

Command, Leadership, Intelligence and Management (CLIM): A Proposed Theory for Improved Strategic Leadership

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Abstract

This article is a theoretical perspective, building on command, leadership and management principles that are grounded within the military (Young & Dulewicz, 2005). The aim of this new theoretical perspective is to introduce the fourth element of intelligence that will represent command, leadership, intelligence and management (CLIM) applied to business executives seeking to improve performance. Moreover, this article fills the gap in the previous theory by identifying and bringing intelligence into the framework. The article will focus on key propositions for each of the four factors of CLIM. Each section will describe the operationalization for the function of the four factors, setting the conditions to conduct future studies. The article concludes with the expected beneficial measures of the attributes needed to maximize strategic leadership which will benefit senior executives.

Keywords

Strategic Leadership, Command, Leadership, Intelligence, Management

Introduction

Strategic leadership theory is marginal at best. Improving strategic leadership theory has the potential to redirect many misguided attempts at strategic leadership practices which fail to impact on long-term sustainable firm performance. These fundamental deficiencies suggest that strategic leadership theories have been too narrowly focused and that potentially important characteristics such as strategic vision, organizational culture, leadership style and leadership intelligence within a given context have been poorly linked or neglected altogether. This article is also meant to reinstate the discussion around strategic leadership with the hope that new endeavours in strategic leadership research will take place and challenge conventional thinking. This article is a theoretical perspective, building on command, leadership and management principles that are grounded within the military (Young & Dulewicz, 2005). Chief executives in today's fast-paced business world are challenged with maximizing organizational performance (Simpson, 2015). These high-level decision-makers guide or more importantly direct their organizations on a daily basis

and additionally must set the strategic direction for the organization (Mohammad & Al-Rabie, 2017). The challenges they face are similar to those faced by generals in the military and the knowledge, skills and capabilities are no less important. Strategic leadership is more challenging than direct leadership (Gurr-Mark, George, & Mulford, 2010) because it requires creating motivation through a strong potentially tangible vision, grounded in solid values which are manifested in the organizational culture and is often difficult to communicate because of the distance between the leader and the follower. The strategic leader is more removed from the workforce and risk being seen as untrustworthy or uncaring from a follower's perspective if the leader fails to motivate and influence (Northouse, 2016). Additionally, if poorly executed it can be disruptive to the operational synergy of the organization affecting its performance. Therefore, all of the strategic leader's energy must be grounded in influential factors associated with command, leadership, intelligence and management (CLIM) if the strategic vision is to be achieved and firm performance maximized.

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Defining Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership research has focused on top management teams (TMTs) and their effects on the organization. ‘The basic premise is that strategies are developed by humans who act on the basis of their idiosyncratic experiences, motives, and dispositions’ (Olie, Van Iterson, & Simsek, 2012, p. 86). Leadership research has benefited greatly over the decades from the work conducted by exceptional thinkers dealing with a number of theories such as transactional and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 2002), charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Gardner & Avolio, 1998), authentic leadership (Gardner, Avolio, Walumbwa, University of Nebraska—Lincoln. Gallup Leadership Institute. Summit, & NetLibrary, 2005) and renewed ideas of servant leadership originating from Greenleaf (1991). However, strategic leadership requires a slightly different approach to direct leadership. Wheeler, McFarland, and Kleiner (2008, p. 1) suggest that strategic leadership may be defined as:

the ability to anticipate, prepare and get positioned for the future. It is also the ability to mobilize and focus resources and energy on the factors that make a difference and will position one for success in the future. It is the courage to think deeply about what one wants to do. Applied strategic leadership is about creativity, intuition and planning to help one reach one’s destiny.

Additionally, Rowe (2001, p. 81) defines strategic leadership as ‘the ability to influence others to voluntarily make day-to-day decisions that enhance the long-term viability of the organization, while at the same time maintaining its short-term financial stability’. While Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2017, p. 384) suggest strategic leadership ‘is the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, empower others to create strategic change as necessary’. There is a greater emphasis on the visionary aspects of strategic leadership. It is more than simply setting a goal and influencing others to achieve the goal. Vision is more profound for the strategic leader (Burnes & By, 2012). Vision is strongly associated with change and change is equally strong with action-oriented processes in order to achieve a more prosperous future for the organization. Multiple little goals can be thought of as links in a chain, and the chain represents the anchor that vision is connected too. Strategy itself is more clearly defined as a set of actions (Hitt et al., 2017). Strategic leadership is therefore grounded in actions associated with setting and achieving the vision (Rowe, 2001).

Many researchers in the area of strategic management have focused on the crucial factor of vision by defining leadership itself as a management activity through which the leader secures the cooperation of others in pursuit of a vision (Burgelman et al., 2018; Elenkov, Judge, & Wright, 2005; Frost 2014; Joyce & Slocum, 2012). When we think

of exceptional visionary leaders who execute strategic leadership with great success, the likes of Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos should come to mind (Lashinsky, 2016). It may be worth noting that none of these strategic leaders are exceptionally charismatic. They all have a reputational image for being highly demanding when it comes to executing their vision, which is a necessity for successful strategic leadership. Being able to see the big picture and create a compelling vision is what truly separates these leaders from more ordinary leaders. Moreover, this is the separation between strategic leadership and direct leadership. The challenge exists on how to create a compelling vision and creating the sense of urgency necessary for achieving the vision with demanding exactness without becoming or appearing to be a bully. Again, this is achieved through the vision itself. Followers must connect with the vision in such a way as to make it part of their own preference on a daily basis (Rowe, 2001). It must become embedded in the values and culture of the organization. Therefore, in understanding our definition of strategic leadership, we can begin to appreciate that it is necessary to set a clear impassioned vision associated with a set of actions utilizing all available resources which are communicated in such a way as to inspire an entire organization to commit to the future end state.

CLIM Theory

This new approach to strategic leadership is built around CLIM. The TMT within an organization is charged with the responsibility of developing a strategic direction for the organization (Joyce & Slocum, 2012). In many organizations, this strategic direction falls to one strategic leader, the chief executive officer (CEO) or managing director (MD). It is also guided by the board of directors (Hitt et al., 2017; Ugboro, Obeng, & Spann, 2011) and supported by other departmental heads or executive directors. The development of a strategic focus is based on a set of actions designed to deliver the products or services to a particular customer which he or she values (Hitt et al., 2017). The development of the strategic focus leads to the strategic planning process by which organizations determine the long-term direction and implement the necessary actions as part of the strategy to accomplish the specified objectives (Hax & Majluf, 1990). Strategic leadership necessitates maintaining clarity of this process.

There will be multiple challenges for the strategic leader; however, the single greatest challenge to strategic leadership is the rate and speed at which information and technology are changing. The ability of the strategic leader to stay abreast of this process is next to impossible. Additionally, it can be argued that context and situation will always have a major influential factor in the overall effectiveness of the strategic leadership outcome (Elenkov et al., 2005). However, a well-crafted strategic leadership

approach balanced against an agile and flexible strategic leader at the TMT level will increase the likelihood of improved performance.

Utilizing CLIM theory, it is possible to increase performance. The four key factors that guide CLIM are the command, leadership, intelligence and management. These four key factors are anchored by the strategic vision, supported by discourse, motivation and operational synergy as indicated in Figure 1. Additionally, organizational culture is significantly influenced by the leadership of the senior management team. Organizational culture must be monitored and measured within in the organizational culture on an ongoing basis. Further discussion on organizational culture is warranted, but is not addressed further in this concept article. As part of the strategic leadership process, all of the operational considerations are set against a higher expectation of performance for the organizations.

Command

The foundational understanding of command is centred on positional power and authority. Positional power is deliberately separated out from other sources of power in this process so that its value may be more clearly understood. It is acknowledged that this concept of command could mimic the transactional leadership theory or even possibly leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. Power is often difficult to harness and is clearly intangible even though

we can see or be acted upon by its use. The strategic leader will need to understand the extent to which their power reaches and the degree to which it can influence. It is vital to appreciate the connection and difference power has to influence and more importantly understanding the source of the influence upon individuals, organization structure, culture and resources. Additionally, Vecchio (2007, p. 71) suggested that ‘[i]nfluence tends to be subtle, broader, and more general than power ... [it] is weaker and less reliable than power’. It is possible to influence desired outcomes or actions by merely maintaining the understanding that the strategic leader is invested with the positional power to force an action or outcome if necessary. When it does become necessary to act upon the available power, the strategic leader does not request the action, he or she will direct it or moreover command it. This approach optimizes the full potential of the authority and power to come to bear. This approach is mistakenly criticized in the leadership literature by some researchers (Boyd & Taylor, 1998; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). However, strategic leadership while using command dictates that achieving the strategic vision may require a certain level of sacrifice. This will require the strength of character and unwavering commitment to making the hard choices.

Command may be operationalized in the following manner. Command is exercised through the legitimate (legally enforcing) authoritative power that is directly associated with a position that allows the strategic leader to

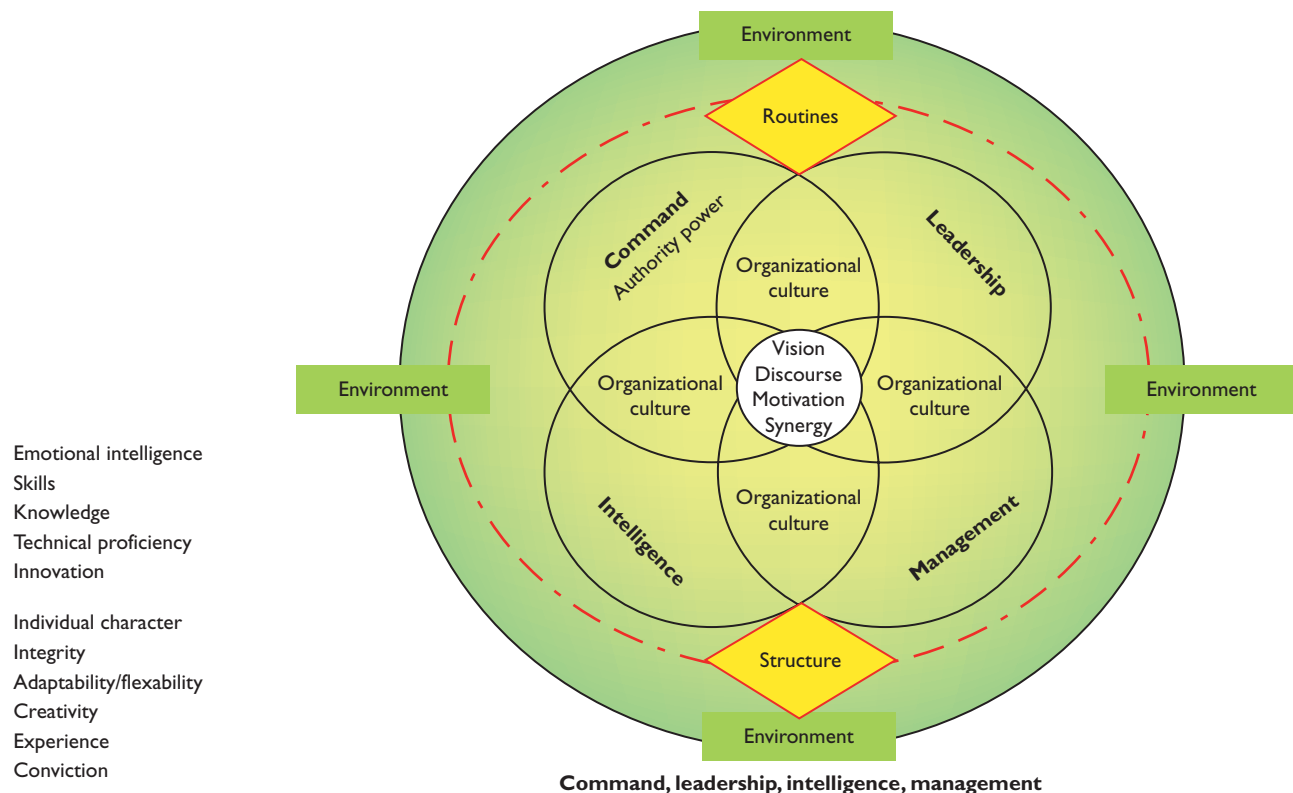


Figure 1. CLIM Theory
Source: CLIM Theory.

commit resources and grant rewards or administer penalties (punishment). When the strategic leader issues a directive, he or she is, in fact, giving a command. This command is backed by procedural policies and legal justification to ensure the enforcement of the directive. The organizational culture grounded in clearly defined values will underpin these directives and the historical past will confirm the expected acceptance of the directive.

Proposition 1. Command is the effective utilization of positional power and is more likely to be exercised when making directives which apply to the legal authority associated with the position aligned with achieving the strategic vision.

Leadership

The foundational understanding of leadership is centred on the ability of the strategic leader to engage in the process of influencing the followers to achieve the strategic vision (Yukl, 1998). Utilization of leadership in this context is associated with the direct forms of leadership and are grounded in the social and psychological relationship which are underpinned by the discourse of the interaction. This form of interaction is where we find our more common understanding of leadership when interacting directly with another individual. It is within the leadership circle that the CLIM theory embraces other theoretical leadership perspectives such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) or authentic leadership (Gardner & Carlson, 2015), just for example. Relationships are delicate interactions brought together through the discourse and grounded in respect and trust. Moreover, Gardner and Avolio (1998, p. 43) suggested that ‘...how leaders say what they say may sometimes be just as important, or even more important, than what they say’.

Proposition 2. Leadership is the process of influencing followers through discourse and is more likely to be successful when relationships are ground in respect and trust and are aligned with achieving the strategic vision.

Intelligence

The foundational understanding of intelligence is centred on two key abilities—cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence—all of which is grounded in the individual’s personality and is used in such a way as to achieve the strategic vision. Intelligence is a vital element to the strategic leadership process and has been overlooked for many years. More studies are discovering the neurological aspects and of intelligence (Neubauer & Fink, 2009). The challenge in this area remains as to how do you measure intelligence accurately enough to make the right selection of the strategic leader. The cognitive intelligence quotient must be balanced and measured against the right context with a delicate appreciation for the strategic leader’s

personality blended into the mix. Ultimately, numerous variables impact on intelligence as well as how it is measured including the speed and accuracy of the decisions. Neubauer and Fink (2009, p. 1021) suggested that:

Among these moderator variables are gender, task type (and an interaction of these variables), task complexity or brain area. Moreover, we reviewed neuroscientific evidence from training studies showing that neural efficiency also seems to be a function of the amount and quality of learning. From integrating this evidence we concluded that the neural efficiency phenomenon is observable mostly when individuals are confronted with tasks of (subjectively) low to moderate task difficulty and it is most frequently observed for frontal brain areas , , , . Future studies should systematically combine behavioural task performance data, subjective measures of effort and brain imaging data to find answers to these questions.

To be clear, there is a cognitive difference in every individual. Future résumés will contain imagery of brain scan data in an effort to capture the cognitive abilities of potential strategic leaders. It is suggested here that the application of intelligence is crucial to strategic leadership. This is not to say that intelligence alone is the answer to successful strategic leadership. Much of the successful decision-making from the strategic leaders will depend on this intelligence though. CLIM theory requires the balancing of all these factors.

Another dimension to the intelligence factor is the addition of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Di Fabio and Saklofske (2018, p. 141) explained that there is a

... complex relationship between the various personality factors and [emotional intelligence] that requires further analysis to determine the contribution of each in a description of resiliency ... due to the fact that current personality measures do not necessarily assess exactly the same traits even though they are similarly labeled as conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness, and extraversion.

This delicate relationship between personality and emotional intelligence is far more complex than can be adequately explained in this short perspective theoretical essay. The most important element to take away from the emotional intelligence factor is that strategic leadership requires a sense of relatedness which is grounded in the relationships and social ability of the strategic leader and requires trust, empathy, connectable social support and visible tolerance of situations and others with regard to their emotional responses. Strategic leadership requires the leader to understand where the boundaries or limitations of others are and then push to the edge of that boundary without crossing the line.

Proposition 3. The greater the degree of measurable intelligence, both cognitive and emotional intelligence, the more likely will be the successful decision-making to achieving the strategic vision.

Management

The foundational understanding of management is centred on the ability of the strategic leader to plan, organize and commit resources in an efficient and effective manner that will ensure the successful attainment of the strategic vision. Management, as well as leadership, creates the perception that the individual sits in a higher position of authority within the organization. Albacete-Sáez, Mar Fuentes-Fuentes, and María Bojica (2011) suggest that TMTs are essential in achieving the strategic vision in organizations. The strategic leader will need to conduct a detailed analysis of the market sectors and/or the environment before making a critical decision. The planning process and resources needed to achieve the strategic vision will play a critical role and much of the effectiveness of the management skills will be grounded in the strategic leader's ability to accomplish this task efficiently and effectively. Applying management skills of planning, organizing, and resource identification and allocation are essential tenants of the management process (Hitt et al., 2017). According to Lane and Wallis (2009, p. 103), the strategic management process has a significant impact on effective decision-making:

The concept of strategic management, when employed for the analysis of decision making in the private firm, is complex ... It engulfs a variety of different kinds of decision making: the so-called 'lowest'-level of strategy, operational strategy, deals with day-to-day operational activities such as scheduling criteria. Business strategy would be the aggregated operational strategies of a single business firm.... Corporate strategy would then be the overarching strategy of the diversified firm: 'in which businesses should we compete?' and 'how does being in one business add to the competitive advantage of the corporation as a whole?'

The strategic leader using his or her management skills will have to think critically about the organizational design needed to accomplish the strategic vision. Much waste and inefficiency can be eliminated in the organizational design and structure. The strategic leader will organize in such a way as to ensure that the appropriate synergy is achieved within the organization. Lane and Wallis (2009) suggest further that the organizational structure should create an opportunity to empower employees. The intelligent strategic leader is likely already thinking in this manner. The strategic leader should focus on an organization which is a learning organization that is agile and innovative.

Proposition 4. Management is the effective ability to plan, organize and commit resources and will have a greater predictive impact for explaining the firm's strategic decision-making process aligned with achieving the strategic vision.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge that human beings are complex social entities and that no single

strategic leadership theory is likely to predict and explain fully the perfect organizational performance outcome. However, this article makes a strong case for a new theoretical perspective built on CLIM. The propositions presented here should facilitate the nexus between CLIM and performance associated with achieving the strategic vision. Though the analysis places many assumptions on the reader's basic understanding without rehashing some fundamental models and theories, it is believed that the axiom for many of these ideas is completely substantiated. The need to reinvigorate strategic leadership theory and testing remains high and is at a critical junction in today's literature as a result of being stifled by old and less imaginative ways of thinking. Future research should test the ideas presented here under CLIM as the propositions suggest in order to advance strategic leadership theory and add or delete to this theoretical perspective.

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