

Understanding Leadership Styles Checklist 256



Introduction

Whilst there are numerous suggested leadership styles, the need to be authentic as a leader and to have a style that suits you, your personality and the people you lead is widely accepted. Adopting an appropriate style is likely to build a good relationship between a leader and their team members, helping to establish rapport, trust and respect. Conversely, leaders who adopt or display an inappropriate style are unlikely to be successful in their job. Some employees may become disenfranchised, disengaged and uninspired when faced with a leader who lacks the self-awareness and know-how to pick the right kind of leadership style. Reflecting on how you lead is an essential aspect of being a good leader.

Your 'leadership style' largely refers to how you deal with people, particularly those employees reporting to you within your organisation. In his book *Leadership Styles*, Tony Kippenberger (See Additional Resources below) suggests that a less deferential and more egalitarian society has meant that there is now a need for leaders to actively assess and improve their style in order to engage followers.

A shift away from manufacturing and heavy industry towards knowledge and service-based industries in the economies of many developed nations over the past few decades has also influenced leadership style. More collaborative and coaching styles are seen to be effective in encouraging the motivation and customer focus on which service industries depend.

It is likely that it will be necessary to adapt your leadership style to a certain degree throughout your career to depending on the type of organisation you are employed by, your colleagues and your working environment. An awareness of differing leadership styles can help you decide which is appropriate for you and your organisation. This checklist describes some of the most popular theories of and approaches to leadership styles before going on to explore how being aware and thinking about leadership styles can be useful in practice.

Definition

'Leadership style' is the general manner, outlook, attitude and behaviour of a leader, particularly in relation to his or her colleagues and team members. This can be expressed in various ways including: what a leader says; how they say it; the example they set; their body language; and their general conduct and character.

Some models of leadership styles

Robert Tannenbaum and Warren H Schmidt: The 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 proposed the idea of a 'leadership continuum' consisting of seven stages. Each stage of the continuum involves a decreasing use of managerial authority alongside an increasing level of subordinate freedom. The continuum progresses from the first stage, where the manager makes all the

decisions and announces them to their team to the final stage where the manager permits team members to function and make decisions within pre-designated limits.

Manager makes decisions and announces it	Manager “sells” decisions	Manager presents ideas & invites questions	Manager presents tentative decision subject to change	Manager presents problem gets suggestions makes decision	Manager defines limits asks group to make decisions	Manager permits subordinates to function within limits defined by superior
---	----------------------------------	---	--	---	--	---

The different stages of the continuum effectively describe different leadership styles. Typically, leaders will move through the continuum, giving more responsibility to their subordinates over time – assuming the subordinates are willing to follow the direction of the leader and are performing at a suitable level. Tannenbaum and Schmidt acknowledged that style will vary depending on the leader, those who are led and the situation, and leaders need to bear this in mind when choosing their style from the continuum.

Whilst leaders may lose some degree of control as they move through the continuum it is important to remember that the leader is always ultimately accountable for the actions of their team. Therefore, moving through the continuum requires a significant level of trust between the leader and their team. Contemporary leaders would be unlikely to regularly use the first, “command and control” style or stage to any great extent, and in most cases it should only be used as a last resort.

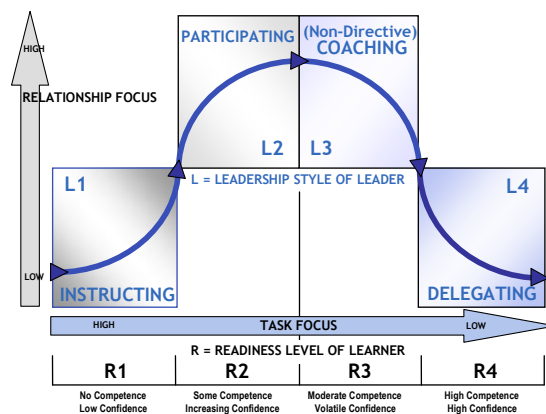
Situational leadership

The need to take account of the context or specific situation within which a leader is operating, was explored in more detail by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard. Their situational leadership theory followed on from the work of Bill Reddin who developed a 3-D model of management style (See Related Models below) and has been updated and refined several times.

As the name suggests, situational leadership theory states that different situations call for different leadership styles. Leaders need to be ready to adjust their style to suit the context. This relates largely to the competence and development level of other team members.

Four leadership styles (directing, coaching, supporting and delegating) are classified according to the level of supportive and directive behaviour required in that situation. Supportive styles of leadership tend to involve two-way communication. Concepts such as social and emotional support, praising and listening are important. In contrast, directive styles of leadership tend to involve one-way communication from the leader to their colleagues and the focus is on providing clarity, goals and direction.

The diagram below, based on a redefinition of the four types of leadership by Peter Cumpstey and Philip Lindsay, illustrates how they are affected by supportive and directive behaviour and the development level of followers.



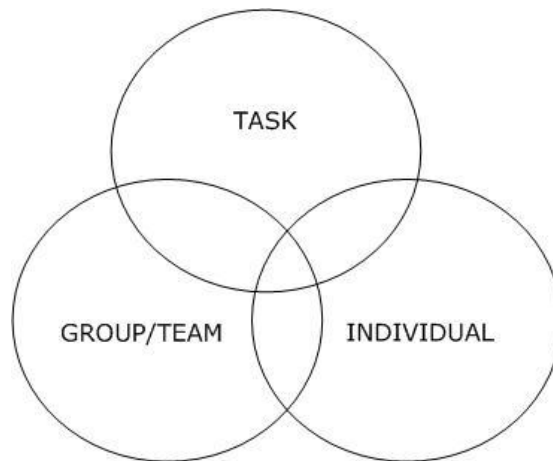
From Pathways Plus Strategic Management and Leadership Level 7: Being a Strategic Leader/Strategic Leadership Practice, Chartered Management Institute, revised ed. 2010, page 69. Reproduced by permission.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

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 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.

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.

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

There are numerous questionnaires and tests that organisations and individuals can use to evaluate leadership styles. One of the most famous is the Multi Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bernard M Bass, but there are many others available online and in printed formats. For an in-depth evaluation of your leadership style, consider discussing your style with a trusted colleague or coach for a second opinion.

2. Know your team

Consider your team members in turn and what kind of style might suit them. Their time in post and experience will influence how much support and guidance they need. Are they happy to be delegated to or do they need a lot of direction? If you are new in your leadership post, you may find that your team is used to working autonomously, or you may find that they need a lot of guidance. Consider whether what has been done before is the best way forward, and which style will help the team with any new challenges or changes that are on the horizon.

You will need to be careful not to pre-judge people, but at the same time take into account that there may be generational or cultural differences in some cases. For example, it has been argued that members of “Generation Y” (a term usually used to refer to individuals born in the 1980s and 1990s) have different expectations of the workplace than the generation that preceded them (“Generation X”). It has been suggested that they are typically seeking fulfilment at work – not just a pay cheque – and therefore tend to prefer leaders and managers who put time and effort into their development by coaching and mentoring them. Employees of all ages are likely to be less accepting of a ‘command and control’ style nowadays, and are likely to want some input and a voice in decision-making.

3. Consider the context

A number of factors are likely to be crucial when considering the right leadership style for your organisation. Is it a private company or a not-for-profit voluntary or governmental organisation? Is it currently doing well financially and/or succeeding as a company? Is it currently undergoing a lot of change? Is it a small start-up or a huge multinational conglomerate? These and many other questions are likely to influence the kind of leadership style to adopt.

4. Share best practice with your team

Other people in your team may already be leaders or may aspire to a leadership position in the organisation. Even those with no leadership responsibilities or plans to take a managerial role at your organisation may be able to act as leaders, even in junior positions. Openly discussing the right kind of leadership approach to take, and sharing your knowledge of leadership styles will be beneficial to everyone. You may be surprised by what the members of your team say they are looking for in a leader. Open discussion can also help to clarify what people can expect from you as a leader and help build rapport between yourself and your team.

5. Continue to evaluate your leadership style

Whichever leadership style you adopt, it’s unlikely to be the case that you stick with that style throughout your career. Take some time every few months to consider whether the leadership style you have adopted is working out for you and whether it can be adjusted or changed to make things better. Be prepared to vary it according to the situation, rather than having a single style all the time. One of the most important aspects of leadership is the ability to reflect honestly and question yourself, so effective evaluation of your leadership style should contribute to better leadership practice.

Managers should avoid

- failing to reflect upon the effect of their style on their colleagues
- 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

Unit AA2: Develop your knowledge, skills and competences

Unit BA2: Provide leadership in your area of responsibility

Additional resources

Books

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

We are all leaders: leadership is not a position – it's a mindset, Fredrik Arnander
Chichester: Capstone, 2013
This title is also available as an [e-book](#)

The leadership challenge: how to make extraordinary things happen in organisations, 5th ed, James M Kouzes and Barry S Posner
San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass, 2012
This title is also available as an [e-book](#)

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](#)

Why should anyone be led by you?: what it takes to be an authentic leader, Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, 2006
Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press

The Bass handbook of leadership: theory, research and managerial implications, 4th ed, Bernard M Bass and Ruth Bass
New York NY: Free Press, 2008

Leadership styles, Tony Kippenberger
Oxford: Capstone, 2002

Test your leadership skills, Brian O'Neill
London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000

Effective leadership: a modern guide to developing leadership skills, revised ed., John Adair
Pan: London, 1988

Leadership and the one minute manager, Kenneth Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi and Drea Zigarmi
London: Collins, 1986

Leaders: the strategies for taking charge, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus
New York NY: Harper & Row, 1985

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

Journal Articles

How to choose a leadership pattern, Robert Tannenbaum and Warren H Schmidt
Harvard Business Review, Mar/Apr 1958 vol 36 no 2, pp95-101

This article is available to download from CMI's library. More information at www.managers.org.uk/library.

Related checklist

Management styles (236)

Related models

Adair's Action-Centred Leadership
Reddin's 3D style model
Situational leadership
Tannenbaum & Schmidt leadership continuum
Transformational leadership

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

t: 01536 204222

e: enquiries@managers.org.uk

w: www.managers.org.uk

Chartered Management Institute
Management House, Cottingham Road, Corby NN17 1TT.

This publication is for general guidance only. The publisher and expert contributors disclaim all liability for any errors or omissions. You should make appropriate inquiries and seek appropriate advice before making any business, legal or other decisions.

Revised November 2013