

Haemon: Undiscovered Leadership

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Collaborative Leadership

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Reflecting on the characters of Creon and Haemon in the play *Antigone*, I believe that when Haemon confronted Creon about his intention to kill his love, Antigone, that he presented a strong argument against this decision as a representative for the people of Thebes.

Unfortunately, despite Haemon's attempt to influence Creon's decision, he failed to develop a productive collaborative relationship with Creon. If a collaborative relationship was in place the outcome where Antigone and Haemon died would not have happened. Looking at both Haemon and Creon's collaborative leadership roles, these characters needed to focus on redeveloping their relationship by building trust and communication, leading to a positive outcome.

As outlined in Collaborative Program Planning, there are three roles that are prominent in a collaborative leadership environment. The roles that were identified by Donaldson and Kozell (1999) were convener, champion, and strategy maker. By definition a convener is a person who "identifies and brings together a set of stakeholders to address a problematic situation through educational programming." (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999, p. 40) "Individuals take on the mantle of a champion for the program idea, promoting it to both internal and external stakeholders, thereby moving the idea for further investigation and possible development." (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999, p. 43) The third role is the strategy maker, which "is a composite of leadership behaviors in which the leader channels and manages resources, deals with power dynamics, and assists the partnership in getting its work done." (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999, p. 45) In *Antigone*, Haemon exhibited characteristics that related to each of the roles, with a primary focus on acting as a champion.

Despite his bias in the situation with Antigone, Haemon presented himself as a champion for the people of Thebes and attempted to persuade Creon, his father, to abandon the idea of

putting Antigone to death. These lines from the play illustrate Haemon's attempt to influence Creon:

“My natural duty is to look out for you, spot any risk. That someone might find fault with what you say or do. The common man, you see, lives in terror of your frown; He'll never dare to speak up in broad daylight. And say anything you would hate to learn. But I'm the one who hears what's said at night-How the entire city is grieving over the girl.”

(Woodruff, 2001, p. 30)

Haemon took a risk by confronting Creon about the situation. Unfortunately, despite being socially responsible for the people, his approach fell short of saving Antigone. In the play the civil conversation between both characters turned into an argument, which resulted in no action being taken by either party, except realizing that they had irreconcilable differences. (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999) Could this situation have been avoided by Haemon? When looking at the collaborative leadership model detailed by Donaldson and Kozell (1999) there were a number of signs that the relationship with his father, and the influence he thought he had, were on shaky ground. At first Haemon implored his father to think his decision through and develop a shared vision that would satisfy the people of Thebes, the Gods, and his family.

Creon loosely embodied the role of a strategy maker. Through his dialogue with Haemon, I would characterize him as a bloker, which in part is an individual who “leads efforts to dissolve the relationship by ending an unproductive relationship before feelings are hurt, which has the strategic advantage of preserving the possibility for working together again when success is more likely.” (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999, p. 49-50) By his intended action against Antigone, and not moving his position, Creon put an end to his relationship with Haemon when he threatened to kill Antigone in Haemon's presence, causing Haemon to leave immediately. Creon had no

intention of killing Antigone in Haemon's presence, but he threatened to do so to get Haemon to stop the argument and leave.

How could Haemon have changed the result to a positive outcome? There are several principles available to improve the relationship between Haemon and Creon. They include appreciating differences, building consensus, compromising, and developing a reciprocal relationship. (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999, p. 106) If they employed the concept of "principled" or "win-win" bargaining (Fisher & Ury, 1981), which is "centered around four strategies – (a) Separating people from the problem, (b) focusing interests instead of positions, (c) inventing options for mutual gain, and (d) insisting on objective standards for fairness in substance and negotiating procedures," (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999, p. 103) they would build a foundation of trust. This would lead to the development of a reciprocal relationship. Had Haemon approached his father by discussing their differences, instead of throwing insults at him, this would open communication between them.

Once communication and trust are in place, Creon could take time to slow 'the progress, forcing himself to deal with and resolve "important strategic issues directly and candidly before moving on." (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999, p. 49) Antigone and Haemon did not have to die. By putting a collaborative relationship in place the outcome is reversed.

References

Donaldson, J. F., & Kozoll, C. E. (1999). *Collaborative Program Planning: Principles, Practices, and Strategies*. Malabar, FL, USA: Krieger Publishing Company.

Fisher, R., & Ury, W. (1981). *Getting to Yes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Woodruff, P. (201). *Antigone/Sophocles; Translated, with introduction and notes, by Paul Woodruff*. Indianapolis, IN, USA: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.