
“External”-oriented Leadership Behaviours and the Association’s Performance

By Dean Black

In 2008, the members of the National Executive Council (NEC) expressed concern with their own individual reports. Some described reports submitted by colleagues as looking more like itineraries, than reports. The simplest of these “itineraries” presented a schedule of events attended, without any explanation why particular events were attended, nor what might have been accomplished, leading one member to refer to such reports as nothing more than “alibis.” In response the NEC members agreed to a policy that encouraged NEC members to write reports that explained their activities in terms of the association’s three pillars – Youth, Heritage & Advocacy – as a means of addressing a widespread perception of ineffective performance. The following analysis of recent work done by Gary Yukl et al, helps explain why the 2008 NEC policy regarding reports, remains important today.

Reference: Shahidul Hassan, Gregory Prussia, Rubina Mahsud and Gary Yukl, (2018) ‘How leader networking, external monitoring, and representing are relevant for effective leadership’, *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 39 Issue: 4, pp.454-467

Studies of the impact of leadership on group and individual effectiveness tend to concentrate on interactions between the leaders and the followers within a group. Long after the mid-20th century “Great Man” leadership theory began to fade away, another theory gained prominence. This latter theory compared the effectiveness of leaders who were either oriented towards the task needed to be performed, or, alternatively, were oriented toward the people who would perform the task. Some years ago, Gary Yukl expanded on this traditional categorisation of task-orientated and people-orientated behaviours, adding a third category: change-orientated behaviours;, and then a fourth category: ‘external behaviours’ that are carried out on behalf of the group, rather than with group members.

In the reference cited above, the authors report on their questionnaire research that explored the relationship between group members’ perceptions of the leader’s external behaviours (external monitoring, representing, and networking) and their perceptions of leader effectiveness and work group performance. It is important for NEC members to acknowledge as board members your work involves external monitoring, representing and networking, in the various communities in which you find yourselves. An understanding of these terms is helpful, but it is especially important for NEC members to understand the differences between “Representing” and “Networking.”

External monitoring means keeping yourself informed of a range of factors, near and far, that may impact on the RCAF Association through the members of the NEC.

Representing involves: coordinating activities with other groups, like Wings, Branches of the Royal Canadian Legion, your own community, and the Air Cadet League and its Squadrons in your area; seeking resources, approval and support, as you might need to do, especially with respect to support for the RCAF Association Trust Fund; promoting the work group’s reputation, and forwarding its interests, both of which are central to an NEC member’s fiduciary accountabilities toward the brand of the RCAF Association; and negotiating with other groups and stakeholders.

Networking was taken to mean building and maintaining cooperative relationships with people outside the work group, including by attending meetings, professional conferences, and joining other associations and clubs, and socializing informally.

The report's research showed that (the RCAF Association's) members' perceptions of external monitoring and representing were both positively related to perceptions of (NEC) work team performance, but networking was not. However, when a perceived high level of networking was combined with a high level of either external monitoring or representing, there was a significant positive effect on perceived work team performance. In other words, networking might enable external monitoring and/or representing – or it might simply be seen simply as being about enhancing the group leader's own career. This report, therefore, explains how members decide whether the work done by their leaders is either effective, or simply self-serving. In 2008, members of the NEC had concluded that member perceptions were likely negative because reports submitted by NEC members: provided little to no evidence of any external monitoring; little to no effort at representing the association; and, no rhyme or reason to any networking being done, if at all.

External monitoring is a crucial part of strategic management, and without strategic management the organization cannot survive the normal life-cycle dynamics – the organization dies. Members of the NEC understand that strategy flows from a properly conducted S.W.O.T. analysis – where S.W.O.T. stands for strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats. The first two (strengths and weaknesses) flow from an internal analysis, while the latter two (opportunities and threats) flow from an external (monitoring) analysis.

Representing is a pivotal part of the NEC members' roles as ambassador or cheerleader, for the RCAF Association. Underscoring these roles is a solid understanding of the association's vision, mission and values. Only recently have members of the NEC actually produced an agreed-to list of values. Service, Camaraderie, Open-mindedness, respect and ethics now serve as "core values" upon which all members of the RCAF Association are encouraged to call, in all of their deliberations, discussions and decisions. It is well known that if service is beneath you, then leadership is beyond you. This is deservedly a mantra to recall, by those contemplating what their role might be in the organization.

Networking is something leaders do, but outside the organization. This is the essence of stakeholder theory. Stakeholders include everyone impacted by the work of the RCAF Association, and everyone whose actions can have an impact on the RCAF Association. Leaders at the top must work toward sound and productive relationships with external stakeholders having a vested interest in the activities of the RCAF Association. And, leaders at the Wing level know full well how important are their actions with local officials, leaders and suppliers. But, networking goes beyond these stakeholder connections to include making connections with those who may not be true stakeholders at all. When a leader makes informal social connections, these actions enhance social capital in subtle but significant ways. And, social capital is just as important and financial capital in the non-profit sector.

In conclusion, leaders cannot be complacent or lackadaisical in any of the areas of external monitoring, representing and networking. Perceptions are everything, but when they are negative, members vote with their feet, not their wallet. Since 1999, the membership of the RCAF Association has fallen by 12,000 members only half of which have passed away. The losses of the other half suggest they see little to no value in any networking that may have been reported, and the value of external monitoring and representing is simply not strong enough to maintain their interests in the RCAF Association. In 2009-

2010 the ASAE report titled ***The Decision to Join*** surveyed over 16,000 people and reported that younger generations are joining more so than previous generations, but because they are much better informed, and more highly educated, they have the means and the wherewithal to scrutinize much better the many associating options available to them, and what they learn and see leads them to steer clear of associations that show troubling results in terms of external monitoring, representing and networking.