Promoting transformational leadership practices of retail managers

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Abstract

Purpose – The pursuit of knowledge should be the objective of managers in the workplace, both for the purpose of empowerment and to achieve financial objectives. It is important that retail managers have a need to solidify their transformational leadership knowledge, which ultimately could increase their capacity to excel. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

Design/methodology/approach – A structured management development programme (MDP), consisting of a comprehensive spectrum of retail management and leadership theory and practices, was designed to develop transformational leadership by using transformational teaching and learning strategies. The sample for this study consisted of seven retail managers from a group of 20 managers, employed by Retek, the largest independent retail pharmacy group in South Africa. A focus group interview identified the dominant themes and produced a landscape to understand the retail managers’ environment, their preferred teaching methodology and benefits experienced from attending the MDP.

Findings – By transforming themselves, these managers have become more empathetic leaders, armed with self-awareness and a deeper awareness of team issues. The MDP created a shift in their attitude towards attending training programmes and subsequently, has created a more accommodating philosophy towards workplace learning. The study added to the understanding of how transformational teaching and learning lead to more effective transformational leadership and the integration of theory into practice by retail managers. The conclusion was that by embracing and practising a transformational teaching and learning ideology, the managers would be better equipped with managerial and transformational leadership abilities.

Originality/value – This research provided a landscape for future management development training in terms of selection of managers to attend, relevant curriculum, teaching and learning methodology as well as benefits of this type of professional development. This initiative was the first project in which such a programme has been designed, developed and instructed in this particular organisation and encompassed a unique experience in terms of training, professional development and the change in the willingness to engage in training and acknowledgement of the value of learning.

Keywords Teaching, Leadership development, Workplace training, Organizational development, Learning methods, Management development, Management development programme (MDP), Transformational teaching strategies, Transformational learning strategies, Workplace learning

Introduction

Background and researcher positionality
Retek (a pseudonym for the organisation) was established in 1978 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The founding members as well as the majority of stakeholders are qualified pharmacists. At its inception the business intended to offer a strong value-driven dispensary proposition. The dispensary remains core and critical to the
business, but the value proposition has transitioned to include an exceptionally strong retail focus, offering an extended product mix at competitive prices and specialised product categories, emphasising the convenience of one-stop shopping within the health, beauty and wellness industries. When Retek was established, training followed a two-pronged approach. First, individuals attended specialised product training offered by suppliers as it related to their specific department. Second, systems and operational training occurred through informal on-the-job information sessions through which individuals “learnt by doing” how to achieve functional efficiency of the operating system.

My insider role resulted from being the National Training Manager at Retek in which I developed, facilitated and researched the management development programme (MDP). I acknowledge my bias and have attempted to separate my role as an insider and that of researcher. However, it took an insider’s perspective, being involved in the community of practice, to identify problems, gaps and opportunities in the contextual reality that becomes the conduit to initiate research. Organisations need insiders to participate in research because they have a sustained commitment to improvement and change in the local context. The managers’ diversity and attitude towards learning should be understood within the context of each individual’s history, politics, power relationships, economic principles and status in the organisational hierarchy. At Retek, the training department operates independently of the human resources function.

Due to the lack of emphasis on management development training at Retek, historically, learning opportunities and exposure to various management and leadership models, theories and applications were limited. The management style most frequently adopted was reliant on disciplined procedures and instructions and did not focus on aspects such as people engagement, obtaining employee buy-in and collaboration. It was my opinion, as incumbent training manager, that the managers were not leading and managing as effectively as they could. They did not demonstrate transformational leadership skills. This skills shortage could be addressed by employing a management development training programme that adopted transformational teaching and learning strategies.

The retail environment

The retail environment can be seen as a battlefield and those who use their capital and competencies in the most innovatively are the most successful. Capital refers to scarce economic, cultural, social and symbolic goods and resources that individuals may or may not have at their disposal and the field may be understood as an arena of contesting stratified forces where skirmishes over limited capital resources occur (Perumal, 2009, p. 42).

In retail organisations, great emphasis is placed on creating a sustainable competitive advantage and offering multiple value orientations to consumers. This results in increased profitability. The competitive advantage is often derived from management competencies and leadership capital that ensure business success. Coad and Berry (1998, p. 164) emphasise that leader behaviour affects work motivation in general and motivation to learn in particular, and both of these factors can direct the efforts of individuals towards particular outcomes and hence influence the effort expended on their achievement. By aligning with this philosophy, a customised in-house MDP was designed to improve the leadership, management skills, and practice of Retek managers.
The overall objectives of the MDP were to empower managers by broadening the scope of their transformational leadership practice, knowledge and experience thereby enhancing their personal and professional development. Therefore, this study was motivated by the intention to improve Retek's management philosophy which emphasised profitability and capital gain without equipping managers with transformational leadership skills. The MDP focused specifically on skills, change, practice and personal and professional development. Through leadership and management competencies, the MDP proposed to identify, diagnose, solve and remediate problems related to managing people. It further aimed to develop a holistic understanding of leadership and the related competencies required to perform productively, and to establish and strengthen teamwork in the stores, thus enhancing profitability.

During the MDP, managers were exposed to areas of strategy, operations and self-awareness that they would not normally be exposed to in a store environment. This learning programme provided the managers with an opportunity for introspection; integrating who they are with what they do. This introspection of their leadership ability was generally unfamiliar territory to them and allowed them the opportunity to understand the consequences of a lack of transformational leadership skills. The MDP comprised 12 modules which were offered in a block release mode five days once a month. The curriculum included extensive exposure to progressive management techniques, principles and practices which underpinned its application. For this study, Module 4 which was titled: Transformational Leadership was used as the unit of analysis. This module dealt with the characteristics, concepts, behaviours, benefits, processes and techniques of transformational leadership. Morgeson et al. (2010, p. 5) suggest that the use of teams has increased in organisations and research has begun to focus on the role of leadership in fostering team success. Due to retailers facing an accelerating demand for knowledge and the ability to mobilise team effort, organisations have two choices: either to continue to learn from programmes which deliver valuable knowledge, resulting in skills development to get the job done, or to allow skills and knowledge to slide into obsolescence, which is not a viable option. We therefore investigated the results of transformational teaching and learning on transformational leadership efficacy. The critical question that the research addressed was how the use of a MDP, as a transformational teaching and learning strategy, could promote transformational leadership of retail managers.

**Theoretical framework**

*Transformational teaching, learning and leadership strategies for the retail manager*

Three pivotal aspects of literature framed the theoretical framework of this study. These included andragogical principles; transformational teaching and learning with reference to the process of transformation during learning; and transformational leadership. In 1984 Knowles was credited as the first to chart the rise of the adult education movement via the notion of andragogy (Jarvis, 1987, p. 185). Andragogy also assisted in understanding the five assumptions of adult learners, the characteristics and unique nature of adult learning, and it played an important role in providing insight for adult educators with regard to programme design and creating conducive learning environments. Ross-Gordon (2003, p. 43); and Smith (2002, p. 7) concur that andragogy was established on the following five assumptions.

*Self-concept and self-directed learning.* Adults learn what they want to learn and what is meaningful for them; they take as much responsibility for their learning as
they want to take and they tend to avoid, reject, reduce or distort any learning in which they see no meaning or interest. Therefore, effective and meaningful adult learning presupposes that learners have accepted the learning task in question (Illeris, 2003, p. 23).

**Experience.** Adult learners accumulate a reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly valuable resource for learning. This storehouse of knowledge could come from experiences from previous education or everyday life activities such as family responsibilities or work-related exposure. Lieb (1991, p. 1) indicates that adult learners need to connect learning to this knowledge or experience base.

**Readiness to learn.** As adults mature, their readiness to learn becomes increasingly oriented to the developmental tasks of their social roles. This implies that adult learners are goal orientated and aware of their goals when attending learning programmes. Lieb (1991, p. 1) contends that adult learners appreciate an educational programme that is organised and has clearly defined objectives and content.

**Orientation to learning.** The adult learners’ time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application and accordingly, their orientation towards learning shifts from subject-centredness to problem-centredness. This andragogical assumption highlights the need for content relevance of the MDP. Learning therefore needs to be useful or applicable to their jobs or other responsibilities as an adult. Value and practicality are important. In line with Lieb (1991, p. 1), theories and concepts must be related to a setting familiar to the adult and learning should reflect their own interests.

**Motivation to learn.** The motivation to learn is internal for adult learners and the most potent motivators are internal pressures such as job satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life (Knowles, 1984, p. 12).

These andragogical principles had to be incorporated in the design of the MDP to facilitate success of this training intervention.

*Transformational learning integrating andragogical assumptions and business success*  
Flores *et al.* (2012, p. 640) suggest that organisational learning is key to an organisation’s capability for continuous change and renewal. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) point to three keys to transformational learning, namely experience, critical reflection and development. The aspect of experience integrates with the andragogical assumption of learners bringing a reservoir of experience to the learning intervention and it is considered critical in establishing an effective learning opportunity for adults. Critical reflection parallels the andragogical principle of learning being self-directed. Time to think and introspect is crucial to establishing an environment conducive to adult learning. Transformation is usually initiated by a problem or gap which challenges individuals into critical reflection. As a result of this reflection, a process of thinking, deliberating and networking with others may result in the individuals being driven to change their perception, values and way of thinking. This could result in the individuals being action-orientated. This is similar to the way in which successful businesses survive. Discovering a threat or opportunity leads to reflection on the implications for profitability or loss. This situation requires deliberating, networking and thinking about the consequences; and finally transforming or adjusting the existing offering or operations. Development is synergistic with the andragogical principle of readiness to learn. Merriam and Caffarella (1991, p. 330) contend that the ability to think critically, which is mandatory to effective transformation, is itself developmental.
Transformational teaching and learning integrating the andragogical assumptions

If the andragogical learning and teaching strategies are not in place, teaching for transformation is unlikely to take place.

Self-concept, self-direction and transformational teaching. Teaching strategies to address self-concept and self-direction would be to actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them (Lieb, 1991, p. 1). Teachers should let the learners work on projects that are relevant to their interests and specific work portfolios and allow them to assume responsibility for presentations and group leadership. They should act as facilitators, guiding participants to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts. Lieb also recommends that the teacher show participants how the training will help the learners to reach their goals. Collaborative modes of teaching and learning will enhance the self-concept of those involved, and result in more meaningful and effective learning (Brundage and MacKeracher, 1980).

Reservoir of experience, readiness to learn and transformational teaching and learning. Teaching strategies that accommodate the vast experience and readiness of the adult learner to participate in learning requires teachers to connect the learning to the learners’ accumulated foundation of life experiences and knowledge gained from work-related activities and previous education. Lieb (1991, p. 1) suggests that the teacher extract participants’ experience and knowledge relevant to the topic, relate theories and concepts to this experience and recognise the value of experience in learning.

Immediacy of application, relevancy and transformational teaching and learning. Teaching strategies need to address a change in a time perspective and accommodate the learners’ need to know the reasons why they should learn. According to Knowles (1984, p. 59), adults learn new knowledge, skills, values and attitudes and gain understanding most effectively when they are presented in the context of application to real-life situations. Lieb (1991, p. 1) states that instructors must identify objectives for adult participants before the course begins and that the theories and concepts must be related to a setting familiar to participants. Relevancy orientation, can be accomplished by teachers designing and developing modules or programmes that reflect the learners’ own interests, situations or problems. Knowles (1984, p. 59) asserts that adults are motivated to devote energy to learning something should they perceive that it will help them perform tasks or deal with problems that they are confronted with in their life situations. Adult learners may not be interested in irrelevant knowledge. Lieb recommends that instructors tell participants explicitly how the lesson will be useful to them in the context of the jobs.

Motivators and transformational teaching and learning. The teaching strategies to encourage motivation should include respect, tolerance and comfortable learning spaces. Teachers must understand that the learners are motivated greatly by the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life (Knowles, 1984, p. 61). In addition, Lieb (1991, p. 1) indicates that adults should be treated as equals in experience and knowledge and be encouraged to voice their opinions freely in class. The instructor must establish rapport with participants and prepare them for learning. Knowles (1984, p. 56) suggests that the classroom climate should be one of “adultness”, both physically and psychologically. The climate should make learners feel accepted, respected and supported, and there should be a spirit of mutuality between teachers and learners as joint-enquirers (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 85). These pedagogically sensitive strategies are echoed by Ross-Gordon (2003, p. 44) who describes the
andragogical process as consisting of elements aimed at establishing a suitable physical and psychological climate for learning: mutual respect, collaboration, supportiveness, openness and fun as well as involving adult learners in mutual planning.

The heightened success of learning requires a greater responsibility on the part of the teacher and the application of an innovative teaching strategy in order to increase the chances of transformational teaching success.

Transformational leadership, training and management success
Transformational leadership has a positive impact on core job characteristics, happiness levels of work and the work environment, which are important when the aim is to inspire, envision and instil values and meaningful working relationships through relevant participation and engagement. Piccolo and Colquitt (2006, p. 329) indicate that leaders frame employees’ experiences to create a new point of reference for understanding the day-to-day rhythms flow of work. Therefore, transformational leadership plays a particularly strong role in the management of meaning and social information and can influence how followers judge a work environment by using verbal persuasion and clearly communicating the value of an organisation’s mission. Bono and Judge (2003, p. 556) maintain that transformational leaders help followers view goals as congruent with their own values. Bass (1990, pp. 19-21) explains that through training, managers can learn the techniques and obtain the qualities they need to become transformational leaders. Managers who behave like transformational leaders are more likely to be seen by their colleagues and employees as satisfying and effective leaders than those who subscribe to transactional leadership styles. Popper et al. (1992, p. 7) argue that transformational leadership training is successful because it helps participants crystallise their roles and their intention to implement what they have learned. There is considerable research available suggesting that transformational leadership can be taught and that transformational leadership principles can increase business performance.

Methodology
Qualitative research
Using a qualitative research paradigm allowed for deeper observation of and listening to participants at various levels to uncover hidden meanings. It also provided a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from quantitative data. Qualitative research presents data as a narration with words (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001, p. 15). Exploring and understanding the social and cultural structures within the organisation were important to the research, as it provided insight into the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that impacted the managers’ ability to successfully lead the teams in their stores. Participatory action research (PAR) was used as the primary research tool in this study. PAR is conducive to ongoing assessment as the idea of incremental learning is also increasingly accepted, when people build on previous learning, developing and transforming past practice within new contexts (McNiff, 2002, p. 10). This aligned with the objectives of the study as PAR lends itself to investigating an event within a community of practice, making this method highly contextual since it includes action and reflection.

Sample
The selection of the sample was purposeful and based on the active participation, willingness and responsiveness of participants, their ability to vocalise opinions and the passion they showed during their attendance of the MDP for improving their
leadership and management skills. The enthusiasm displayed during the programme was particularly evident when they provided feedback on how they were applying the theories learnt from Module 4 in their store situations. This feedback served as a further sample selection criterion. The managers were solicited face-to-face during the first module of the MDP during which time they were sensitised to the focus group interview and its objectives and to the intention to use the MDP as the basis for the research project. During the initial dialogue, the retail managers were invited to participate in the project. In due course, a consent form was sent to the managers, which included a copy of the research proposal, an explanation of the objectives and purpose of the study as well as a brief theoretical underpinning of the notions which frame transformational teaching, learning and leadership.

The sample consisted of seven retail managers employed by Retek. These managers completed the biographical data questionnaire using pseudonyms to protect their identity. The purpose of the biographical data was to obtain the demographic profile of the managers and to establish previous MDP training and formal leadership programmes they had attended and their previous management experience. These data were relevant as it provided a general overview of the participants’ professional development and career history. The managers had heterogeneous educational backgrounds and professional experience. The demographic profile of the group included males and females of different ages and languages (see Table I).

The focus group interview
During the 60-minute interview, questions were posed pertaining to the managers’ perception of management and leadership prior to attending the MDP, as well as how their knowledge had changed during the MDP. Other questions related to how their learning experiences influenced their leadership practice and how their leadership practices changed as a result of attending the MDP.

The managers did not have the same mother tongue, but the data was collected in English. The focus group interview was recorded and transcribed. The transcription was then coded and analysed.

The theoretical framework that informed the three broad units of analysis were transformational teaching, transformational learning and transformational leadership. To understand the data, coding process drew on a frequency table, that is, recurrent themes were identified. For example, when the managers spoke about profitability and making money, the code assigned was MM, leadership change (LC), desire to lead (DL), and results through people (RP). There were 64 codes in total which were clustered into similar themes under one category. The dominant codes became the dominant themes that were selected for in depth analysis and discussion. The following themes were identified:

1. the Retek environment;
2. the MDP;
3. transformational teaching and learning; and
4. transformational leadership.

Discussion of the results
The Retek environment. The managers explained their understanding of what being a good manager was prior to attending the MDP and agreed that the critical success factors of a store were making money, operational efficiency such as turnover,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>What previous MDP training have you attended?</th>
<th>Describe your previous management experience</th>
<th>Have you attended any formal leadership programmes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>No formal training where certificates were issued</td>
<td>Stuttafords</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At Stuttafords training took place in-store with books being given stating key performance areas. When the manager felt you were ready, he signed it off and it went into your personnel file, but we had excellent coaches</td>
<td>Sales Manager July 2000-Dec 2003 Store Manager Jan 2003-May 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At John Orr's a group of people were identified in-store by management, sent to a workshop and people were identified by directors to be developed. We were then given an “Introduction to retail” training course</td>
<td>John Orr's Department Manager Jan 1996 Assistant Manager July 1996 Store Manager June 1997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>No specific development training courses</td>
<td>Limited Sportsmans Warehouse Head of Department (3 years) The Cross Trainer Manager (2 years): Outdoor Warehouse Manager (4 years)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francois</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Sportsmans warehouse Introduction to leadership Management skills</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joost</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronaldo</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Portuguese</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vince</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Dale Carnegie</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Stuttafords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
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<td>Matric</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
profitability, correct stock levels, reduced shrinkage and the use of transactional leadership. The perception was that the aim was to open, run and close a store and to make money for Retek. This perception changed considerably after exposure to and attending the MDP. The managers indicated that they could achieve success through transformational leadership practices. Sandy explained:

My understanding of being a manager was just to fill a position. I think it was more about daily operations and achieving turnover that the company expects of you. It wasn't so much about interaction; it was making sure that everything goes the way it's supposed to be every single day.

The MDP: The data highlighted issues relating to a tension resulting from attending training during store hours. The managers remarked that being out of the stores was consistently a concerning factor, even when they acknowledged the value and the benefits of attending the MDP. In response to the question about the benefits derived from attending the training, Sandy responded:

Before starting with the management development programme, we kept saying that we don’t have time and we can’t afford to be out of the store. But now that we realise that we're gaining something and we can develop ourselves through the management development programme, it means something to us.

The time out of the stores became less important as the managers realised the implications of the course adding value to their management and leadership performance. The managers vocalised the benefits of attending the MDP because of its applicability and relevance specifically to store management, as they were able to select and apply the transformational leadership techniques that were part of the curriculum.

The managers reported the following regarding content relevance and applicability of the training intervention and this emerged as a primary benefit of the programme:

Francois: I experienced that the content was relevant when I took it back to the store and applied it. I realised that it actually worked. This course is not about theory, it's about practice.

Sandy: I think we might have known about the coaching and the counselling skills but we didn’t know how to get commitment from the people. The course helped us discover what our teams like and what to look for, so that we can get their buy-in and their commitment. That's how it helped me.

An interesting aspect that emerged was that the managers’ vocabulary and dialogue changed from referring to employees as “staff” to “teams”. The benefits of the MDP were that it became a vehicle for professional advancement, self-actualisation and a mechanism that created change in how the managers led their stores. Managers could, as a result of the MDP, differentiate between transactional and transformational leadership practices. This understanding could inform change of leadership style. Ashley admitted:

I think, in the past my management style was very transactional. I am now able to distinguish between transactional and transformational styles of leading people. I am conscious that I have become more aware and understand the importance of this awareness.

Further benefits of the MDP and the content relevance as indicated by the comments of the managers were integrated. A strong premise that emerged throughout all categories of the data analysis was information that was gained and application of the theory into store practice.
Transformational teaching proposes an integrated teaching strategy consisting, in this case, of a bouquet of approaches that emphasised the managers’ preference for a teaching strategies which included multiple teaching techniques and an integrated approach in the form of formal lectures, group and individual presentations and interactive media. Transformational learning highlighted the managers’ desire to learn, the learning experience and professional and personal development which were gained as a result of attending the programme. Ashley also voiced a preference for all the teaching strategies through this comment:

My favourite teaching strategy was formal lectures. They were good because I understood the information and I gained knowledge. Group work was phenomenal. I enjoyed the interactive media and also the presentations. I think that the presentations brought out a completely different side of us. I can find strengths in all of the teaching strategies and I think they’re all very, very good.

Sandy stated her preference for integrating multiple teaching strategies:

I also enjoyed the group work. It takes longer for a group to try and sort out something because we all have different opinions. Using all of the different teaching strategies actually helped to confirm the learning, like interactive media where you go on to the internet and you just had a lecture on transformational leadership and you see this actually confirmed and that it is not something that the facilitator has made up.

From the above comments it is evident that the managers preferred multiple teaching strategies and a variety of ways to create knowledge to make knowledge meaningful to themselves. The managers viewed knowledge, collaboration, dialogue, negotiation of possible solutions, and creating knowledge in groups as important. The group work allowed the managers to acknowledge multiple voices and take other people’s opinions into account when developing solutions to problems. This showed their dislike for passive learning.

Dominant themes that emerged indicated a desire to learn as a result of a positive learning experience, which in turn, created a desire amongst the managers to pursue professional development. They responded to the following questions:

1. Do you think you could be successful without this knowledge and training in the retail environment?
2. On completion of this course, would you continue to develop yourself?
3. How has your attitude towards learning changed?

Due to the fact that there was pressure from Retek on facilitators to prove that the training would add value and provide applicable skills, the learners needed to be willing to be educated.

Transformational leadership attempts to change organisations into effective business units by transforming the norms, values and beliefs of their members and subsequently influencing their decision making (Johnson and Wartel, 1998). In this regard, transformational leaders can also be seen to play a role in creating a culture of learning. A culture of learning has now been established at Retek, because the managers have a desire to learn. They expressed an internal drive to be the best and this made them seek knowledge and take ownership of learning opportunities. The MDP was enjoyable and relevant as it provided them with the opportunity to acquire useful knowledge. It also became evident that the desire to learn was
transferred to the managers’ teams and they in turn also voiced the desire to learn, in spite of the fact that promotion or monetary rewards were not immediately available. The MDP was the vehicle which allowed them to develop personally and professionally in order to achieve store objectives and satisfy their personal goals. Sandy remarked:

People don’t just want a cheque at the end of the month anymore; they want some meaning in their lives for the work they do. I think personal and professional development is important for retail business. I would prefer a company that offers me development as well as a pay cheque. This is the higher meaning that people are searching for. Attending the management development programme would motivate me to go and buy a book to further develop myself.

Francois stated:

I’ve come to the stage where I want to grow and develop myself professionally. At previous companies, they sent me on a course and I was forced to attend. I actually wanted to attend this course and finish it. It’s going to benefit me in my professional work environment as a worker for the company and I am also doing this for myself.

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership in this study indicated the components that facilitated a change in leadership style, the desire to lead and the practice of transformational leadership in daily store management. The results were noticed in the managers’ leadership ability and mindset change because they realised that they had to be in tune with their teams and engage with them. Specific engagement techniques utilised by the managers included talking, listening and responding to their teams, showing sincerity and care and creating commitment – all of which are elements of transformational leadership. The managers explained that it was necessary to have a vision and determination as these could have a positive impact on their teams. Francois added:

I used to be the old school manager because I was taught by old school managers, but this course has changed me a lot. My staff can recognise the changes in me because I try to apply the knowledge and skills that I have gained from the course. I think it is very effective.

The MDP created a consciousness in which the managers could distinguish between old-school (transactional) and transformational leadership. The starting point for making changes was being able to identify and acknowledge that there are different approaches and that these approaches could create different results. Sandy explained:

I’m more engaged and aware of what’s going on around me. The most important thing with transformational leadership is that I am more in tune with the needs of my people. I think we need to recognise the people, listen, talk and respond to them. We have to be sincere and show that we actually care about them. We should strive for collaboration and interaction to get them to participate in finding solutions.

Awareness about transformational leadership, in addition to heightened self-awareness; as well as insight into the difference between management and leadership were change agents in the managers’ practice as they expressed an intention to integrate theory and practice. Ashley responded:

Management is your daily operations and include ordering, paperwork, making sure that everything’s done correctly. Leadership shows determination and guts and requires that you develop people. Leadership also teaches you a lot about yourself, who you are and how you impact on other people’s lives.
A critical component which stimulated change in their transformational leadership practices was the opportunity and ability to introspect and participate in critical self-reflection on their abilities. Managers experienced a sense of satisfaction in leading people as their team members began to believe in them. Ultimately, learning about leadership was a major catalyst for change. Change would only have been possible if the managers practised and applied transformational leadership strategies. As the data revealed, the managers said that leadership could be learnt and that as a result of attending the MDP, their behaviour and actions changed, because they were equipped to lead with more awareness. The managers also alluded to the fact that being adaptable to the environment was important. This shows that they were continuously contemplating how best to apply their transformational leadership skills in a volatile environment.

**Conclusion**

The MDP provided the managers with extensive transformational leadership and management skills such as counselling, coaching, collaboration, communication, commitment and engagement techniques which allowed them to select specific principles as they related to a particular problem and developed their critical thinking. With new skills, change in thinking could result in a change in leadership practices and, therefore, a change in the Retek environment.

The advantages of transformational leadership were that it focused on results through people by giving them a sense of direction, a belief in values and a sense of empowerment. The managers’ exposure to the MDP created an awareness that the personal potential of their team members had to be developed in order to achieve professional development, loyalty and commitment to Retek. Transformational leaders will ideally create valuable and positive change in the people they lead.

The MDP changed the way the managers practised leadership and provided an understanding that success and profitability could be achieved by applying practical transformational leadership techniques. A balance between operational, technical and leadership skills should be adopted.

Professional development and learning in the spheres of management and leadership development should become a key focus area for training. Professional development of this nature will also uplift the status of retail managers within the retail sector. Due to the growing retail pharmacy industry in South Africa in which managers are increasingly pressurised to do more with less, there is a need for competent managers who have been educated to lead the business competently and confidently.

**References**


Further reading


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