

The I-C-E Path to Leadership Expertise

The knowledge-based model of leadership expertise contends that as leaders develop, they acquire five interactive aspects of leadership expertise, namely, basic values, key ideas, and essential skills, as well as, two metacognitive aspects, self-awareness and self-regulation (Wall, 2008). In other words, as they develop leaders acquire an increasingly well-organized knowledge-base that significantly impacts how they will lead.

Both experience and research have shown that with sufficient time, appropriate practice, and suitable support leaders may improve their level of leadership expertise (Ericsson, 1996; Ericsson, Prietula, and Cokely, 2007; Goleman, 1998; Knuth and Banks, 2006). In order to consider more fully the development of leadership expertise, I propose the use of a heuristic framework based on three overlapping phases of leadership expertise; namely, inexperienced, competent and expert.

Being a devoted fan of the Montreal Canadiens, who are in the midst of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, it would be remiss of me, given my penchant for using acronyms, not to call the above developmental framework - the I-C-E path to leadership expertise! Please note that on my website, theleadershipwall.com, I include a warning that you may wish to stay away from my website, and now my blog, if you are a member of the Double Triple A Society, that is, the Ancient Association Against Annoying Acronym Abuse. Enough said, let us get back to the ICE and a consideration of the three phases in the leadership journey!

Phases in the I-C-E Path to Leadership Expertise

1. Inexperienced Phase:

Inexperience is defined as a lack of knowledge or skills acquired by practical experience. In the case of the development of leadership expertise, an inexperienced leader is a person who is in the process of acquiring the knowledge and skills to competently lead. Note that this definition

underscores the importance of building a knowledge-base of ideas and skills, based on one's values, while emphasizing the crucial role that practical experience plays in the developmental process of becoming a leader.

2. Competent Phase:

Competent is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “having the necessary ability, knowledge, or skill to do something successfully”. In the leadership domain, a competent leader is a person who has the ability, knowledge, and skills to lead successfully. Again, this definition highlights the importance of acquiring a suitable knowledge base focused on leadership, if one is to become a successful leader.

3. Expert Phase

Expert is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “a person who is very knowledgeable about or skillful in a particular area”. Again, this definition highlights the role of knowledge and skills in the development of leadership expertise. Expert leaders have a number of important characteristics, which is a topic that will be addressed in future additions to my website.

Comments on the I-C-E Path Framework

There are several points to keep in mind when considering the ICE journey towards leadership expertise. First, the three phases overlap with each other and there is a broad range of leadership competence within each phase.

Second, depending on the leadership situation, a person may be relatively inexperienced, quite competent, or moving towards becoming an expert leader. In other words, the situation plays a crucial role in the degree to which a person can competently provide leadership.

Finally, the support provided or accessed during development changes significantly as a person moves through the inexperienced, competent, and expert phases of leadership. As Glaser (1996) so clearly explained, during the initial phases of development support on the journey often comes in the form of formal, structured, learning opportunities. For

example, the support provided in short courses, professional learning sessions, or formal college, university and online courses. As a person becomes more competent and confident, they begin to take increasing control over their own learning. For example, they can assume more personal control by reading relevant articles or books, watching videos or accessing Internet resources, or by talking with a trusted friend or mentor about ways to enhance their leadership.

Thus, the I-C-E path towards leadership expertise is influenced by the demands of the situation, the availability of formal and informal support, and the degree to which the leader takes personal control of their own learning. In a later blog, I will share my ideas on the Four A's to Mastery, which describes the four phases of skill learning that lead to the mastery of specific leadership skills. Moreover, I will identify some of the differences in knowledge and skills, especially metacognitive skills, among leaders who are at the inexperienced, competent and expert levels of expertise.

References

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