Leader-Member Exchange Theory and Questionnaire

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory describes the dual relationship and the interactions between a leader and subordinate. All the leadership theories we have learned so far address the relationship between the leader and the subordinates as a group. LMX theory is a unique leadership technique because unlike traditional leadership theories, it focuses on the dyadic relationship and addresses the specific relationships between the leader and each subordinate (Northhouse, 2012).

What makes Leader-Member Exchange successful is that a good relationship between a leader and their subordinates tends to create an environment where employees feel good about the organization which leads them to accomplish more and creates an overall positive environment for the organization. Research shows that these type of positive relationships between a leader and subordinate also results in lower turnover rate, high job performance, employee loyalty and for the employee, better work assignments, more promotions and faster job progression overall (Harris et al., 2009).

Leadership making process is an approach that prescribes that a leader should try to establish a positive relationship with all of their subordinates and not just a few of them. The goal is to make all subordinates feel that they are members of the in-group (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In general, leadership making promotes partnerships in which the leader tries to build effective dyads with all employees in the work unit

When I took the questionnaire, my scores fell in the high range for answering the questions both as a subordinate and a leader. The scores as a leader were slightly higher than those as a follower, but both were in the high range. According to the LMX-7 leadership instrument, the questionnaire was aimed at three parts of a relationship, respect, trust and obligation. "It assesses the degree to which leaders and followers have mutual respect for each other's capabilities, feel a deepening sense of reciprocal trust, and have a strong sense of obligation to one another."(Northouse, 2012).

For the questionnaire, the questions and my responses were as follows:

The first question addressed whether as a leader/subordinate I was aware of where I stood with my leader/subordinate and if I knew whether or not they were happy with my job performance. For this question, when answering as a subordinate my response was a 4 (fairly often) while my response from the role of leader was a 5 (very often). The second question asked how well my leader/follower understands my job problems and my needs. Similar to question #1 as a follower, my response was a 4, and as a leader it was a 5. The third question asked how well my leader/follower recognizes my potential and again I scored a 4 as a follower and a 5 as a leader. Question four asked: regardless of how much formal authority my leader/follower has built into his or her position, what are the chances that my leader/follower would use his or her power to help you solve problems in my work. For this question my response both as a leader and a follower was a 4. For question five which asked: again, regardless of the amount of formal authority my leader/follower has, what are the chances that he or she would "bail you out" at his or her expense. For this I scored a 4 when responding as a follower and a 5 as a leader. Question six asked if I have enough confidence in my leader/follower that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so. For this question I responded with a 5 both

as a leader and follower. Finally for question seven, how I would characterize my working relationship with my leader/follower, I responded with a 4 as a follower and a 5 as a leader.

When analyzing my scores, I realize that I scored higher overall as a leader than as a follower. I do feel that this is fairly accurate because I believe that as a leader, I would have greater control over the relationship with my subordinates and greater influence in establishing a positive work environment than I would have as a subordinate. I feel that because my responses as a leader were all high scoring, it indicates that as a leader I would be likely to try to establish positive relationships with my subordinates as well as a positive working environment. This seems to align with the leadership-member exchange approach.

Despite the high scores on my answers to the questionnaire, there are still a few other qualities that I believe I could develop to increase my success as a leader at establishing a positive relationship with my subordinates. This includes building effective communication and working to become an inclusive leader so that there are no members of the out-group but rather everyone would feel included and as if they are all members of the in-group. This would not only lead to a more fair work environment but would also improve three aspects of leader-member relationship namely respect, trust and obligation.

Reference:

Northouse, Peter G. (2012-02-02). Leadership: Theory and Practice (p. 164). SAGE Publications.

Harris, K. J., Wheeler, A. R., & Kacmar, K. M. (2009). Leader-member exchange and empowerment: Direct and interactive effects on job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and performance. Leadership Quarterly, 20, 371– 382.

Graen, G. B., & Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader– member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level, multi-domain perspective. Leadership Quarterly, 6(2), 219– 247.