

# CHOOSING YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE

## GOALS:

1. To identify the differences between a boss, manager, and leader.
2. To present the leadership differences between Laissez-Faire, Transformational, Bureaucratic, Autocratic, Democratic, and Transactional leadership.
3. To encourage the advancement of a novice leader to a professionally capable and successful leader.

**PREAMBLE:** So-called and uneducated leaders in the proven skills of leadership often do what just comes naturally and what has appeared to have “worked” for them in the past. However, leadership is improved and self-assured when leaders intellectually know, choose, and perform specific and researched positive leadership behaviors.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A BOSS, MANAGER, AND LEADER:

**Boss:** A person who *oversees workers* and is responsible for *enforcing authority* within a group/company/organization.

**Manager:** A person who partially or completely *controls, leads, organizes, executes, or administers* within a group/company/organization.

Leader: A person who *leads, commands, inspires, guides, and is held accountable for successful and unsuccessful outcomes* within a group/company/organization.

## **A LEADER'S OPTIONS, STYLE, & CRITICAL THINKING CHOICES**

### **Understanding Laissez-Faire Leadership**

Definition: A leadership style representing a *hands-off, passive, and delegative* approach.

Leadership Behaviors: Information, tools, and resources related to the work/behavior are provided to the employee for the purpose of accomplishing the expected behavior/work with a high degree of autonomy for decision-making and managing their work. There is little to no supervision. The employee has the freedom to plan, organize, and do what is needed to do the job assigned or to tackle the identified problem(s).

Employee Capabilities: Performance ability requires an employee to autonomously and correctly solve problems. Acceptable productivity is a result of highly skilled, accurate decision-making and self-motivation.

### Leadership Potential Problems & Possible Resolutions:

- **Problems**: Employee autonomous behaviors have the potential to be contrary to the leader's expectations. Leadership behavior has historically been known to be overall the least effective and satisfying of the other leadership options.

- Resolution: A dated and signed job description by each employee.

## **Understanding Transformational Leadership**

Definition: A leadership style that exhibits a *direct approach and control*.

Leadership Behaviors: Firm and goal-directed inspiration is provided to employees for continual business improvement. Such goals result in decreased confusion related to leadership performance expectations. Leaders provide a clear understanding to employees so that work behaviors proceed like clockwork. Such work specificity allows employees to master their required tasks and proficiency. Consequently, the results encourage job stability and compliance with job requirements, as well as a tendency to boost performance and work efficiency.

Employee Capabilities: Work performance shows evidence of pronounced intellectual, business, social, and process abilities. There is an acquired excellence in empathic communication skills and the ability to provide support and share in the leader's future expectations of the organization.

### Leadership Potential Problems & Possible Resolutions:

- Problems: Employee requirements by a leader's continual efforts toward business progress/improvement may tend to decrease employee job satisfaction, resulting in frequent employee turnover. Optimum employee performance may not be within the capability or desire of some employees.

- Resolution: Require employees to review, sign, and date their job description which advances the progression of the organization.

## **Understanding Bureaucratic Leadership**

Definition: A leadership style that requires a *strict hierarchy chain of command*.

Leadership Behaviors: Efficiency and control of employees occur through clearly defined tasks, rules, roles, and expectations. A rigid chain of command sets forth formal policies, job descriptions, a chain of command, and decision-making at the higher levels of administration. Impersonality exists, rather than using or considering the individuality or potential/possible personal contributions of employees. Company policies are followed, and practices usually do not deviate. Behavioral and technical rules for employees define the scope of a manager's behavior and managerial decisions.

Employee Capabilities: Abilities and possible work-related contributions are usually based on technical expertise.

Leadership Potential Problems & Possible Resolutions:

- Problems: There is a chance of overt inflexibility and rigidity. Lower-level employees are often left out of input for appropriate administrative problem-solving. Communication may be slow due to many hierarchical layers.
- Resolutions: Establish clear roles and a chain of command for order, consistency, and stability. Have a clear hierarchy for

ease of tracking appropriate tasks and decisions. Increase appropriate communication methods.

## **Understanding Autocratic/Authoritarian Leadership**

Definition: A leadership style retaining *unlimited power* over employees and decisions.

Leadership Behaviors: One person makes the decisions without consultation. Behaviors are indicative of the “Self-Rule” of tasks. There is a strong focus on command—often used in situations requiring quick decisions and needed control to prevent error and task performance as directed. There is a known, recognized, and clear distinct requirement of tasks. There is obvious micromanagement to ensure performance accountability.

Employee Capabilities:

Due to the discouragement of creative thinking, innovation, and creation, adaptation to change is a challenge. However, when quick decisions are related to job expectations, the leader acts decisively to protect employees from injury; this leadership approach might be beneficial or necessary. For the inexperienced/new worker, the autocratic control of the leader helps to ensure acceptable conformity to expected behavior and work-related outcomes and a sense of assurance that performance is acceptable.

### Leadership Potential Problems & Possible Resolutions:

- **Problems:** There is a lack of employee engagement and low morale and trust. Information is often ignored which causes a tense working environment and low morale. This may lead to resistance to compliance and change. There may be resentment due to their thinking and ideas being ignored. Due to a stressful atmosphere, there may be a high turnover.
- **Resolutions:** Explain the reasons for administrative behaviors. Build a support system with employees. Build trusting relationships with employees.

### **Understanding Democratic Leadership**

Definition: A leadership style of *active participation and shared decision-making*.

Leadership Behaviors: The leader maintains final authority for decisions but gathers input and ideas from the group to reach a collaborative outcome through participation and productive communication.

Employee Capabilities: There is a building of employee trust, communication, morale, commitment, and strong relationships. Employee creativity and innovation stimulate new ideas and approaches.

### Leadership Potential Problems & Possible Resolutions:

- **Problems:** Employees may become frustrated if they feel their input is not considered valuable. The deliberate and slower

process of employee involvement in decision-making and consensus can be problematic, as clear directions often do not occur in urgent situations!

- Resolutions: The democratic process works best when collaborative employee insight and decision-making occur. Employee support occurs when there is a “buy-in” by employees to the final decision.

## **Understanding Transactional Leadership**

Definition: A leadership style *focusing on rewards and punishment*.

Leadership Behaviors: The leader creates a structured environment of requirements, rules, processes, and procedures. There is a choice of active or passive leadership behaviors.

*Active Leadership Behavior*: Leaders actively observe performance and correct mistakes. Clear expectations, organization, proactive direction, and occasional intervention are needed to ensure the status quo, order, and efficiency occur. There is a current and ongoing maintenance of structure and supervision rather than promotion of long-term visions and aspirations. Awards (i.e., raises, bonuses, or special recognition) are granted for good status quo performance and efficiency. Punishment (like reprimands) occurs due to poor performance. Promotion of current efficiency and stability is important.

*Passive Leadership Behavior*: Leaders only intervene as necessary and/or when problems occur, or quotas are not met.

### Employee Capabilities:

Employees are efficient. This leadership style is ideal for disciplined employees in a short-term work environment, rather than encouraging innovation and long-term growth.

### Possible Resolutions to Problems:

#### Active Approach:

- Observe performance and correct mistakes.
- Focus on rules, compliance, and efficiency.
- Provide a clear reward system for appropriate attention to rules, efficiency, and compliance.

#### Passive Approach:

- Allow employees to work independently but punish mistakes.
- Provide little guidance until a problem exists.
- Respond only when there is a customer complaint.

## **IN CLOSING**

It is no longer acceptable for a so-called leader to act in any leadership role without researched knowledge of appropriate administrative/leadership behavior and responsibilities. Intellectual leadership requires self-awareness, acting with integrity, and aligning actions with known and acceptable leadership values and beliefs. Such leadership ability identifies and separates the expert effective leader from the novice ineffective leader.

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.

