

# An Interactive Team Leadership: a Conceptual Model for Team based Organizational Effectiveness in large Hierarchical Organizations

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## Abstract

Despite Interactive leadership enjoying success and attention as an exceptional leadership theory, few scholars have investigated a specific link between Interactive leadership theories and team performance. As such, the researchers discuss how interactive leadership theories can provide a framework in which to investigate a leader's impact on team performance. As the scope and complexity of modern task demands exceeding capability of individuals to perform, teams are emerging to shoulder the burgeoning requirements. Accordingly, researchers have striven to understand and enhance human performance in team settings. The purpose of this study is to present a **conceptual model** of interactive team leadership for hierarchical organizations such as law enforcing agencies and other public sector organizations in Pakistan, that is workable, practical and efficient compared to traditional leadership model. Further specified are important avenues to creating successful teams like structure of teams, team selection/composition, task design, role of top leader and subordinate leaders. In other words, one can select the right people, provide them with a task engineered for superior performance and train them in the appropriate skills to accomplish that task for overall success of the organization as per set objectives. Researchers have also drawn comparative analysis of proposed interactive team leadership model and traditional hierarchical leadership model in order to prove practicability of the conceptual model. The paper concludes with the identification of ways to select better teams, to design better team tasks and by mentioning effective techniques from which to draw principles, guidelines and specifications to maximize success. Limitations and future directions are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Interactive Leadership, Team Leadership, Organizational Effectiveness

## Introduction

1. As a concept, interactive leadership has its roots in participative management approaches, in transformational leadership theories, and in situation - contingent models of leadership. Its links to participative management approaches are quite clear in Judy Rosener's (1990) description of interactive leadership. Rosener's description notes the following characteristics of interactive leadership: 1) encouragement of participation in all aspects of work; 2) wide-spread sharing of information and power; 3) efforts to enhance self-worth of employees; and 4) energizing employees for the task. Leaders must master all competencies. They need to develop—in more rigorous and deliberate ways—team leadership skills that go beyond the basic leadership competencies. Given the need for 21st-century the team leadership model the researcher offers addresses some concepts not currently discussed in professional management education.

2. A team consists of two or more people who interrelate within defined roles to accomplish a common goal. An individual leader unless he or she knows how to leverage the power and synergy of the collective intellect of a team will face greater uncertainty. Today's leaders must cultivate skills that differ in some ways from those of their predecessors. These differences answer the needs of flatter organizations and less submissive team members. 21st-century team leaders must display self-awareness, humility, and selflessness. Team leaders must let their subordinates lead and may need to allow mistakes, even at some personal cost. They must develop communication skills that go beyond clear and directive to rhetorically savvy. They must give reasons, not just orders. Because their teams will include other highly critical thinkers, leaders must consider other perceptions

and perspectives, and formulate convincing arguments. The team leader must focus on developing a sense of trust among all members to enable constructive candor, honest feedback, and team resiliency. They must “lead from within” by collaborating as a peer while maintaining some autonomous leader authority. The above description of team leadership differs significantly from the current norm, but the researcher believes that structuring organization on team based model where top leader directly interacts with every team leader, will provide competitive advantage to such an organization.

#### **Problem Statement**

3. Keeping above discussion in view, the researchers intend to present/formulate a conceptual team based model for a hierarchical organization such as law enforcement agencies for organizational effectiveness through interactive leadership in the environments of Pakistan.

#### **Originality of the Study**

4. The research area which is outcome of interactive team leadership based model on organizational effectiveness for law enforcement agencies/hierarchical organizations in Pakistan has not been explored by any researcher so far. This is a visible gap in the body of knowledge. The present research does offer an one possible solution to fill this gap and is a significant contribution to the body of knowledge.

#### **Applied Aspects**

5. The above description of team leadership differs significantly from the current norm, but the researcher believes the law enforcement agencies/hierarchical organizations will lose competitive advantage if they do not begin now to adopt a new model. High motivation, a “can-do” culture, strong discipline, and incredibly advanced technologies will only take the law enforcement agencies/hierarchical organizations so far in the coming century. Clearly, many leaders of law enforcement agencies/hierarchical organizations already understand the importance of team leadership and practice it on a daily basis. This research targets leaders who seek a basic foundation in these concepts, and offers enough new information to warrant the attention of experienced team leaders. Findings of the research will be helpful for law enforcement agencies and other such hierarchical organizations which are still following traditional ways/ bureaucratic channels of managing/ leading organizations.

#### **Objective of the Study**

6. The objective of this study is to present an effective and result oriented teams based **conceptual model** for organizational effectiveness through interactive team based leadership in the environments of Pakistan for hierarchical organizations such as Law enforcements agencies.

#### **Literature Review**

7. The first serious attempts to study team processes began in the 1950s and 1960s, with a focus largely on military teams and team processes that enabled them to function more effectively under conditions of extreme time pressure, high stress, ambiguous and incomplete information, and severe consequences for actions taken. Much of the impetus for team research over the years has been tied to team failures, particularly those associated with high visibility (e.g. aircraft accidents, military accidents) (Ilgen, 1999). Globalization of marketplaces, information availability in terms of speed and volume, and increased competitiveness have changed the way organizations function and respond (Katzenbach, 1998). The need for increased flexibility and responsiveness, and the urgent and frenzied pace of product/service development has yielded tasks that prove too complex and time-consuming for individual attention and completion (Katzenbach, 1998; Swezey and Salas, 1992). Because teams can better provide a directed and collaborative effort to address complex task concerns, organizations around the world have significantly increased their dependency on teams (MontoyaWeiss et al., 2001; Salas et al, 1992). Although reliance on teams has increased drastically since the early 1980s, research surrounding team development has not been able to keep pace with the growing need for understanding how teams can achieve more effective performance ( Stout et al., 1997; Tannenbaum et al.,1991). Although achieving higher level individual performance is widely reached in interactive leadership literature (Avolio and Yammarino, 2002; Bass, 1985, 1990), achieving higher levels of team performance has not been as widely researched (Bass et al., 2003). Yet, DeGroot 17,2 et al (2000, p. 363) noted in their meta-analysis that when leadership and performance were examined “results show an effect size at the group level of analysis that is double in magnitude relative to the effect size at the individual level”. Therefore, evidence suggests that interactive leadership and team performance may be a fruitful area for further exploration.

8. Previous conceptualizations have linked interactive leadership with various aspects of team performance. For example, Waldman (1994) discussed improving multi-functional team innovation processes through reliance on interactive leadership, while Bass (1994) discussed improving team decision-making skills through the use of interactive leadership. Additionally, Atwater and Bass (1994) presented a general conceptualization of how interactive leadership may interact with and influence team factors such as cohesion and conflict management, but they did not put forth any specific, testable propositions.

9. More recently, Kahai et al. (2000) demonstrated that interactive leaders are likely to increase group performance in that they are instrumental in overcoming social loafing among group members. Additionally, Balthazard et al. (2002) reported that face-to face teams were more likely to demonstrate higher levels of shared

(interactive) leadership than virtual teams. Thus, there has been some effort to link team performance with interactive leadership (Bass, 1990; Yammarino, 1996), however, explicit relationships to teamwork processes and skill sets have not been clearly delineated. Moreover, the existing empirically based leadership/team performance studies primarily have focused on a direct leadership-performance link, without examining what role teamwork processes could have on performance. Because teamwork processes are a required component of team effectiveness (Stevens and Campion, 1994; Sundstrom et al., 1990), their inclusion into a leadership/team performance model is pertinent. As such, researcher attempts to examine inside of a leadership and team performance relationship by exploring what role teamwork processes may play in a interactive leadership/team performance link. Given the widespread use of teams in all types of organizations (Salas et al., 1992), the time is ripe for an integration of team performance theory with interactive leadership theory.

10. The researchers' leadership/teamwork process/team performance integration builds on a previous, limited effort to conceptualize an interactive leadership and team interpersonal skills link (Atwater and Bass, 1994). Further, the Atwater and Bass (1994) conceptualization appears to be the only linkage between these two factors within the interactive leadership domain. Therefore, researcher focuses this integration of leadership and team performance on developing limited understanding of the link between interactive leadership and various teamwork processes, especially interpersonally based processes, and their Leadership. Teams are an outgrowth of the quality management process, and go beyond the quality circles and empowerment trends that achieved popularity in the 1980s (Dess and Miller, 1993). When used effectively and provided with proper training (Stout et al, 1997; Tannenbaum et al, 1991), teams could lead to increased production, morale, creativity and innovation (Dess and Miller, 1993; Modrick, 1986).

**Methodology**

11. For the purpose of proposed research model, non-sampling procedure has been used. An intensive and extensive survey of literature on internet and through books on leadership has been carried out to analyze effectiveness of various models of team leadership. Basing on this literature review and researcher's personal experience of working in various hierarchical outfits, an effort has been made to propose a workable and effective model for smooth /efficient functioning of hierarchical organizations.

**Interactive Team Leadership Model**

12. Organizational theorists offer various models for team leadership; many reflect the underlying notion that teams are complex, dynamic systems that exist in larger systemic contexts of people, cultures, technologies, and structures. Most models invoke the input-processes-output (IPO) model. Figure 1 shown on next page portrays a model of team leadership which researchers think would apply well to teams in hierarchical organizations such as law enforcement agencies.



Figure 1: Interactive Team Leadership Model: A Conceptual Model

Source: Researcher's Own Processing

13. The model has been described in succeeding paras. Though theorists emphasize the need for leaders to cultivate collaboration and create synergy, researchers' depiction focuses attention on "the task" as a driving force that carries through the model. The task aligns activities in a hierarchical organization such as the law enforcement agencies, whose main competitive advantage is consistent high performance/mission accomplishment. It grounds the model to a practical activity more likely to satisfy a "task - oriented" and

mission - focused culture. The model captures the actions of the top leader as central, but additional whole - team factors have a significant impact on process outcomes and team success. They include the level of boundary spanning, the decision - making style of the team, the level and type of communication and coordination, and the team's norms. Finally, in addition to team performance, team member satisfaction and the level of innovation and adaptability of the team are also important and relevant outcomes. To apply the model, leaders must gain a more detailed understanding of each of the factors in this team leadership model.

14. **Structure.** In proposed model top leader directly interacts with subordinate leaders for performance management keeping in view the organizational objectives for success of organization. This is almost opposite to traditional leadership practices of managing organizations. Leaders must bear the responsibility to ensure their team's structure enables success. Most leaders lack the authority to reorganize the broader organization. Adaptable team leaders in the 21st-century will not hesitate to change both the lines of authority in their teams' structures. In the Information Age, logic demands a reconsideration of team structures designed to address Industrial-Age problems. Virtual and ad hoc teams further amplify this new reality. Ultimately, the team leader should foster productive team interaction leading to task completion. Quickly reorganizing team structures to fit specific tasks requires imaginative leaders and flexible team members. The most successful leaders will develop the ability to envision alternative structures and mold the right members into a cohesive team. Keeping this factor in mind an organizational structure has been proposed where independent teams have been constituted in such a way that they directly interact with top leader and work under his supervision and guidance unlike traditional hierarchical model of leadership where a particular subject is seen by number of managers and effort is always duplicated. Other important aspects in this regard are:

- a. **Direct Interaction.** Top leader and subordinate leaders interact directly and there are no intermediate channels or hindrance in-between which ensures smooth functioning through direct guidance/supervision.
- b. **Decentralization/Independent Tasking.** In this model leaders are given lot of initiative and are tasked independently to motivate their teams and get best out of them without interference from anywhere.
- c. **Multiple Tasks Performance.** In proposed model any type of task can be performed by designing team according to requirement or creating new team according to situation.
- d. **Quality Management.** Quality in life and working environment is ensured through a dedicated teams.
- e. **Monitoring/Welfare Team.** Such teams / mechanism hardly exist in traditional organizational leadership system. The purpose of proposing this in new model is to ensure that lower level employees are motivated and there is no such policy or decision which negatively affects them. Moreover, all teams/complete organization are/is directly monitored by top leader.
- f. **Conflict Management/Grievances Handling Team.** A conflict exists when two or more members of a group, or two or more groups, disagree. A conflict becomes harmful if tension within or between groups is such that it impedes members from thinking clearly or making sound decisions. Formation of a dedicated team along with a leader who directly reports to top leader will minimize problems of grass root level employees. This will ultimately affect the performance of all employees as well as of the organization.

15. **Team Composition.** By understanding the considerations of team composition, leaders can influence whom they bring onto their team and whom they may attempt to remove. This becomes even more important with ad hoc teams. As leaders think about the composition of their teams they should explicitly address three concerns. First: team size. In contrast to a prevalent cultural assumption that big teams get easier "buy-in" and produce a better product, most researchers argue teams be as small as possible. Leaders need to determine what skills are required and then limit the size of the team to those who have the requisite talents to meet the requirement, regardless of their organizational position. Although violating existing protocols, research shows that small, talent-based teams perform better and have a greater chance of producing results. In proposed model, the composition of team depends upon nature of task. If the task pertains to training of soldiers, then according to type of training required, the training team/sub team can be organized under a leader.

16. **Tasks.** The task is the foundation for all team activities. Teams may receive tasks or generate their own. Proactive team leaders scan the environment for relevant tasks their organization might overlook. They must also understand their obligation as gatekeeper for the team's tasks. This role takes on special importance in law enforcement agencies whose culture encourages the acceptance of almost any mission with a "can-do" attitude. Finally, leaders must prioritize tasks and allocate resources in a deliberate manner.

17. **Culture.** The organization's culture circumscribes all the team's processes and, most importantly, its underlying decision-making logic. One prominent theorist defines "culture" as the shared pattern of underlying assumptions that drives how organization members think, feel, and act. Team leaders should carefully assess the

culture and weigh any proposed initiatives or decisions against the likely cultural response. Although successful team

leaders need to empower their subordinates, they cannot disregard cultural norms. Performance orientation closely relates to the law enforcement agencies' "can-do" attitude. Team leaders need to collate all the knowledge within the team to inform decision making. However, leaders should also balance the cultural expectation for rapid decision making (i.e., performance orientation expectations) against the time it may take to gather additional information or perspectives. Finally, leaders must remember culture typically takes many years to change. Team leaders should usually adapt to existing culture, rather than try to change it.

18. **Task-Focused Behaviors.** In proposed team leadership model this aspect has been given special attention. Task-focused behaviors include goal setting, work apportionment, process structuring, adapting to changes, standard setting, information seeking, and feedback. Teams that routinely achieve excellence begin with clear objectives and expectations, receive timely and candid feedback, and garner recognition for goal accomplishment. Task-focused leader behavior requires a concomitant ability to know when to monitor a situation and when to take action.

19. **People-Focused Behaviors.** In addition to sorting through how best to accomplish tasks, proposed model is based on people-focused behaviors. These include developing a positive climate, facilitating team member participation in the group, harmonizing interpersonal problems, setting standards of behavior, and being friendly and supportive. This all is not possible without using interactive leadership style and managing organizations through teams. Military readers may be surprised to learn that some studies show people-focused behaviors have twice the effect on team performance as task-focused behaviors. This does not mean that team leaders should focus all their energy on climate and cohesion at the expense of task-focused behaviors, but it probably implies that a task-oriented team will be more productive if the leader properly manages climate concerns and sets conditions that enable healthy relationships among team members.

20. **Decision Making.** Interactive team leadership model involves subordinates in the decision-making process to the maximum. In the Information Age, timely decision making demands that leaders decide when to quit gathering and analyzing data and when to stop taking inputs from the team. This function requires more art than science. At a minimum, top leaders need to recognize that decision making at the strategic level differs from the tactical level. Decision quality also suffers when a leader defaults to position power. Though position power usually evokes compliance from subordinates, it may also stifle their willingness to offer candid opinions during the decision-making process. Leaders should establish a team climate that encourages maximum candor, regardless of the potential for disagreement. Actually, team leaders need to foster a climate in which members openly acknowledge and discuss their disagreements about team strategies and goals. Cognitive conflict results from judgmental differences about how best to achieve common objectives; it places ideas—but not people—in opposition. This type of conflict improves team decision quality because it allows multiple perspectives while not degrading team processes.

21. **Feed back/Communication.** Without directly getting feedback of lower level employees getting best out of them is not possible. The proposed model of interactive team leadership emphasizes on this aspect and suggests a monitoring team for the purpose. Not surprisingly, high-performing teams communicate effectively. Team leaders must create a climate of psychological safety for all team members. Psychological safety exists when all team members believe interpersonal risk taking has low stakes. Psychological safety is a prerequisite of trust, a critical component for a high performing team in a complex environment. Without trust, healthy risk taking becomes much less likely. Team leaders must closely monitor the extent of information sharing among team members and also explicitly gauge how well team members understand organizational and team objectives and strategies. Often, team leaders assume once they have communicated the organizations and team's purposes, team members understand the underlying logic. Leaders forget their team members did not attend the meetings during which accompanying rationale came to light or became common knowledge. Therefore, leaders must also recount the dialogue and logic from which these strategies sprang. Given this additional background information, the team has a much better chance of achieving vertical and horizontal alignment with the rest of the organization.

22. **Coordination.** For the purpose of coordinating efforts/tasks of all teams a separate team has been suggested in the model at organizational level i.e. Administrative Team. However, how well team members coordinate their activities largely determines their effectiveness. Team leaders should help develop the interaction patterns among team members that will lead to success. A key ingredient in team coordination is shared mental models. Team members consciously or unconsciously develop mental models from the beliefs, thoughts, and verbal descriptions they experience. These models then guide subsequent thoughts and actions. Well-coordinated teams share mental models about team purposes, their connections to each other, roles, and behavior patterns. These team-based mental models form a fundamental requisite for effective coordination. They develop over time, but team leaders may shape certain elements—roles and interaction patterns—of such

models toward more efficient team coordination. As team composition and tasks get increasingly vague and complex, the leader must deliberately act to ensure the development of these shared mental models. Failure to develop shared mental models can lead to uncoordinated—and thus inefficient or unproductive—efforts. Uncoordinated team members expend their energies in different directions, or fail to synchronize their work on time-critical tasks. At worst, duplication of tasks or even counterproductive efforts result, and some sub-processes may go completely undone.

23. **Competitiveness.** By default a spirit of competition is created amongst various teams thereby benefiting overall performance management of the organization. Every team leader would try its best to motivate and inspire his team to surpass other teams thereby enhancing productivity/efficiency of the organization as whole. Team leaders accept and shape their teams; to produce desired outputs. The dynamic conditions of the contemporary operating environment mandate an adaptive and innovative force. Innovative solutions increase competitive advantage. Correspondingly, team leaders must develop metrics to determine how well their teams perform tasks or achieve other outputs. Typically, how quickly, efficiently, and effectively a team achieves a desired outcome indicates team performance. The organization may provide weak team members, the strength of its culture might overwhelm the team leader's attempts to re-orient the team's objectives, or the entrenched norms of an established team may impede the efforts of a newly assigned leader to propel change.

24. **Comparative Analysis**

S/No	Interactive Team Leadership Model	Traditional Hierarchical Leadership Model
a.	Interactive/Participative.	Based on number of intermediate channels. Not interactive.
b.	Job/Task specific.	A leader deals with number of issues.
c.	Multipurpose/Flexible.	Fixed setup/departments.
d.	No duplication of effort.	Numbers of managers supervise a particular task.
e.	Direct supervision/guidance.	Leaders hardly interact directly with grass root level employees.
f.	Balanced model.	Numbers of subjects are un-addressed.
g.	Competitive culture.	No such culture.
h.	Conflict management /grievances' Handling.	Not addressed.
j.	Employees focused.	Top management focused.
k.	Smooth functioning.	No of channels do not allow smooth functioning.
l.	Organizational performance based on team performance.	No necessarily.
m.	Efficient /Productive.	Possible but not due to structure of organization or style of leadership.
n.	Conducive working environment/independent tasking.	Over supervision.
o.	Involvement of employees in decision making through feedback/interaction.	Decision making at top management level. No monitoring to see of impact of such decisions.

**Conclusion**

25. The progression of this concept has been traced from its inception 50 years ago to current thinking. It has been learnt that teamwork is the seamless integration of specific cognitive, behavioural and affective competencies that allow team members to adapt and optimize their performance. Researchers have made great strides in defining team leadership model, and in differentiating effectiveness of organizations in such a set up. This interactive team leadership model illustrates many important concepts and relationships officers/leader must understand to lead effective teams in the 21<sup>st</sup> century operating environment. These principles apply to hierarchical organizations; questions remain in determining how best to adjust this model to accommodate teams in such hierarchical set ups. Evidence to date suggests teams in traditional set ups are both slower and less accurate than successful teams in team based setup. In the meantime, researcher offers this interactive team leadership model for leading from within to achieve organizational effectiveness/ competitive advantage.

**Recommendations**

26. In the light of above study, it is recommended that traditional hierarchical organizations should analyze this model for implementation, keeping in view dictates of 21<sup>st</sup> century and practicability of team based interactive leadership concept.

**Limitations**

27. Study could have been conducted through sampling procedure but due to rare existence of such models

in hierarchical organizations in Pakistan it could not be done.

28. Various models of team leadership concept should have been discussed to analyze their effectiveness in the context of organizational performance but due to limited time available for research and due to less research information available in the Pakistani context, many details could not be analyzed and included in the research article.

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