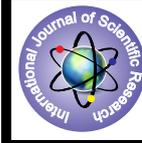


Would Application of General Semantics Make A Leader An Effective Leader?



Arts

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I would like to introduce and suggest some of the features of General Semantics that would make a leader an effective leader. General Semantics is a general system of evaluation and awareness. It provides a systematic methodology to understand how one relates to the world around oneself, how one reacts to any incident, how one reacts to the reactions of someone, and how one may adjust one's behavior accordingly. General Semantics advocates that human beings should try to evaluate or judge any situation objectively. By applying some of the features of General Semantics, an individual become saner in the art of evaluating people.

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Leadership is an art of getting things done through people, efficiently and effectively. How a leader can do it effectively and efficiently? For acquiring that Leader must have developed the art of delegation. For delegating the work, the leader should have the ability to identify or evaluate his/her people, their strengths and limitations as well as attitudes. As "Leadership is a development of a clear and complete system of expectations in order to identify, evoke and use the strengths of all resources in the organization the most important of which is people."1 The routine and traditional way of evaluating people is either to have an analysis of their appraisal reports or listen to their words and then judge. How many times these judgments prove to be correct? These evaluations may be made more accurate by applying General Semantics in organizational leadership which requires skills and techniques. Remember that good leaders are made not born. In fact, they are continually working and studying to improve their leadership skills; they are NOT resting on their laurels. Along with the skill of evaluating the people, the leader has a high degree of Emotional Intelligence (EI)--the ability to manage one's emotions and one's relationships effectively.

An attempt has been made in this discussion how General Semantics can be helpful in making a leader an effective leader. The theory of General Semantics was introduced by Alfred Korzybski in 1933, in his book, 'Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics'. The theory of General Semantics is the result of his scientific and psychiatric studies as well. General Semantics is the study of the relations between 'language' 'thought' and 'behavior': between how one 'talks', therefore how one 'thinks', and therefore how one acts.

Let us see first, in brief, what General Semantics is. General Semantics is a general system of evaluation and awareness. It provides a systematic methodology to understand how one relates to the world around oneself, how one reacts to any incident, how one reacts to the reactions of someone, and how one may adjust one's behavior accordingly. General Semantics advocates that human beings should try to evaluate or judge any situation objectively.

So, the important facet of this theory is to develop a new pattern of evaluation. Human beings are in normal conditions evaluated through language and behavior. Language helps in evaluating the issue through verbal aspect and with the help of non-verbal clues; one can judge and evaluate the human behavior. When language and behavior both are evaluated, one would have a better chance of judging the overall reactions of human beings to an event. General Semantics supports to cultivate the habit of evaluating objectively and find out better ways of maintaining human relationship so one could avoid unhappy situations and human problems. The thirst area of the concept of General Semantics is the thinking process of human beings and reactions of human beings to any event or incident.

General Semantics is a new way of looking at life and it is a completely new way of thinking and behaving. George Doris opines,

"General Semantics is the study of the relations between language "thought" and behavior: between how we talk, therefore how we 'think', and therefore how we act. General Semantics can be related to the other language disciplines".2

The General Semantics notion that people function as "organisms-as-a-whole-in-environments"--individuals acting as totalities (sensing, thinking, etc.) could be a great help in achieving the goals of the company and making you an effective leader. Give lot of freedom to your people to work, throw responsibilities on them, and create a situation where they bring out their best. They should feel that they are the people who have made the decision on their own and they are the people who are going to implement the decision and at the same time, they should feel that they are the same people who are going to experience the consequences of that decision. The realization of the non-identity principle, illustrated by Alfred Korzybski's famous formulation, "Whatever you may say something is, it is not!" is at the root of the system of General Semantics. The world is continually in a state of flux and transform. Nothing remains the same. There aren't two truly identical thing-events in the world. Alfred Korzybski strongly propagates that no two things are the same. The leader should remember this principle, be ready for any unexpected situation and try to see any situation holistically.

The important feature of General Semantics 'Delayed Reaction' could be applied in leadership to get the better results and minimizing misunderstanding. Be a critical thinker while communicating in any business situation, i.e. take a little more time before delivering any judgmental statement. Don't jump to a conclusion while you are communicating with any person or employee. Develop your listening skills, imbibe the art of 'delayed reaction' in you ...this would surely help you in creating the situation where 'problem' does not get the 'issue'.

Communication is an art of creating understanding where as General Semantics is an art of minimizing misunderstanding. For this, General Semantics suggests adopting a 'to-me attitude'-an outlook based on the premise that there is considerable individual variation in the way we sense things, the way we react, and the way we symbolize. One finds this approach particularly useful in managing conflict and widening perceptions. For example, rather than allowing your employees to make general statements like "this strategy is not going to work for our company" or "my manager is having a high headed attitude," I would suggest here to all employees, to add the phrase, "it seems to me" to such descriptions. The system advocates a general orientation by extension rather than intension, by relational facts rather than assumed properties, an attitude, regardless of how expressed in words, that, for example, "Rajesh does things that seem foolish to me," rather than saying 'he is a fool'.

The theory also advocates the concept of extensional orientation to make an individual sane that really makes a leader an effective leader. Be objective in your approach. Levinson, Martin H, a scholar who put into practice the theory of General Semantics in his job affairs says, "Korzybski's extensional theory of happiness helped me to develop staff potential as well. This theory maintains that to reach a measure of contentment and a sense of

success, we ought to form reasonable expectations, work hard, and be prepared to get not exactly what we want. I especially emphasized the importance of forming reasonable expectations and preparing oneself for less than hoped-for results, as these tend to be areas that, if disregarded, can cause burnout (a state of physical, emotional, and mental depletion)".³

To assess people and situations more accurately, I would suggest the use of 'indexing' - a General Semantics tool used to remind us that no two things are identical. For example, the HR manager of your firm should know that no two employees are equal. Both require different ways of dealing to get the best results out of them. Indexing could also be a good device. All situations are different. What you do in one situation will not always work in another. You must use your judgment to decide the best course of action and the leadership style needed for each situation. For example, you may need to confront an employee for inappropriate behaviour, but if the confrontation is too late or too early, too harsh or too weak, then the results may prove ineffective.

Some of the other features of General Semantics which can be applied related with the topic of leadership are 'Etc.'- Think in terms of et cetera--one cannot know or say all about anything, 'Multidordinality' - Words do not have "one true meaning"--words

mean different things to different people; words mean different things at different times; words mean different things in different contexts, 'non-allness'- Human beings never experience all of the thing-event or the object and the words do not capture the whole of the object, the concept of non-allness reminds that there is always more than human beings know and 'dating' -when any name or anything is mentioned in any form of conversation, one should develop the habit of affixing a date to it so that one could understand that people and things change over time. That is one should frequently use 'time markers' which are known as 'dating'. Use of 'dating' shows that no one thing is ever twice the same, for example, Employee1995, XYZ Company2000 and so on.

Conclusion:

By following principles of General Semantics, one can make oneself a sane person and that sanity helps and individual to make the correct judgment of others by developing the art of evaluating on the steps and suggestions indicated in the theory. Success is what makes you, ultimately, an effective and efficient leader. It seems to me (to - me attitude) that by applying General Semantics, a leader could be a successful, efficient and effective leader.

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