Dysfunctional Leadership

Overview
This study comes from a study done in Zimbabwe. Of interest here is the descriptor of leadership dysfunction. Dandira uses both ends of the spectrum to attempt to illustrate what leadership is not and at the same time, what it is. Using cancer as an analogy is often used in literature to describe events that, if left unchecked, can seriously harm the overall health and well-being of the organism. Like cancer, dysfunctional leadership, on a large enough scale, can be fatal to the organization.

Changes in the Basic Organizing Principles
This study espouses to describe dysfunctional leadership. In reality, it is describing dysfunctional behaviors in people who hold positions that have leadership responsibility. Most of the time we see these types of behaviors emerge out of lack of information or misinformation. Typically people in these positions are using behaviors they learned in previous job positions that worked as a work contributor, but fall short of, or even inhibit effective leadership.

Scholars and consultants have identified hundreds of discreet competencies displayed by people in leadership roles. Of these myriad models, some barely address any actual leadership behaviors. Many mix competencies specific to management of problems and processes with leadership. Many mix personal competencies of management i.e. problem solving, and most mix people management skills, primarily performance management. In reality, leadership is more simple and basic than many models tend to present. Here are some key points to remember to keep things straight and develop functional leadership: organizational health.

Management vs. Leadership
As you will find repeatedly in the literature, this study again makes the point that managing is not leading. Leadership roles in organizations require both. The key is to know the difference and to be intentional about when you apply each. One key to notice is in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
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<td>Produce a degree of predictability and order</td>
<td>Produce useful change.</td>
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This can seem somewhat paradoxical, if these activities are viewed as moving in different directions. The idea is that management often stops change, rather than propel it. This is an important place to explore techniques of accomplishing both in the people you lead.

Constant Commitment to Leading
Probably the most common problem in leadership is withdrawal, or laissez-faire styles. We often call it an “Observational” style, in which the leader simply steps back and lets things
happen. Sometimes this is an error state, when the formal leader is attempting to create collaboration or empowerment and instead creates a leadership vacuum. We know from studying the Neuroscience of leadership that there is always a force that creates leadership in a team. Too often, when the formal leader withdraws, it is replaced by dysfunctional behaviors in the work groups. This sort of leadership style can cause organization performance drops of 20 to 80%.

This is a primal requirement of formal leaders. They must always be leading. Recognition of this is one of the first steps towards creating positive and dynamic leadership styles.

**The Way Out**

The first requirement is to personally choose to lead. It is very helpful to have models of what are positive and negative leadership behaviors. However, they are only useful if you have somewhere to lead towards, and you choose to lead.

Here are some simple but powerful ways that you can step into leadership.

- **Leadership Starts at home with the questions** - Who are you and where are you going? Get clear about your purpose, your organizations purpose, and ensure they are in alignment. Clarify the vision state that you are leading your organization towards. Learn it, live it, and share it.
- **First manage yourself**, your own mental and emotional states, and your own ability to walk your talk. Say what you will do, then do it well. Make commitments to people, then keep them.
- **Build a sense of service and empathy towards others**. Look out for the greater good, for the common need. Find these needs, them meet them.
- **Spend your time connecting with others**. Build your relationships. Connect around the vision, and the overall organization direction. Build common ground with other.

While this may seem overly simple, these are cores to solid leadership. Take a moment to look back over the items listed in this case study as dysfunctional. If a leader were doing the things listed above, would these dysfunctions still exist?

**The Leadership Challenge**

Personal Leadership Dysfunction Test

Please answer these questions for yourself:

- To what extent to you display the items mentioned in the case study?
- Which ones do you do most often?
- Are there any of them that you would like to change?
- To what extent do you see the items mentioned exhibited in your organization?
- If you see them, what can you do about it?
- What, if anything, would you like to develop in yourself as a result of reading this?