

# OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY



## 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION

November 27-28, 2017

Theme: LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: TRENDS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

Ref: CP034

October 30, 2017

Bolu John Folayan, PhD  
Department of Mass Communication  
Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro  
Ogun State

### LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

I am pleased to inform you that your paper titled "***A Communication Approach to Leading Difficult People***" has been accepted for presentation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Faculty of Administration International Conference (FAICO) to be held between November 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The conference programme will be electronically communicated to you at a later date.

Please follow the information in the conference flyer about the **Full Paper** submission deadline and conference registration.

Congratulations on the acceptance of your paper. We look forward to seeing you in the conference.

Best regards.

Professor E.D. Adetayo  
Chairperson, LOC

# A Communication Approach To Leading Difficult People

By

**Bolu John Folayan, PhD**

**Head, Department of Mass Communication**

**The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State, Nigeria,**

**Visiting Senior Lecturer in Mass Communication, Joseph Ayo Babalola University,  
Ikeji Arakeji, Osun State, Nigeria.**

[bolu.folayan@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng](mailto:bolu.folayan@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng), [bolujohnfolayan@gmail.com](mailto:bolujohnfolayan@gmail.com)

**08023089548**

**BEING A PAPER DELIVERED AT THE 2017 FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE**

## **ABSTRACT**

Leadership is a big challenge everywhere today – in schools, churches, social clubs, homes, businesses, governance and politics. This explains the huge attention scholars have paid to the subject in recent years across disciplines. Leadership literature, however, reveals that perhaps too much attention has been given to leaders at the expense of the led: the former's *Physiological qualities* (fitness/good health, intelligence, etc.); *Psychological qualities* (visionary, empathetic, courageous, etc.); *Sociological qualities* (integrity, etc.); *Communication Skills* (ability to share his or her vision; expressiveness, etc.). Yet, leadership experts agree that there can be no leadership without the led. A popular definition of leadership offered John C. Maxwell says *a leader is someone who wants to achieve a result and is able to take others along with him/her to achieve that result* (Maxwell, 2011). This author submits that more often, success in leadership is rapidly enhanced when adequate attention is focused on those being led, who often are difficult to lead. The author sampled 20 emerging CEOs drawn from the private and public sectors in Nigeria and proposes the C-Q-M (Coping, Quarantining and Motivating) communication framework for managing difficult people in organizational settings.

**Keywords:** Leaders, Leadership, Difficult People, Emerging CEOs, Communication Approach, and Communication Techniques.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is a big challenge everywhere today – in schools, religious institutions, social clubs, homes, businesses and of course in governance and politics. It is so because it is one key factor that determines *results*. If we are interested in any positive outcome of an effort, then we must be interested in the leader or the leaders.

There are hundreds of perspectives of leadership in management literature and most of them say something important about leadership. Most definitions of leadership perceive leadership as the process of spearheading efforts to reach a preferred destination or attain a desired result. A Leader, therefore, is someone who wants to achieve a result and is able to take others along with him/her to achieve that result.

According to Folayan, the challenge of leadership is usually around the WHO and the HOW:

WHO (What makes a Leader)?

- Physiological qualities (fitness/good health, intelligence, etc.)
- Psychological qualities (visionary, empathetic, courageous, etc.)
- Sociological qualities (integrity, etc.)

HOW (Right combination of resources – the 5Ms – money, men, materials, minutes and method - to get results). How the resources are combined depends often on the kind of organization being led and the kind of objectives and goals envisaged.

We ultimately end up with the WHO as being of overriding importance because when we have the WHO (the leader and the led in the right frame), the HOW will be obtained. (Folayan, 2015).

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

This paper is focused on three main objectives:

- To establish the fact that no leader can succeed without having generous people-management skills and capabilities.
- To canvass a paradigm shift which focuses on those being led as much as on the leaders, in proffering solutions to leadership problems in organizations and institutions?
- To find out how difficult people affect leadership and how emerging leaders manage difficult people to accomplish set goals and suggest communication approaches that could be effectively used to successfully manage difficult people in organizations/institutions?

### **III. PROBLEM STATEMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE IN ORGANIZATIONS/INSTITUTIONS**

Despite rapid technological advancements, people have remained the focal point in managing organizations and institutions.

In entrepreneurial history, money, minutes, method and materials have assumed positions of importance at various times. During the *Industrial Revolution/Age*, Material was very significant. Henry Ford changed the world when he came up with his cheap Ford (car) models in his automated factories which turned the cars in their hundreds.

Next was the *Information Age* during which technology and computers literally took the world by storm. There were fears then that computers would keep people out of jobs. In fact, some experts predicted that human beings would soon be irrelevant in the scheme of things as everything in the world would be automated. But the amazing thing is that as technologies continued to improve, HR (human resources) also continued to be needed in more proportions. After all, it is people who invent technologies! Unlike in the Industrial Age when people in factories watched the machines pass on materials from one stage to another, today, people do not just watch the machines pass products through robots. They think for the machine. That thinking ability of humans remains critical and would always give humans prime positions in anything.

During the industrial age (1850- about 1975), companies succeeded by how well they could capture the benefits from economies of scale and scope. Technology mattered, but, ultimately success accrued to companies that could embed new technology into physical assets that offered efficient mass production of standard products. As Kaplan and Norton (2005) have noted, “industrial age companies created sharp distinctions between two groups of employees. The intellectual elite – managers and engineers – used their analytical skills to design products and processes, select and manage customers and supervise day-to-day operations. The second group composed of people who actually produced the products and delivered the services. Direct labour work force was a principal factor of production for industrial age companies based only their physical capabilities, not their minds. The machines did the job automatically “

The information age also has huge technological component. But the period engages the thinking process more. Customers are now linked to suppliers. There is customer segmentation and globalization. Innovation and creativity are more critical. Thus, unlike what some experts had predicted (that information technology would make HR irrelevant at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century),

it has been the other way round: knowledge workers are needed more than ever before in human history. (Kaplan and Norton, 2005).

Yet human resources, despite their importance, remain a knotty management issue. The failure of many African governments to govern well has been blamed on “poor leadership”. Many companies have posted very poor results and some others liquidated also due to “poor leadership”. Crisis in homes (families) have often been blamed also on “poor leadership”. All of this praxis seems to place the blame for failure of institutions and organizations squarely on “the leader”. Research has however showed that “the follower” or “the led” is often of equal importance as the “leader”– sometimes even more important, as Abedi Hassan puts it: “The conventional definition of management is *getting work done through people* but real management is *developing people through work*.” (Business: Ultimate Resource, 2002)

What should the leader do when followers are not able or are not willing to follow the leader? In extreme (but common) situations such as bureaucracy and politics when the followers constitute deliberate clogs in wheels of progress, what should the leader do?

#### **IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study sought to find answers to three pertinent questions:

1. How do difficult people affect leadership?
2. How do emerging leaders manage difficult people to accomplish set goals?
3. What communication approaches could be effectively used to successfully manage difficult people in organizations/institutions?

#### **USE OF TERMS**

**Leader:** The person responsible for providing direction in a group. He or she also takes final decision, most blame and praise.

**Leadership:** The process through which a leader carries out his or her responsibility.

**Difficult People:** Human beings who are not easy to influence or understand

**Emerging CEOs:** Chief Executive Officers in organizations within the most recent decade

**Communication Approach:** A tactical way of sharing knowledge, information and ideas.

**Communication Techniques:** Skills used in sharing knowledge, information and ideas.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:**

##### **Theory X and Y (McGregor)**

Douglas McGregor (1906-1964), a professor of management at Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), posited that managers’ basic beliefs have a dominant influence on the way that organizations are run, and central to this are managers’

assumptions about the behaviour of people. McGregor argues that these assumptions fall into two broad opposing categories – Theory X and Theory Y. (McGregor, 1960)

*Theory X* assumes as follows:

- The average human being dislikes work and will avoid it if possible;
- This category of human being must be coerced, controlled and directed and threatened with punishment to get them to make adequate commitment toward achieving organizational objectives.
- This kind of people has relatively little ambition and primarily wants security and hence would avoid responsibility and would prefer to be directed.

What is required of the leader under Theory X management is close, firm supervision. He or she gives clearly specified tasks. Motivation is through threat of punishment against promise of greater pay.

*Theory Y* assumes the following:

- The average human being does not inherently dislike work – much depends on the conditions of the work, which makes him or her see work as punishment or source of satisfaction.
- This kind of people does not need to be coerced or punished to work; they exercise self-control and self-direction in the service of the objectives to which they are committed.
- Such people are driven by their objectives (results they want to accomplish) not necessarily by the rewards offered and therefore learn not only to accept but to also seek responsibility
- People of this genre are very imaginative. They exercise ingenuity and creativity in solving organization's problems.

What is required of the leader using the Theory Y is basically mentoring and empowerment. (Business, Ultimate Resource, 2002).

In the communication field, the early 1950s through the early 1970s witnessed what was popularly called the “Hypodermic Needle Hypothesis” or “Bullet Theory”. The communicator (that is the mass media - here, the ‘leader’) was seen as possessing awesome powers to positively or negatively impact his or her audience. The mass media or leader conjured the image of a “bullet” that instantly has huge impact on the audience, once triggered. But with the series of “audience studies” by Paul Lazarsfeld, Elihu Katz in the 1950s and 1960s and consequently numerous communication scholars later notably Everett Rogers, found scientific evidence that the audience of communication was not a passive object. Communication could only often succeed given the predisposition of the audience or in the ability of the communicator to manipulate those dispositions effectively. (Rogers, 1994).

Abraham Maslow and other followers of McGregor - such as William Ouchi - later came up with Theory Z through applications of Theory X and Theory Y. Ouchi studied Japanese (Type J) and American (Type A) organizations and found that Type A organizations tend to offer short-term employment, specialized careers (with rapid promotion) and individual decision making and responsibility while Type J firms, on the other hand, adopts ethos of Japanese society of collective effort instead of individual effort. He classified Type J organizations as Theory Z.

Notably, all of Theories X, Y and Z principally focus on those being led. In all three, the approach of the leader is determined by the ‘nature’ of those being led.

## **METHOD**

Data for this study was derived from a simple random sampling of 20 CEOs of successful small-medium companies from the Nigerian private and public sector. The qualitative study covered a period of 20 months when the researcher served as the CEO of *Newswatch Magazine*, (published monthly as at then). The researcher asked every CEO selected by the Editor to appear in the *CEO Journal Pull-Out* three questions: How do difficult people affect your leadership? How do you, as an emerging leader manage difficult people to accomplish your set goals? What communication approaches could be effectively used to successfully manage difficult people in organizations/institutions? E-mails containing the ground tour questions and follow-up questions were sent to the CEOs.

To strengthen the instruments used, a Focus Group Discussion of three CEOs (different from the 20 CEOs studied) was conducted by the researcher, also using the three Research Questions as ground tour questions.

## **V. FINDINGS**

### **Profile of Respondents/FGD Participants (CEOs)**

All the 20 CEOs selected for the study returned their questionnaires. Sixteen (16) of the CEOs were male. Fifteen (15) had Master’s degree and professional certificates, three (3) had first degree and post-graduate diplomas while two (2) possessed PhD certificates. Table 1 shows the profiles of the CEOs in terms of leadership courses/workshops attended.

***Table 1 – Attendance of Leadership Conferences/Courses/Workshops before or after becoming CEOs.***

<b>Number of Leadership Courses Attended</b>	<b>Number of CEOs who attended</b>
1-3	7

4-5	8
6-7	3
8+	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

From Table 1 it can be inferred that the CEOs interviewed were sufficiently exposed to leadership tenets. Every one of them had attended at least two leadership courses/workshops in the last decade.

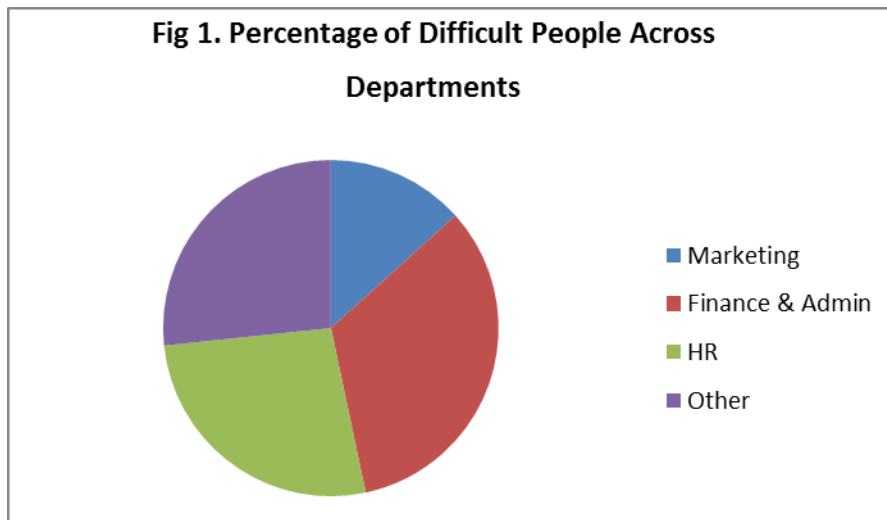
In terms of the nature of organizations being led by the respondents, two (2) each were leading IT/Telecoms, Manufacturing, Marketing, and Media, Hospitality and Educational organizations. Three CEOs were leaders of Law firms and Consultancy organizations respectively. One CEO was in a Transport/Logistics concern while another one was leading an Accounts and Audit firm at the time of the study.

The least total number of employees among the organizations studied was 15 and the highest was 93.

***RQ 1: How do difficult people affect leadership?***

*Spread of Difficult People In each Organization*

The CEOs were, among other questions, asked to state the Departments in their organizations which they considered as having the highest number of “difficult people”. Fig 1 shows the outcome



‘Finance and Administration’ recorded the highest number of people considered by the CEOs to be “difficult” (33%), while HR and Marketing had 27% and 13% respectively. “Other”, departments (such as engineering, legal, etc. depending on the nature of the organization, accounted for 27%. This suggests that all departments have evenly-spread numbers of “difficult



persons”. Finance and Administration appeared to be more in numbers in the organization and this might explain its being the mode.

### *Kinds of Difficult People*

The Branson Model of classifying difficult people in organizations was applied to the responses in the Questionnaires given to the selected CEOs and the outcome of the Focus Group Discussion, which featured three (3) CEOs. (Branson, 1981, 2012). These are:

1. **The Hostile-Aggressive:** These are workers who tend to be over-bearing. They bombard and overwhelm others by bullying their ways through: cutting remarks, throwing tantrums, build opposition – all when things do not go their way. When Hostile-Aggressives are being led, it actually means there is a ‘second’ leader within the organization. If not managed, they soon build up an opposition strong enough to derail the leader, or even unseat him or her. When Hostile-Aggressives are many within a system, good results do not come quickly as they are typically clogs in the wheels of progress.
2. **The Complainer:** Complainers are those employees and managers who find fault in almost everything. Workers who have genuine complaints and who want to solve problems that would move the organization forward are expected to make complaints. That is not what is being described here. Rather, we are referring to who have accusatory lifestyle. They are impatient and masters at making excuses. They always look at the problems in the organization and hardly see any good thing coming or existing. In a media house, when you ask them how many advertisements to expect in the next edition of the magazine, they would tell you “the marketing vehicle did not work last week and that there was not enough ink in the printers to generate letters to would-be advertisers.”
3. **The Silent and Unresponsive:** They rarely talk or act visibly. At team or management meetings, they rarely talk. In group assignments they are ‘lost’ in the maze. Yet they are there, making impact - a ‘yes’, a ‘no’ or a ‘grunt’. If their positions in the organization require taking key or swift decisions, this kind of workers, such behaviour automatically contributes negatively to the score-sheet of the overall leader.
4. **The Super-Agreeable:** On the other extreme (of complainers) are the Super-Agreeables. When you have managers and employees under you who always agree with whatever you come up with, be careful. They can be more dangerous than complainers, although they are less harmful when handled properly. Super-agreeable will always tell you what will be pleasant to your ears. They agree to do what you ask them to do but will always let you down by not doing those things. Because they want to be in your good books, Super-Agreeable will commit themselves to actions which they cannot and will not follow through. They project themselves as being loyal but overtly or covertly, they are not.

5. **The Negativist:** When a leader allows complainers to grow unchecked, they become full-blown negativists. These are workers and followers who do not believe the leader can achieve the objectives he or she had set for the team and the organization. Now, they are fed up with complaining. They work against the direction the leader is moving towards (directly and indirectly) through their actions. The trouble with them is that they are often not visible to the leader.
6. **The Know-it-All Expert:** They are workers who feel they have superior ideas –ideas that are even superior to those the leader may have. They are condescending and imposing. They are very pompous. If the leader happens not to have basic knowledge of the services being provided by the Know-It-All Expert, the leader is in ‘trouble’. Sometimes they may not even know so much. They are also resistant to new ways of doing things except that which they are used to.
7. **The Indecisive:** They are staffers who stall all key decisions until those decisions are made for them. They can let go of anything until it is perfect (and usually that perfection in their favour). Indecisive does take decision – one that does not happen as at when it should be made.

***RQ 2: How do emerging leaders manage difficult people to accomplish set goals?***

From the analyses of the questionnaires completed by the CEOs and the FGD, the researcher found that CEOs vary remarkably in how they treat the foregoing seven classes of difficult workers. They are hamstrung in dealing with the difficult followers for several reasons ranging from lack of executive powers to act appropriately (for instance, sometimes the difficult staffer is a ‘sacred cow’); lack of a better alternative to the particularly difficult staffer; time constraints, etc.

Generally, however, data generated from the study showed that the CEOs managed difficult staffers in three broad ways, the C-Q-M:

- i) **C - Coping:** This means that they try to maintain the right balance so that the effects of difficult people are minimized such that they do not cause serious damage to the system. When a leader copes with the led in this way, it means he or she (the leader) has come to terms with the fact that he or she must work with the difficult person and the most pragmatic way to handle him or her is to create a sort of equilibrium. Consider the example of a Special Assistant to a Governor on Media appointed by the Governor to work with a Senior Special Adviser to the Governor on Media. Let us assume that the Special Assistant is a sniper and all he does is to undermine the authority and efforts of the Senior Special Assistant. It is not within the powers of the SSA to discipline or remove the SA. One good way to handle this situation is “coping”. In one word, to cope means to “endure” (the bad workforce) while minimizing any salutary effects of their behaviour in the workplace. This is the *defensive approach* to leading difficult people.

- ii) **Q - Quarantining:** This approach is more combative. It seeks to neutralize the negative effects of the difficult staff. In other words, the difficult staff is there but the leader consciously makes efforts to render him or her ineffective. It is different from coping in that, rather than the leader trying to endure, the leader is a more counter-offensive: he or she strips the difficult staffer of influence, power and functions. The problem staffer is there more or less like a figure head, still seated in his or her office. This, however, is not achieved through enduring but by destabilizing the difficult people. It is the *offensive approach* to leading difficult people and where necessary it may lead to the difficult people being reprimanded or ejected from the organization.
- iii) **M - Motivating:** Those being led are engaged and encouraged to do better no matter how terrible they seem to be. The reasoning of the leader is that coping leaves the problem staff a time-bomb (or at least a potential wreck) to the system. Similarly, quarantining the bad worker only gives temporary or short-term respite. Rather than endure them or keep them at bay, if they cannot be fired, the difficult worker should be *changed* to become better. More enduring solution would come from systematic motivation and change programme targeted at the difficult staffers, rather than leaving them the way they are (coping), or rendering them ineffective (quarantining). This is the *proactive approach* to leading difficult people.

***RQ 3: What communication techniques could be effectively used to successfully manage difficult people in organizations/institutions?***

Specifically, how do CEOs apply communication techniques (especially inter-personal and group communication) in *coping*, *quarantining*, and *motivating* workers who are difficult or are less or not inclined to follow him or her to a set destination?

Responses of the CEOs to both the questionnaires and the FGD questions suggest that the communication techniques adopted depended on how they perceived the difficult behaviours. CEOs who adopt the ‘motivation approach’ engage more in *persuasive and empathetic communications*. Those who opt for ‘quarantine’ use more of *propaganda communication techniques* and those who believe that ‘coping’ would bring better results from difficult workers use essentially *public relations and development communication techniques*.

Table 2 presents a summary of specific difficult people’s behaviours and the problem-solving approaches as well as the interpersonal/group communication techniques most commonly adopted by the CEOs.

***Table 2: CEOs’ Communication Techniques on Managing Difficult People in their Organizations***

KIND OF DIFFICULTY	COPING FRAMEWORK	QUARANTINE FRAMEWORK	MOTIVATION FRAMEWORK
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do not fight them; just confront them to make them back down; win the battle, even if you may not win the war.</li> <li>2. Be self-assertive</li> <li>3. Persist bullies will want to come back but remain friendly with him or her</li> <li>4. Insist on earning your respect (know your job, meet targets, be a good example, etc.)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fight them; Return their hostilities strategically; confront them <i>openly</i> to make them back down; win the battle and the war.</li> <li>2. Develop the grapevine to know what he or she is up to next</li> <li>3. Don't allow him or her to grow supporters within the system</li> <li>4. Reward loyalists in the system</li> <li>5. Promote open communication (bring to the open issues in the undercurrent and don't allow gossip to thrive)</li> <li>6. Insist on earning your respect (know your job, meet targets, be a good example, etc.) <i>but in addition, exercise your power and authority</i></li> <li>7. Cut down their wings (reduce their powers and functions)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find out why he or she is hostile or aggressive and tackle him or her from that angle</li> <li>2. Dialogue with him or her <i>privately</i> and let him or her know how much difficulty is being created through such behaviour and the implications</li> <li>3. Entice him or her; (nominate him/her for courses, approve his or her memos especially where they merit it and explain why you disapprove if you did not approve)</li> <li>4. Allow robust communication in the system and 'negotiation'</li> </ol>
<i>Complainer</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide open time and place for those concerned to bring up problems and issues for discussion.</li> <li>2. Disagree with them but don't try to convince them</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give them attention but don't heed their actions</li> <li>2. Shut them out consistently but diplomatically</li> <li>3. Don't openly accept (or apologize) when their positions proved to be right.</li> <li>4. Isolate him or her or at least do not let him or her wield much influence among other workers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Listen attentively to them</li> <li>2. Let them know how their behaviour inhibits corporate goals</li> <li>3. Disagree with them and try to convince them to shift to your side</li> <li>4. Reward open dialogue</li> </ol>

<i>Silent and Unresponsive</i>			
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prompt the silent/unresponsive to talk (e.g. ask questions directly from them)</li> <li>2. Use non-verbal cues frequently e.g. starring, pulses, to elicit responses.</li> <li>3. Get to know him or her intimately to understand his/her unresponsiveness</li> <li>4. Assign speaking or expressive assignments to them,</li> <li>5. Study their non-verbal behaviours (silent-unresponsive people often talk non-verbally)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discourage silence; insist on getting 'everyone' to talk openly; insist on knowing where everyone stands.</li> <li>2. Acknowledge their 'silent' views in the open and re-confirm it's an opinion they had expressed silently.</li> <li>3. Put them on the spot (on the defensive)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Request their responses formally</li> <li>2. Reward robust contributions to debates</li> <li>3. Find out why they often do not respond</li> </ol>
<i>Super Agreeable</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reward candor (frankness)</li> <li>2. Investigate why they tend to always agree with you and tackle them from that angle</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Openly condemn sycophancy</li> <li>2. Openly disagree with them when they praise you unduly or make unrealistic commitments</li> <li>3. Make them express their positions on critical issues in writing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Train them to be objective</li> <li>2. Reward objectivity</li> </ol>
<i>Negativist</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Don't give them important responsibilities</li> <li>2. State your realistic optimism</li> <li>3. Don't reason with negativists</li> <li>4. Anticipate their negative responses and plan proactively</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Openly condemn negativity</li> <li>2. Do not allow them build followership in the system</li> <li>3. Shut them out (e.g. don't make them team leaders or put them in decision-taking positions)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the effects of negativism openly</li> <li>2. Teach success attitude</li> <li>3. Don't argue with negativists</li> <li>4. Redeploy their energy positively (there is usually something good in something bad)</li> </ol>
<i>Know-it-All Expert</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give 'recognition' to the person make him or her</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make him or her commit grave errors</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Re-direct his or her energy</li> </ol>

		<p>out themselves by Making wrong or unrealistic suggestions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Let his or her position be clear do not allow him or her to take credit that is not his or hers</li> <li>5. Bring into the team people with superior knowledge (than the Know-it-All Expert)</li> </ol>	
<i>Indecisive</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find out why they fail to take decisions as at when due and tackle</li> <li>2. Recognize individual efforts</li> <li>3. Let teams, rather than individuals, take decisions</li> <li>4. Hear them out when they have reservations</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give responsibilities to individuals, not teams.</li> <li>2. Apportion blames and praises to individuals, not teams.</li> <li>3. Set targets and timelines and enforce them</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Request that 'decisions' be clearly stated in reports.</li> <li>2. Take responsibilities as team leader to encourage the indecisive to take decision.</li> <li>3. Help them to arrive at decisions</li> <li>4. Give support when they have arrived at decisions</li> </ol>

## VI. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION:

This study underscores the fact that people-management remains a major challenge in management, especially within organizations. All highly-acclaimed leaders (in business, military operations, religion, politics and governance and other human endeavour) have one thing in common: they have foot-soldiers who execute necessary actions effectively. The success of leaders often depends on the extent to which these foot-soldiers key into the leaders visions and implements decisions and actions to fulfill those visions. In reality, one of the things that make leadership difficult is inability, refusal or indiscretion of the led to follow the leader. (Of course, there are common situations where the leader is “the problem” by him or her being incompetent, unfit, lacking in knowledge, visionless etc.).

In his classic works, *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*, and *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Alternative*, management thinker, Stephen Covey proposes that in addition to understanding himself/herself

and his/her actions, and having critical leadership qualities, the leader must understand those being led (“*I See You*”). (Covey, 1999, 2012). . “I see you” is about honest intent to know who the other person is. It is an acknowledgement of the other person’s unique individuality. Covey recommends four steps to synergize followership and resolve conflicts:

. **Ask** – are we ready to come up with a solution that is better than any one of us has come up with yet? 2. **Define** – What will it look like and what shall we both gain if we come up with the right solution to the problem? Are you really looking at all sides genuinely 3. **Create** – Look at/experiment to get possible solutions (3<sup>rd</sup> alternative) getting as many ideas as possible. Don’t judge the suggestions; just get them on board; 4. **Arrive at Synergy-** Come up with a way out without making compromise.

Jack Francis Welch, one of the most celebrated corporate leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and retired CEO of General Electric looks at the issue of managing the led from a different perspective, through his concept of “differentiation”. (Welch, 2005)

*Differentiation*, as enunciated by Welch, holds that a company has two parts – software and hardware. Software is your people and hardware could mean your portfolio (for a large company) and your product lines (for a smaller company). The principle holds that the leader must have a clear-cut definition of his/her **strong** and **weak** peoples and portfolios. The people side of differentiation is what Welch refers to as 20-70-10 Formula. It is a process that requires managers to assess their employees and separate them into three categories in terms of performance: the top 20 per cent, the middle 70, and the bottom 10. In dealing with hostile subordinates, Bramson suggests also that the leader should give the subordinates time to run down, be self-assertive as well as avoid head-on collision with them. (Bramson, 1981:pp12-19).

People often complain that their leaders are difficult. But the followers can also be extremely difficult and they are often the reason leaders fail. In the business workplace for instance, unlike in a military setting, followers are not robots. Overtly or covertly, they do not sheepishly follow the leader often. The leader needs to understand who they are leading and design effective communication framework to engender followership. According to Ciampa and Watkins (2005:p.215), “if key people cannot be swayed, it may be necessary to enter into *quid pro quo negotiation*; a this-for-that negotiation to support a project or initiative they care about in exchange for their support for the larger change effort.”

Difficult people in organizations are not altogether bad. If the leader understands the nature of their difficulty and has appropriate communication framework, in fact, such people can be made to contribute immensely to the organization’s progress. After all, leaders are expected to lead human beings, not angels. At best, people-in-organizations (employees and managers) are raw materials that need to be properly processed to become good products. In this perspective, Kaplan and Norton support the ‘motivational approach’. According to them, “alignment

programs cannot deliver results unless employees have personal commitment to help their enterprise and unit achieve strategic objectives.” (Kaplan & Norton, 2006,p. 263).

This study replicates Bramson’s postulation that leaders who have very difficult followers should assess the situation and stop wishing those difficult workers were different. The leader should formulate a plan for interrupting interaction with followers and then monitor the progress of the interaction.

In other words, the study provides evidence that difficult people in organizations can be dealt with through strategic communication: COPING (creating and maintaining the right balance to work with the difficult people), QUARANTINING (neutralizing the negative effects of the difficult people), or MOTIVATING (engaging the difficult people to change from bad to good and from good to better) to enhance leadership success.

## REFERENCES

- Bramson, Robert M. (1981), *Coping with difficult people*. New York: Anchor Press Book Business: The ultimate resource. (2002). Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.
- Ciampa, Dan, & Watkins, Michael (2005). *Right from the start: Taking charge in a new leadership role*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.
- Covey, Stephen R. (1999). *The seven habits of highly successful people*. London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd.
- Covey, Stephen R. (2011). *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Alternative: Solving life’s most difficult problems*. London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd.
- Folayan, Bolu John (2015). “How successful leaders manage difficult people”. Paper delivered at the First Leadership Conference by Joseph Ayo Babalola University, held at MiComm Resort, Ada, Osun State, July 20.
- Kaplan, Robert S. and Norton, David P. (1996). *Translating strategy into action: The balanced scorecard*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Kaplan, Robert S. and Norton, David P. (2006). *Alignment: Using the balanced score card to create corporate synergies*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.
- Maxwell, John C. (2011). *The five levels of leadership*. New York: Center Street.
- McGregor, Douglas. (1960). *The human side of enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Rogers, Everett M., (1994). Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Mass Communication Effects. In Rogers, Everret M., *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach*. New York: The Free Press, 1994, pp. 244–245.
- Welch, Jack. (2005). *Winning*. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers



