

Understanding management and leadership styles

Checklist 256



Introduction

If managers are to be effective in their role it is important for them to think consciously about how they manage – what kind of management style suits them best and will work well in their team and organisation. Adopting an appropriate style helps managers to establish rapport, trust and respect, engage their team members and build good working relationships. Conversely, adopting an inappropriate style may lead to employees becoming disengaged or demotivated. Similarly, managers who adopt a style that is at odds with the ethos of their organisation are unlikely to be successful.

In the twentieth century management style was seen as primarily about how managers exercised their authority to get work done and successfully meet objectives. There was also a perception that there was one best way to manage which would achieve the best results in every situation. Before the 1980s a 'command and control' style was generally seen as the norm. Later, more collaborative and coaching styles began to be favoured with the aim of promoting motivation and engagement among employees. Today there is certainly a stronger emphasis on management style as the way in which managers relate to people, especially those who report to them. There is now also a growing belief that managers need to find a style which is authentic for them and that they will need to adjust their style according to the context – the culture of the organisation where they work, the nature of the tasks to be completed and the characteristics and expectations of their team members.

The use of the term 'leadership style' has become much more common in recent years and has largely replaced the term 'management style' in the work of management thinkers. Often the distinction between the two is unclear. There is an ongoing debate about the concepts of management and leadership with some seeing them as different and distinct and others seeing leadership as an aspect of management which is not just the prerogative of senior managers but can be exercised by everyone in their area of responsibility. One helpful approach has been put forward by Henry Mintzberg in his book *Managing*. Here he suggests that although management and leadership are conceptually distinct it is difficult to separate the two in day to day practice.

For these reasons, this checklist does not attempt to define management as opposed to leadership style but introduces a range of the most well-known models and approaches, as well as providing an action checklist to help managers assess, develop and adapt their personal management practice and style.

Definition

Management or leadership style is the manner in which managers exercise their authority in the workplace and ensure that their objectives are achieved. It covers how managers plan and organise work in their area of responsibility and, in particular, about how they relate to, and deal with their colleagues and team members. The key components of management and leadership style are attitudes and behaviours, including: what a manager says; how they say it; the example they set; their body language; and their general conduct and demeanour.

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Some models of management and leadership styles

Rensis Likert

Early theories about management and leadership style focused primarily on the manner by which authority was exercised. Based on research carried out at the University of Michigan in the 1950s, Rensis Likert identified four different styles:

- **exploitative/authoritative** – the leader has little trust or confidence in his subordinates, manages by issuing orders and uses fear and punishment as motivators
- **benevolent/authoritative** – the leader has some trust in his workers but treats them in a condescending and paternalistic manner
- **consultative** – the leader shows trust and confidence towards subordinates, seeks their opinions and ideas, but retains decision making power
- **participative** – the leader trusts his subordinates completely, seeks and acts on their ideas and involves them in setting goals

Likert's research suggested that consultative and participative styles were more effective, but he did not consider the context in which management was being carried out.

The Tannenbaum Schmidt Leadership Continuum

An early contribution to the literature on leadership styles was made by Robert Tannenbaum and Warren H Schmidt back in the 1950s. They looked at the extent to which a manager exerts authority or control and the degree to which subordinates have freedom to act on their own initiative. They proposed a 'leadership continuum' consisting of seven stages moving from a situation where the manager makes all the decisions to a context where the manager permits team members make decisions independently within pre-designated limits. Seven styles are identified: tells, persuades, shows, consults, asks, shares and involves.

They further suggested that a good manager will be able to judge the capabilities of the team and move between points on the continuum accordingly. Over time, as abilities develop, the manager may choose to accord a greater level of freedom while retaining overall responsibility for the work.

Theory X and theory Y

Douglas McGregor, working in the 1960s, believed that management style was determined by the manager's assumptions about human nature. Based on his research, he identified two broad sets of beliefs which he labelled theory X and theory Y.

Theory X suggests that human beings have an inherent dislike of work and need to be controlled and directed if they are to achieve objectives. This leads to autocratic and paternalistic management styles.

Theory Y sees work as a natural part of life from which people gain a sense of satisfaction. Workers can be motivated to give their best by respect and recognition. This leads to more consultative and participative management styles.

McGregor believed that while both styles could be effective, theory X management could lead to demotivation and low levels of performance, whilst conversely, theory Y management could produce high levels of motivation and performance.

The managerial grid

Working in the 1950s and 60s, Robert R Blake and Jane S Mouton identified two drivers of managerial behaviour: concern for getting the job done and concern for the people involved. To demonstrate how an individual manager's style is affected by their level of concern for these two factors, they used a nine by nine grid. (See Related models below). This showed five basic management styles:

1. **Impoverished management** – little concern for either the task or the people. This style involves little more than going through the motions, doing only enough to get by.
2. **Authority-obedience** – high levels of concern for task and low for people. This represents a controlling style, close to the traditional 'command and control' approach, but runs the risk of damaging human relationships.

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3. **Country club leadership** – high levels of concern for people and low for task.
This is seen as accommodating – it may create a warm and friendly working environment but at the cost of getting the job done efficiently.
4. **Team management** – high levels of concern for both task and people.
This is seen as the most effective style with the potential for high achievement.
5. **Middle of the road management** – moderate level of concern for task and people.
This achieves a balance between task and performance but is likely to perpetuate the status quo rather than achieve notable success.

William B Reddin's 3D theory

Reddin (1970) also focused on concern for the task and concern for people, which he defined as Task Orientation (TO) and Relationship Orientation (RO). He introduced the idea that particular styles might be more appropriate in some contexts than others. Starting from four basic styles: related (high RO), integrated (high RO and TO), dedicated (low RO) and separated (low RO and TO), he added a third dimension, depending on how appropriately and therefore efficiently the style was used. (See Related Models).

Style	Inappropriately used	Appropriately used
Related	Missionary	Developer
Integrated	Compromiser	Executive
Dedicated	Autocrat	Benevolent autocrat
Separated	Deserter	Bureaucrat

Situational leadership

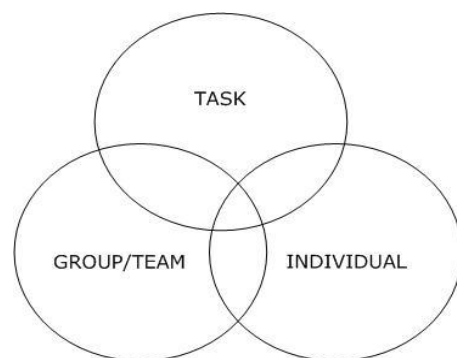
Following on from the work of Bill Reddin, Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, writing in the late 1980s, further developed the idea that different situations require different types of leadership. As the name suggests, their situational leadership theory (See Related models below) states that leaders need to be ready to adjust their style to suit the context. They saw the willingness and ability of subordinates to carry out the tasks allocated to them as the key factor in selecting the most appropriate leadership style. Four leadership styles were identified, based on the level of support and direction required:

- a **telling/directing** style when they are both unwilling and unable
- a **selling/coaching** style when there is some competence but a lack of commitment
- a **participating/supporting** style where they are competent but unwilling or insecure
- a **delegating** style where competence and commitment are both high

Action-centred leadership

Another situational approach to leadership is action-centred leadership, made famous by John Adair. Action-centred leadership is perhaps more of an approach than a style, but it is very widely-taught on management and leadership courses and used by leaders globally, particularly in the United Kingdom.

Adair suggests that leaders need to be attentive to task needs, group needs and individual needs. The most effective leaders balance all three areas, as demonstrated by the Venn diagram below. However, the leader may need to vary the degree of emphasis given to each of the three components in response to the situation at any point in time.



Transactional leadership

In the 1970s and 1980s the transactional model of leadership was dominant. This is based on an exchange between leader and follower where the interests of both parties are served. The efforts made by followers to achieve organisational aims are exchanged for specific rewards, which may be financial or non-financial.

Whilst the idea of transactional leadership may lack the dynamism of other approaches, it may well be the case that it accurately describes practice in many workplaces. Additionally, this kind of leadership can be particularly effective in emergency or conflict situations when all parties are able to see a tangible benefit.

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Bernard M Bass felt that effective leaders needed to exercise two transactional elements: contingent reward and management by exception. Contingent reward refers to the agreed exchange process between leaders and followers (e.g. leaders giving a salary or a bonus, in exchange for the efforts and hard work of their followers); whilst management by exception is characterised by corrective criticism and giving feedback when things go wrong.

Transformational leadership

The term 'transformational leadership' was first used by James V Downton in 1973 and was popularised by James MacGregor Burns in his 1978 book *Leadership*. It remains the predominant leadership approach in the literature and has also had a significant impact on the way that modern leaders behave.

Transformational leadership involves the engagement of followers and therefore transformational leaders are often charismatic. Accounts of transformational leaders differ, but most focus on how the leader can fulfil the development needs of their followers. In uncertain times, it has been suggested, employees want to feel inspired and empowered by their leaders, and therefore transformational leadership fits well with the modern age.

There has been a huge amount of writing devoted to transformational leadership over the past two to three decades, so the focus here will be on the key thinkers:

Bernard M Bass and Bruce J Avolio

In an echo of Robert Tannenbaum and Warren H Schmidt's work, Bass devised a leadership continuum, from transformational leadership to laissez-faire leadership, with transactional leadership in the middle. Transformational leadership, for him, involved four factors:

1. **Idealised influence/charisma:** The leader is a strong role model whom followers seek to emulate. Leaders have strong moral and ethical principles and as a result, are well-respected.
2. **Inspirational motivation:** Followers are encouraged to do more than the bare minimum due to the inspirational communication and high expectations provided by the leader.
3. **Intellectual stimulation:** The leader encourages followers to be creative, innovative and to challenge their own beliefs and those of the organisation.
4. **Individualised consideration:** A supportive climate is provided with coaches and advisors assisting followers. Delegation is encouraged to support the development of employees.

James M Kouzes and Barry S Posner

James M Kouzes and Barry S Posner describe five factors of excellent leadership that they believe anyone can learn to incorporate into their leadership approach:

1. **Model the way:** be clear about your values and philosophy
2. **Compelling vision:** you need to create a vision that followers can use to guide both their day-to-day behaviour and their own dreams and visions
3. **Challenge the process:** willingness to challenge the status quo and innovate is seen as key
4. **Enable others to act:** collaborate, trust and encourage others
5. **Encourage the heart:** authentic reward and recognition is also seen as important.

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus

The qualities of a transformational leader were identified by Bennis and Nanus as:

1. Having a clear vision for the future
2. Being "social architects" for their organisations: communicating a direction and form for their organisations that others could follow
3. Trust created by consistency and clarity: leaders need to make their positions clear and stand by them
4. Positive self-regard: this is about having an awareness of your strengths and weaknesses – but then concentrating on what you're good at, rather than dwelling on your weak points.

Transformational leadership is thus seen by all these authors as being characterised by certain competencies and qualities. Common themes of these qualities include: having a vision, emotional intelligence, charisma and being consistent and clear.

Daniel Goleman on leadership styles

In an article for Harvard Business Review in 2000 (see Additional resources below), Goleman reported on research into the leadership styles of over 3,000 executives worldwide carried out by consulting firm Hay McBer. The findings revealed six distinct leadership styles, each emerging from varying elements of emotional intelligence:

- **coercive** leader – one who demands the instant compliance of others
- **authoritative** leader – one who marshals others towards their vision
- **affiliative** leader – one who creates emotional connections and seeks harmony
- **democratic** leader – one who seeks consensus achieved through participation
- **pacesetter** leader – one who expects excellence from others; encouraging self-direction
- **coaching** leader – one who seeks to develop and equip others for the future

Goleman believes that leaders need a multitude of styles to fit the context at any given time, with an ability to adapt when necessary. The modern style of 'heroic leadership' follows this multi-styled approach – the notion of the manager as a chameleon. However, managers need to be mindful that a constant switching of styles can confuse those they are trying to lead.

Modern literature on management and leadership styles puts emotional intelligence at the heart of management and leadership and argues that it is more effective to engage the voluntary effort of employees rather than use coercion. The development of 'soft' skills such as empathy, honesty, listening and trust-building are seen as the lynchpins for success today.

Henry Mintzberg on managing

In his 2009 publication *Managing* (see Additional resources below), Mintzberg approaches management as a practice and introduces the art-craft-science triangle as a means of identifying the many different managerial styles.

- art – this is an insightful management style grounded in intuition; focusing on visions and ideas
- craft – this is an engaging management style based upon experience
- science – this is a cerebral style, deliberated and analytical.

Mintzberg raises the interesting question of whether personal styles are influenced by nature or nurture – innate character or experience and his answer is both. From his study of 29 managers across different sectors, he discovered that personal style had remarkably little impact on what the managers did. This is because, he argues, context matters. Mintzberg challenges Goleman's notion of the manager as the chameleon, believing rather that the most effective managers are a natural 'fit' with their work context. Whilst he concedes that a degree of flexibility and adaptability is necessary, trying to be someone or something you aren't, is not the most conducive way to manage.

Mintzberg also looked at how managers view their role in the context of those they are managing. He identified three different views:

- at the top – in control and in authority
- in the centre – at the heart, with activities revolving around them
- throughout – operating in a network; forging links far and wide

How managers see their position has a strong bearing on the management style they are likely to adopt. Mintzberg points out that there are a myriad of combinations of management styles, and criticizes his predecessors for attempting to pigeon-hole managers into specific categories when, in truth, one size doesn't always fit all.

Authentic leadership

Recent corporate, financial and governmental scandals and misconduct have also led to a growing interest in the related idea of authentic leadership. This focuses on being genuine, honest and trustworthy in your leadership style. Authentic leaders must 'live their values,' showing that they practise what they preach, in order for their followers to see them as authentic. An important aspect of an authentic leadership style is self-knowledge, although there is also a strong emphasis on knowing others and knowing your organisational culture. This enables you to strike the right balance between being an authentic, true version of yourself and fitting in to your company or organisation. Key writers on authentic leadership include Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, and Bill George.

Action checklist

1. Know yourself

Assessing your personal management style can be an uncomfortable process. However it is important to understand what you actually are and how you actually behave not just what you think you should be or should do. If you do not understand this, you will never know what needs to change.

Looking at the models described above, ask yourself where you fit in. Think about which styles you feel most comfortable with. What are your preferred ways of working? What motivates you? How do you communicate with your colleagues and team members? You may wish to complete a diagnostic test - tests administered by HR professionals are generally recommended as opposed to online tests which may have no sound theoretical basis – but you can also gain powerful insights by consulting with your colleagues. Consider the styles you may need to adopt to suit your individual context as well as your natural approach to managing and think about what your organisation, team, peers and colleagues expect of you?

2. Look at your work habits

How do you manage your time? How do you set work priorities? How organised are you? Do you focus on formal team and one to one meetings or do you prefer to manage by walking about?

3. Think about how others see you

Reflect on how your colleagues and team members interact with you. How do they react when you ask them to complete a task or comment on their performance? Look at times when things have gone well or badly and try to identify how your own behaviour contributed to these outcomes.

How we see ourselves may be at odds with how others do. Ask a few people whom you trust and respect how they see your management style and seek opinions from superiors, peers and subordinates. In practice, the views of these groups may differ considerably so you will need to find a balance between them and be honest with yourself about which of them strike a chord with you.

4. Take account of the context in which you work

Mintzberg (2009) comments on the importance of context in partnership with style and refers to a symbiotic relationship, where 'style matters and context matters, but mostly they matter together'. Think first about the organisation you work for. What kind of management structure is in place? How are objectives set and how is performance managed across the organisation? What are the accepted behavioural and cultural norms? Do you work in a high pressure environment or are things more informal and relaxed? How well do you think you are fitting in? Then focus on the immediate context by asking questions such as: What motivates your team members? What do they expect from you? How much guidance and support do they need? Are they used to working autonomously? The answers may vary depending on age, educational level or cultural background as well as experience and familiarity with the work. What may be acceptable to one person may not be acceptable to another.

5. Identify areas for adjustment or development

Think about your strengths and weaknesses and any problems that have become apparent. Are there any areas where you need to develop your skills, adjust to the team you are leading, or adapt to the wider culture

of your organisation? Consider what you need to work on and decide how you will go about this. Can you get advice from your line manager or can you find a mentor with whom you can talk things through? Would structured training in skills such as time management, communication or presentation be appropriate?

Remember that an element of flexibility will be needed. Monitor your approach to managing and leading on a regular basis. Be honest with yourself about what is working well and what is not effective. Always be prepared to make changes in line with changing circumstances and conditions.

The key point is that if you understand yourself (i.e. your strengths and weaknesses and how you approach your work) then it is easier to determine what adjustments or developments you need to make to suit the current situation. If your management style is inconsistent with the dominant organisational norm, then you cannot hope to optimise your performance.

Potential pitfalls

Managers should avoid:

- ignoring the opinions of superiors, peers and subordinates when assessing managerial style
- trying to imitate others or squeezing themselves into a mould that works for other people
- riding roughshod over the accepted style and culture in their organisation
- sticking to one style rigidly regardless of situation and context
- not being authentic and true to themselves in whichever style they adopt

National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership

This checklist has relevance for the following standards:

Unit AA1 Manage yourself

BA2 Provide leadership in your area of responsibility

Additional resources

Books

Leadership theory and practice, Peter G Northouse
Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2013

A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about studying leadership, 2nd ed, Brad Jackson and Ken Parry
London: Sage, 2011

A manager's guide to leadership: an action learning approach, Mike Pedler, John Burgoyne and Tom Boydell
London: McGraw-Hill, 2010
This title is also available as an [e-book](#)

Leadership styles, Tony Kippenberger
Oxford: Capstone, 2002

Test your management style, John Wilson
London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000

This is a selection of books available for loan to members from the CMI library. More information at: www.managers.org.uk/library

Journal Articles

Leadership that gets results, Daniel Goleman
Harvard Business Review, March/April 2000, vol 78 issue 2, pp 78-90

Leadership styles: a powerful model, Pierre Casse
Training Journal, January 2011, pp 46-51

This is a selection of journal articles available for members to download from CMI's Library. More information at: www.managers.org.uk/library.

Related checklists

Empowerment (048)
Leading from the middle (041)
Understanding organisational culture (232)

Related thinkers

Daniel Goleman Emotional intelligence (053)
Douglas McGregor: theory X and theory Y (026)
Henry Mintzberg: a great generalist (011)
Robert R Blake and Jane Mouton: the managerial grid (038)
Warren Bennis: leadership guru (039)

Related models

Adair action centred leadership
Managerial grid
McGregor's theory X and theory Y
Reddin's 3D style model
Situational leadership
Tannenbaum and Schmidt leadership continuum
Transformational leadership

This is one of many checklists available to all CMI members. For more information please contact

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