Followership: The underrated aspect of Leadership

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Most of us are followers

- A major part of life is spent as a follower.
- A majority of employees are followers.
- 80% of the work is executed by followers.
- Followership dominates our lives and organizations, but not our thinking.

(Kelley, 1992)

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Follower = Inferior

- Follower: Servant / Sidekick / Henchman

- To follow: Passive / Submissive

- Easily led.

(Stech, 2008) (Race, 2006)
Leader-Follower Collaboration
Leader-Follower Collaboration
Most leaders are followers

- Leaders are first followers. (Frisina, 2005)
- Followers struggle and make sacrifices to become leaders. (Schachter, 2007)

Most leaders follow someone (Agho, 2009)
Famous Leader-Follower Collaborations

Bill Gates, Craig Mundie (Chief Research and Strategy Officer), Ray Ozzie (Chief Software Architect) Steve Ballmer (CEO).
Followership = A role or a position

- Leader’s dominance is rooted in the leadership ROLE.

Dominance: Characteristic of a person.

Dominance: Characteristic of a role.

(Hogan and Hogan, 2004)
Follower = Leader’s Strength

- Intelligent, courageous, ethical.  
  \textit{(Kelley, 1992)}

- Wants leader + organization to succeed.  
  \textit{(Chaleff, 1995)}

- Complements leadership.

- \textbf{Enhances leadership effectiveness.}  
  \textit{(Kellerman, 2008)}
Leader-Follower Collaboration

Shared Vision reduces cognitive dissonance

Organization A

Organization B
Leader’s Individual Effectiveness

Adapted from Maxwell, 2006

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Collaborative Effectiveness

Adapted from Maxwell, 2006

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Followership Hierarchy

Isolators

Bystanders

Participants

Activists

Die Hard

TRUST

COMMITMENT

(Chaleff, 2003)
Effective Follower .......

- Defends the leader.  
  (Bryman, 2011)

- Challenges selectively. Doesn’t alarm.  
  (Chaleff, 2008)

- Fights in private and keeps it private.  
  (Meilinger, 2001)

- Self-concept and self-determination.  
  (Hopper, 2008)

- *Doesn’t expect perfect responses*  
  (Chaleff, 2008)
Leadership - Followership Similarities

- Common characteristics such as integrity, charisma, vision, and ability to initiate change

(Nolan & Harty, 2001)
Leadership advantages

- Leader gets the **limelight**
- Leader **controls** the resources
- Leader gets **higher** returns
Leadership Advantages - Facts

- Followers strengths help leader rise.
- Risks magnify as leader rises.
- Visibility and pressures intensify.
- Flaws magnify as leader rises.

(Chaleff, 2003)
Leadership Advantages - Facts

- Leaders have limited resources and allocate them on the basis of organizational priority.
Followers may not be as well off as their leaders, but they are better off than individuals in poorly led groups.

(Vugt et al. 2008)
Followership Advantages

- Followership is more recognized by senior management.

- Likely to be rewarded more strongly as a result.  
  (Dixon and Westbrook, 2003)

- Positively influences performance evaluation.  
  (Thompson, 2006)
Followership Advantage

- 20% of the knowledge is explicit
- 80% of the knowledge is tacit
- Followers gain the advantage of tacit leadership knowledge
Followership and Students

- More followers than leaders are needed. Today and in future.

- Followership is a valuable skill. In all walks of life.

(Race, 2006)
Employers prefer employees who have the ability to take charge or relinquish control (followership) according to the needs of the organization.

(Gardner, 2007)
Followership and

- Employers don’t want to see our leadership skills in the beginning.

- They want to see our followership skills.

(Holton and Naquin, 2001)
Thank you.