



Why is Leadership Style Important? Part III

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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

Over the last two months I have explored four leadership styles that have a positive impact on workplace climate: the Visionary style, the Participative style, the Coaching style and the Affiliative style. In this newsletter, I'll address the final two leadership styles that have been proven to be important for the effective leader but which can have negative impacts on climate if not used appropriately.

Go to the following link to read Part I on the Visionary and Participative styles:
<http://www.dirigoconsulting.com/articles/WhyIsLeadershipStyleImportant.pdf>

Go to the following link to read Part II on the Coaching and Affiliative styles.
<http://www.dirigoconsulting.com/articles/WhyIsLeadershipStyleImportantPartII.pdf>

- **Pacesetting:** This style has a useful place in the leader's repertoire. However it should be used sparingly and reserved for the situations that really need this style. This sounds contrary to sound thinking. A leader must push for excellence and speed in completing assignments. There are short term crises in which the leader must push everyone up to and beyond their limit. So the challenge for an effective leader is to know when to use this style, because if used to excess, it can poison the work climate. People will feel pushed too hard by the relentless demands. It will cause most people to experience anxiety rather than the stimulation for peak performance.

Another dilemma with this style is that the pacesetter often is unclear about guidelines and expects that people will "know what to do". This leaves team members second guessing what the leader wants rather than doing their work in the manner they think is most effective. People's talent for innovation is then curtailed. Also pacesetters are so focused on the goals that they often appear to not care about the people that they rely upon to complete these goals. This can lead to short term compliance and an upward tick in results but the leader will not get true performance that can be sustained.

Pacesetting works best in combination with other leadership styles. It works well with the visionary style. The leader articulates where the group is going while continually modeling and emphasizing high standards of excellence. This leader would also balance the need for speed with innovative thinking about how to best get there.

- *Primary objective:*
 - Accomplishing tasks to high standards of excellence
- *What does it look like when the leader is using this style?*
 - Being the model for others to follow. Establishing herself as the standard of excellence.
 - Being obsessive about doing things better and faster and asking the same of everyone on the team.
 - Quickly pinpointing poor performers, demanding more from them, and if they don't respond, taking over the task himself.
 - Usually unwilling to spend time collaborating with colleagues since his focus is on task accomplishment. An exception is when the leader must obtain or exchange resources
- *When is this style most effective?*
 - When employees are highly motivated, competent, and know their jobs
 - When managing a small team of individual contributors (e.g., scientists in R&D)
 - To make the organization move fast over the short term
- *When is it least effective:*
 - When the manager cannot do all his/her work personally
 - When team performance must be maintained at a high level over an extended period of time
 - When employees need direction, development and coordination

- *What are ways to enhance your pacesetter style?*
 - **Maintain your “expert” professional/technical knowledge and skills.** You must be credible as an expert in whatever you do.
 - **Teach by example.** Model the behavior you want to see in your team. If you want people to work long hours, then you should be the first person at work and the last to leave.
 - **Insist on excellence.** Try to find the work in which people can excel. Change their assignments if they can't be successful at a task.

- **Directive:** This style is important for the leader to use in very selective situations. It is needed in emergencies and urgent turnaround situations. A leader can use this style effectively to unfreeze useless business habits and to shock people into new ways of doing things.

However this style has the strongest negative impact on a group's climate when used excessively. Most high performing team members will lose their sense of pride and accomplishment when managed with this style. The directive style undermines a critical tool that the leader must have available which is the ability for people to see how their job fits into the organization's mission. People will become less committed and unwilling to stretch to give their best.

Similar to other styles, the Directive style is most effective when used together with other styles. A good example is Jack Welch who used a strong hand as he began the turnaround at General Electric. He then began to use the Visionary and Participatory styles as he articulated a new vision for the company and mobilized people to follow it.

- *Primary objective:*
 - Immediate compliance to orders

- *What does it look like when the leader is using this style?*
 - Giving strong, urgent direction
 - Relying on commands with very little dialogue
 - Closely monitoring performance with negative, corrective feedback
 - Efforts to motivate are focused mainly on the consequences of noncompliance

- *When is this style most effective?*
 - In crisis situations
 - When applied to straightforward tasks
 - When deviations from compliance will lead to serious problems
 - With problem employees, when all else has failed

- *When is it least effective:*
 - With complex tasks that require critical thinking and discretion
 - With self motivated team members
 - Over the long term

- *What are ways to increase your directive style?*
 - **Get to know the work.** Your judgment about the work in question must take precedence over that of others.
 - **Be decisive.** Make it clear that you are the decision maker and clearly communicate what you expect.
 - **Clearly point out deviations from the rules.** Point out to people what behavior does not meet your standards. Insist on adherence to the rules.

Final Thoughts

The main message I want to leave with you is that it is important to expand your repertoire of leadership behaviors. I hope that these three articles have helped you realize more clearly which styles you gravitate towards and which ones you avoid. Don't forget that it is essential to gather feedback about how your style impacts others. Becoming more aware about what you intend and your actual impact on others, will enable you to make informed choices to improve 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 clarifying the choices and developing an action plan for 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.