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Characteristics and analysis of telework leadership

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Recently, Japan has been starting to change its working style according to the government's suggested "work style reform." In particular, people can now choose the location from which they work. This change may be having an effect on Japanese society. Specifically, the number of people who are working without being bound to a company office is increasing, and the organizational structure may be changing. Many companies have now introduced telework. The key feature of telework is that it allows one to be hired by a company but conduct work from any location. Companies in Japan may change in the future as a result of increasing telework, so the study of telework is significant.

Previous telework research in Japan has primarily focused on management field research but rarely on leadership. Through "work style reform," the number of organizations that operate by telework will increase, so it is necessary to study telework from a leadership point of view too. Therefore, this paper conducts a case study by interviewing the leaders of some companies that have already introduced telework and that have permitted employees to work from home five days a week. In particular, this paper shows the characteristics of telework leadership environments via interviews studies the characteristics of telework leadership in light of the differences of between face-to face leadership.

This paper considers previous studies on telework from the *Journal of the Japan Telework Society*; the research results were few and information gathering difficult. However, this paper examines a wide range of these previous studies from throughout the history of telework to the present.

Telework began in the United States in the 1970s. The Japanese government implemented telework policies, but the practice was not widely adopted. However, recently, based on "work style reform," the number of companies introducing telework is increasing. Research on telework mainly focuses on perspectives of corporate governance, such as labor management, communication problems, information security, and so on.

According to the questionnaire that was provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, many companies think that the introduction of telework has caused many problems that need to be solved. So far, telework research has mainly focused on resolving these disadvantages. One company resolved a communication problem by using an ICT tool, and another resolved a labor management issue by introducing a new method of attendance management. Meanwhile, methods for solving social problems that make use of telework are also being studied. For example, there is research on a tool that enables people with disabilities to work at home as well as research on the creation of regional businesses.

This paper also reviews previous studies on leadership. For many years, leadership has been studied all over the world and in far greater quantity than research on telework. This paper summarizes the history of research on leadership, discusses an overview of the current primary leadership theory, and reviews the follower-centric theory of leadership. Leadership research is divided into three historical groups. The first depends on individual ability, the second depends on the environment rather than the individual, and the third comprises the change-leader and the follower-centered theories. In particular, the most recent is that centered on followers.

When the external environment has been changed drastically, the company should be actively responding to that change. In this situation, the control of followers is effective because followers are close to the changing environment. Leadership is required to communicate between with followers using three steps and four elements. These steps are interaction, development, and expression, and the elements are communication, leadership core, compatibility, and creative space.

Based on previous studies, this paper conducted a semi-structured interview of three leaders. Company A's interview showed the following result. First of all, telework communication requires preparation. For example, newcomers should work in the face-to-face environment for about a few months. People who elect to telework need to have active communicative with the company because such work makes communication more difficult. The leader should compel the follower to offer information to ensure communication symmetry. Company B's interview revealed that this company conducts communication with local members face-to-face, building a relationship of trust before telework commences. The leader delegate authority to followers. Company C's interview showed that this company only allows people to adopt telework who are highly skilled and experienced. The business process is improved so that followers can work by themselves. As a result, even when employees telework, this company does not experience loss of communication between leader and follower.

From the results of these interviews, three elements were identified that are necessary for the development of telework leadership. The first one is the trust relationship between the leader and the follower. Communication between leader and follower is a central issue in introducing telework; so, as a solution method, a face-to-face preparation period is

necessary or the construction of an organized business process that will build a relationship of trust based on these elements. The second one is the delegation of authority to the followers, which is based on the trust relationship, and the provision of creativity space. This element leads to the expression of leadership between leader and follower. To provide an environment which followers can make decisions and to encourage self-reliance. This is a third element.

  The characteristics of telework leadership are as follows: To get a Leader Equity as a leader through raises deepen mutual understanding and relations of trust with followers, to delegate the authority which is based from the deepen mutual understanding and relations of trust, and then the endogenous motivation is developed, and active relationship of followers and leader construct a service "ba". This leads to the expression of leadership in telework.