

# How Transformational Leaders Inspire

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Have you ever been in a group where someone took control of the situation by conveying a clear vision of the group's goals, a marked passion for the work, and an ability to make the rest of the group feel recharged and energized? This person just might be what is called a transformational leader.

Transformational leadership is a type of leadership style that can inspire positive changes in those who follow.

Transformational leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic, and passionate. Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process; they are also focused on helping every member of the group succeed as well.

## **The History of Transformational Leadership**

The concept of transformational leadership was initially introduced by leadership expert and presidential biographer James MacGregor Burns. According to Burns, transformational leadership can be seen when "leaders and followers make each other to advance to a higher level of moral and motivation." Through the strength of their vision and personality, transformational leaders are able to inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work towards common goals.

Later, researcher Bernard M. Bass expanded upon Burns' original ideas to develop what is today referred to as Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory.

According to Bass, transformational leadership can be defined based on the impact that it has on followers. Transformational leaders, Bass suggested, garner trust, respect, and admiration from their followers.

## **The Components of Transformational Leadership**

Bass also suggested that there were four different components of transformational leadership.

**Intellectual Stimulation** – Transformational leaders not only challenge the status quo; they also encourage creativity among followers. The leader encourages followers to explore new ways of doing things and new opportunities to learn.

**Individualized Consideration** – Transformational leadership also involves offering support and encouragement to individual followers. In order to foster supportive relationships, transformational leaders keep lines of communication open so that followers feel free to share ideas and so that leaders can offer direct recognition of the unique contributions of each follower.

**Inspirational Motivation** – Transformational leaders have a clear vision that they are able to articulate to followers. These leaders are also able to help followers experience the same passion and motivation to fulfill these goals.

**Idealized Influence** – The transformational leader serve as a role model for followers. Because followers trust and respect the leader, they emulate this individual and internalize his or her ideals.

## **Observations**

In their classic text, *Transformational Leadership*, authors Bass and Riggio explained:

*"Transformational leaders...are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization."*

Researchers have found that this style of leadership can have a positive effect on the group. "Research evidence clearly shows that groups led by transformational leaders have higher levels of performance and satisfaction than groups led by other types of leaders. The reason, he suggests, is that transformational leaders believe that their followers can do their best, leading members of the group to feel inspired and empowered.

## **How does a Transformational Leader work?**

Transformational Leadership begins with awareness – awareness of our own thoughts and feelings, and how these affect your actions, and the states of others. As your awareness grows, you begin to see your own inner motivating force, what drives you - your passions and values - and how these affect your thoughts, feelings and actions, and that of others. As you become more aware your perception increases, and you are able to choose actions that directly meet the needs of the situation and people around us, but much more powerfully than a Situational Leadership style. It speaks to the “being” level of the people around you.

Transformational Leadership inspires wholeness of being, so your thoughts, feelings and actions are consistent. It is about leading with an integrity and authenticity that resonates with others, and inspires them to follow. Not only does it inspire others to follow, but to become leaders themselves. This approach to leadership takes us from a constricting model of competition between individuals, teams or nations, to a connection with the whole of a situation, and leadership for the good of all. We move from making a sale at any cost, towards creating lasting relationships and seeking socially responsible outcomes; it takes us from a narrow focus primarily on the bottom line, to realizing a sustainable vision that contributes to the welfare of all involved, not just the ones with the power and control.

What are the characteristics of a leader of change? What is it about certain leader that enables them to successfully lead their organizations through change?

- Be inspired in your heart and mind, and show it.
- Be connected to yourself, the world and the people around you. Be grounded in reality.
- Have a vision and communicate it with passion and purpose. Allow your emotion to speak to others in a way that transcends the mind, and speaks to the heart.
- Pay personal attention to others in a way that engages them and generates trust and commitment.
- Genuinely care about them, what they want, and how you can serve them.
- Access the awesome power of the mind. Be curious, open to new ideas and learn constantly.

### Sources

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