

LEADERSHIP STYLES

A **leadership style** refers to a leader's characteristic behaviors when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Great leaders can inspire political movements and social change. They can also motivate others to perform, create, and innovate.

Lewin's Leadership Styles

In 1939, a group of researchers led by psychologist Kurt Lewin set out to identify different styles of leadership. While further research has identified more distinct types of leadership, this early study was very influential and established three major leadership styles that have provided a base for more defined leadership theories.

In Lewin's study, schoolchildren were assigned to one of three groups with an authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire leader. The children were then led in an arts and crafts project while researchers observed the behavior of children in response to the different styles of leadership. The researchers found that democratic leadership tended to be the most effective at inspiring followers to perform well.

1. Authoritarian (Autocratic) leadership

Authoritarian leaders, also known as autocratic leaders, provide clear expectations for what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. They generally have all the power, authority, and responsibility in an organization. There is rarely input or decision-making on the part of team or group members; instead, team members are tasked with implementing the leader's decisions and choices. This style of leadership is strongly focused on both commands by the leader and control of the followers.

Researchers found that decision-making was less creative under authoritarian leadership. Lewin also concluded that it is harder to move from an authoritarian style to a democratic style than vice versa. Abuse of this method is usually viewed as controlling, bossy, and dictatorial leader.

This type of leadership is generally very rigid. Authoritarian leadership is best applied to situations that demand structure, quick decision-making, and close supervision, where there is little time for group decision-making or where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group. The autocratic approach can be a good one when the situation calls for rapid decisions and decisive actions. However, it tends to create dysfunctional and even hostile environments, often pitting followers against the domineering leader.

2. Laissez-faire (Delegative) leadership

Delegative leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave the decision-making up to group members. Employees of laissez-faire leaders have a high degree of autonomy. Leaders maintain a hands-off approach to managing workers, providing them with the tools they need to do their job without being directly involved in decision-making processes, daily tasks, and responsibilities.

The laissez-faire leadership style can be successful when employees are highly qualified experts, skilled in the nature of the work and motivated to succeed and do their jobs well. Workers enjoy independence, which may be appealing to many employees. This type of leadership can have consequences when the leader is uninvolved or takes a passive approach to working with employees who need more guidance. It can also lead to a lack of unity and cohesion in a group or team, it often leads to poorly defined roles and a lack of motivation and projects may fall off track without strong oversight.

Lewin noted that laissez-faire leadership tended to result in groups that lacked direction, where members blamed each other for mistakes, refused to accept personal responsibility, and produced a lack of progress of work.

3. Democratic (Participative) leadership

Lewin's study found that participative leadership, also known as democratic leadership is typically the most effective leadership style. In case of democratic leadership, all or most group members are able to participate in decision-making processes. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members; they emphasize equality and encourage discussion and flow of ideas. Participative leaders encourage group members to participate but retain the final say in the decision-making process.

Democratic style tends to be an effective leadership style and has a number of benefits, it encourages creativity, emphasizes fairness, and values intelligence and honesty. Group members feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative. Democratic leaders tend to make followers feel like they are an important part of the team, which helps foster commitment to the goals of the group.

However there are some potential drawbacks- roles may be less well defined which could create communication problems and failures. Some group members, typically those with less experience, may be less willing or able to contribute, or feel that their contributions are not as valued as others are.

The above mentioned theories are the classical theories, and the following are the modern theories.

4. Charismatic leadership

Charismatic leaders are individuals who use their personality and communication style to gain the admiration of followers. Typically, they can communicate effectively, possess emotional sensitivity, put a considerable emphasis on social ties, and can maintain emotional control in numerous situations that may cause stress or troubling emotions. Charismatic leaders exhibit a confidence and healthy self-esteem. They focus on solutions instead of problems, and on consistent improvement. It is about seeing what could be and then working to create a solution or future that aligns with that vision. These individuals can make employees feel like they are a part of a unified team who are striving for the same purpose. They are focused on self-improvement, portraying an image that presents them in a good light, and they notice how they are different from others. Charismatic leadership can transform

attitudes and beliefs in employees and others. They have the power to influence and inspire people, and the goals of the organization generally reflect their vision.

It is not surprising that many political leaders and activists have been characterized as charismatic. More so than any other leadership style, charismatic leadership depends on the personality of the person who is fulfilling the leadership role.

As the name suggests, this type of leader is charismatic and can effect great change, as well as inspire people. This leadership increases loyalty among followers and also increases productivity. On the flip side, the organization may become overly dependent on the leader. Other risks include lack of clarity, a charismatic leader ignoring the needs or ideas of her employees and being unable or unwilling to learn from mistakes.

5. Servant leadership

Robert K. Greenleaf first coined the phrase "servant leadership" in his 1970 essay, "The Servant as a Leader." As a servant leader, he or she focuses on the needs of others, especially team members, before he/she considers himself/herself. He acknowledges other people's perspectives, give them the support they need to meet their work and personal goals, involve them in decisions to build a sense of community within the team. This leads to higher engagement, more trust, and stronger relationships with team members and other stakeholders. It can also lead to increased motivation and initiate innovative ideas.

The important characteristics of servant leaders are- listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community.

6. Motivational leadership

Motivational leadership refers to someone leading others by motivating them to strive for certain goals rather than simply act on orders. The leader tries to create a safe and trusting environment and thus ensure the organization is lead towards success.

Motivational leaders have a vision. This vision is a clear picture of what the future will look like. By sharing their vision and how it fits into the big picture, leaders can inspire others to join them in working toward it. Sharing a clear vision is an important part of influencing others to follow a leader to achieving the defined goal. Motivational leaders are self-motivated. These leaders understand the importance of continuous personal and professional improvement. They always actively seek out new ideas through various sources, such as books, seminars and conferences, professional publications, or networking and sharing ideas with others. They are not only committed to the project at hand, but also to the people working on the project with them. When everyone sees the leader working as hard as they are to achieve a successful result, they are more committed to the job. Leaders show commitment to people by being the first to publicly praise, giving credit where it is due, and keeping promises. They focus on effective communication, they use words to inspire and influence. They are also expert listeners. They help people believe in themselves.

7. Transformational leadership

Leadership expert James McGregor Burns introduced the concept of transformational leadership in his 1978 book, "Leadership." He defined transformational leadership as a process where "leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation."

Like charismatic leaders, transformational leaders inspire others. However, unlike the former leadership style, this style does not require the leader to be present to effect change, because the leader initiates transformation through the organization and motivates employees to perform. Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders.

There are four main components of Transformational Leadership: Individualized Consideration, Intellectual Stimulation, Inspirational Motivation, and Idealized Influence. Each of these components is positively related to individual and organizational performance.

Transformational leaders are particularly good at culture building, providing intellectual stimulation and individual support, modeling positive behaviors, vision-building and holding high performance expectations for employees.

Transformational leadership demands a high level of productivity and involvement from employees. While this style can go a long way in effecting real change, it may overuse some employees to the detriment of others. Transformational leaders also risk setting too-high, unrealistic expectations for team members.

8. Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership, also known as managerial leadership, focuses on the role of supervision, organization, and group performance. Leaders who implement this style focus on specific tasks and use rewards and punishments to motivate followers. Transactional leadership stems from the notion that employment and specific projects are a transaction: When an employee accepts a job, she agrees to "obey" the leader and complete the tasks and duties as assigned, and will be compensated in exchange for her efforts.

This theory of leadership was first described in by sociologist Max Weber and further explored by Bernard M. Bass in the early 1980s. The basic assumptions of this theory are that people perform their best when the chain of command is definite and clear; rewards and punishments motivate workers; Obeying the instructions and commands of the leader is the primary goal of the followers and subordinates need to be carefully monitored to ensure that expectations are met. This method is used in business and athlete teams.

Roles are well-defined, and people who are ambitious and respond to rewards are likely to do well under this kind of leadership. Additionally, this leadership style establishes a clearly defined structure that enables the organization to meet short-term goals. However, transactional leadership does not allow for much innovation or creativity in employees. It also establishes a rigid structure that may not respond well to change.

Unlike transformational leaders who tend to be forward-looking, transactional leaders are interested in merely maintaining the status quo. Transformational leaders try to sell their ideas and vision to followers. Transactional leaders, on the other hand, tell group members what to do and when to do it.

9. Task-oriented leadership

Task-oriented leadership focuses on achieving goals. Task-oriented leaders delegate assignments, set clear processes and issue deadlines to ensure all team members remain focused and deliver their part of the project within the designated time. Perhaps the most concise definition of task-oriented leadership is “doing whatever it takes to get the job done.” The approach tends to be autocratic and emphasizes completing tasks required to meet organizational goals. Leaders are highly goal-focused and work effectively towards predetermined objectives. This style of leadership is less concerned with the individuals and teams performing the work just as long as the work is done on time and to the required standard. Task-oriented leaders will define the roles within a team, divide the work up amongst the team, establish processes and procedures and monitor progress. Everything is focused towards achieving the task.

Strength for this style of leadership is that it ensures deadlines are met and tasks are completed. It can be highly effective for industries which need to meet strict deadlines while simultaneously maintaining a high standard of quality. Media publications and newspapers may be a good example of this type of leadership.

10. Relationship-Oriented Leadership

Relationship-oriented leaders are primarily focused on supporting, motivating and developing individuals and teams. They seek to establish meaningful relationships with their staff and aim to utilise this emotional connection to maximise staff performance.

Advanced levels of emotional intelligence are required for effective relationship-oriented leadership enabling them to easily empathise with their staff and understand their point of view when making decisions. This style of leadership encourages effective teamwork and collaboration through enhanced relationships that exist between team members. Understanding the needs and requirements of each individual person is vital for relationship-oriented leadership to be effective.

By focusing on the emotional needs of the staff, relationship-oriented leaders ensure they have a positive and motivated workforce. Staff will be enthused and inspired to work and will feel valued, appreciated and productive. There will be less personal conflicts, dissatisfaction and boredom. Free from personal issues the staff will be able to work more productively and at a higher standard. Staff may also be more inclined to work creatively and innovatively, taking risks and challenging key operations.

11. Supportive leadership

Supportive leaders delegate and assign tasks to employees, but also provide employees with the skills needed to complete the task. They work through problems and issues with employees and offer a high degree of attention and coaching on an as-needed basis. The employee maintains autonomy, but the supportive leader will step in and work through issues and problems with the employee as they arise.

Supportive leaders tend to have compassion and are respectful to their employees. In turn, employees feel valued and empowered. Still, supportive leadership can have some pitfalls. For instance, a supportive leader may lose recognition as a manager if she only steps in when problems arise and be less involved in the overall workflow and realization of the organization's goals.

12. Situational Leadership Styles

Situational theories of leadership stress the significant influence of the environment and the situation on leadership. Situational leadership is a leadership style that has been developed and studied by Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey. Situational leadership refers to when the leader or manager of an organization must adjust his style to fit the development level of the followers he is trying to influence. It is an effective way of leadership because it adapts to the team's needs and sets a beneficial balance for the whole organization.

Two of these theories include:

- **Hersey and Blanchard's leadership styles:** Hersey and Blanchard's model is one of the best-known situational theories. First published in 1969, this model describes four primary styles of leadership, including:
 1. The **telling style** is characterized by telling people what to do.
 2. The **selling style** involves leaders convincing followers to buy into their ideas and messages.
 3. The **participating style** is marked by allowing group members to take a more active role in the decision-making process.
 4. The **delegating style** involves taking a hands-off approach to leadership and allowing group members to make the majority of decisions.
- **Blanchard's SLII leadership styles:** Later, Blanchard expanded upon the original Hersey and Blanchard model to emphasize how the developmental and skill level of learners influences the style that should be used by leaders. Blanchard also described four different learning styles, including:
 1. The **directing style** involves giving orders and expecting obedience but offers little in the way of guidance and assistance.
 2. The **coaching style** means giving lots of orders, but leaders also give lots of support.
 3. The **supporting style** is an approach that offers plenty of help, but very little direction.
 4. The **delegating style** is low in both direction and support.