

Choosing the Right Leadership Models for Your team and Your Organization

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Let's get this out of the way this early on: There is NO one correct leadership style. A lot of factors affect the kind of leadership model that works for a particular individual, team, and / or organization. Some **leadership models** that work with others won't always work with the next team or company. It's important to remember that leadership, as well as whichever of the leadership models one chooses isn't the end in itself — the goal is to drive a team or the organization forward in a positive way, fostering an environment where stakeholders are motivated, productive, and creative, and creating a way for that organization to keep its relevance and continue to be innovative, cost-effective, and revenue-generating.

True and effective leadership is never about what title one holds, or what awards or accolades one receives. Leadership models have a much more profound, meaningful, and significant impact on the organization; by extension, leaders have an important role in developing one's self, and that of the people they work with and for. This in turn, helps the organization grow, evolve, and constantly become a better version of itself.

5 Leadership models that you'll find on this article:

- The Authentic Leadership Model
- Autocratic Leadership
- Laissez-Faire Leadership
- Situational Leadership
- Shared Leadership

Before anything else: Developing the right mindset

Leadership models aren't styles of bossing people around or handing out orders. Going into the process of choosing among the many leadership styles around (or better yet, taking all the good parts and creating a style that's uniquely yours) means not only understanding what leadership is about, but also developing a mindset that conducive to adapting the principles needed to truly become a leader.

Pope Francis has revolutionized how people see the Roman Catholic Church, and a significant part of that is because of his style of leadership. He writes that one of the most prevalent "diseases of leadership" is "thinking we are immortal, immune, or downright indispensable." An important aspect of leadership, regardless of which of the leadership models you choose, is to

always retain the ability to take an objective assessment of yourself and finding points for improvement. And trust us, there will always be ways to be better at what you do. Pope Francis calls a leadership team that is unable to be self-critical a “sick body.” No truer words have been said (regardless of your religious affiliation), because time and time again, “leaders” who fall in love with their own image and their own legend ultimately fall, and fall down hard — often bringing down with them the other unfortunate, innocent souls in the organization they belong to.

Having the right mindset also means that leadership can be learned. Legendary Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi says that people don’t come out of the womb already equipped with the skills they need to be good leaders — it takes hard work and effort to become a good leader. Again, one’s mentality and mindset play major roles in this. One simply does not stake his or her claim to leadership, it means internalizing what it means to be a leader and how to lead people. You can’t just “wing” it. A lot of thought, willpower and determination (and even to some extent, trial and error) goes into leadership and into choosing which of the many leadership models out there will work best for you, your team and your organization.

It’s important to realize that leaders set the bar for the whole organization. They inspire and motivate other stakeholders — more often than not, good leaders stir people to do what is required of them, and even go beyond that, without giving orders or bossing people around. They set the example everyone follows organically and naturally. Choosing the right leadership model enables leaders to see the bigger picture and determine which course of action can make the most and biggest positive impact on the organization. John Maxwell, who is widely recognized as an authority on leadership says, “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”

Leadership models: Pick one, or a few, or tweak to get the right one that works

Once the foundation for good leadership is in place, then that’s the time one can take a look at the different leadership models and styles to see which one works best. Again, there’s no one right leadership model or style. It depends on factors like the company culture, the nature and disposition of the person leading, the kind of stakeholders involved, and so on. And don’t despair if one way doesn’t work all at once — finding the right model takes time, patience, and effort.

The Authentic Leadership Model

Authentic leaders are all about sincerity. They are aware of the values they hold, and strive to reflect those values in the way they speak, act, and lead. Staying true to those values express a sense of authenticity and genuineness. This in turn, increases these leaders’ credibility and makes them trustworthy in the eyes of both the people who work for them and the people they work for. The authentic leadership model is characterized by four things: self-awareness, relational

transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective. Self-awareness means that the leader knows and understands his or her strengths and weaknesses, and acts and makes decisions accordingly. Self-awareness also means that authentic leaders often realize the depth of the impact their interactions and decisions have on a team or on the organization. Plus, the more the leader learns and progresses, they more become self-aware.

Relational transparency indicates that this type of leader will be much more of an open book to the people he or she works with. They're more open with their feelings and are more willing to talk things out and have a better understanding of the people they work with and the situations they find themselves in. Balanced processing refers to the objectivity that the leader adopts as a lens to look at everything — there's no office politics, bias, or emotional attachment factored in. This means that data and metrics are king, and authentic leaders are not shy in using these kinds of objective information to come to a decision about something. Finally, the internalized moral perspective means that based on the leader's self-awareness of his or her values and the need to act in such a way that reflects those principles, the leader effectively regulates him or herself and is generally unaffected by social or group pressures.

Among leadership models, authentic leadership is advantageous in the sense that there is a higher level of trust and respect among a group or organization, and authentic leaders generally have less trouble getting things done — even in challenging situations — because of this harmonious relationship.

Autocratic Leadership

In the autocratic leadership model, it's all about chain of command and top-down instructions. There is little collaboration and decision-making is largely dictated by the people on top, who have all the power and authority in the group or organization. The rest of the team may or may not give their own input, but the final decision will always lie with the leader regardless. The team's duty is to implement the choices and decisions of their leader.

While this may seem like a poor model, it does work and can be really effective, depending on the organization. For example, in situations where major decisions have to be made quickly and frequently, taking others' input can become a waste of time. The rigidity of the autocratic model also often makes for much more strict supervision, which can be productive and profitable for the company.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

The opposite of autocratic leadership. Here, the role and the supervision of the leader is minimal, and he or she relies much more on team members to exercise their own initiatives and play a bigger part in the decision-making process. It's a very laid-back style, but in an environment

where talented and creative people abound, this kind of leadership model can be very successful. As long as the team is guided by a number of basic principles, having a laissez-faire leadership model in place encourages a much higher level of creativity and freedom, something that many stakeholders and employees enjoy. This will further motivate them to put out quality deliverables and spur innovation and creativity. This in turn results in the company potentially growing much faster, since there are a lot of people contributing to the effort.

Situational Leadership

In situational leadership, the focus is on the current level of employees and staff — their capability and capacity to effectively carry out and complete certain tasks. Here, the leader has a much better awareness of the capabilities of the people who work for them. This means that work deadlines and expectations are much more realistic, and workers better feel that their leader can relate to them. A major advantage of situational leadership is that leaders will be pushed not only to improve their own skills, but also launch initiatives that will also improve the capabilities and knowledge of rank-and-file employees. As a result, the company's talent pool grows, which means a better chance at continuing to evolve the organization to meet current needs and keep abreast of the latest trends and challenges. Situational leaders are good for the growth of an organization as a whole.

Shared Leadership

In the shared leadership model, power and authority are vested in a group, rather than in a single individual. Shared leadership is much more flexible and can better withstand sudden changes in the organizational structure. This kind of leadership model also fosters a stronger collaborative and cooperative spirit among members of the organization, thus generally making employees much more motivated to work and be productive. Shared leadership also means that a manager doesn't need to spread himself or herself out too thin — there are proper decision-makers for every major step or part of the workflow, ensuring for a much-improved quality control. There is also much more freedom (not to mention breathing room) in the organization that employees are much more inclined and encouraged to practice and apply their creativity, resulting not on in quality output, but in a better and more efficient process and workflow as well.