

Definition of leadership essay sample

[Business](#), [Leadership](#)



Describe, examine, compare, contrast, explain, analyze, evaluate, and illustrate the trait definition of leadership versus the process of leadership. Leadership is a fascinating topic. As Stogdill states, “ there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it” (Stogdill 1974, p. 7). In the 1930’s the trait definition of leadership became the main approach. The great man theory was introduced due to the studies of the great people in history and their special characteristics that made them great leaders. This study looked at people such as Abraham Lincoln, Catherine the Great, Mohandas Gandhi, and Joan of Arc. We have all been exposed to the saying that a certain individual is a “ natural born leader”; this statement is representative of what the definition of trait based leadership is. The trait perspective is defined as certain individuals have special innate or inborn characteristics or qualities that make them leaders, and that it is these qualities that differentiate them from non-leaders (Northouse, 2013, p. 7). The major 5 traits for leadership are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.

In his research of the traits theory of leadership John P. Howell, in his book, *Snapshots of Great Leadership*, determination and drive include traits such as initiative, energy, assertiveness, perseverance, masculinity, and sometimes dominance. People with these traits often tend to wholeheartedly pursue their goals, work long hours, are ambitious, and often are very competitive with others. Cognitive capacity includes intelligence, analytical and verbal ability, behavioral flexibility, and good judgment.

Individuals with these traits are able to formulate solutions to difficult problems, work well under stress or deadlines, adapt to changing situations,

and create well-thought-out plans for the future. Howell provides examples of Steve Jobs and Abraham Lincoln as encompassing the traits of determination and drive as well as possessing cognitive capacity, demonstrated by their ability to adapt to their continuously changing environments (Howell, 2012, p . 4-6). R. M. Stodgill engaged in two studies on trait based leadership. In those he found that a group of important leadership traits were related to how people in various groups ascended to leadership. The following eight traits were: intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability (Stodgill, 1974). In his second study Stodgill also identified ten characteristics that were associated with leadership. Those being

1. Drive for responsibility and task completion;
2. Vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals;
3. Risk taking and originality in problem solving;
4. Drive to exercise initiative in social situations;
5. Self-confidence and sense of personal identity;
6. Willingness to accept consequences of decision and action;
7. Readiness to absorb interpersonal stress;
8. Willingness to tolerate frustration and delay;
9. Ability to influence other people's behavior; and
10. Capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand.

There have been many who have studied the trait aspect of leadership, including Stodgill (1948, 1974), Mann (1959), DeVader and Aliger, Kikpatrick, and Locke (1991), to Zaccaro, Kemp, and Black (2004 & 2007). They have all deduced that leaders have specific traits that have enabled them to ascend to the top. The strengths of the trait theory are its consistency with the perception that leaders are different, due to the different traits that they

possess. Another strength is that there is over a hundred years of research to support the theory. The weaknesses within trait theory are that there is not a definitive “list” of traits. Also there has been a plethora of studies done on the theory that many studies have led to ambiguous or non-conclusive findings. Lastly many critics of the trait theory have maintained the theory has failed to take situations into account (Northouse, 2013, p. 31). The mere fact that life situations that form leaders with certain traits in one case, may not form then to lead in another set of circumstances.

Zaccaro states it best. He asserts that the traits theory fails to consider patterns or integrations of multiple attributes; does not distinguish between those leader attributes that are generally not malleable over time and those that are shaped by, and bound to, situational influences; and does not consider how stable leader attributes account for the behavioral diversity necessary for effective leadership (Zaccaro, 2007). The theory of process leadership simply states that it is not a trait or characteristic that resides in the leader, but rather a transactional event that occurs between the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2013, p. 5). The process theory asserts that there is a definite dynamic relationship between the leader and the followers. This also asserts that leadership is not mutually exclusive; it is available to anyone who feels the need to “step up” and lead. Leadership, according to process theory, consists of one individual influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

In accomplishing this goal the leader has to be ethically bound to listen and attend to the needs and concerns of the group. Thus the “process”. There

needs to be strong interaction between the leader and the group, if goals are to be effectively attained. In comparing and contrasting the two theories, trait theory asserts that there are certain traits and characteristics that form leaders. This means that only certain individuals can attain leadership roles. Process theory asserts that it is not traits, but the dynamic relationship between the leader and the follower that defines the leader, and thus makes leadership a non-exclusive role. Examine & explore, describe, contrast, explain, analyze, evaluate, and illustrate the concept of leadership versus management. Leadership and management have been described as being one in the same, but the truth of the matter is that they are very different. The study of leadership can be traced back to Aristotle; management emerged around the turn of the 20th century, to address the issues caused by the industrial revolution (Northouse, 2010, p. 12). Many scholars such as Bennis and Nanus (1985) maintain that there is a very distinct difference between the two.

To lead means to influence other and create visions for change, where to manage is to accomplish activities and master routines. Zaleznik (1977) contends that managers and leaders are distinct, and even argues that managers are reactive and prefer to work with people to solve problems with low emotional involvement. Leaders are emotionally involved and active; they seek to mold ideas and look to expand available options. Leadership produces change and movement, whereas management produces order and consistency. Leadership focuses on establishing direction, aligning people, and influencing, motivating and inspiring individuals. Management consists of budgeting and planning, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem

solving (Fayol, 1916). Leadership and management do share some common approaches, such as working with people, setting and attaining goals, being empathetic to you group's needs, and celebrating victories. Northouse (2010) addressed the topic of assigned leadership versus emergent leadership.

Examine, describe, compare, contrast, explain, analyze, evaluate, and illustrate these concepts and their tenants. Emergent leadership is viewed as a process and leadership as an emergent event arising from dynamic interaction among agents over time. (Lichtenstein, 2006). One leader may emerge at a particular moment to advance common interests and goals and then recede to let another individual or group lead at another point "... leadership in complex systems takes place during interactions among agents when those interactions lead to changes in the way agents expect to relate to one another in the future" (Hazy, Goldstein, & Lichtenstein, 2007, p 7) whether the changes are due to changing perceptions about objectives or strategy or norms relating to behaviors. Emergent leadership is not assigned by position; instead the leadership emerges through communication behaviors. These behaviors consist of being verbally involved, informed, seeking other's opinions, initiating new ideas, and being firm but not rigid (Fisher, 1974).

Assigned leadership is leadership that is basically earned by occupying a position in an organization. Examples of these positions are plant managers, department heads, directors, and team leaders. Individuals are placed in these positions mostly without input from the subordinates. This can cause a

strong disconnect between the leader and the followers, which can cause an infinite amount of negative issues. Employees may perceive that assigned leaders are educated, intelligent and wise, even if they are not. This is because workers assume that you as the owner performed some kind of screening process and found the best person for the job (Johnston, 2013). This kind of automatic authority has its pitfalls. If your assigned leader has areas in which they are incompetent, employees can begin to resent having to follow such a person. Similarly, an emergent leader may cause resentment if they have to make decisions that help the company instead of employees. For example, an emergent leader may come out against employee raises based on a review of company finances. Employees can feel betrayed by an emergent leader; even though the reality is the leader may be making wise decisions.

Enlist the assistance of 5 people who know you very well, and do the LTQ. Score, assess, and interpret the results. I distributed the LTQ assessment to my wife, my supervisor, and three colleagues at work. The scoring results ranged from lows of 4.4 in sensitive and empathetic; mids of 4.6 in self-assured, dependable, and outgoing; to highs of 5 in articulate, trustworthy, and self-confident. Compared with my self-rating scored they matched up very evenly. I was surprised when my colleagues told me that I am a natural born leader. I was surprised at that statement. Reviewing these results, I can assess that I may have many of the positive traits for leadership, but I work hard to be a strong leader and manager and believe that leadership is a processes of give and take, one of emergence leadership.

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