THE DARK SIDE OF LEADERSHIP:
A FOCUS ON THE ABUSE OF POWER

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Abstract

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One of the fastest growing construct of leadership and management focuses on the notion of "The Dark Side of Leadership". This concept has been conceptualized using a variety of definitions; however, our presentation centers on the core attribute of the construct which is "*the inability of an individual in a leadership position to effectively and constructively manage position power, and the direct effect on subordinate attitude and performance*." Prior research has indicated that a primary reason employees leave an organization is the perceived quality of their immediate supervisor. The organizational costs of employee turnover continue to rise and in many cases can be reduced if the correct steps are taken in advance. As such, understanding the psychological and interpersonal dynamics that predispose those in leadership roles to go to "the dark side" and abuse their power is an important consideration. Specifically, personality traits, emotional intelligence, and empathy all play integral roles in manifesting a leader's 'dark side' and will be the primary focus of our presentation.

We will discuss the leadership intention, motivation, and traits that leaders can use to avoid ending up on the 'dark side'. For example, so many times individuals are promoted for their performance only and not for their ability to lead others. These individuals then learn on the job and from their bosses as to how power should be wielded. In addition, the culture of the organization cannot be ignored as a contributing factor as the values, norms, and expectations all impact on how power distributed, enforced, and strategically leveraged by management.

Several current workplace issues, such as workplace bullying, will be discussed within the 'dark side' context, and we will present an outline of what an organization can do to prepare for and possibly prevent these and other outcomes from undermining workplace productivity and harmony. In addition, legal approaches training objectives will be presented so that organizations can detour around the road to the dark side.