film crews, does not contribute to a quality final product and drastically diminishes freedom of expression. Therefore, in this context, adopting the transformational leadership style is the most appropriate approach for the film department heads.

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Ioana Mititelu is a PhD student, and she works in movie production, mainly on feature films. Her PhD project focuses on the marketing in contemporary film society and the impact of the new media on film's production, circulation, and consumption. In 2017 she was the founder of her own advertising agency and, since then, she has been working on different advertising and film related projects.