

Concepts of Leadership and Management in a Free Agent World

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Introduction

- In the 21st Century organizations have to be flexible in a dynamic and often highly uncertain environment.
- Many employees are prepared to work for multiple organizations in a career, and are willing to move as part of pursuing one or more careers in their lifetime, effectively becoming ‘free agents’
- How do people in positions of authority approach leading and managing this type of ‘free agent’ employee?
- On a deeper level, how do men and women in positions of authority understand the concepts of leadership and management?

Methods

- The first phase of the study was a literature survey focused on theories and studies of organizational leadership and management practices
- The second phase was a qualitative research project based on interviews with eight participants: four from corporate and public organizations; and four from an NCAA Division 1 university athletics department
- Participants were asked to describe their thoughts about leadership and management in separate parts of their interview. Their responses were systematically coded using a thematic framework derived from the literature survey
- Data with the same code were grouped into sub-themes and themes, and shown in hierarchical content trees

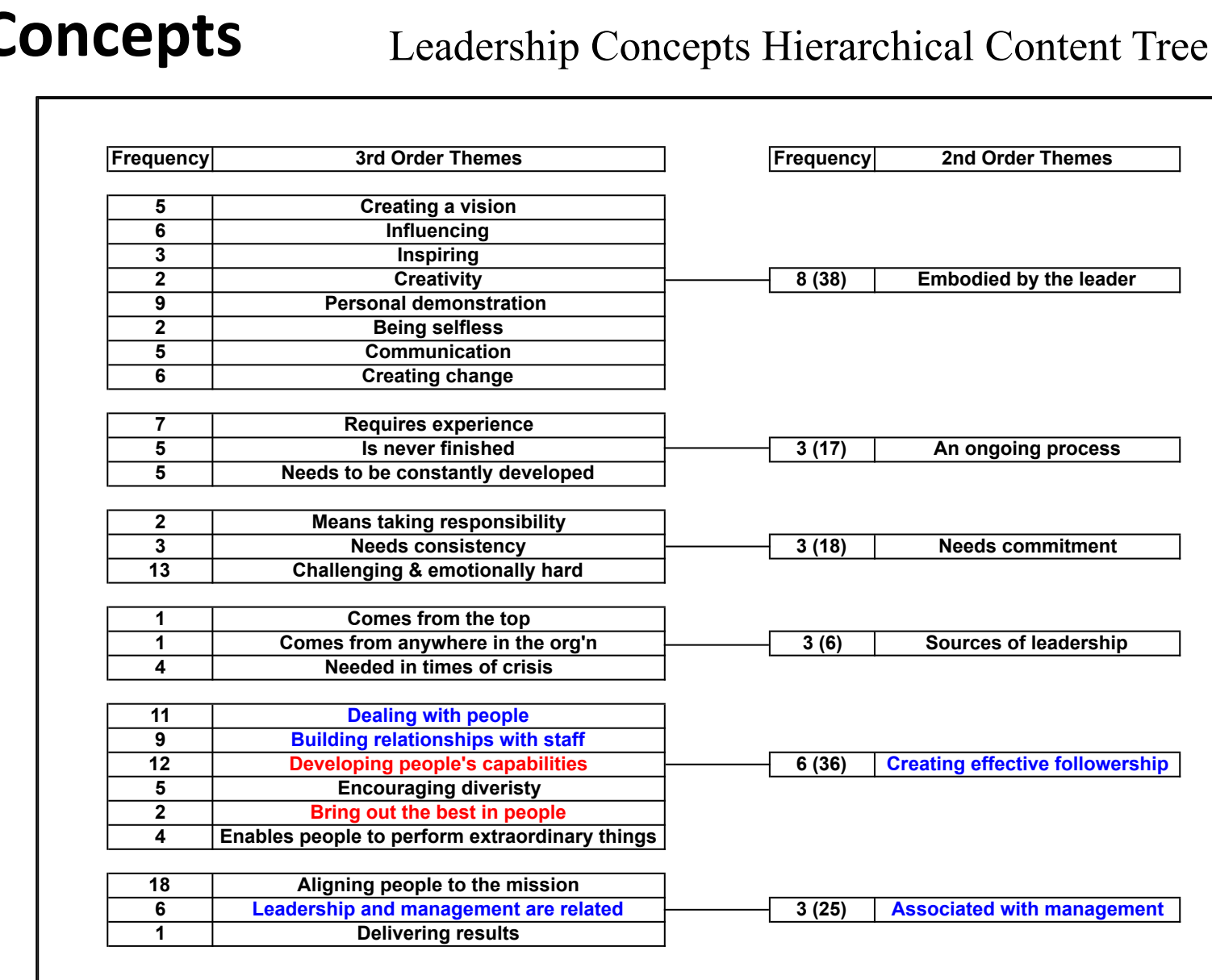
Literature Cited

Conger, J.A. (1998). Qualitative Research as the Cornerstone Methodology for Understanding Leadership. *Leadership Quarterly* 9(1), 107-121.
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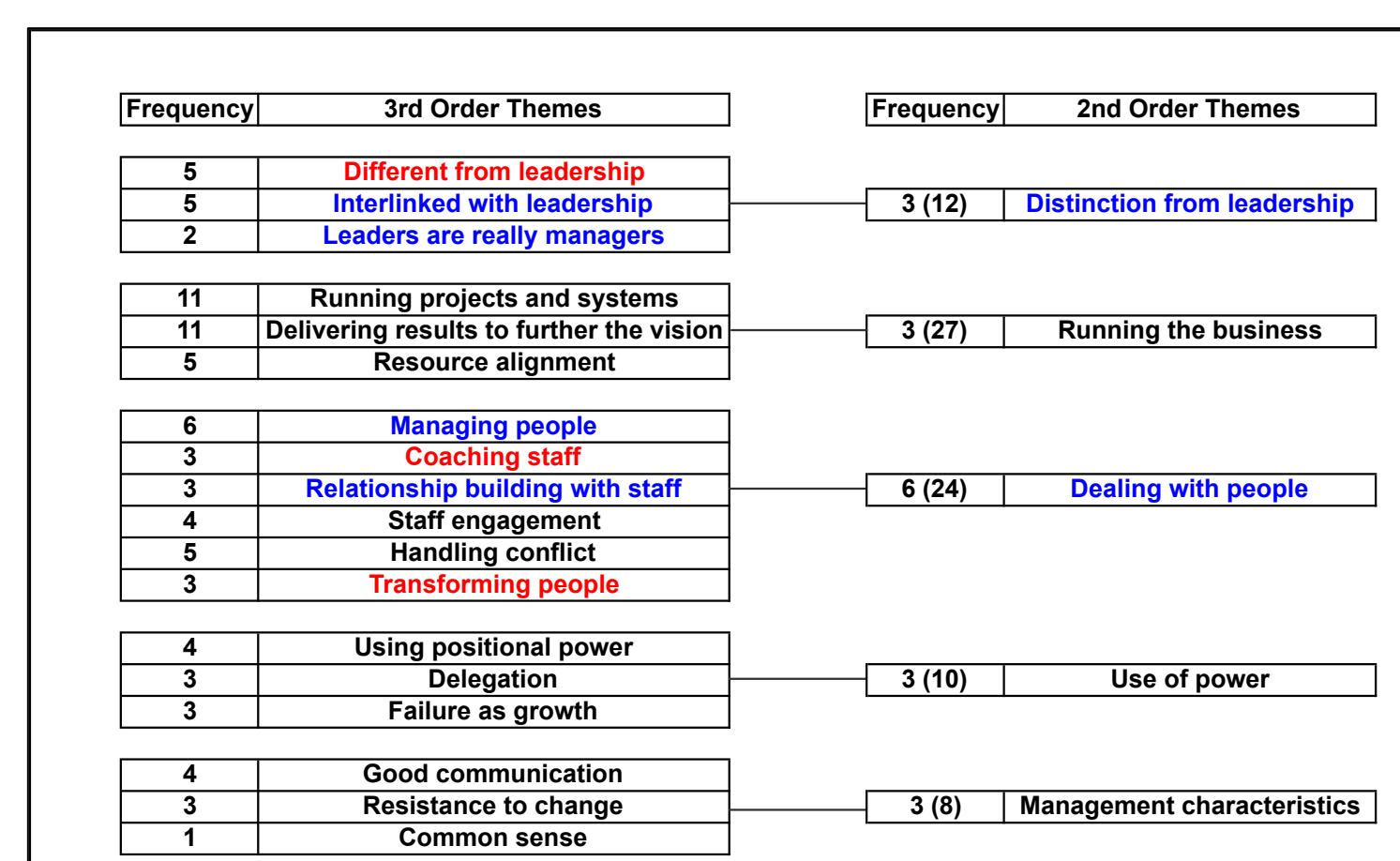
Results

Systematic analysis of the interview transcripts yielded 975 data (each 2-3 words to several sentences). The data were coded into categories (Concepts, Behaviors, Activities, Traits, Theories, Morality/Ethics and Gender) that were taken as supra-themes. Supra-theme data were analyzed and correlated to produce 66 themes and 191 sub-themes. The supra-themes of Concepts, Behaviors and Activities dominated the results for both leadership and management (84% data collected). The results dealing with Concepts and Activities are shown here.

Concepts



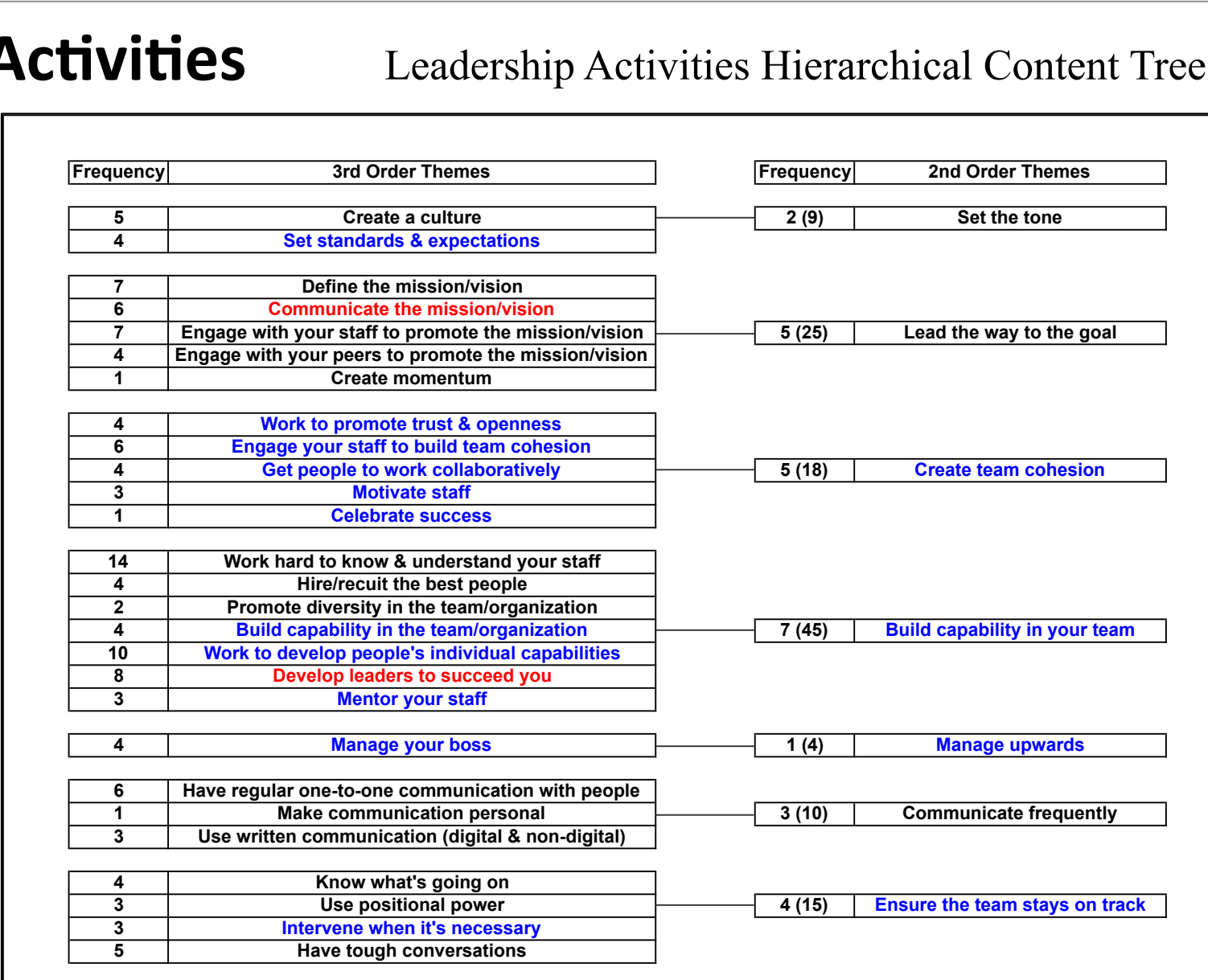
Management Concepts Hierarchical Content Tree



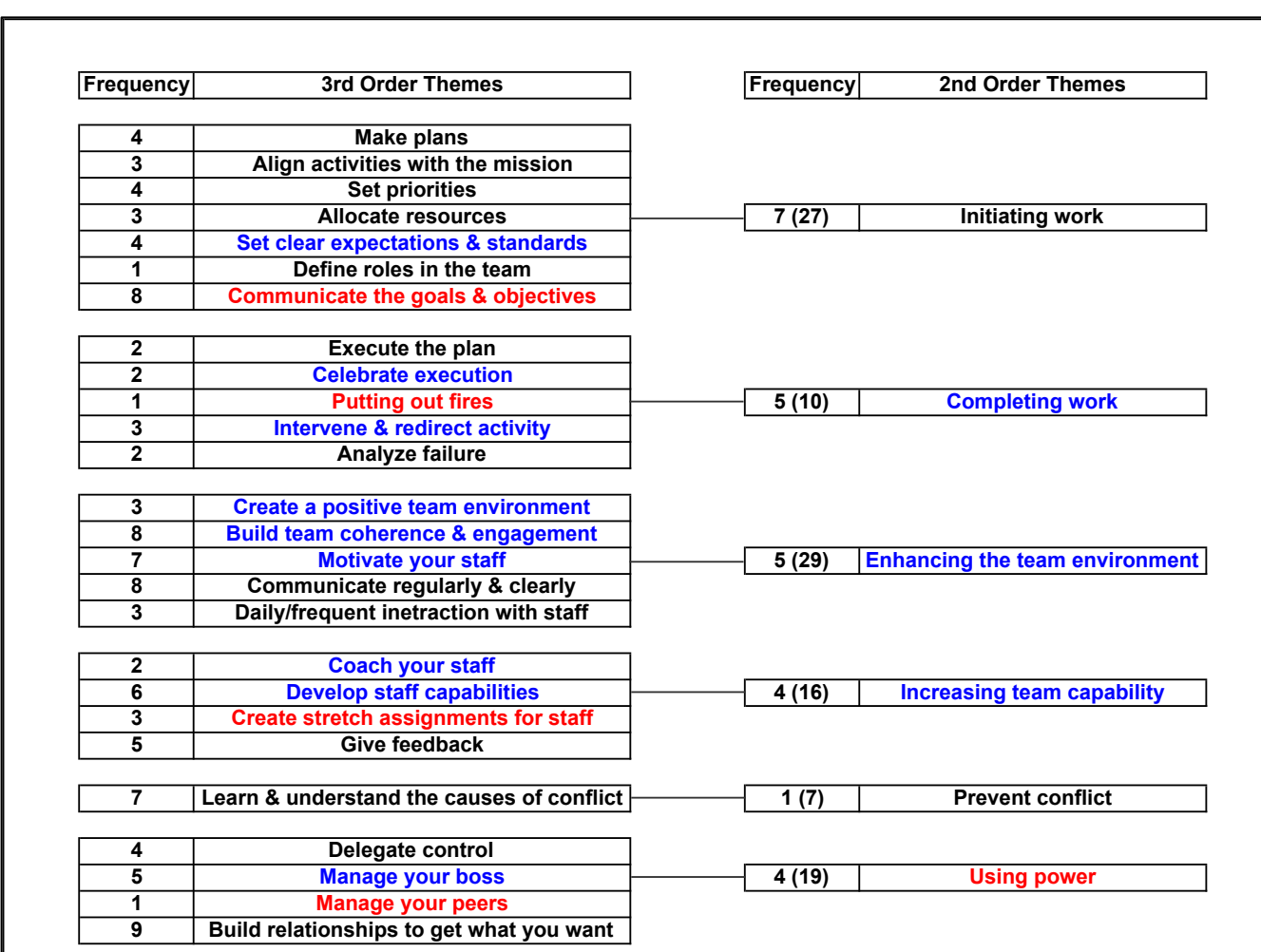
Themes and sub-themes shown in blue have equivalents in the opposite topic.
 Those in red have parallels in the opposite topic.
 Those in black are distinct from the opposite topic.

- The participants, as a group, conceptualize leadership as being distinct from management.
- They also think of leadership in broader terms and concepts than management.

Activities



Management Activities Hierarchical Content Tree



The color-coding for Activities is the same as for Concepts

- The participants describe a much larger number of equivalent themes and sub-themes for leadership and management activities than for concepts.
- Even the equivalent themes and sub-themes have different foci.
- Leadership activities mostly center on collective actions.
- Management activities mostly center on process and the delivery of results.

Conclusions

- The participants describe leadership as being different from management when asked a direct question.
- Analysis of the interviews reveals a more nuanced distinction in the participants’ understanding of the difference between leadership and management.
- The participants’ responses about concepts, behaviors and activities indicate a distinct difference of focus within these foundational elements of leadership and management.
 - Leadership themes center on the character of the leader and the positive effects that her character, behaviors and activities have on her followers.
 - Management themes focus on dealing with people for the efficient delivery of performance and the successful achievement of results.
- The participants conceptualize leadership and management distinctly when talking about concepts and behaviors. When they consider their daily activities this distinction is significantly less well defined.
- When describing their professional roles, the participants clearly described and identified ‘role conflict’: the challenges faced by having to perform leadership and management in the same organizational role.
- Leadership and management may be easily articulated as distinct ideas, especially in an abstract sense. The actuality of roles that call for both leadership and management creates a deeper conceptualization of those topics, built upon critical components that are shared by leadership and management. Most of those common components focus on the human dimensions of organizational authority.

Acknowledgments

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Further Information

Please contact me via e-mail (john.oleary@utexas.edu) for further information or to discuss the findings of this study.