

Key Concept

4

LEADERSHIP

But of a good leader, who talks little, when his job is done, his aim fulfilled, they will all say 'We did this ourselves'.

Lao Tzu

Leadership is the art of influencing people so that the group is moved one step closer to its goal. A group leader may be appointed or elected (the 'designated' leader) or may emerge from the ranks as the person who most frequently or persistently performs acts of leadership (the 'indigenous' leader). Leading is an art that can be practised by any group member, not just by the official leader, although this has not always been a widely accepted view.

Leadership Theories

The dimensions of effective leadership have been the subject of intensive research and debate for more than fifty years, yet no single satisfactory theory has so far emerged. Prior to the 1930s, the *trait* theories predominated, in which it was held either that individuals are born with certain characteristics that make their emergence as leaders almost inevitable (the so-called 'great man' theory), or that such traits could be acquired through training. These theories largely failed to prove any cause-and-effect relationship between traits and effectiveness, but the popularity of listing 'desirable attributes' has a persistent history. The examples below show one early and one more recent such list:

Tead (1935)

Physical and nervous energy
Sense of purpose and direction
Enthusiasm

Stogdill (1974)

Adaptable to situations
Alert to social environment
Ambitious and achievement-oriented

Friendliness and affection	Assertive
Integrity	Co-operative
Technical mastery	Decisive
Decisiveness	Dependable
Intelligence	Dominant
Teaching Skill	Energetic
Faith	Persistent
	Self-confident
	Tolerant of stress
	Willing to assume responsibility

Pioneering studies by Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939) at the University of Iowa introduced one of the first classifications of leadership styles:

Autocratic: very directive, stresses discipline, allows little or no participation, makes all decisions, usually conservative, may be strict, patronising or benevolent. Group members may be happy with this style, or they may rebel, become dependent, or harbour resentful feelings.

Democratic: encourages group discussion and participation in decision-making, assists and encourages group members, and has confidence in members' abilities, respects their needs, treats them as peers. Group members may be happy with this style, or they may attempt to load responsibility back onto the leader.

Laissez-faire: provides little or no control or supervision, allows complete freedom to the group, gives direction or advice only if requested. Group members may be happy with this style, or they may lose interest and commitment, compete with each other, split into factions, or disintegrate.

Subsequent research efforts led to the conclusion that the 'one best style' approach was limited. Different situations were seen to call for different styles, and the research focus broadened to include the whole group and the changing conditions in which it exists at any moment. First, Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) proposed a *continuum* of styles from boss-centred to subordinate-centred, reflecting a progressively increasing range of freedom to group members to influence decisions. Later, the *situational* or *contingency* theories (e.g. Fiedler, 1967, 1978; Hersey and Blanchard, 1977; Vroom and Yetton, 1973) focused on the way a leader's effectiveness is moderated by the circumstances of the moment, such as the group composition and mood, the leader's attributes, the task, the setting and organisational environment, and so on. Eventually, the realisation that constantly shifting situations demand an impossibly high degree of versatility and flexibility on the part of the leader led to the *distributed-functions* theory (Cartwright and Zander, 1968; Katz and Kahn, 1978). This theory states that the leadership function may be and

indeed should be fulfilled by different members performing a variety of relevant behaviours. More explicitly, it advocates that any member may take a leading role if they have the information, style or skills appropriate to the situation.

For group members to initiate a leading act, they must (a) be aware that a particular function is needed, and (b) feel that they have the ability to perform it and that it is safe for them to do so (Cartwright and Zander, 1968, p. 310). The task and maintenance roles described earlier are all examples of leading behaviours, as much as any of the classical and more general managerial roles (co-ordination, planning, liaison, negotiation, etc) customarily expected only of a formal leader.

Distributed leadership does not come about by edict, but by evolution. The deliberate creation of a climate of trust and a willing (but not necessarily total) delegation of power and control on the leader's part are necessary conditions for this to occur. Distributed and situational leadership theories clearly imply that any particular leader may be right for one group and wrong for another, or effective in one situation and ineffective in another, even with the same group.

The Leader's Role

The formal leader must coordinate, unite and direct the members until such time as the group becomes more self-directing and autonomous. The leader must create opportunities along the way for leading initiatives on the part of the followers to occur and be validated, so that the completion of the task is felt to be a truly collaborative effort. In this endeavour, a leader imposed on the group from outside will most likely experience greater difficulty than will a leader who emerges either spontaneously or by election from within the group and enjoys the members' mandate to lead.

In a maturing group committed to developing into a team, the *functions* required of the leader will vary according to the degree of organisation that the group has achieved, or its stage in the life-cycle. This is clearly shown in Figure 4.1 (see p. 89), the last column of which shows the leader's changing role in detail.

The leader has two other roles of a more on-going nature: the executive role and the boundary role. The former includes responsibilities such as convening meetings and starting and finishing on time; arranging venues and facilities; providing necessary documents and materials; arranging for implementation of decisions reached, etc. The boundary role requires the leader to take responsibility for the relationship between the group and its environment, for example other groups, the parent organisation, consumers or the community at large. In this role, the leader, if caught between conflicting demands and expectations, can often experience high stress.

When a leader or other member intervenes, i.e. enters into the on-going group process for the purpose of assisting the group to pursue its goals, it is essentially an act of communication: a verbal message accompanied by nonverbal signals which hopefully reinforce rather than contradict the verbal content. The intervention may take almost any form: instruction, observation, question, suggestion, interpretation, criticism; offers of information, ideas or resources; confrontation; self-disclosure; acts and expressions of emotion that interrupt, surprise, encourage, distract, provoke or inspire.

The manner in which the group leader intervenes profoundly affects the interpersonal and developmental processes occurring in the group (Heron, 1975). With the overall responsibility of ensuring that the group survives and performs optimally, the leader's value system is also of decisive significance. His or her world view, intellectual honesty, authenticity, ethics, temperament, and concern for the best interests of the group members are of vital importance. While there is undoubtedly a mystique of leadership, rooted in mythology and history, with which followers tend to endow their leaders, in the mundane life of a typical work group, leadership depends largely on the dynamic interaction between three sets of variables: the leader, the led and the situation. In striving to provide the appropriate function and make effective interventions, leaders bring to their behaviour an *orientation* that has its roots deep in their personal system of values and beliefs. At this deeper level the origins of the leader's psychodramatic role will be located, while at the surface level of the group interactions, the social (managerial) role is more in evidence. How leaders value the world, the organisation and their fellow beings, and how they believe all of these *ought to be*, will have a profound influence on the way they enact their roles and formulate their interventions. Numerous theorists have conceptualised leadership orientations in distinctively different terms, yet most of their schemas are compatible and promote similar prescriptions as the basis of 'good' leadership. Three such schemas, all of which apply equally well to large organisations and small groups, are described next.

The Leader's Orientation

Douglas McGregor (1960) suggested that understanding leadership must start with the basic question of how leaders see themselves in relation to others, and that this in turn requires thought on the perception of human nature. He identified two sets of assumptions — Theory X and Theory Y — that he considered would influence the way leaders enact their role.

Stage of Group Development	Work Issues Facing Group	Social-Emotional Issues Facing Group	Patterns of Group Behaviour	Leadership Functions Needed
Forming	Identifying group's task and obtaining agreement about it. 'What are we here for?'	Establishing contact between members. Awareness of and uncertainty about leader. 'What will this group be like?' 'What is appropriate behaviour here?'	Dependence on leader. Politeness. Uncertainty about what to do or how to do it. A search for a sense of direction and a 'strong' leader.	Clarification of task. Promoting interaction. Enough guidance to let members feel safe. Enough freedom to let them start to take initiative.
Storming	Need to have a more detailed understanding of task, and of how it can be achieved. 'Can we achieve this task?'	Testing of leader and other members in power struggles. Personal commitment of members to the group and their ambivalence about that.	Either rebellion (especially against leader or any dominant members) or a sense of apathy, drifting hopelessness.	A sense of security: 'holding' the group through a difficult period. Showing that the leader is strong and/or competent, but not inflexible.
Norming	More detailed procedures set up for achieving task. Allocation - overtly or covertly - of roles.	Development of closer relationships. Growth of trust.	New sense of enthusiasm. Trying out new ideas, new ways of working: members beginning to take more responsibility for the group.	Modelling of appropriate behaviour by leader, along with 'shaping' of member responses and validation of helpful behaviour. Clarification of boundaries and rules.
Performing	Activity to achieve the task. Concern for quality and time availability.	Maintenance of adequate degree of cohesion in the group.	Sense of group 'getting on with the job', with only occasional pauses or detours to resolve problems in functioning.	Monitoring progress: keeping a balance between task and social-emotional activity in the group. Encouraging the indigenous leadership.
Terminating	Evaluation of task: 'Did we do what we set out to do?' and 'Could we have used more effective methods to get the same or better results?'	Coping with impending end of group and associated feelings. Handling the difficulties of disbanding.	Regression to earlier behaviour and problems. Reminiscing about the group's past. Planning of ending 'ceremony' and/or reunions.	Helping group to face up to task and social-emotional issues involved in ending. Help members make individual plans for future as appropriate.

Fig. 4.1 Leadership functions (adapted from Crawley, 1978, 1979).

Theory X assumptions:

1. Most human beings have an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if they can.
2. Because of this human characteristic of dislike of work, most people must be coerced, controlled, directed, and threatened

with punishment to get them to make adequate effort towards achieving the organisation's objectives.

- Most human beings prefer to be directed, wish to avoid responsibility, have relatively little ambition, and want security above all.

Theory Y assumptions:

- The expenditure of physical effort and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest.
- External control and the threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort towards organisational objectives. People will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of organisational objectives to which they are committed.
- Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement, particularly at the self-actualisation level.
- Most human beings learn, under proper conditions, not only to accept but also to seek responsibility.
- Imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organisational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed among people.
- In our modern industrial society, the potential of the average human being is only partially utilised.

These two theories are obviously fundamentally different, and represent two extremes. Most leaders tend to have a leaning towards one or the other of these. Theory X is rigid, pessimistic and static; leaders who tend this way would differ substantially from those who lean more towards the flexible, optimistic and dynamic Theory Y. Theory X and Theory Y leaders correspond closely to Lewin's autocrat and democrat respectively.

Rensis Likert (1961, 1967) proposed four basic systems or styles of organisational leadership (Figure 4.2).

The leader who operates under a System 1 approach is very authoritarian, and actively exploits subordinates. The System 2 leader is also authoritarian, but softer and more paternalistic: the 'benevolent dictator'. The System 3 leader consults, asking for and receiving inputs from subordinates. The System 4 leader involves all members in decision-making, giving only direction and limited inputs, and aiming for consensus on all important decisions. The four systems can be seen to have Theory X-type assumptions at one extreme (Lewin's 'autocrat'), and Theory Y-type assumptions at the other (Lewin's 'democrat').

System 1 (exploitive- authoritative)	System 2 (benevolent- authoritative)	System 3 (consultative)	System 4 (participative)
Control and decision-making located at the top	Some delegation of control and decision making	Considerable delegation of control and decision-making	Control and decision-making widely dispersed
Members motivated by fear, coercion and punishments	Members motivated by a system of rewards and penalties	Members motivated by rewards and the opportunity to participate	Members motivated by rewards and genuine involvement
Leader has no confidence or trust in group members	Leader has condescending confidence and trust	Leader has substantial but not complete confidence and trust	Leader has complete confidence and trust in members in all matters
Members do not feel at all free to discuss things about the job with the leader	Members do not feel very free to discuss things about the job	Members feel rather free to discuss things about the job	Members feel completely free to discuss things about the job
Leader seldom gets ideas and opinions of members in solving problems	Leader sometimes gets ideas and opinions of members	Leader usually gets ideas and opinions and usually tries to make constructive use of them	Leader always asks for ideas and opinions and always tries to make constructive use of them

Fig. 4.2 Systems 1, 2, 3 and 4 (adapted from Likert, 1961, 1967).

A different but compatible model formulated by Blake and Mouton (1964, 1978) focuses on and represents the task and maintenance dimensions of leadership, i.e. concern for production (goal-achievement, task completion) *versus* concern for people (relationships, needs, feelings, self-esteem). Other theorists have called these two dimensions production-oriented v. employee-oriented; task-centred v. subordinate-centred; initiating structure v. consideration. They are the two axes on which Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (Figure 4.3 overleaf) is set out, showing five basic orientations. The 1.1 manager shows a minimum of concern on both axes, the 9.9 manager a maximum. The 5.5 position is 'middle of the road'. Harmony and friendliness take precedence in the 1.9 style, output in the 9.1 style.

The foregoing theorists all have a human relations emphasis. Although they have conceptualised leadership style and orientation with supposedly value-neutral terminology, they do not disguise the value they place on

the Theory Y / System 4 / 9.9 orientation as the ones most likely to yield optimum results. However, this could be seen as inconsistent with the contingency theory view that holds there is no 'one best way'. The resolution of this may be found in the idea of a leader who is openly committed to a truly democratic approach, while being capable of intervening in whichever style is called for to match the situation and meet the legitimate needs of the group at that moment.

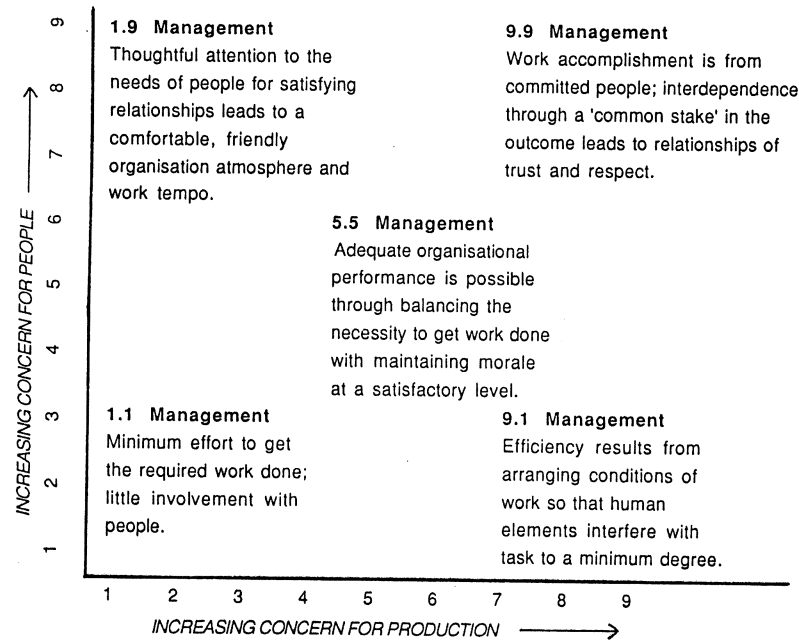


Fig. 4.3 The Managerial Grid (Blake and Mouton, 1964, 1978).

The Leader and the Led

Designated leaders have power: they are either backed by the authority that appointed or elected them, or they at least are endowed with expert or referent power. As soon as anyone is placed in the group as some kind of leader, they become subject to reciprocal influences from the led (Yukl, 1981, p. 10).

In theory, leadership is a transaction, an exchange between leader and follower in which each gives and receives rewards which, if the transaction is to be beneficial to both parties, must be perceived as equitable (Hollander, 1978). In practice a leader might be followed, abused, admired, rejected or loved. Members might successively view their leader

first as someone who promises some kind of help or promotion; then as a surrogate father, mother, brother, sister; next as a human being with weaknesses; and finally as a human being with strengths. No matter how skilful a leader may be, his or her actions are likely to be met with mixed reactions — approval and compliance from some, disapproval or rebellion from others. This is largely due to the make-up of the average heterogeneous work-group: some dependent personalities, some counter-dependent, and some interdependent, all of them with different motivations and aspirations. The leader who can satisfy the needs of all three types with a single intervention is lucky.

When leaders are perceived as failing or refusing to perform in the way the group needs or wants them to, the members' anxiety levels increase rapidly. Even if the leader follows all the 'rules' of effective communication, he or she may be ignored or deposed, or become a target for the group's anger or disdain. When this happens, the members cease to behave as a work group in the sense that Bion (1961) uses the term, and cling to one or another of his Basic Assumption modes: dependency, fight/flight or pairing. The group becomes a closed system which can do no work (de Board, 1978, p. 138): either the leader cannot function or the group can't, each 'side' being caught up in attempts to mobilise behaviours that will 'win'. These behaviours are defences against anxiety, and prevent the members from engaging in the realities of the task. Rather than colluding with the basic assumption behaviours, the leader has to help confront the members' behaviour and assist them to identify and deal with the underlying source of their anxiety. Until this is done, the group cannot return to working effectively on its task.

When leaders fail to match up to the personality image which has been constructed by the group members out of their projections and fantasies, similar processes may occur. The fantasised image has to be peeled away to reveal the leader as just another human being, care being taken that the reality so revealed is not too abrupt a let-down. This can only be done easily if the leader's behaviour has been authentic from the outset, and a fair degree of trust has been built between the leader and the led.

The Ideal Leader

In addition to personality traits, interpersonal style, orientation, and leader-follower relationships as significant variables affecting leadership effectiveness, versatility must also be considered. Leaders need *repertoires* of models and roles (e.g. cognitive models for understanding group development, behavioural models for intervention and communication) and they need *mobility* to shift easily among them in order to respond appropriately to the changing dynamics of the group. Taking all of the above into account, plus the enduring features embodied in leadership

theories of the past fifty years or so, it is possible to construct a profile of the 'perfect group leader':

He or she has:

- a sense of purpose and direction;
- integrity, humour, sensitivity, caring and faith;
- technical competence;
- energy and attention;
- ability to stimulate emotion and provide cognitive meaning;
- commitment to self-evaluation and evaluation of the group functioning.

He or she will:

- model direct, open and accurate communication;
- show respect for self and others;
- engage in appropriate risk-taking and self-disclosure;
- give support and build trust in the group;
- take easily to the basic task and maintenance roles and make interventions based on these appropriate to the group's needs of the moment;
- encourage the distribution of leadership behaviour among all group members.

He or she understands the consequences of each style and type of intervention well enough to use the one that is best for:

- the structure and history of the group;
- the amount of time and other resources available;
- the nature of the task being worked on;
- the kind of climate the group wishes to establish;
- the type of setting in which the group is working.

To complete this counsel of perfection, anyone aspiring to become an effective leader would do well to reflect on the words of Lord Melbourne, a former British Prime Minister. 'I am their leader', he said of his constituents in a period of crisis, 'I must follow them'.

For detailed reading on leadership, see Argyris, 1983; Bradford, 1976; Johnson and Johnson, 1987, Chap. 2; Mullins, 1985, Chap. 8; Wilson and Hanna, 1986, Chap. 7; Yukl, 1981.

References

- Argyris, C. (1983). *Increasing leadership effectiveness*. Malabar, Fla.: Krieger.
- Bion, W. R. (1961). *Experiences in groups*. London: Tavistock.
- Blake, R. R., and Mouton, J. S. (1964). *The managerial grid*. Houston, Tex.: Gulf Publishing.
- Blake, R. R., and Mouton, J. S. (1978). *The new managerial grid*. Houston, Tex.: Gulf Publishing.
- Bradford, L. P. (1976). *Making meetings work*. San Diego, Calif.: University Associates.
- Cartwright, D., and Zander, A. (eds) (1968). *Group dynamics: research and theory*. 3rd edn. New York: Harper and Row.
- Crawley, J. (1978). 'The life cycle of the group'. *Small Groups Newsletter (Australia)* 1(2), 39-44.
- Crawley, J. (1979). 'The nature of leadership in small groups'. *Small Groups Newsletter (Australia)* 2(3), 28-31.
- De Board, R. (1978). *The psychoanalysis of organisations: a psychoanalytic approach to behaviour in groups and organisations*. London: Tavistock.
- Fiedler, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Fiedler, F. E. (1978). 'The contingency model and the dynamics of the leadership process'. In L. Berkowitz (ed.) *Advances in experimental social psychology*. Volume 11. New York: Academic Press. 59-112.
- Halpin, A. W. (1969). 'How leaders behave'. In F. D. Carver and T. J. Sergiovanni (eds) *Organizations and human behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 287-91.
- Heron, J. (1975). *Six category intervention analysis*. Guildford: University of Surrey, Centre for Adult Education, Human Potential Research Project.
- Hersey, P., and Blanchard, K. H. (1977). *Management of organisational behaviour*. 3rd edn. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Hollander, E. P. (1978). *Leadership dynamics: a practical guide to effective relationships*. New York: The Free Press.
- Johnson, D. W., and Johnson, F. P. (1987). *Joining together: group theory and group skills*. 3rd edn. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Katz, D., and Kahn, R. L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations*. 2nd edn. New York: Wiley.
- Lewin, K., Lippitt, R., and White, R. K. (1939). 'Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created "social climates"'. *Journal of Social Psychology* 10, 271-99.
- Likert, R. (1961). *New patterns of management*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Likert, R. (1967). *The human organization*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- McGregor, D. M. (1960). *The human side of enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mullins, L. J. (1985). *Management and organisational behaviour*. London: Pitman.

- Stogdill, R. M. (1974). *Handbook of leadership*. New York: The Free Press.
- Tannenbaum, R., and Schmidt, W. H. (1958). 'How to choose a leadership pattern'. *Harvard Business Review* 36, 95-101.
- Tead, O. (1935). *The art of leadership*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Vroom, V. H., and Yetton, P. W. (1973). *Leadership and decision-making*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Wilson, G. L., and Hanna, M. S. (1986). *Groups in context*. New York: Random House.
- Yukl, G. A. (1981). *Leadership in organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.