

Leadership Styles

Rainbow Team Leader Meeting 3/11/15

A leadership style refers to a leader's characteristic behaviours when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Researchers have described many different types of leadership styles. The following are just a few of the most prominent leadership frameworks and styles that have been identified.

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. In the study, schoolchildren were assigned to one of three groups with an authoritarian, democratic or laissez-fair leader. The children were then led in an arts and crafts project while researchers observed the behaviour of children in response to the different styles of leadership.

Authoritarian Leadership (Autocratic)

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. This style of leadership is strongly focused on both command by the leader and control of the followers. There is also a clear division between the leader and the members. Authoritarian leaders make decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group.

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. Authoritarian leadership is best applied to situations 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 thing 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.

Participative Leadership (Democratic)

Lewin's study found that participative leadership, also known as democratic leadership, is typically the most effective leadership style. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members. In Lewin's study, children in this group were less productive than the members of the authoritarian group, but their contributions were of a much higher quality.

Participative leaders encourage group members to participate but retain the final say in the decision-making process. 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.

Delegative (Laissez-Faire) Leadership

Researchers found that children under delegative leadership, also known as laissez-faire leadership, were the least productive of all three groups. The children in this group also made more demands on the leader, showed little cooperation and were unable to work independently.

Delegative leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave decision-making up to group members. While this style can be useful in situations involving highly qualified experts, it often leads to poorly defined roles and a lack of motivation.

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 and work.

Observations About Lewin's Leadership Styles

"The autocratic-authoritarian cluster encompasses being arbitrary, controlling, power-oriented, coercive, punitive, and close-minded. The cluster has often been described in pejorative terms. Stripped of negatives (emphasized by so many social scientists), it means taking full and sole responsibility for decision and control of followers' performance. Autocrats stress obedience, loyalty, strict adherence to roles. They make and enforce the rules. They see that decisions are carried out. Powerful autocratic leaders throughout history have often been praised for their ability to develop reliable and devoted followers and to act as the principal authority figures in establishing and maintaining order." (Bass & Bass, 2008)

"The democratic or egalitarian leadership cluster reflects concern about the followers in many different ways. Leadership is considerate, democratic, consultative and participative, employee-centered, concerned with people, concerned with maintenance of good working relations, supportive and oriented toward facilitating interaction, relationship oriented, and oriented toward group decision-making." (Bass & Bass, 2008)

Additional Leadership Styles and Models

In addition to the three styles identified by Lewin and his colleagues, researchers have described numerous other characteristic patterns of leadership. The following are just a few of the best-known:

The Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership is often identified as the single most effective style. This style was first described during the late 1970s and later expanded upon by researcher Bernard M. Bass. Some of the key characteristics of his style of leadership

are the abilities to motivate and inspire followers and to direct positive changes in groups.

Transformational leaders tend to be emotionally intelligent, energetic, and passionate. They are not only committed to helping the organization achieve its goals, but also to helping group members fulfil their potential.

Research has revealed that this style of leadership resulted in higher performance and improved group satisfaction than other leadership styles. One study also found that transformation leadership led to improved well-being among group members.

The Transactional Leadership Style

The transactional leadership style views the leader-follower relationship as a transaction. By accepting a position as a member of the group, the individual has agreed to obey the leader. In most situations, this involves the employer-employee relationship, and the transaction focuses on the follower completing required tasks in exchanged for monetary compensation.

One of the main advantages of this leadership style is that it creates clearly defined roles. People know what they are required to do and what they will be receiving in exchange for completing these tasks. It also allows leaders to offer a great deal of supervision and direction if it is needed. Group members may also be motivated to perform well to receive rewards. One of the biggest downsides is that the transactional style tends to stifle creativity and out-of-the-box thinking.

Reflection

As you can see, there are many different ways to conceive of leadership styles. You probably have also noticed that some of these leadership styles bear many similarities to the three core styles initially described by Lewin and his colleagues

For next week take these leadership quizzes and think about your own leadership style

<http://psychology.about.com/library/quiz/bl-leadershipquizbc.htm>

<https://hbr.org/2015/06/assessment-whats-your-leadership-style>

Behaviour	Percentage of time spent on each behaviour	Ideally the percentage of time you would devote to each behaviour
Informing		
Directing		
Clarifying or Justifying		
Persuading		
Collaborating		
Brainstorming or Envisioning		
Reflecting (Quiet Time for Thinking)		
Observing		
Disciplining		
Resolving interpersonal conflicts		
Praising and/or encouraging		

Follow Up Questions

1. Is there a gap between how you should spend your energy and how you actually spend it?
2. Are there some behaviours that are taking up too much of your leadership time? Why?
3. Are there some strategies that you can employ that would move you closer to your ideal distribution of behaviour?