



Why is Leadership Style Important?

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A Few Reminders from Last Month:

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. Using a variety of styles will increase your success in achieving higher levels of organizational performance. 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's New This Month: Two Additional Styles with a Positive Impact on Climate:

Last month I talked about two leadership styles that have a positive impact on workplace climate: the Visionary style and the Participative style.

View last month's issue at:

<http://www.dirigoconsulting.com/articles/WhyIsLeadershipStyleImportant.pdf>

In this newsletter, I'll address two more of the leadership styles that have a positive impact on climate. In the August newsletter, I'll discuss the final two styles that are important but must be used very selectively.

- ❑ **Coaching:** This style has the second strongest impact on climate behind the visionary style. Yet the research found that it was the least used of the six styles. Leaders report that it takes too much time and doesn't lead to results. This style does create an apparent contradiction to getting results because the coaching focuses primarily on personal development rather than on immediate tasks. However it produces "bottom-line results". Why? It engages the direct report with her manager. It requires ongoing dialogue and that dialogue pushes every driver of climate. For instance it supports flexibility and risk taking because she knows that her manager will give her quick and constructive feedback if the risk is producing negative results.
- *Primary objective:*
 - Long term professional development of team members
 - *What does it look like when the leader is using this style?*
 - Helping team members identify their strengths and weaknesses and tying them to their personal and career aspirations
 - Encouraging people to establish long term development goals and helping them envision a plan for attaining them
 - Delegating challenging assignments and willing to put up with short-term failure if it furthers long-term learning
 - *When is this style most effective?*
 - When employees want to be coached.
 - When team members are motivated to take the initiative to stretch themselves and learn new behaviors and skills.
 - When direct reports realize a discrepancy between their current performance and the level at which they would like to be performing
 - *When is it least effective:*
 - When people are resistant to learning, or changing their ways
 - When the leader lacks the expertise to guide their direct reports
 - When the team is in crisis mode and must respond quickly with no room for error.
 - *What are ways to enhance your coaching style?*
 - Create development goals with your direct reports. Have candid conversations about their long term aspirations
 - Provide feedback on team members' strengths and weaknesses. Take the time to give your perspective and help them think through how their abilities fit with their aspirations and with the strategy of the organization.
 - Support the development plan. Agree on the kind of support you can offer and what the employee will do in carrying out the development plan.

- ❑ **Affiliative:** This style has one of the strongest impacts on a group's climate. Only the visionary and coaching styles have more of a positive impact on all the climate variables. When using this style the leader places more emphasis on individuals and their emotions and less emphasis on accomplishing tasks and goals. The leader does this by spending a lot of time cultivating relationships with people and building strong emotional bonds with the leader and between the team members.
- *Primary objective:*
 - Creating harmony among team members and avoiding conflict
 - *What does it look like when the leader is using this style?*
 - Offering a lot of positive feedback as a means of recognizing people and rewarding work well done
 - Avoiding conflict by avoiding performance related confrontations
 - Being flexible in applying rules or requirements about how team members get their work done
 - Creating a sense of belonging by spending one-on-one time with direct reports outside of the work setting to see how they are doing
 - *When is this style most effective?*
 - When it is important to heal rifts and broken trust in a team
 - When the work environment is very stressful and people need support in keeping up their motivation
 - When diverse and conflicting groups need to work together harmoniously
 - *When is it least effective:*
 - This style should not be used alone. It is most powerful when used in combination with the Visionary, Participative and Coaching styles.
 - When employees' performance is inadequate, this style's main focus on praise can allow poor performance to go uncorrected and employees may perceive that mediocrity is tolerated.
 - When people need clear directives to face complex challenges, this style can leave them without clarity and control.
 - *What are ways to increase your affiliative style?*
 - Initiate personal contacts with your team members. Whenever possible have lunch together, drop by their cubicle or team room, travel with them on business trips.
 - Empathize with others. Take time to listen and express compassion for how people feel.
 - Provide social activities. Consider holding group activities: holiday parties, birthday parties, regular recognition events, team building events.



Final Thoughts

I hope these last two articles are stimulating you to think about your patterns of behavior as a leader. It is important to build your awareness of which styles you gravitate towards and which ones you avoid. It is also essential to gather feedback about how your style impacts others. Having both sets of data enables you to make a more informed choice about improving your effectiveness at achieving the results that are important for you, your team and your organization.

I have been assisting my clients in gathering this feedback by using a 360-degree online instrument, The Inventory of Leadership Styles (ILS). We then work on developing an action plan for developing and integrating new skills and behaviors into everyday leadership challenges. 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.