

What Type of Leader Are YOU?

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A guest post by Tyana Daley,
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Understanding our intrinsic and learned leadership styles is critical to leadership training, growth and development. Part of effective leadership is being able to adapt one's style in alignment with one's constituency and audience while keeping values, vision and mission in tact! I am delighted to share this excellent post about Leadership Styles, by Tyana Daley!



Leaders of all kinds share many recognized and documented traits, such as decisiveness and good communication skills. Not as commonly acknowledged, however, are the countless distinctions among various types of leaders. Knowing exactly what kind of leader you are—and what kind of leader your workplace calls for—is vital, as it may make the difference between getting the job done well and barely getting by.

As many as nine different varieties of leaders exist, depending on the mode of categorization, from the hands-off delegative leader to the domineering autocratic leader. The primary means of distinction most psychological typologies employ is quality and frequency of engagement with team members.

Likewise, the most appropriate leadership style for any given project or profession is just as dependent on the team members' needs and expectations as those of the leader. Although you may find that a certain style comes most naturally, integrating select features of other leadership styles into yours can help you excel in your position, as well as identify and work effectively with your team and other leaders.

Here are a few leadership styles and their respective traits. Consider your own leadership style and if incorporating any of the traits from another style might help you in your current

position.

- **Autocratic:** As the name suggests, autocratic leaders rule the roost with utmost control. Also called authoritarian or directive leadership, this particular style is characterized by unilateral decision-making and complete adherence to established protocol. A good fit for employees who flourish under ample supervision, the autocratic leadership style is ideally suited to high-stakes projects that must be accomplished quickly and with absolute precision. Military hierarchies are prime examples of autocratic leadership in action.

Because autocratic leadership can transfer into simple bossiness or micromanagement if not carefully regulated, taking the time to educate and listen to employees is critical. If team members understand the need for a regimented workplace—perhaps there are safety or budgetary concerns that warrant strict policies—they're much more likely to accept autocratic authority, while leaders who remain receptive to employees' ideas and feedback, even if they can't be implemented, can help offset any brewing resentment.

- **Consultative:** A consultative leader retains the autocratic leader's right to make autonomous decisions but, unlike the autocrat, draws on team members' expertise and opinions before doing so. This leadership style is particularly useful in results-oriented processes; employee input is only valuable in so far as procedures are flexible.

Challenges that merit creative group strategies are also prime opportunities to apply a consultative leadership style. Leaders who know how to distill great ideas from large amounts of team member feedback are consultative in nature, as are those who recognize each employee's strengths and contributions publically.

- **Participative:** The most egalitarian of all types, participative, or democratic leaders function as a fellow team member, often privileging employee ideas over their own. They tend to facilitate conversation and encourage collective decision-making, rather than deliver instructions and delegate tasks. Process-oriented work that requires innovation, creativity and synergistic team efforts can be accomplished via participative leadership; employees with complementary aptitudes and areas of expertise work well in teams helmed by participative leaders.

The erasure of the traditionally rigid distinction between supervisor and supervised is both the primary attraction and potential pitfall of participative leadership. Employees who are not personally invested in the company or project or who need direct supervision can undermine a participative leader's efficacy, even unintentionally. Responsible, trustworthy and knowledgeable team members are critical to the success of this leadership style.

- **Delegative:** Also known as a "laissez-faire" leader, the delegative type is the least engaged in the team's routine functions. "Laissez-faire" roughly translates to "allow to do," and that's precisely the purpose that delegative leaders serve in the workplace. Team members are expected to draw on their own initiative and knowledge to accomplish tasks, solve problems, establish processes and produce quality results. The delegative leader's role may, in fact, be as minimal as providing resources and remaining available for occasional consultation.

Only the most motivated and high-performing teams are suited to a more laissez-faire style of leadership. New or inexperienced employees tend to flounder without more engagement, and even the most competent workers may benefit from direction when undertaking new or high-value operations.

Delegative leaders can eliminate any resentment over their absence by explaining its cause, particularly if it involves exemplary employee performances.

Great leaders of various types exist across all industries, and there are no hard and fast rules for selecting a leadership style. What comes naturally is important, but experimentation and adaptation are equally critical. Pay attention to your team's performance under a variety of styles while developing your own, and don't over-focus on yourself. Great leaders aren't measured by their own achievements, but by those of the people they lead.

About the Author/Guest Blogger, Tyana Daley



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