

Team Leadership

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DESCRIPTION

Leadership in organizational work teams has become one of the most popular and rapidly growing areas of leadership theory and research. A team is a specific type of group composed of members who are interdependent, who share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish these goals. Examples of such teams include project management teams, task forces, work units, standing committees, quality teams, and improvement teams. Teams have an applied function within an organizational context. A team has specified roles for its members with requisite knowledge and skills to perform these roles (Levi, 2011).

Reviews of the historical roots of group research provide a clear explanation of the long and diverse study of human groups (Levi, 2011; McGrath, Arrow, & Berdahl, 2000; Porter & Beyerlein, 2000). Porter and Beyerlein (2000) indicate that the study of groups actually began in the 1920s and 1930s, with the focus of the human relations movement on collaborative efforts at work, as opposed to the individual efforts previously advocated by scientific management theorists. In the 1940s, the focus shifted to the study of group dynamics and the development of social science theory. In the 1950s, the focus moved to sensitivity training and T-groups, and the role of leadership in these groups. Much of this early research was based on laboratory studies of experimental groups, frequently ignoring the contexts in which the groups were embedded (McGrath et al., 2000).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the era of organizational development, researchers focused on developing team and leadership effectiveness

through interventions in ongoing work teams. In the 1980s, competition from Japan and other countries encouraged the focus on quality teams, benchmarking, and continuous improvement. In the 1990s, the focus on organizational teams, while still focusing on quality, shifted to a global perspective focusing on organizational strategies for maintaining a competitive advantage. Organizations have faster response capability because of their flatter organizational structure, which relies on teams and new technology to enable communication across time and space (Porter & Beyerlein, 2000). Mankin, Cohen, and Bikson (1996, p. 217) referred to this new organization as being “team-based, technology-enabled.” The organizational team-based structure is an important way to remain competitive by responding quickly and adapting to constant, rapid changes.

Much research has focused on the problems confronting organizational work teams and on ways to make them more effective (Ilgen, Major, Hollenbeck, & Sego, 1993). Research on the effectiveness of organizational teams has suggested that the use of teams has led to greater productivity, a more effective use of resources, better decisions and problem solving, better-quality products and services, and greater innovation and creativity (Parker, 1990). However, for teams to be successful, the organizational culture needs to support employee involvement. Many teams have failed because they exist in a traditional authority structure that does not promote upward communication or decision making at lower levels. Teams will have great difficulty in organizational cultures that are not supportive of collaborative work and decision making. Changing the organizational culture to one that is more supportive of teams is possible, but it takes time and effort (Levi, 2011).

A review of team research suggests that studies since 1996 have become more complex, focusing on more team variables, and no longer focusing exclusively on the outcome of team performance. Current research is also investigating the role of affective, behavioral, and cognitive processes in team success and viability. The role and impact of mediating processes such as trusting, bonding, planning, adapting, structuring, and learning are also being studied in terms of team performance and viability (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005).

It is important to focus on and understand the necessary functions of leadership in teams. Zaccaro, Heinen, and Shuffler (2009) urge the development of conceptual frames or models that differ from traditional leadership theory by focusing on *leader-team interactions* (team-centric) instead of *leader-subordinate (leader-centric) interactions*. Traditional leadership

approaches do not explain how leaders develop their teams. “A focus on *team* leadership necessitates attention to the *process* by which teams develop critical capabilities. Contingencies that necessitate shifts in leader action are linked to task and team development *dynamics* that vary within teams and over time” (Kozlowski, Watola, Jensen, Kim, and Botero, 2009, p. 114).

Equally essential is understanding the role of leadership within teams to ensure team success and to avoid team failure. “Not surprisingly, the totality of research evidence supports this assertion; team leadership is critical to achieving both affective and behaviorally based team outcomes” (Stagl, Salas, & Burke, 2007, p. 172). Other researchers have claimed that “effective leadership processes” are the most critical factor in team success (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001, p. 452). Conversely, ineffective leadership often is seen as the primary reason teams fail (Stewart & Manz, 1995).

These leadership functions can be performed by the formal team leader *and/or* shared by team members. Day, Gronn, and Salas (2004) referred to this shared or distributed leadership as *team leadership capacity*, encompassing the leadership repertoire of the entire team. Distributed leadership involves the sharing of influence by team members who step forward when situations warrant providing the leadership necessary and then stepping back to allow others to lead. Such shared leadership has become more and more important in today’s organizations to allow faster responses to more complex issues (Pearce, Manz, & Sims, 2009; Solansky, 2008). Much of the early work on teams has focused on the traditional role of the formally appointed leader of the team; future research needs to focus more on the distributed or shared leadership within the team. Leadership is provided by anyone who meets the needs of the team (Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010).

Team Leadership Model

The team leadership model proposed in this chapter places leadership in the driver’s seat of team effectiveness. The model provides a mental road map to help the leader (or any team member who is providing leadership) diagnose team problems and take appropriate action to correct these problems.

Hill’s Model for Team Leadership (Figure 12.1) is based on the functional leadership claim that the leader’s job is to monitor the team and then take whatever action is necessary to ensure team effectiveness. The

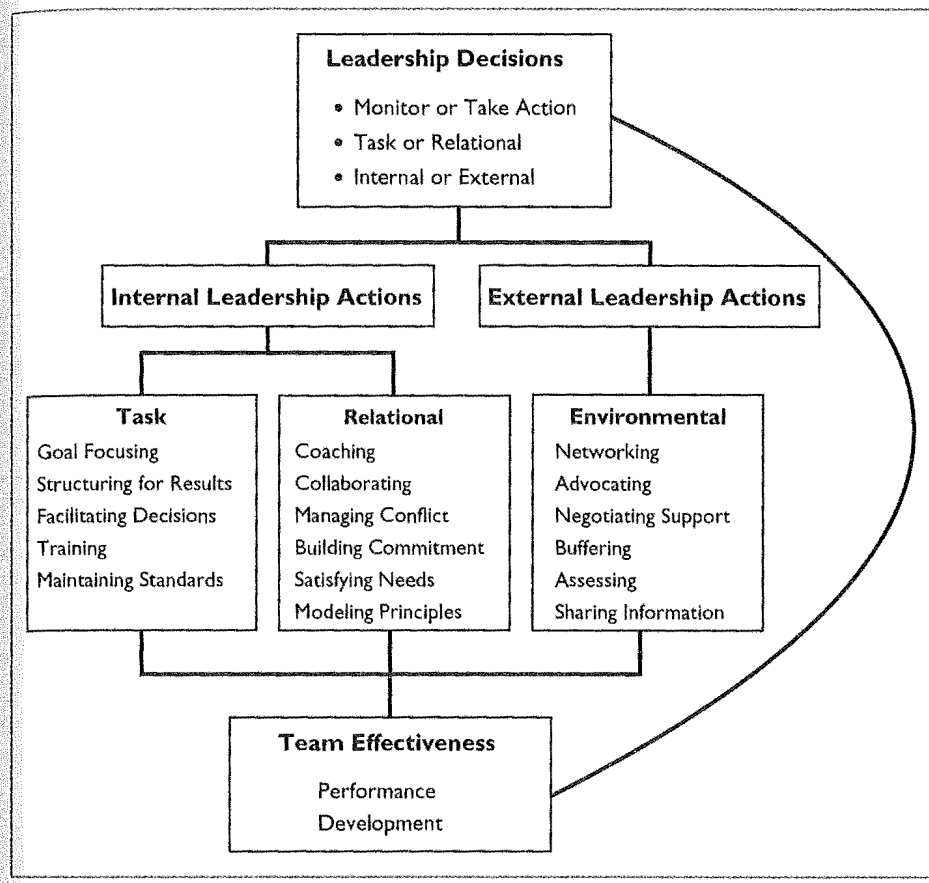
model provides a tool for understanding the very complex phenomenon of team leadership, starting at the top with its initial leadership decisions, then moving to leader actions, and finally focusing on the indicators of team effectiveness. Hill's model attempts to integrate mediation and monitoring concepts (Barge, 1996; Hackman & Walton, 1986) with team effectiveness (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphey, 1993; Larson & LaFasto, 1989; Nadler, 1998). In addition, the model prescribes specific actions that leaders can perform to improve team effectiveness (LaFasto & Larson, 2001; Zaccaro et al., 2001). Effective team leaders need a wide repertoire of communication skills to monitor and take appropriate action. The model is designed to simplify and clarify the complex nature of team leadership and to provide an easy tool to aid leadership problem solving.

Effective team performance begins with the leader's *mental model* of the situation. This mental model reflects not only the components of the problem confronting the team, but also the environmental and organizational contingencies that define the larger context of team action. The leader develops a model of what the team problem is and what solutions are possible in this context, given the environmental and organizational constraints and resources (Zaccaro et al., 2001).

To respond appropriately to the problem envisioned in the mental model, a good leader needs to be behaviorally flexible and have a wide repertoire of actions or skills to meet the team's diverse needs (Barge, 1996). When the leader's behavior matches the complexity of the situation, he or she is behaving with "requisite variety," or the set of behaviors necessary to meet the group's needs (Drecksel, 1991). Effective team leaders are able to construct accurate mental models of the team's problems by observing team functioning, and can take requisite action to solve these problems.

The leader has special responsibility for functioning in a manner that will help the group achieve effectiveness. Within this perspective, leadership behavior is seen as team-based problem solving, in which the leader attempts to achieve team goals by analyzing the internal and external situation and then selecting and implementing the appropriate behaviors to ensure team effectiveness (Fleishman et al., 1991). In addition, Zaccaro et al. (2001) indicated that leaders must use discretion about which problems need intervention, and make choices about which solutions are the most appropriate. The appropriate solution varies by circumstance and focuses on what should be done to make the team more effective. Effective leaders have the ability to determine what leadership interventions are needed, if any, to solve team problems.

Figure 12.1 Hill's Model for Team Leadership



Leadership Decisions

Figure 12.1 outlines the team leadership model. The first box at the top of the model, Leadership Decisions, lists the major decisions a leader needs to make when determining whether and how to intervene to improve team functioning. The first of these decisions is whether it is most appropriate to continue to observe and monitor the team or to intervene in the team's activities and take action. The second decision is to choose whether a task or a relational intervention is needed (i.e., does the team need help in accomplishing its tasks, or does it need help in

maintaining relationships?). The final decision is whether to intervene at the internal level (within the team itself) or at the external level (in the team's environment).

Leadership Decision 1: Should I monitor the team or take action? The first decision confronting the leader is whether to keep monitoring the team or to take action to help the team. McGrath (as cited in Hackman & Walton, 1986) outlined the critical leadership functions of group effectiveness, taking into account the analysis of the situation both internally and externally and whether this analysis indicates that the leader should take an immediate action. Figure 12.2, McGrath's Critical Leadership Functions, demonstrates these two dimensions of leadership behavior: *monitoring versus taking action* and *internal group issues versus external group issues*. As leaders, we can diagnose, analyze, or forecast problems (monitoring), or we can take immediate action to solve a problem. We can also focus on the problems within the group (internal) or problems outside the group (external). These two dimensions result in the four types of group leadership functions shown in Figure 12.2.

The first two quadrants in Figure 12.2 focus on the internal operations of the team. In the first quadrant, the leader is diagnosing group deficiencies, and in the second quadrant, the leader is acting to repair or remedy the observed problems. The third and fourth quadrants focus on the external operations of the team. In the third quadrant, the leader is scanning the environment to determine and forecast any external changes that will affect the group. In the fourth quadrant, the leader acts to prevent any negative changes in the environment from hurting the team.

Therefore, the first decision confronting the leader is "Should I continue monitoring these factors, or should I take action based on the information I have already gathered and structured?" To develop an accurate mental model of team functioning, leaders need to monitor both the internal and external environments to gather information, reduce equivocality, provide structure, and overcome barriers. Fleishman et al. (1991) described two phases in this initial process: information search and structuring. A leader must first seek out information to understand the current state of the team's functioning (information search), and then this information must be analyzed, organized, and interpreted so the leader can decide how to act (information structuring). Leaders can also help their information search process by obtaining feedback from team members, networking with others outside the team, conducting team assessment surveys, and evaluating group outcomes. Once

Figure 12.2 McGrath's Critical Leadership Functions

	MONITOR	EXECUTIVE ACTION
INTERNAL	Diagnosing Group Deficiencies 1	Taking Remedial Action 2
EXTERNAL	Forecasting Environmental Changes 3	Preventing Deleterious Changes 4

SOURCE: McGrath's critical leadership functions as cited in "Leading Groups in Organizations," by J. R. Hackman and R. E. Walton, 1986, in P. S. Goodman & Associates (Eds.), *Designing Effective Work Groups* (p. 76). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

information on the team is gathered, the leader needs to structure or interpret this information so that he or she can make action plans.

All members of the team can engage in monitoring (information search and structuring) and collectively provide distributed or shared leadership to help the team adapt to changing conditions. In fast-paced, rapidly changing situations, the team leader and members might have to work in concert to assess the situation accurately. The official leader of the team might be too busy processing information from the environment to process information internal to the team. The team members can help the leader by staying on top of internal problems. Together, they can form an accurate mental model of the team's effectiveness.

In addition to gathering and interpreting information, team leaders also must take the right action based on this information. "Action mediation is at the heart of leadership because it involves selecting from among competing courses of action and helping the group create a system of organizing that allows it to make quality decisions" (Barge, 1996, p. 324). Leaders differ in their tendencies to take action quickly or to delay taking action by analyzing the situation at length. Leaders who prefer to take action might prevent problems from getting out of control. However, they might not

make the right intervention because they do not have all the information, and such fast action might undermine the development of shared leadership. Leaders who prefer to carefully analyze the situation might encourage other team members to emerge as leaders, but the problem might become unmanageable. The exact timing of a leadership intervention is as important as the specific type of intervention (Wageman, Fisher, & Hackman, 2009).

Leadership Decision 2: Should I intervene to meet task or relational needs?

The second decision confronting the leader is whether the team needs help in dealing with relational issues or task issues. Since the early study of small groups, the focus has been on two critical leadership functions: task and maintenance. Task leadership functions include getting the job done, making decisions, solving problems, adapting to changes, making plans, and achieving goals. Maintenance functions include developing a positive climate, solving interpersonal problems, satisfying members' needs, and developing cohesion. Later scholars studying intact work teams also refer to these functions in terms of performance and development (i.e., how well the team has accomplished its task and how well the team has developed effective relationships).

Superior team leadership focuses constantly on both task and maintenance functions (Kinlaw, 1998); both types of leadership behaviors (task-focused and person-focused) have been found to be related to perceived team effectiveness (Burke et al., 2006).

Task (performance) functions are closely interrelated with maintenance (development) functions. If the team is well maintained and has good relationships, then the members will be able to work together effectively and get their job done. Similarly, if the team is productive and successful in accomplishing its task, it will be easier to maintain a positive climate and good relations. Conversely, failing teams often take their lack of performance out on each other, and fighting teams often accomplish little.

In virtual teams connected across time and space by electronic media, focusing on building team relationships is even more critical than in traditional colocated teams. "Virtual team leaders must be able to 'read' all the personal and contextual nuances in a world of electronic communications. They must be able to understand the possible causes of silence, misunderstanding, and slights without any of the usual signs to guide them. Leaders must be sensitive to the 'flow' of team processes, paying attention to the smallest matters to head off potential troubles that could derail the team's

task" (Pauleen, 2004, p. 229). Virtual teams place even greater demands on team leaders than the more traditional colocated team demanding 50% more time investment (Dyer, Dyer, & Dyer, 2007). As the prevalence of virtual teams expands, specific leadership issues and interventions related to these virtual teams are increasingly the focus of study (Cordery, Soo, Kirkman, Rosen, & Mathieu, 2009; Zaccaro, Ardison, & Orvis, 2004).

Leadership Decision 3: Should I intervene internally or externally? If a decision was made to take action or intervene, the leader must make the third strategic leadership decision in Figure 12.1 and determine what *level of the team process* needs leadership attention: internal leadership actions or external leadership actions.

Effective team leaders analyze and balance the internal and external demands of the team and react appropriately (Barge, 1996). Is there internal conflict between members of the group? Then perhaps taking an *internal relational action* to maintain the group and improve interpersonal relationships would be most appropriate. Or are the team goals unclear? Then perhaps an *internal task intervention* is needed to focus on goals. Is the organizational environment not providing proper support to the team to do its job? Then perhaps an *external environmental intervention* focusing on obtaining external support for the team might be the most appropriate intervention. The current focus of research is on real-life organizational work teams that exist in a larger organizational environment. In addition to balancing the internal task and relational needs of the team, the leader has to help the team adapt to its external environment. Most teams focus on the internal problems of the team. But it is increasingly important for teams to also be externally oriented to "reach across boundaries to forge dense networks of connection, both inside and outside the organization" so that they can deal effectively with the fast changing environment (Ancona, Bresman, & Caldwell, 2009).

Leadership Actions

The next section of Hill's Model for Team Leadership (Figure 12.1) lists a number of specific leadership actions that can be performed internally (task, relational) or externally (environmental). These lists are not exhaustive but are compiled from research on team excellence and team performance to be discussed later in this chapter. For example, teams that have clear goals and standards and effective structure and decision making will have higher task performance. Teams that can manage conflict, collaborate

well together, and build commitment will have good relationships. Teams that are well connected to and protected from their environment will also be more productive. It is up to the leader to assess what action, if any, is needed and then intervene with the specific leadership function to meet the demands of the situation. The leader needs the ability to perform these skills and to make a strategic choice as to the most *appropriate function or skill* for the intervention. For example, if the leader decided that team members were not getting along, he or she might decide to initiate conflict management. *To be an effective leader, one needs to respond with the action that is required of the situation.* Thus, it is the job of the leader to analyze and mediate the situation to make the best decisions for the good of the team.

A team leader needs to recognize and interpret what is getting in the way of the team's goal accomplishment and then make a strategic choice and respond with the appropriate action (Gouran & Hirokawa, 1996). If a problem is diagnosed as a team performance problem, then the leader needs to determine the appropriate action to solve this task problem (e.g., goal focusing, standard setting, or training). If a problem is diagnosed as a team development problem, then the leader needs to determine the appropriate action to solve this relational problem (e.g., managing conflict or building commitment). If a problem is diagnosed as an environmental problem, then the leader needs to determine the appropriate action to solve this context problem (e.g., networking, advocating, or sharing information).

Internal Task Leadership Actions: The task box on Hill's Model for Team Leadership (Figure 12.1) lists the set of skills or actions that the leader might perform to improve task performance.

- Goal focusing (clarifying, gaining agreement)
- Structuring for results (planning, visioning, organizing, clarifying roles, delegating)
- Facilitating decision making (informing, controlling, coordinating, mediating, synthesizing, focusing on issues)
- Training team members in task skills (educating, developing)
- Maintaining standards of excellence (assessing team and individual performance, confronting inadequate performance)

For example, if after monitoring the team's performance the leader observes that the team members do not have the skills necessary for the task, then the leader might choose an intervention to educate the team

members or provide them with necessary skills or professional development (*training*). If the leader observes that the team is not clear as to its focus or goals, then he or she might intervene to clarify goals or work with team members to obtain agreement on goals (*goal focusing*). If the leader observes that some team members are coming to work late or not attending important meetings, then the leader might have to take direct action to address this inadequate performance (*standard setting*). If the leader determines that the team is stuck in day-to-day affairs and not looking to or building for the future, then he or she might intervene by helping the team vision and helping to plan for the future (*structuring for results*).

Internal Relational Leadership Actions. The second set of internal leadership actions in Figure 12.1 reflects those that the leader needs to implement to improve team relationships.

- Coaching team members in interpersonal skills
- Collaborating (including, involving)
- Managing conflict and power issues (avoiding confrontation, questioning ideas)
- Building commitment and esprit de corps (being optimistic, innovating, envisioning, socializing, rewarding, recognizing)
- Satisfying individual member needs (trusting, supporting, advocating)
- Modeling ethical and principled practices (fair, consistent, normative)

If, after monitoring the relationships between team members, the leader observes that some of the group members are engaged in interpersonal conflict, then the leader should intervene to manage that conflict (*managing conflict and power issues*). Or if the team seems down in the dumps, the leader should try to build commitment and unity by recognizing past team successes (*building commitment and esprit de corps*). If team members do not seem to be able to communicate effectively, then the leader might intervene by coaching team members in appropriate behaviors (*coaching*).

External Environmental Leadership Actions. The external leadership actions (Figure 12.1) reflect those actions the leader might implement to improve the environmental interface with the team. Real-life teams do not exist in a laboratory—they are subsystems of the larger organizational and societal context. To stay viable, the team needs to monitor this environment closely and determine what actions should be taken to enhance team effectiveness (Barge, 1996; Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997; Zaccaro et al., 2001). If environmental

monitoring suggests a leadership intervention, then the leader needs to select from the following functions:

- Networking and forming alliances in environment (gathering information, increasing influence)
- Advocating and representing team to environment
- Negotiating upward to secure necessary resources, support, and recognition for team
- Buffering team members from environmental distractions
- Assessing environmental indicators of team's effectiveness (surveys, evaluations, performance indicators)
- Sharing relevant environmental information with team

If after monitoring the environment the leader learns that the organizational superiors are unaware of the team's successes, she or he might initiate an "FYI" policy, sending information about all successes upward as they happen (*advocating and representing team to environment*). The leader can also initiate a team newsletter that chronicles team efforts to accomplish the same function but to a broader context. Alternatively, the leader might determine that the team does not have enough clerical support to accomplish its goals. The leader then negotiates with upper management to provide the needed support or to alter the goals accordingly (*negotiating upward to secure necessary resources*).

Team leadership is complex; there are no simple recipes for team success. Team leaders must learn to be open and objective in understanding and diagnosing team problems and skillful in selecting the most appropriate actions (or inactions) to help achieve the team's goals. It is important to note that these critical functions need not be carried out only by the leader. Experienced members in a mature team might share these leadership behaviors. As long as the team's critical needs have been met, the leadership behavior, whether enacted by the leader or team members, has been effective. *The key assertion of the functional perspective is that the leader is to do whatever is necessary to take care of unmet needs of the group.* If the group members are taking care of most of the needs, then the leader has to do very little.

Team Effectiveness

The box at the bottom of Hill's Model for Team Leadership (see Figure 12.1) focuses on team effectiveness, or the desired outcome of

teamwork. Two critical functions of team effectiveness are listed: performance (task accomplishment) and development (maintenance of team). Team performance is the "quality of decision making, the ability to implement decisions, the outcomes of teamwork in terms of problems solved and work completed, and finally the quality of institutional leadership provided by the team" (Nadler, 1998, p. 24). Team development is the cohesiveness of the team and the ability of group members to satisfy their own needs while working effectively with other team members (Nadler, 1998).

Researchers have systematically studied organizational work teams and developed standards of effectiveness or criteria of excellence that can be used to assess a team's health (Hackman, 1990, 2002; Hughes et al., 1993; LaFasto & Larson, 2001; Larson & LaFasto, 1989; Zaccaro et al., 2001). Hackman and Walton (1986) suggested criteria necessary for effectiveness of task-performing teams in organizations. They found that effective groups have a clear, engaging direction; an enabling performance situation that contains structure, support, and coaching; and adequate resources.

Larson and LaFasto (1989) studied real-life successful teams and found that, regardless of the type of team, eight characteristics were consistently associated with team excellence. Table 12.1 demonstrates the similarity of these characteristics to the theoretical components suggested by Hackman and Walton (1986), providing grounded research support for the group effectiveness approach.

Table 12.1 Comparison of Theory and Research Criteria

Conditions of Group Effectiveness (Hackman & Walton, 1986)	Characteristics of Team Excellence (Larson & LaFasto, 1989)
Clear, engaging direction	Clear, elevating goal
Enabling structure	Results-driven structure
	Competent team members
	Unified commitment
	Collaborative climate
Enabling context	Standards of excellence
Adequate material resources	External support and recognition
Expert coaching	Principled leadership

Team leaders need to understand these performance standards and be able to assess their team's level of achievement across them to determine possible areas of ineffectiveness. Assessing how well the team compares to these established indicators of team success is a valuable source of information guiding the leader to take appropriate actions to improve team success.

Clear, Elevating Goal. Team goals must be very clear so that one can tell whether the performance objective has been realized. Groups often fail because they are given a vague task and then asked to work out the details (Hackman, 1990). In addition, the goal must be involving or motivating so that the members believe it to be worthwhile and important. Teams often fail because they let something else replace their goal, such as personal agendas or power issues (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). Research data from numerous teams show that effective leaders keep the team focused on the goal (LaFasto & Larson, 2001).

Results-Driven Structure. Teams need to find the best structure for accomplishing their goals. Structural features that lead to effective teamwork include task design, team composition, and core norms of conduct (Wageman et al., 2009). Top management teams typically deal with power and influence, task forces deal with ideas and plans, customer service teams deal with clients, and production teams deal with technology (Hackman, 1990). Problem resolution teams such as task forces need a structure that emphasizes trust so that all will be willing and able to contribute. Creative teams such as advertising teams need to emphasize autonomy so that all can take risks and be free from undue censorship. Tactical teams such as emergency room teams need to emphasize clarity so that everyone knows what to do and when. In addition, all teams need clear roles for group members, a good communication system, methods of assessing individual performance, and an emphasis on fact-based judgments (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). Appropriate structures enable groups to meet their needs while accomplishing team goals.

Competent Team Members. Groups should be composed of the right number and mix of members to accomplish all the tasks of the group. In addition, members need sufficient information, education, and training to become or remain competent team members (Hackman & Walton, 1986). As a whole, the individual team members need to possess the requisite technical competence to accomplish the team's goals. Members also need to be personally competent in interpersonal and teamwork skills. A common mistake in

forming teams is to assume that people who have all the technical skills necessary to solve a problem also have the interpersonal skills necessary to collaborate effectively (Hackman, 1990). Team members need certain core competencies that include the ability to do the job and the ability to solve problems. In addition, members need certain teamwork factors such as openness, supportiveness, action orientation, and a positive personal style (LaFasto & Larson, 2001).

Unified Commitment. A common mistake is to call a work group a *team* but treat it as a collection of individuals (Hackman, 1990). Teams do not just happen: They are carefully designed and developed. Excellent teams are those that have developed a sense of unity or identification. Such team spirit often can be developed by involving members in all aspects of the process (Larson & LaFasto, 1989).

Collaborative Climate. The ability of a team to collaborate is essential to team effectiveness. A collaborative climate is one in which members can stay problem focused, listen to and understand one another, feel free to take risks, and be willing to compensate for one another. To build an atmosphere that fosters collaboration, we need to develop trusting relationships based on honesty, openness, consistency, and respect (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). Integration of individual actions is one of the fundamental characteristics of effective teams. Team members "have specific and unique roles, where the performance of each role contributes to collective success. This means that the causes of team failure may reside not only in member inability, but also in their collective failure to coordinate and synchronize their individual contributions" (Zaccaro et al., 2001, p. 451). Research demonstrates that effective team leaders ensure a collaborative climate by making communication safe, demanding and rewarding collaborative behavior, guiding the team's problem-solving efforts, and managing their own control needs (LaFasto & Larson, 2001).

Standards of Excellence. Effective group norms are important for group functioning. Team members' performance should be regulated so that actions can be coordinated and tasks completed (Hackman & Walton, 1986). It is especially important that the organizational context or the team itself set up standards of excellence so that members will feel pressure to perform at their highest levels. The standards must be clear and concrete, and all team members must be required to perform to standard (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). A team leader can facilitate this process by requiring results—making expectations clear; reviewing results—providing feedback

to resolve performance issues; and rewarding results—acknowledging superior performance (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). With such standards in place and monitored, members will be encouraged to perform at their highest levels.

External Support and Recognition. A supportive organizational context includes material resources, rewards for excellent performance, an educational system to develop necessary team skills, and an information system to provide data needed to accomplish the task (Wageman et al., 2009). A common mistake is to give organizational teams challenging assignments but give them no organizational support to accomplish these assignments (Hackman, 1990). The leader must identify which type of support is needed and intervene as needed to secure this support (Hackman, 2002). The best goals, team members, and commitment will not mean much if you have no money, equipment, or supplies for accomplishing the goals. Also, organizations often ask employees to work on a difficult team assignment but then do not reward them with raises or bonuses for that performance. Hyatt and Ruddy (1997) found that having systems in place to support work groups (clear direction, information, data, resources, rewards, and training) enables the group to become more effective and achieve performance goals. Teams can achieve excellence if they are given the resources needed to do their jobs, are recognized for team accomplishments, and are rewarded for team performance rather than for individual performances (Larson & LaFasto, 1989).

Principled Leadership. Effective team leadership has been found to consistently relate to team effectiveness (Zaccaro et al., 2009). Leadership has been described as the central driver of team effectiveness, influencing the team through four sets of processes: cognitive, motivational, affective, and coordination (Zaccaro et al., 2001). Cognitively, the leader helps the team understand the problems confronting the team. Motivationally, the leader helps the team become cohesive and capable by setting high performance standards and helping the group to achieve them. Affectively, the leader helps the team handle stressful circumstances by providing clear goals, assignments, and strategies. Coordinatively, the leader helps integrate the team's activities by matching members' skills to roles, providing clear performance strategies, monitoring feedback, and adapting to environmental changes.

Effective team leaders are committed to the team's goals and give members autonomy to unleash their talents when possible. Leaders can reduce the effectiveness of their team by being unwilling to confront

inadequate performance, diluting the team's ability to perform by having too many priorities, and overestimating the positive aspects of team performance. Leaders can enhance the effectiveness of their team by keeping the team focused on its goals, maintaining a collaborative climate, building confidence among members, demonstrating technical competence, setting priorities, and managing performance (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). It is essential that the leadership of the team be assessed along with the other criteria of team excellence. Such feedback is essential to the health and effectiveness of the team.

The leadership of the team can use the characteristics of team excellence (Table 12.1) in a normative fashion to assess the health of the teams and to take appropriate action to address any weaknesses. If the team leader assesses that one or more of the eight characteristics of team success are not being achieved, then he or she needs to address these weaknesses. Continually assessing the standards of team effectiveness can also provide feedback, enabling leaders to determine whether past actions and interventions had the desired results. To assess team effectiveness, team leaders need to use whatever tools are at their disposal, such as direct observation, surveys, feedback, and performance indicators. The information gained from the analysis of team effectiveness can provide feedback to the leader and guide future leadership decisions. The line on Hill's Model of Team Leadership (Figure 12.1) that connects the Team Effectiveness box at the bottom to the Leadership Decisions box at the top reflects the ongoing learning process of data gathering, analysis, and decision making. Such feedback loops demonstrate the dynamic and evolving nature of teams (Ilgen et al., 2005). Past leadership decisions and actions are reflected in the team's performance and relational outcomes. In turn, these indicators of team effectiveness shape the future analysis and decisions of the team leadership.

HOW DOES THE TEAM LEADERSHIP MODEL WORK?

Leaders can use the model to help them make decisions about the current state of their team and the specific actions they need to take, if any, to improve the team's functioning. The model portrays leadership as a team oversight function in which the leader's role is to do whatever is necessary to help the group achieve effectiveness. The model provides the leader with a cognitive map for identifying group needs, and offers suggestions

about how to take appropriate corrective actions. The model helps the leader make sense of the complexity of groups and offers practical suggestions based on theory and research.

In using the model, the team leader engages in the leader mediation process by deciding which is most appropriate for the team: monitoring or taking action. If the monitoring reveals that all aspects of the team's functioning are satisfactory, then the leader should not take any direct actions but continue to monitor the internal and external environments in terms of team performance and development. If monitoring reveals that action is needed, then the leader decides whether to take an internal-level action or an external-level action or both. Finally, the leader decides which action is appropriate to meet the needs of the team.

Determining the exact intervention is not as easy as it sounds, however, and it clearly reflects the skills necessary for team leadership. For example, a leader monitoring the internal functioning of the team notices infighting for control and power. The leader might see this as an *internal relationship problem* because of the authoritarian and autocratic behavior of one group member. Or perhaps the leader might see it as an *internal task problem* because the structure of the team is not appropriate and the roles and responsibilities of some group members are unclear. Or perhaps the leader sees the problem as an *external environmental problem* because the team is not given sufficient autonomy from the organization; consequently, the members are fighting over what little power and control exist. In any case, the leader can decide to keep monitoring the situation and not take any immediate action. Or the leader can decide at which level to intervene and then decide to enact the most appropriate leadership function at that level. The leader might decide to intervene at all three levels, addressing the authoritarian individual (internal, relational), clarifying group roles (internal, task), and negotiating more team autonomy with those higher up in the organization (external).

The team leadership model helps to point the way for constant team analysis and improvement, much like that of sports teams. In sports, the coach does not stop working just because the team is winning. The coach keeps working to build commitment, develop young players, share expertise, create new methods and strategies, and generally improve team functioning. The effective coach never rests on past successes, but works to improve the team's functioning for the future. Organizational team leaders could learn a great deal from sports team coaches. The team leadership model helps point the way for such constant analysis and improvement. By

comparing their own teams with established standards or criteria of team excellence, leaders can determine the areas of greatest weakness that might need critical intervention.

STRENGTHS

One of the strengths of this model is that it is designed to focus on the real-life organizational work group and the leadership needed therein. The model places the ongoing work group or team in an environmental context within the organization, industry, or society. In addition, the real-life focus on performance and team effectiveness enables leaders and members to diagnose and correct team problems. By learning what constitutes excellent teams and applying these criteria to team performance, leaders can learn how to better lead teams to the highest levels of excellence.

A second strength of the model is that it provides a cognitive guide that helps leaders design and maintain effective teams, especially when performance is below standards. Such an approach is consistent with the emerging theoretical notions of the leader as a medium whose job it is to process the complex information inherent in teamwork (Fisher, 1985). Any model or theory that tries to simplify such a complex process would be inappropriate and inadequate. The team leadership model is not simplistic, and it integrates in a manageable and practical form many complex factors that can help a leader be a good medium or processor of information.

Another strength of the model is that it takes into account the changing role of leaders and followers in organizations. The model does not focus on the position power of a leader but instead focuses on the critical functions of leadership as diagnosis and action taking. Any team member can perform the critical leadership functions to assess the current effectiveness of the team and then take appropriate action. This approach is consistent with the current movement in organizations to rethink leadership responsibilities in work groups. The responsibilities or functions of team leadership—such as setting goals, coaching, and rewarding—historically have rested with the group's formal leader, but now, with organizational restructuring, these duties and responsibilities often are distributed across the team.

In addition, this approach to team leadership can help in selection of team leaders. If you have to name a leader for the team, it might be best

to select one who is perceptive, open, objective, analytical, and a good listener who has good diagnostic skills. You might want to select a leader who has a wide repertoire of action-taking skills—that is, who is comfortable intervening in the group process in many ways, such as with negotiation, conflict resolution, problem solving, goal focusing, and influencing upward. Good leaders not only can diagnose the team's problems, but also can reach into their bag of tricks and pull out the appropriate action or actions. For example, if I determine that two members of my team are in conflict with one another, I need to be able to determine the root cause of that conflict and select the most appropriate action (or select nonaction).

CRITICISMS

Hill's Model for Team Leadership (Figure 12.1) is a conceptual framework to assist team-based leadership in its decision making. As such, it lists only some of the many skills that leadership might need to employ in making such decisions. Depending on the type of team or situation, additional skills might be needed that focus more on the environment (Cobb, 2012), coaching and training (Zaccaro et al., 2009), or preplanning and timing (Wageman et al., 2009). A team might need to modify the model to include skills that are particularly relevant to its effectiveness.

Even though the model does not include all possible leadership skills, it is still quite complex. Team leaders need to spend time adjusting to the framework so that it comes naturally to them when decisions are needed. This framework also does not provide on-the-spot answers to specific problems facing the team leader, such as “When is the best time to intervene?” “What do you say to a member who is upset and crying?” or “What specific action do you take to deal with an organizational culture that is not supporting teamwork?” The model only points the leader in the right direction and suggests skills needed to solve these complex problems. The model assumes that the leader is skilled in group process, decision making, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, and other abilities.

To make matters worse, many teams have shared or distributed leadership necessitating that everyone who provides team leadership have a wide range of team-oriented skills. In addition, the roles of leaders and followers can change over time making it very important for the team

leader and team members to possess the requisite leadership skills. Increasingly, scholars are providing instruction in diagnosing weaknesses in team leadership skills and offering methods for development and improvement (Cobb, 2012; Levi, 2011; Morgeson et al., 2010; Salas, Burke, & Stagl, 2004). Instruction in teamwork and team leadership needs to focus on team diagnosing and action taking so that team leadership skills can be developed throughout the team and be more easily implemented.

APPLICATION

There are many ways to apply the team leadership model to increase the effectiveness of organizational teams. The model is useful in helping the leader make decisions: Should I act? If so, how should I do so? For example, if the group is not performing effectively (*team effectiveness*), then the leader can make the first strategic choice by monitoring the situation or acting to improve team functioning. If an action seems warranted, then the leader needs to decide whether the action should be directed inward toward team functioning, outward toward the environment, or both. Once the context for the action is determined, then the leader needs to choose from his or her repertoire the most appropriate skill for the situation. It is important to continue monitoring the results of the intervention and adapting accordingly, depending on these results.

The leader might choose to use a survey such as the one included later in this chapter to help conduct the team's diagnosis and set the steps needed for taking action. Team members are asked to fill out the questionnaire, as is the team leader. The results are fed back to the team members and team leader, allowing them to see the areas of greatest strength and weakness. It is particularly important that both team leaders and team members fill out the questionnaire. Research suggests that team leaders overestimate their effectiveness on these dimensions and often score themselves much higher than do group members (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). By comparing the scores by leaders and by members, the leader can determine which dimensions of team or leadership effectiveness need improvement. The team and leader can then prepare action plans to correct the highest-priority problems. Such a team assessment approach is very helpful in monitoring and diagnosing team problems. It aids in determining the complex factors affecting team excellence to build a committed team involved in action planning.

CASE STUDIES

To improve your understanding of the team leadership model, refer to the following case studies (Cases 12.1, 12.2, and 12.3). For each case, you will be asked to put yourself in the role of team leader and apply the team leadership model in analyzing and offering solutions to the team problems.

CASE 12.1

Can This Virtual Team Work?

Jim Towne heads a newly formed information technology team for a major international corporation. The team is composed of 20 professionals who live and work in Canada, the United States, Europe, South America, Africa, and Australia. All members of the team report to Jim. The team is a virtual team connected primarily via videoconference, group decision-support software, e-mail, text, and telephone. The team has met twice in a face-to-face setting to set goals and plan. All of the team members are quite competent in their respective technical areas. Some team members have a long and valued history with the company; others have recently joined the company through a corporate merger. The team members have never worked together on any projects.

The task of the team is to develop and implement technology innovations for all global business units. The team members are excited about the importance and the innovative nature of their assignment. They respect each other and enjoy being part of this team. However, the team is having difficulty getting off the ground, and the members report being extremely overloaded. Most team members travel to business sites at least 2 weeks each month. The travel is important, but it causes team members to get farther behind.

The team has one half-time secretary, located in New York. Her primary responsibility is to organize travel and meetings of team members. Team members are working on several projects at once and have great difficulty finishing any of the projects. One team member has 500 unread e-mail messages because each team member sends copies of all messages to everyone on the team. Jim is under great pressure to prove that this team can work and provide a valuable function to the organization.

Questions

1. Which of the eight characteristics (Table 12.1) of team excellence are lacking in this team?

2. Based on this analysis of team effectiveness, should Jim intervene at this time, or should he just keep monitoring the team? If you think he should take action, at what level should he intervene (internal or external)? If internal, should his action be task or relational?
3. What specific leadership functions should Jim implement to improve the team? Why?

CASE 12.2

They Dominated the Conversation

The local cancer center has a health team designed to coordinate the care of children with cancer. The team is composed of a physician, Dr. Sherif Hidyat (a clinical oncologist); a radiologist, Dr. Wayne Linett; a nurse practitioner, Sharon Whittling; a social worker, Cathy Ing; a physical therapist, Nancy Crosby; and a child life worker, Janet Lewis. The team members meet on a weekly basis to discuss the 18 children under their care and agree on the best course of treatment for each child. Cathy Ing, the social worker, is the head of the team and is responsible for the case management of each child. However, when the team meets, Drs. Hidyat and Linett dominate the conversation. They feel that their medical background gives them greater knowledge and skill in treating cancer in children. They welcome input from the women in the group. When it comes to making a decision, however, they insist on doing it their way for the good of the patient. Cathy Ing (the social worker), Janet Lewis (the child life worker), Nancy Crosby (the physical therapist), and Sharon Whittling (the nurse practitioner) resent this behavior because they are the health care workers who spend the most time with the children and feel that they know best how to handle their long-term care. As a result, the patients feel as if no one cares or understands them. The team is also having trouble working together, and no one on the team is satisfied with the outcome.

Questions

1. How would you assess the effectiveness of this team?
2. In monitoring this team, at what level and function do you see the most serious problems? Internal task? Internal relational? External?

(Continued)

(Continued)

3. Would you take action to improve team functioning? If so, how would you intervene? Why?
4. What specific leadership skill or skills would you use to improve group functioning?

CASE 12.3

Starts With a Bang, Ends With a Whimper

A faculty member, Kim Green from the Management Department, was asked to chair a major university committee to plan the mission of the university for the next 20 years. Three other senior faculty and seven administrators from across the campus were also asked to serve on this committee. The president of the university, Dr. Sulgrave, gave the committee its charge: What should Northcoast University be like in the year 2020? Dr. Sulgrave told the committee that the work of this task force was of utmost importance to the future of the university, and the charge of this committee should take precedence over all other matters. The task force was allowed to meet in the president's conference room and use the president's secretary. The report of the committee was due in 2 months.

The task force members felt very good about being selected for such an important team. The team met on a weekly basis for about 2 hours each time. At first, the members were very interested in the task and participated enthusiastically. They were required to do a great deal of outside research. They came back to the meetings proud to share their research and knowledge. However, after a while the meetings did not go well. The members could not seem to agree on what the charge to the group meant. They argued about what they were supposed to accomplish and resented the time the committee was taking from their regular jobs. Week after week the team met but accomplished nothing. Attendance became a problem, with people skipping several meetings, showing up late, or leaving early. Group members stopped working on their committee assignments. Kim didn't want to admit to the university president that they didn't know what they were doing; instead, she just got more and more frustrated. Meetings became sporadic and eventually stopped altogether. The president was involved in a crisis in the university and seemed to lose interest in the committee. The president never called for the report from the committee, and the report was never completed.

Questions

1. Which characteristics of excellence were lacking in this task force?
2. Which characteristics of excellence were evident in this task force?
3. How would you assess Kim as a leader?
4. What actions would you take (internally or externally) if you were the leader of this task force?

LEADERSHIP INSTRUMENT

Several different instruments have been used to assess team effectiveness and the leadership within those teams. Larson and LaFasto have developed one such survey to assess a team's health after studying many different types of excellent organizational teams (see Larson & LaFasto, 1989). Their research demonstrated eight criteria or factors that are consistently associated with team excellence and high performance. The complete Team Excellence survey contains more than 40 questions across the eight factors that are used to determine a team's performance level and suggest areas that might need corrective action. The eighth factor on this instrument is *principled leadership*. Subsequent research by LaFasto and Larson led to the development of a 42-item questionnaire focusing on this criterion of leadership. The full Collaborative Team Leader instrument and a discussion of its reliability and validity can be found in their latest text (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). The questionnaire included in this chapter provides a sample of questions from these two surveys so that the reader can see how team and team leadership effectiveness can be evaluated.

The team members are given the questionnaire, and their scores are combined and averaged to obtain a group view; the leader fills out the same questionnaire. The responses from the team leader are then compared with the team members' to determine the areas of greatest weakness, if any. Based on these comparisons, the team and its leader can plan the action steps needed to correct and improve the weak areas of team functioning.

The Team Excellence and Collaborative Team Leader surveys are designed as diagnostic tools to help teams sort through the complex problems confronting them and to pinpoint areas for action taking. The Team Excellence and Collaborative Team Leader Questionnaire provided in this chapter contains sample questions from the two instruments developed by

LaFasto and Larson. The first seven questions are taken from the Team Excellence Survey, developed by LaFasto and Larson in 1987 (cited in Larson & LaFasto, 1989) to measure a team's health in terms of the criteria of team excellence (goal, structure, team members, commitment, climate, standards, and external support). Leadership is measured by the next six questions, taken from the Collaborative Team Leader Survey developed by LaFasto and Larson in 1996 (LaFasto & Larson, 2001, pp. 151–154). These six questions assess the effectiveness of the leader in goal focusing, ensuring a collaborative climate, building confidence, demonstrating know-how, setting priorities, and managing performance. All of these team and leadership factors have been found to relate to team effectiveness.

As you fill out the sample questionnaire, think about a group or team to which you belong as a member or as the leader. The items that you score as 1 or 2 (*False* or *More false than true*) are the areas of team weakness from your perspective. To obtain a team assessment, you would compare your scores on this instrument with the scores of the other group members. For example, if almost everyone on the team responds with a 1 or 2 to Item 3 (“Team members possess the essential skills and abilities to accomplish the team’s objectives”), then the team leader might need to provide training to increase the competence of team members. Such an instrument that assesses team effectiveness is particularly helpful to the team leader in identifying areas of team or leadership weakness and suggesting solutions for improving team effectiveness.

Team Excellence and Collaborative Team Leader Questionnaire

Instructions: This questionnaire contains questions about your team and the leadership within this team. Indicate whether you feel each statement is true or not true of your team. Use the following scale:

Key:	1 = False	2 = More false than true	3 = More true than false	4 = True
1. There is a clearly defined need—a goal to be achieved or a purpose to be served—that justifies the existence of our team. (team: clear, elevating goal)	1	2	3	4
2. We have an established method for monitoring individual performance and providing feedback. (team: results-driven structure)	1	2	3	4
3. Team members possess the essential skills and abilities to accomplish the team’s objectives. (team: competent team members)	1	2	3	4
4. Achieving our team goal is a higher priority than any individual objective. (team: unified commitment)	1	2	3	4
5. We trust each other sufficiently to accurately share information, perceptions, and feedback. (team: collaborative climate)	1	2	3	4
6. Our team exerts pressure on itself to improve performance. (team: standards of excellence)	1	2	3	4
7. Our team is given the resources it needs to get the job done. (team: external support and recognition)	1	2	3	4
8. If it’s necessary to adjust the team’s goal, our team leader makes sure we understand why. (leadership: focus on the goal)	1	2	3	4
9. Our team leader creates a safe climate for team members to openly and supportively discuss any issue related to the team’s success. (leadership: ensure a collaborative climate)	1	2	3	4
10. Our team leader looks for and acknowledges contributions by team members. (leadership: build confidence)	1	2	3	4
11. Our team leader understands the technical issues we must face in achieving our goal. (leadership: demonstrate sufficient technical know-how)	1	2	3	4
12. Our team leader does not dilute our team’s effort with too many priorities. (leadership: set priorities)	1	2	3	4
13. Our team leader is willing to confront and resolve issues associated with inadequate performance by team members. (leadership: manage performance)	1	2	3	4

SOURCES: Questions 1–7: Adapted from the Team Excellence Survey (copyright 1987 LaFasto and Larson; portions reprinted with permission of Profact). Questions 8–13: Adapted from the Collaborative Team Leader Instrument (copyright 1996 LaFasto and Larson; portions reprinted with permission).

Scoring Interpretation

In addition to such targeted questions on each of the criteria of excellence, the complete surveys also ask open-ended questions to allow team members to comment on issues that might not be specifically covered in the directed questions, such as strengths and weaknesses of the team and its leadership, necessary changes, problematic norms, or issues that need to be addressed. The complete version of the survey is given to team members and the team leader, and all are involved in the diagnosis and the resulting action planning. Such a method is clearly consistent with the empowerment movement in organizational teams and helps address the enormous complexity involved in making teams effective.

SUMMARY

The increased importance of organizational teams and the leadership needed for them has produced a growing interest in team leadership theory. The team leadership model provides a framework in which to study the systematic factors that contribute to a group's outcomes or general effectiveness. Within this approach, the critical function of leadership is to help the group accomplish its goals by monitoring and diagnosing the group and taking the requisite action.

A strategic decision model has been developed to reveal the various decisions team leaders must make to improve their group's effectiveness. The model describes the decisions: What type of intervention should be used (monitoring or action taking)? At what level should the intervention be targeted (internal or external)? What leadership function should be implemented to improve group functioning?

Questionnaires filled out by team members and the team leader can aid in diagnosing specific areas of team problems and suggest action steps to be taken by the team.

The strength of this approach is its practical focus on real-life organizational teams and their effectiveness. The model also emphasizes the functions of leadership that can be shared and distributed within the work group. The model offers guidance in selecting leaders and team members with the appropriate diagnostic and action-taking skills. Furthermore, the model is appropriately complex, providing a cognitive model for understanding and improving organizational teams.

Visit the Student Study Site at www.sagepub.com/northouse6e for web quizzes, leadership questionnaires, and media links represented by the icons.

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