

Leadership styles: What you need to know

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What is leadership?

“Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.” — DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

It is the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal.

What is style?

A style refers to characteristics and behaviors through which one does things. This refers to the distinctive art of something.

Leadership style

It is therefore a distinctive manner through which someone gets to achieve what they want through other people. That is, it refers to a leader's characteristic behaviours when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Leadership style is how a leader manages resources and the individuals in their team. It is in how a leader exercises their authority to achieve a certain goal they may have set for their teams or they have been given to achieve by someone higher up the ranks of leadership.

Different styles suit different environments and different types of organisations. Depending on the type of organisation that one is running, certain styles may fit while others may not fit the organisation.

I will explore with you the best leadership styles that best-fit businesses and how effective they have been and they are.

The Six Business Leadership Styles

1. Autocratic Leadership Style
2. Visionary Leadership Style
3. Affiliative Leadership Style
4. Democratic Leadership Style
5. Pace-Setting Leadership
6. Coaching Leadership Style

1. Autocratic Style

In this leadership style, the leader has the final say. The leader makes choices and decisions according to what they feel and see on other people and the organisation at large. He also clearly outlines the way he wants tasks to be done and he alone has a say on what has to be done at what time. This type of leader rarely depends on the advice of other people. The question now is how ideal this kind of leadership is. Who can adopt it and will this bring success?

According to a survey of 14 033 employees by Leadership IQ:

- 39% of the people do not like a leader who retains the final say at all
- 21% of people see some benefit in a leader who retains the final say
- 11% of people like a leader who outlines everything on how they need a task to be done
- 63% of the people do not like a leader who tells them how to do tasks

This gives a clear sign that on average, most people find this type of leadership unpopular. That goes on to say this type of leader is going to find themselves clashing with their subordinates more often than not.

I will say that this leadership style though not so popular among many people is necessary. That is I times when decisions are urgent and in tasks that should be error-free, a leader must make a decision solely based on their experience and judgement.

However, it is key to note that this style promotes dependency and no personal development among subordinates.

2. Visionary Style

Do you feel so confident in your innovative abilities? Are you in a crisis as an organisation? Then this might be just the right style for you to implement.

In this type of leadership style, the leader outlines a new strategic direction that they are to take and the reasons why they are taking the new route. This style is best suited for times when the organisation is being outcompeted by rival businesses and the chance to match competition are necessary.

According to research by the Harvard Business Review, *Why Visionary Leadership Fails*, (by Nufer Yasin Ates, Murat Tarakci, Jeanine P. Porck, Daan van Knippenberg, and Patrick Groenen), visionary leadership fails when you face middle managers who are not aligned with your line of thought. That is to say, a visionary leader faces the risk of a fall out with subordinates when implementing this leadership style.

I will then conclude that this leadership style is a risk worth if you see a direction with an opportunity that others cannot see. You will however then have to combine it with some authoritative style like the autocratic. It however best suits small companies where the manager does not have many protocols to follow in decision-making.

3. Affiliative Style

In this type of leadership, the leader's focus is on building relationships with employees. This kind of leader is highly team-oriented and team relationship-building focused. The main goal of using this style is in enhancing employee trust, and ensuring that overall team connection is present.

Elements of Affiliative Style

- Strong people focus
- Strong moral compass
- Good communication
- Flexibility

This style ensures that employees have less stress and thereby enhancing work performance.

Research by John Gatithi Wachira, Dr Kabare Karanja and Prof. Mike Iravo of 35729 middle-level staff in the 20 commercial state corporations in Kenya revealed that:

- there was a positive and significant relationship between affiliative leadership and organizational performance.
- This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 11.524 which is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96 (Kothari, 2011) and a p-value of less than the conventional 0.05.

Since high employee engagement has a positive impact on customer satisfaction according to research, it goes on to say that organisations run using this type of leadership style tend to excel in performance.

The major drawback with this type of leadership can be creating a complacency attitude thereby reducing productivity in work.

4. Democratic Style

At first, you may think it is the same as affiliative leadership, but the main aim of the democratic style is to get as much input of ideas from as many people as possible. Leaders tend to focus on the free flow of ideas in this type of leadership style. This type of leadership is also called the participative leadership style.

In a way, this type of leadership is similar to affiliative in that it promotes teamwork.

Traits of democratic leaders

- High Intelligence
- Creativity
- Fairness
- Open-minded

For organisations that have this type of leadership, high employee engagement, high productivity and high customer satisfaction rate are ever-present. This type of leadership promotes the diversity of ideas and thereby enhancing innovativeness.

Major drawbacks may include slow decision making, ineffective in crises and for some it may be a sign of lack of expertise. There are high chances of quarrels and rejection as each employee has input in the decision making process.

This leadership style works best in situations where group members are skilled and eager to share their knowledge. It is also important to have plenty of time to allow people to contribute, develop a plan, and then vote on the best course of action. Therefore, if you are to use this style consider your staff and your clock!

5. Pacesetting Style

These kinds of leaders demand a high standard of work. They demand high performance from their employees. Pacesetting leadership is when a leader sets an example from the front. Think of athletics in a long-distance run, a pacesetter will be in front and everyone that follows will try to match their standard. This same principle applies to the organisation run with a pacesetting leadership style. The leader sets an example and demands their subordinate to match or exceed their standards with minimal to non-supervision.

Though so effective for immediate and quick results, this type of leadership is barely hard to sustain due to its high standards. A sense of dependency can also develop in subordinates as they just wait to follow an example available.

Pacesetting is most suitable for highly motivated followers. It can be of great use when results are only the main focus. For example, consider a time of crisis like the lockdown, the only main focus is keeping your business running and that implies results are only what matters.

Effects of Pacesetting

- Business goals are quickly achieved
- Full effective utilisation of team competency
- Swift addressing issues
- High energy and outstanding performance shortly
- No feedback to employees most of the times

- Employees are stressed and overwhelmed most of the times
- Work often becomes repetitive and boring

6. Coaching Style

First defined by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard in the late 1960s. This style focuses mainly on each employee's development. Coaching leaders rather than just focus on what the employee gives to the organisation in terms of value, also focus on what the organisation gives to the employee in terms of value. This is a long terms goal-focused leadership and it involves direct interaction between the manager and the employee.

Coaching leaders are very effective communicators and are people willing to allow their subordinates to learn from new challenges. Constant evaluation is ever-present to see the progress being made by the employee.

This leadership style is most suited for organisations that are lacking a particular skill and are running ineffectively. Coaching leaders can also enable the alignment of the organisation's goals and culture with the career and personal aspirations of the people who work there. Thus, this style is more effective where employee engagement can be improved to keep the talent developed.

Impacts of the Coaching Style

- Personal development is promoted
- Employee engagement is improved
- New opportunities are created
- Not effective where immediate results are of major importance
- Difficult to implement where there is an existing culture and employees are resistant

Conclusion

While there may be many different styles, it is up to the leader to determine which style best suits their situation. Are you trying to develop talent, then coach. Are you in need of immediate results, then pace set? Are you looking for new ideas and trying to get everyone involved, then be democratic. If it is that you are trying to build unity and address the concerns of your team, then be affiliative. For new opportunity exploration, try to be visionary. If finally, it is that you are running under pressure in need of immediate results and trying to save your organisation that is on the brink of failure, then be a bit autocratic.

The situation an organisation is in determines the type of leadership style that may be necessary. I would not see it possible that one manager could change from one style to another. That would be a bit confusing to their subordinates. Rather from the onset, let managers learn to be good leaders rather than managers. With that, I will leave the definition of a good leader with the quote,

“A leader is best when people barely know he exists when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.” —Lao Tzu

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