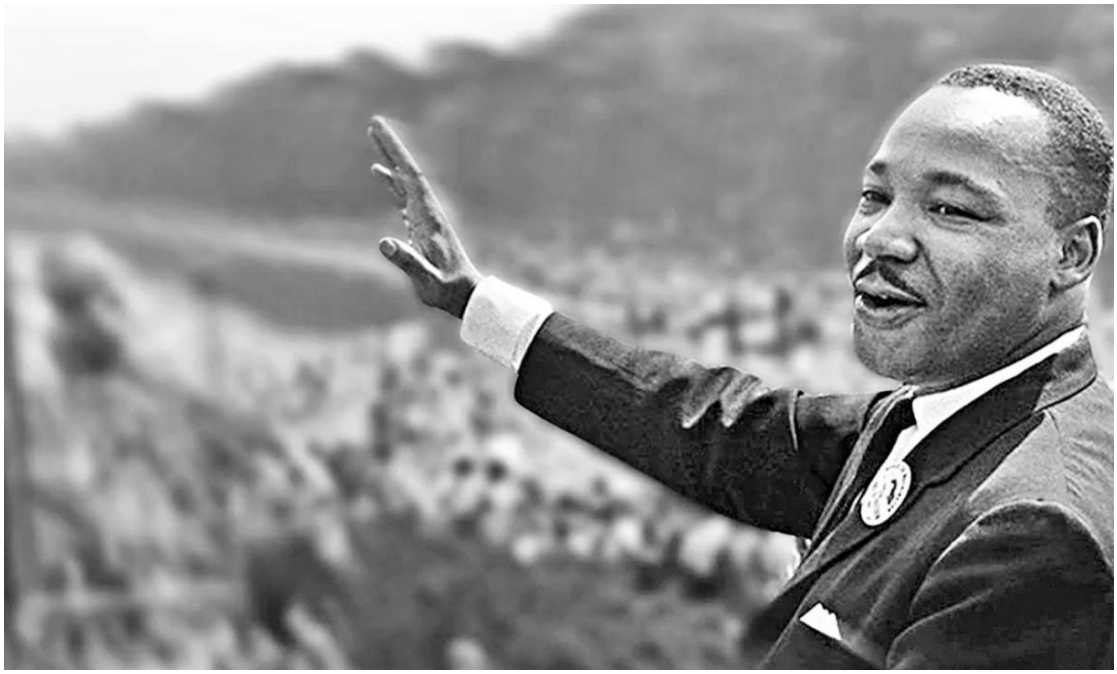
Martin Luther King Jr.: An Analyses of his Leadership Skills.



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Abstract:

Martin Luther King Jr. (January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968) was a charismatic and religious leader who fought for the equal rights of all Americans of all colors. He was the leader of the Civil Rights Act and he was also the president of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. He was a leader who fought against inequality without using any type of violence. There for the purpose of this paper is to identify and provide example of King's leadership by examining his ethos, crisis management, leadership skills, communication techniques, cultural literacy, use of language, and emotional intelligence.

Keywords: *leader, visionary, ethos, cultural literacy, equality, crisis, language, skills, persuasive, emotional intelligent.*

Martin Luther King Jr Biography

Martin Luther King Jr. (January 15, 1929) was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and he was the leader of the Civil Rights Movement (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). His leadership position was unexpected, and he dedicated his life achieving justice and equality for all Americans of all colours (Kirk, 2014). He began his carrier as Baptist church minister, then he attended a primary white theological seminary before gaining his PhD in theology at the Boston University (Kirk, 2014). In 1957 Martin Luther King Jr. was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which was an organization to help and develop the Civil Rights Movement (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). The philosophy of this organization was developed from Christianity and Gandhi (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). In addition, he was also the president of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights which was a state civil right organization that was working with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Kaplan, 2013).

From 1957 until 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. had travelled over six-million miles and he gave speeches over twenty-five hundred times (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). He is considered one of the greatest speakers in the American history and he is also a writer of numerous articles and the author of five books (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). His career includes many remarkable moments that are embedded in the American history (Smith, & Velasco, 2018). Such examples are his speeches in Birmingham and at the Lincoln memorial that helped and enhanced the passing of the Civil Rights Act, his anti-war activism that helped to put a stop at the Vietnam war, and his march at the Selma to Montgomery that effectively supported the voting rights (Smith, & Velasco, 2018). He was also the founder of Project C which was better known as the Birmingham Campaign in 1963 (Kaplan, 2013). Project C was a program that aimed

to put economic pressure and to protest against the "city's rigid system of segregation," which aimed to bring economic opportunities for the African-American society (Birmingham Demonstrations, n.d.; Kaplan, 2013).

King is well known for his "I have a dream" speech in 1963, that facilitated on the passing of the Public Accommodations Bill in July 1964 (Smith, & Velasco, 2018). Moreover, at the age of thirty-five he was the youngest man to ever receive a Nobel Prize in 1964 (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). Also, he celebrated the passing of the Voting Rights in 1965, and he was the creator of the "Poor People's Campaign" in 1967 (Smith, & Velasco, 2018). His assassination took place while standing at his motel balcony on Memphis, Tennessee on the evening of April 4 in 1968 (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). At that day King was about to deliver a speech and lead a protest march on behave of the rights of the garbage workers (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). The reasons why I choose King is because he was a visionary leader with a clear goal who did not care about power, but he cared and fought for what was right. He died fighting for what he believed and this what makes him on of the greatest leaders throughout history.

Leadership ethos

In order to better understand ethos, it is important to look at the original definitions written by Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, and the three different types of persuasive appeals found at his writings (Barrett, 2014, p. 10). These three appeals are Logos that refer to the logic of an argument, Pathos that refers to the use of emotions, and finally Ethos that refers to the "perceived character of the sender of the message" (Barrett, 2014, p. 10). Ethos has to do with how trustworthy, confident, credible, knowledgeable, and believable a person is (Barrett, 2014, p. 10).

In the case of Martin Luther King Jr. there are many examples that depict his ethos. King was a religious leader who believed and found strength through God, and this showed to his audience his morality as a person. Moreover, his determinations and constant fight for his beliefs, without using any type of violence, showed to all people of all colors that he is a person with ethos. One of these examples is the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" written in 16 April 1963. The population of Birmingham in 1963 was approximately 2/3 white and 1/3 black (Kaplan, 2013). By that period Birmingham had acquired the nickname "Bombingham" due to the bombing of the African-American churches (Kaplan, 2013). As King was fighting for the rights of the black community he was arrested because he violated Alabama's law against mass public protests ("Letter from Birmingham Jail," n.d.). His actions to protest even if it was illegal showed his determination to fight against racism and inequality and that he is a trustworthy person who keeps his word. It also showed that he was willing to do whatever it takes to protest for his beliefs and rights.

Moreover, on the day of his arrest eight Birmingham clergy members wrote a news article that criticized the King's campaign and characterized his actions "unwise and untimely" ("Letter from Birmingham Jail," n.d.). During his time in prison which was from the 12th of April until the 20th of April in 1963, he wrote a letter to the clergy members who unfairly criticized him (Kaplan.2013). In his letter King was very respectful. He referred to them as "My Fellow Clergymen" as "men of genuine good," even though they criticized him publicly ("Letter from Birmingham Jail," n.d.). Moreover, during his long letter he was polite, his language was respectful, and he defended his beliefs even from prison. One of these examples is when he said, "One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust" ("Letter from Birmingham Jail," n.d.). This shows his ethos and determination for his beliefs, and that he is willing to fight for what is right.

He was a well-respected leader that was recognized for his work and fight. This is apparent from Robert F. Kennedy statement on the day of King's assassination, "King dedicated his life to love and to justice for his fellow human beings, and he died because of that effort" (Chute, 2018). Finally, King donated all the money from his Nobel Prize to the civil rights movement (Brunicardi, Cotton, Cole & Martinez, 2007). This shows that he is a person with ethos and as Gunner Jahn, who was a member of the Nobel committee, stated that King was "the first person in the western world to have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence" (Brunicardi, Cotton, Cole & Martinez, 2007)

Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage, understand, and identify one's emotions and be sensitive about the feelings of over people (Adler, & Proctor, 2015). With emotional intelligence, leaders are able to connect and communicate more effectively with other people by verbal and non-verbal actions (Barrett, 2014, p. 200). Martin Luther King was a leader with high emotional intelligence and he used various emotionally intelligent techniques to persuade his audiences to join him in the battle of racial and economic inequality (Stern & Divecha, 2014). He was an honest person who fought and died for what he believed.

According to Reuven Bar-On and his definition of emotional intelligence in 1988 a person needs to a) have self-awareness, b) understand and relate with other people, c) have self-control, and d) solve problems and adapt to situations (Barrett, 2014). Moreover, according to Daniel Goleman's model of emotional intelligent leaders need to a) motivate people, b) show empathy, c) have self-regulation, d) have social skills, and e) have self-awareness (Castellano, 2014). King was a leader who combined all of these elements and this is evident from his "I have a dream" speech. In his speech King identified and underlined the feelings of his followers and his own about social dissimilarity (Tareq,

Khazaei, Khazaei, & Lumpur, 2017). The fact that he was an activist who was fighting for racial inequality for all the Americans of all colors, and that he was able to understand and relate the problem with his audience shows that he has a high level of self- awareness and emotional intelligence.

Moreover, in his speech he triggered emotion of pleasure for his audience by underlining the pride of his followers and the long-lasting difficulties that they were facing and expressed emotions of pity for those who used violence and brutality (Tareq, Khazaei, Khazaei, & Lumpur, 2017). Also, in his speech he stated that "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up," this shows that he is a leader with self-awareness and a vision (Gokadze, 2013). He was a leader who had identified the problem of inequality and he was willing to do whatever it takes to for what is right (Kirk, 2014). He used strong emotional words and phrases and he presented himself as a "we" a united community that "will not be satisfied until…" justice rises (Gokadze, 2013).

Use of Language and Communication Techniques:

The use of language and the communication ability, style, and techniques of a leader play an important role on how to better persuade an audience and how to motivate them to take action (Barrett, 2014). The word choices and the combination of these words in a sentence define and create the style of a person (Barrett, 2014). This style is perceived from the audience as the tone of the person, and through this tone the audience perceives and make assumptions about the ethos of the person (Barrett, 2014). For every leader the use language is very important. Through words audiences are able to understand and connect with the leader and share the same perspective for every issue.

Moreover, language is a tool that can inform, persuade, instruct, and engage audiences (Barrett, 2014). King was a charismatic leader and his strongest weapon was the

use of his language and the fact that he spoke from his heart. He was motivational speaker and leader who delivered more than over twenty-five hundred speeches (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). He used the political persuasion techniques to convince his audience to feel the same way as he felt about the inequality issue. For instance, King at his speech "I have a dream" he used analogy to compare two unlikely concepts, such as the rights of the people with a check (Gokadze, 2013). With this example he wanted to show to his audience that they were being treated unfairly. Moreover, he effectively delivered his message by using a lot of repetition and parallel structure in his speech like the phrase "100 years later" to make his point more memorable and remind to his audience that it has been 100 years since they were freed as slaves (Barrett, 2014).

Furthermore, his language was empowering, poetic, vivid, imagery, and with rhythm (Lucas, 2012). He used a lot of unpleasant emotional words at his speech to trigger emotions such as unspeakable, disappear, like fierce, and vicious, that activated the attention of the audience (Stern & Divecha, 2014). Finally, he used various communication techniques such as repetition, persuasion, inspiration, strong emotional words and phrases, and vivid language.

Leadership Communication Style

Martin Luther King was the leader of the Civil Rights Movements who transformed racial differences during the 50s and 60s in the Unites States (Agodzo, 2015). According to the book *"Leadership Communication,"* leadership is defined as the ability to predict the interruption of the message that is being transmitted, value and understand the message or context, understand the audience, select the right medium, and create messages that reach the desired target audience (Barrett, 2014, p. 7). Therefore, an effective leader needs to have a clear strategy, effective writing and speaking skills, resolve conflict, have emotional intelligence and cultural literacy, work in teams, and function effectively in an

organization (Barrett, 2014, p. 8). King was a combination of all these characteristics and this is what makes him a great leader.

He was a leader that instead of presenting himself as confident and flawless leader, he had identified his limitations and weakness, and he had many self-doubts (Carson, 1987). For example, during the Montgomery bus boycott in which Africa-Americans refused to drive city buses in Montgomery, Alabama, King received numerous threats about his life and family that made him terrified (Carson, 1987; Montgomery Bus Boycott, 2010). Instead of taking advantage of his role as leader, he was overwhelmed with emotions and was only able to carry on when he understood "his dependence on a personal God who promised never to leave him alone" (Carson, 1987). His actions showed to the people that he was a religious person with a clear mission and vision who identified himself as a member of society.

Furthermore, he was a transformational and visionary leader who inspired nations and had a clear purpose and goal (Barrett, 2014). During his speech "I have a dream" King described a world of freedom and a brotherhood for all (Agodzo, 2015). According to McGuire and Hutchings an effective leader needs to have the ability to transform abstract concepts of a vision into specific goals where audiences can identify and associate with (2007). King started having a vision from an early age and as he stated to his mother "There is no such thing as one people being better than another. The Lord made all of us equal, and I am going to see to that" (Brunicardi, Cotton, Cole & Martinez, 2007). Also, he was a master communicator who spoke from the heart and his listeners were able to resonate with him because he was standing for what he believed (Barrett, 2014). King supported and fought for his vision until he died. He was able to set a goal of equality and achieve it through his actions (McGuire & Hutchins, 2007).

Furthermore, he was an effective communicator that led him to the youngest person to receive the Nobel Price for Peace (Brunicardi, Cotton, Cole & Martinez, 2007). When notified of his win, he donated the money of the price, $54,123, to help and enhance the civil right movement (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). Finally, King was able to handle conflict and negotiate situations peacefully (McGuire & Hutchins, 2007). He fought with dignity and courage for his rights without using any type of violence and this is what makes him an effective leader (Brunicardi, Cotton, Cole & Martinez, 2007). An example of that is the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" who wrote while he was in prison.

Cultural literacy

Culture is defined as a set of values, beliefs, and behaviours (Statman, 2018). Cultures differ from each other and this has to do with religion, gender, economics, traditions, politics and many more (Statman, 2018). According to Geert Hofstede there are six layers of culture: 1) national level, 2) regional/ ethnic/ religious and linguistic affiliations, 3) gender, 4) generation level, 5) social class level, and 6) organizational or corporate level (Barrett, 2014). It is important for every leader to understand and value the cultural diversity among societies and organizations (Barrett, 2014). Culture is transmitted from generation to generation, but this does not mean that culture does not change (Statman, 2018). The ability of the leader to be able to recognize the value of cultural differences and avoid misunderstandings within a society is very important (Barrett, 2014).

King was the leader of the Civil Rights Movement in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act who fought against inequality (Martin Luther King Jr. Biographical, n.d.). The 13th Amendment of the Constitution ended slavery in 1865 (Gregory, 2014). After that the African American community faced a lot of discrimination, inequality, and economic underclass (Gregory, 2014). During the 20th century 90% of the working African Americans were employed in low income jobs and during the depression years in the 1930s

the situation got worse (Gregory, 2014). They were payed less than the white community and in 1962 non-white people earned 60% less comparing to white community (Gregory, 2014).

King was an advocate who put pressure and fought for this inequality for 15 years with no violence, and he believed that all people should be treated equally. His mission of brotherly love aimed for a more democratic society for all Americans (Beshai, 2017). King was a religious leader that based his mission upon the meaning of the Greek concept Agape and in the Good Samaritan parable (Beshai, 2017). King believed that the "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" and "You shall love your neighbour as thyself" (Beshai, 2017). He wanted a society of equal right were both whites and non-whites are equally respected. He did not use any type of violence as a leader and this is one of the characteristics that make him a respected leader. The success of his movement was due to the creative morality between different segments in the American society and because of his understanding and respect of different cultures (Beshai, 2017).

Crisis management strategy

A crisis is an abnormal situation which is beyond of the everyday scope of the business and can create a threat (Eder & Alvintzi, 2010). It is something that can happen to any organization, at any time, and it is something that causes high instability (Hagen, Statler, & Penuel, 2013). Moreover, a crisis disrupts the way organizations operate and attracts a lot of attention in the media sector (Eder & Alvintzi, 2010). There are three phases to every crisis a) pre-crisis phase, b) crisis response phase, and c) post-crisis phase (Eder & Alvintzi, 2010). The pre-crisis phase deals with the preparation and privation of a crisis, the crisis response phase is when an organization is phasing a crisis, and at the post-crisis phase the organization tries to find and prepare more ways for dealing with future crisis (Eder & Alvintzi, 2010).

Martin Luther King was a leader that had to face many crisis and challenges. He faced prison, threats, and discrimination, but he always tried to manage every situation with respect and with no violence. One of these examples is the Birmingham incident in April 12, 1963 (Kaplan, 2013). On this day King marched a protest with approximately 50 more people to celebrate freedom on the same date that Jesus was hang from the cross (Wilson, 2019; "Letter from Birmingham Jail," n.d.). This protest violated Alabama's law against mass protest and King along with the other protesters got arrested (Wilson, 2019). The protests were turned from peaceful demonstrations to violent events that used police dogs and high-pressure fire hoses on the protesters that led to the most iconic images of the Civil Rights Movement (Johnson, 2007).

Because King along with other leaders wanted to show and "make visible the injustice of segregation," they decided to go ahead with the protest after there was a blanket injunction that prohibited any times of protest (Birmingham Campaign, n.d.). King deliberately went ahead with the protest and got himself arrested because he wanted to show the world the discrimination that the black community was facing (Johnson, 2007). And this is evident from the letter that he wrote while he was in jail. As King stated in his letter "we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive" (Johnson, 2007). King was facing a crisis, a crisis of inequality, violence, and discrimination. His response to these circumstances was to peacefully and strategically show to the world the face of this injustice. And this is what he achieved since the pictures from the protests were published in the media, and now they are characterizes as the most iconic pictures of the Civil Rights Movement (Johnson, 2007). Finally, he had to deal with racism throughout his life, and as a leader he chose to be respectful to everyone no matter what.

Evaluation of overall communication strategy:

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter"

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a charismatic leader who fought for the equal rights of all Americans of all colors. He was the leader of the Civil Rights Act and he was also the president of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. King was a visionary leader and through his actions and speeches he was able to motive his audience and fight for what is right. Moreover, he was a leader with a high emotional intelligence and cultural literacy and this is evident from his actions, since he was against violence, he treated his opposition with respect, and he was fighting for the equal rights of all the Americans.

In addition, he was a religious person with ethos and this is depicted from his values and beliefs. He had a clear goal, vision, and mission to bring justice and peach for all the members of the American society. Another characteristic that made him a great leader is the fact that he did not take advantage of his power, instead he identified himself among the community and with this way it was easier to persuade his audience. He was a leader who strategically dealt with crisis and he was willing to do whatever it takes to show the true face of racism, even if that meant getting arrested. He was a leader that brought a revolution of justice and equality and he died fighting for what he believed.

Word Count: 3,619

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