



Why is Leadership Style Important?

By John Cronkite Ed.D.
www.dirigoconsulting.com

A Few Reminders from Last Month:

- One of the most significant strengths of an effective leader is the ability to create a positive work climate. In an outstanding organizational climate, people are energized to do their best work, free of unnecessary distractions.
- Climates that energize workers to produce their very best can improve results by as much as 30 percent.

What's New This Month:

- Up to 70 percent of an employee's perception of organizational climate can be traced directly to the actions of you as the organization's leader.
- More than anyone else, you as the boss create the conditions that determine people's ability to work well.
- Research by David McClelland on leadership has identified "styles" of leadership that provide not only a roadmap for leading but also implications for action.

What is Leadership Style?

Leadership style refers to the patterns of behaviors an individual leader uses across a full range of managerial and leadership situations. Although leaders face an unlimited range of leadership situations, studies have shown that there are six basic leadership styles that leaders apply to the situations they encounter. These styles are:

- Directive**-demanding immediate compliance
- Visionary**-mobilizing people toward a long term direction and vision
- Participative**- building commitment and generating new ideas
- Affiliative**-creating harmony and emotional bonds
- Pace Setting**-expecting excellence and self direction
- Coaching**-developing people for the future

What Leadership Style Gets the Best Results?

❑ *You need a variety of styles:*

McClelland discovered in his research that leaders with the best results didn't practice just one particular style - they used a variety of styles, depending upon the business situation. Like a golfer who has six clubs in her golf bag. She uses a specific club for driving the ball down the fairway, another to get out of the sand trap and a third club on the green.

❑ *Certain styles more positively impact the workplace climate and financial results:*

Research on a global database of over 3,000 executives showed that leaders who used styles with a positive emotional impact on their employees saw better financial results than those who did not. Four of the styles when used consistently over time had a positive impact on climate and results. The other two styles were only effective when used in the short term to address specific performance or business issues. If they were used on a regular basis there was a negative impact on the workplace climate.

Styles with a Positive Impact on Climate:

In this newsletter, I'll address two leadership styles that have a positive impact on climate. In the July newsletter, I'll address additional styles.

❑ **Visionary:** This style was found to have the most positive impact on climate. Leaders who used this style consistently drove up each of the aspects of climate (refer to the *Change Ability Challenge* issues number four and five, *So I Can't Do This Alone* and *Getting the Best From Your People*, for a description of the specific climate factors).

- *Primary objective:*
 - Mobilizing people toward a long term direction and vision
- *What does it look like when the leader is using this style?*
 - Articulating where the group is going but not how it will get there
 - Keeping others engaged through dialogue about their perspective
 - Taking time to help people see how their work fits into the big picture
 - Monitoring performance toward the established goals to reach the vision
 - Providing feedback to people to keep them on track with the future direction
- *When is this style most effective?*
 - When the business is stalled and a clear direction and standards are needed
 - When the leader is perceived to be the "expert" or "authority"
 - When there are team members who depend on the leader for active guidance
- *When is it least effective:*
 - When the leader is not perceived as credible
 - When the leader is not clear on the best direction for the business

- *What are ways to increase your visionary style?*
 - Clearly formulate your vision, strategy and objectives.
 - Use every opportunity to communicate your vision with your team
 - Explain the “whys” behind the vision. Link your decisions to the future direction of the organization
 - Solicit input from your team. Get their ideas, feelings and concerns about the direction of the organization and about the best way to get there

- **Participative:** This style had a positive impact on climate but lower than the visionary style. A leader builds trust, respect and commitment with this style. It also supports flexibility and responsibility in the work unit. However it has its drawbacks. It can result in endless meetings with postponed decisions. People can end up feeling confused and leaderless.
 - *Primary objective:*
 - Building commitment and generating new ideas

 - *What does it look like when the leader is using this style?*
 - Reaching decisions by consensus
 - Holding many meetings and listening to employees’ concerns
 - Inviting employees to make decisions affecting their work
 - Rewarding adequate performance and rarely giving negative feedback

 - *When is this style most effective?*
 - When employees are competent
 - When employees possess critical information
 - The visionary style has already been used to create and develop a vision
 - Employees have clearer ideas about the best approach than the manager

 - *When is it least effective:*
 - In times of crisis when immediate decisions and actions are required
 - When employees are incompetent, lack crucial information or need close supervision

 - *What are ways to increase your participatory style?*
 - Hold information sharing meetings. Keep people informed about issues that impact them.
 - Share decision making with others. This will require that they have the necessary information regarding the issues to be decided
 - Use it to generate fresh ideas for executing the vision



Final Thoughts

Understanding your behavioral style as a leader is key to improving your leadership abilities and the results that you are able to achieve through others. It is useful for you to identify the pattern of behaviors that you intend to use; however, it is even more important to gather feedback about how your style affects others.

I have been assisting my clients in gathering this feedback by using a 360-degree online instrument, The Inventory of Leadership Styles (ILS). They have found it very useful for focusing their development on critical styles to improve their effectiveness at getting results through others. Please give me a call if you would like to explore this application with you or your team.

John Cronkite works with leaders faced with the challenge of implementing change that will be sustained over time. Sustaining change requires effective leadership and top performing people. John will provide you with practical, hands on coaching and consulting to build your confidence and effectiveness at providing this leadership and bringing the best from your people. To contact John send an email to cronkite@dirigoconsulting.com and for more information about John and his work visit his website at www.dirigoconsulting.com.