

In *The Energy Bus* we are exposed to a character that exemplifies poor leadership as a manager at NRG Company, his name is George. With a life that is in shambles due to a failure to be a good leader, George finds himself in a unique situation where he is able to learn rules from a cast of characters that help grow George into a positive and strong leader. As a result of this enlightenment, George is able to turn his broken life around and becomes an example of how good leadership can change any situation. Before George changed his life around, he demonstrated passive management by exception behaviors. He waited for things to go wrong before acting and did not interfere with issues, hoping they would be resolved without a leaders' intervention (Scott, 2014, p. 17). George exhibited one of the three classic styles of leadership known as the *Laissez-faire*. This type of leadership is considered a "stand off and watch" approach. In this type of leadership there is little to no direction provided by the individual in the leadership role (Scott, 2014, p. 9). In addition George demonstrates low levels of emotional intelligence. This theory is recognized as dissonant leadership. As a leader George was manipulative to his colleagues, and as a result created toxic environments and increases in the stress levels of his followers. However, as George learns from his newly met mentor he becomes more aware of his own flawed style and begins his transition into a motivated and inspirational leader.

Turnaround is defined as "the reversal of performance in an organization from negative to positive" (Scott, 2014, p. 121). The transition George decides to make corresponds to this term. In context to corporate organizations, turnaround is initially associated with a decline in sales and market shares followed by subsequent transformation which then allows for a profitable environment to be regained. Turnaround is simply about the need and desire to create rapid, dramatic, and lasting change (Scott, 2014, p. 121). Applying this theory to George, we see

that he is in desperate need for turnaround in his life. Fortunately for George, he comes across an individual who wants to help change his life around; her name is Joy. Joy demonstrates exceptional attributes of a leader and a mentor. On their first encounter George was miserable, self-centered and closed minded, while Joy on the other hand was positive, confident and willing to create a new relationship. Joy knew instantly that she could become the mentor George needs in his life. Carnegie recommends key points for helping people feel important and appreciated: be a good listener; become genuinely interested in other people; and give honest and sincere appreciation (Scott, 2014, p. 34). With these ideas in mind, Joy provides her list of rules and through her mentoring skills helps George become the leader his family and career need.

Joy from *The Energy Bus* refers to leader responsibility as “you are the driver of your bus” (Gordon, 2007, p. 25). She explains “It’s the most important of the rules because if you don’t take responsibility for your life and control of your bus then you can’t take it where you want it to go” (Gordon, 2007, p. 26). Terry Francona (2017) discusses the importance of knowing your responsibilities and understanding the roles of others (Summit, 2017). He mentions that communication becomes more effective, and the values and goals of the team are understood by the athletes (Summit, 2017). Francona’s team is in charge of driving their own bus. By riding ones’ own bus people begin to understand their purpose and start to demonstrate self-discipline. Bill George describes these attributes as characteristics of an authentic leader (Scott, 2014, p. 39). Authentic leaders demonstrate self-awareness and are highly supportive of their followers. Moreover, when employees or athletes decide to drive their own bus, they take the leap to transform into the leaders their organization needs.

Leaders looking to develop and implement visions within their organizations need to understand certain elements of visionary leadership. In George’s situation, support and

collaboration are the most important aspects for developing a vision. The textbook mentions that visions all require other people to help shape and implement the vision (Scott, 2014, p. 85). Similarly, *The Energy Bus* suggests gathering a team together to spend time developing a vision for the direction of the bus. Joy tells George “Don’t let the world create you. You create your own world” (Summit, 2017, p. 43). Nanus lays out the foundation of how to, in George’s case, create your own world; develop a vision; determine the target for the vision; identify future developments related to the vision; choose the right vision; and turn the vision into reality (Scott, 2014, p. 87).

Billie Jean King is a former tennis star that exemplifies extraordinary visionary leadership. She is a women’s sport leader and a social advocate that has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and by *Life* magazine as one of the top 100 most important Americans in the 20th century (Scott, 2014, p. 83). King demonstrates the importance of vision and commitment and how it can lead to significant changes and advances. George in *The Energy Bus* has been struggling to provide success at work because he has not developed a clear vision nor put in the commitment to change the way he leads. To combat this Joy recommends he should fuel his vision with purpose. King has exhibited exceptional progress in gender equity as well as social, cultural, and environmental responsibility in sport because she understands her vision and is able to ‘fuel it with purpose’ (Scott, 2014, p. 83). Thomas Edison once said “Vision without execution is hallucination” (Scott, 2014, p. 89). Similar to Edison’s quote, Joy explains to George if he builds a vision, focuses on seeing it, and takes action, then success will follow (Summit, 2017, p. 44).

The Energy Bus emphasizes the importance of positivity in the workplace. Joy states that “where there is a void, negativity will fill it so we must keep fueling up with positive energy so

the negative energy doesn't have room to expand" (Summit, 2017). Boyatzi provides a theory on the effects of negativity (Scott, 2014, p. 55). He suggests that individuals' specific feelings are contagious to others around them and that negative feelings leave a stronger impact than positive ones (Scott, 2014, p. 55). Going back to Joy's advice to George, it is important to continue fueling the ride with positive energy in order for the negative feelings to be eliminated.

Additionally, Joy demonstrates empowerment and tries to increase George's confidence by positive energy. Similarly, the textbook states that during a time of turnaround, executives within an organization need to restore people's confidence in themselves and each other. Likewise, Kanter theorizes this work as psychological turnaround (Scott, 2014, p. 126). She explains that there are several dynamics that are associated with the decline of organizations. Kanter refers to these dynamics as organizational pathologies. She provides strategies to reverse people's attitudes in turnaround situations. Specifically for George, Kanter explains that there needs to be an attitude reversal (Scott, 2014, p. 126). This attitude adjustment comes from leaders that are able to move the organization away from a culture that consists of blame and move toward a culture that includes respect for themselves and others.

"Invite People on Your bus and Share Your Vision for the Road Ahead" is Joy's fourth rule to George for becoming a better leader in his workplace (Summit, 2017, p. 56). Without the support and collaboration from employees, many organizations would fail quickly and horribly. George needs to ensure he is asking the correct people to share the ride he is on. Jane Booth produced a guide for managing change. One of her key points states "engage the right people in telling the story – identify leaders at all levels that will inspire others to follow" (Scott, 2014, p. 120). Through critical analysis, we can believe that attracting the right people into the plan of action demonstrates clear, successful results. Also, Cartwright and Baldwin put theory into

practice by offering several strategies for communicating a vision once it has been developed. Some recommendations include: giving the vision a “personal touch” by engaging others in one-to-one conversations; and identifying key stakeholders and supporters who can help motivate them to be engaged with the vision (Scott, 2014, p. 87). Moreover, Joy’s advice to George as well as Booth’s, Cartwright’s and Baldwin’s theories allow for growth in visionary leadership.

The Energy Bus focuses on directing positive energy into the workplace, lifestyles and relationships. Another effective method Joy suggests to George is “Don’t Waste Your Energy on Those Who Don’t Get on Your Bus” (Summit, 2017, p. 70). She emphasizes that successful leaders do not waste their time trying to fight with individuals who do not agree with their vision. Kim Cameron created leadership values she believes contribute to “spectacular, extraordinary, and astonishing” organizational results (Scott, 2014, p. 74). Specifically, one idea from Cameron that correlates with George’s life is the importance of high-quality relationships. These form through perfect execution on commitments to external stakeholders. In other words, these relationships require collaboration and mutual support in order to build honest and trusting interactions. Another value Cameron theorizes suggests in order for a culture to have successful change, there needs to be change in individuals. This being said, leaders, teammates, employees and other organizational members need to believe differently, behave differently, and pursue the executives’ purposes and visions (Scott, 2014, p. 76). Likewise, Frontiera, a researcher who has studied culture change in sport suggests that introducing new people into the organization is considered necessary to begin culture change (Scott, 2014, p. 78).

Although collaboration is key within organizations, conflict is inevitable when individuals communicate with one another. Work groups and teams will come across disagreements and differences that may cause anxiety and anger. Effective leaders are able to

deal with interpersonal conflict in a professional manner. Throughout the book *The Energy Bus*, George is slowly learning from his mentor how to manage and utilize his leadership skills for times of conflict. Joy suggests to George that he needs to post a sign on his bus that says NO ENERGY VAMPIRES ALLOWED (Summit, 2017, p. 74). She emphasizes that he needs to stay strong and to tell his co-workers that he will not tolerate any negativity on his bus. The textbook provides a guide for conflict management for leaders. It is important for George to know how to deal effectively with energy vampires to ensure his vision is successful. Runde and Flanagan provide simple measures to take when dealing with conflict (Scott, 2014, p. 37). First, leaders need to monitor the environment and recognize conflict early on. An effective way to avoid conflict from escalating is resolving the problem as soon as possible. Second, leaders need to understand the level of conflict and destructive behaviors in order to take the appropriate approach to solving the problem. Lastly, conflict competence leaders must foster constructive response to conflict. This can be done by staying calm, focusing on the facts, asking questions, providing feedback and offering advice (Scott, 2014, p. 37).

Emotional intelligence is defined as “one’s ability to effectively understand oneself and others, relate effectively to other people, and adapt to and cope with one’s immediate surroundings” (Scott, 2014, p. 51). *The Energy Bus* relates to this theory by stressing the importance of leading with the heart. Joy explains to George as he embarks through his leadership journey that emotional intelligence is all about tapping into the power of the heart (Summit, 2017, p. 104). She mentions that emotional intelligence is communicating effectively and being able to gather followers through honesty and respect (Summit, 2017, p. 104). Similar to the theories in the text, strong leaders demonstrate values which represent resonant leadership. Goleman identifies resonant leaders to be “associated with high levels of emotional intelligence,

are upbeat and enthusiastic, are capable of effectively managing and directing the feelings of a group...” (Scott, 2014, p. 57). Evidently, leaders that are able to demonstrate self awareness and social awareness are able to move forward effectively.

Throughout the book *The Energy Bus*, George demonstrates significant change in his attitude and outlook towards leadership. With the help of a new found mentor, he was able to use positive energy and new perspectives to help him move forward in his career. One of the major themes demonstrated throughout this book was mentorship. Joy and George quickly created a relationship based on trust, honesty and positivity. According to the textbook, mentorship is one of the major components to leadership development (Scott, 2014, p. 196). As George’s life changes, it becomes evident he would not be the leader he is without his mentor Joy. Conger and Riggio identify a relevant aspect of mentorship, “mentoring has been found to have a positive impact on career and job satisfaction...” (Scott, 2014, p. 196). George grew as a leader through self-development by becoming aware of his personality, emotional intelligence, resonant leadership and most importantly, mentorship.

In relation to my life, *The Energy Bus* helped me manage my leadership in a time of adversity. Being one of the older players on the Cougar’s Women’s Volleyball team, I need to be aware of my role and responsibility as a leader. This book has helped guide me through the process of becoming more self aware of my emotions and more self confident. Through critical analysis of *The Energy Bus* and the theories in the textbook, I am assured that leading with positive energy, self-awareness and effectively solving problems are the most important aspects. Not only am I involved in a sport organization but I have also chosen a leadership-oriented career path. As a future educator, my philosophy has always been focused around building relationships. The textbook reassured this viewpoint by stating “Leaders whose organization

produces extraordinary results are still not likely to be effective in the long term unless they attend to the demand for high-quality and trusting relationships” (Scott, 2014, p. 34). The last line in *The Energy Bus* states, “The Energy Bus will surely take you on the ride of your life” (Summit, 2017, p. 156). With this in mind, I have realized that leading a team or a classroom with positive energy becomes contagious, inspiring, and motivating. Moving forward I understand I am in complete control of my behavior and my emotions and I will use this awareness to continue on my journey of a developing leader.

Works Cited

Gordon, J. (2007). *The Energy Bus*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

Scott, D. (2014). *Contemporary Leadership in Sport Organizations*. Windsor, Ontario, Canada: Sheridan Books.

Summit, T. S. (2017, July 2). *The Conduit: Terry Francona on Building Relationships in Major League Baseball*. Retrieved from Leaders in Sport:
https://urcourses.uregina.ca/pluginfile.php/1147165/mod_resource/content/1/Chapter%202%20Add%20On.pdf