

RESEARCH PAPER ON HERBERT KELLEHER AND HIS LEADERSHIP STYLE AT SOUTH WEST AIRLINES

Introduction

The challenge for business leaders, across all industries, is to recognize and accept a new reality in which easy answers, quick fixes and magic bullets are harder to find. This is a reality in which pathways to success are increasingly complex and ambiguous – a reality in which organic growth and innovation emerge as the key drivers of sustainable top- and bottom-line growth. The leaders know the employees and marketplace well and can effectively take action for the success of the organization. The leader applies disciplined processes more flexibly to the growth and innovation arena where organizational processes need to be constantly adjusted, where fast to failure and accelerated experimentation is often as important as guaranteed success. The leader develops new metrics and measures towards the shift in the behavior and culture of the organization toward sustainable growth.

Leadership is both a process and a property. As a process, leadership involves the use of non-coercive influence. As a property, leadership is the set of characteristics attributed to someone who is perceived to use influence successfully. A leader develops a vision for the organization, and of the future. The leader communicates the direction that people and organizations should take. The leader energizes people to overcome psychological and social barriers at work place. The leader produces extremely useful change and motivates people to stay committed to achieve greater goals for the organization. The leaders bring in new methods and practices to motivate people and show the true meaning of camaraderie.

This study on one of the greatest corporate leaders of American Society and Business, Herbert D Kelleher, Co- founder and Chairman of South West Airlines. Herbert Kelleher is called as one of the best CEOs by Fortune magazine in USA. Under his leadership, South West Airlines became the most consistently profitable, productive and cost efficient carrier in the industry. Herbert Kelleher's leadership style helps in answering many pertinent questions related to leadership and the role of leaders in organizations. By following a practice, which he himself coined, as "be yourself" he has been able to illustrate the secret behind building great organizations.

The Focus of the Study

The focus of the study is primarily to analyze different leadership issues and styles. The author plans to do a brief literature survey on leadership styles; the role of a leader and various function of the leader. The focus is to draw conclusions on leadership styles followed at South West Airlines and discover the body of knowledge on belief based leadership practices at the airline and how it contributes to building great organization. Though the focus can be broadened looking at the popularity of the subject and wide array of discussion on leadership styles, the author will concentrate on the idea of belief based leadership and charisma of the leader in inspiring the people in the organization.

The Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is to conduct a brief literature survey on leadership styles; understanding how leaders develop long term vision and a supportive action plan to achieve the vision by inspiring people and enhancing their commitment level to the organization. Though leadership is a vast subject, but the author plans to study Herbert D Kelleher leadership style at South West Airlines and to draw conclusions. The author also plans to study briefly how other low cost airlines are achieving success by copying the leadership model at South West Airlines.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the list of objectives that **the author plans to achieve** through this research paper

- An understanding of meaning and function of a great leader
- An evaluation of various thoughts on different styles of leadership
- An appreciation of role and responsibility of a leader in leading a business organization
- An understanding and appreciation of Herbert D Kelleher's Leadership style at South West Airlines and how they have brought changes and led to building South West Airlines as a great organization.
- To draw conclusion about effective leadership styles and how spiritual leadership can transform organizations.

Methodology and Research Design

In this section we will explain the research methodology followed and the abstraction done for writing this article. This section will also explain how the researcher mapped key learning on leadership styles through model analytics and content analysis.

Review of Literature

Inspiring leaders have the ability not only to motivate people in their work organizations but also to people in other competing organizations. Herb D Kelleher is one of these leaders who went far ahead beyond the context of his organization i.e. South West Airlines. Leadership is about leading, inspiring, motivating people to pursue organizational goals and achieve excellence for them as well as for the business process. It is a process through which the leader uses non-coercive techniques to influence and direct the activities of group members to achieve desired organizational goals. It is also a set of characteristics attributed to those perceived to use more influence for organizational success.