Lewin's leadership styles

Psychologist Kurt Lewin developed hisleadershipstyles framework in the 1930s, and it provided the foundation of many of the approaches that followed afterwards. He argued that there are three major leadership styles:

Autocratic leaders make decisions without consulting their team members, even if their input would be useful. This can be appropriate when you need to make decisions quickly, when there's no need for team input, and when team agreement isn't necessary for a successful outcome. However, this style can be demoralizing, and it can lead to high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover. Democratic leaders make the final decisions, but they include team members in the decision-making process.

They encourage creativity, and people are often highly engaged in projects and decisions. As a result, team members tend to have high job satisfaction and high productivity. This is not always an effective style to use, though, when you need to make a quick decision. Laissez-faire leaders give their team members a lot of freedom in how they do their work, and how they set their deadlines.

They provide support with resources and advice if needed, but otherwise they don't get involved. This autonomy can lead to high job satisfaction, but it can be damaging if team members don't manage their time well, or if they don't have the knowledge, skills, or selfmotivationto do their work effectively. (Laissez-faire leadership can also occur when managers don't have control over their work and their people.) Lewin's framework is popular and useful, because it encourages managers to be less autocratic than they might instinctively be.

The Blake-Mouton Managerial Grid

The Blake-Mouton Managerial Grid was published in 1964, and it highlights the best leadership style to use, based on your concern for your people and your concern for production/tasks.

With a people-oriented leadership style, you focus on organizing, supporting, and developing your team members. This participatory style encourages good teamwork and creative collaboration.

With task-oriented leadership, you focus on getting the job done. You define the work and the roles required, put structures in place, and plan, organize, and monitor work.

According to this model, the best leadership style to use is one that has both a high concern for people and a high concern for the task – it argues that you should aim for both, rather than trying to offset one against the other. Clearly, this is an important idea!

The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership® Theory

First published in 1969, the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory argues that you need to use different leadership styles depending on the maturity of your team members. The model argues that with relatively immature individuals, you need a more directing approach, while with higher maturity people, you need a more participative or delegating leadership style.

You can use this model in most business situations, regardless of whether you want to build a new team or develop an existing one.

Path-Goal Theory

You may also have to think about what your team members want and need. This is where Path-Goal Theory – published in 1971 – is useful.

For example, highly-capable people, who are assigned to a complex task, will need a different leadership approach from people with low ability, who are assigned to an ambiguous task. (The former will want a participative approach, while the latter need to be told what to do.)

With Path-Goal Theory, you can identify the best leadership approach to use, based on your people's needs, the task that they're doing, and theenvironmentthat they're working in.

Six Emotional Leadership Styles

Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee detailed their Six Emotional Leadership Styles theory in their 2002 book, " Primal Leadership."

The theory highlights the strengths and weaknesses of six leadership styles that you can use – Visionary, Coaching, Affiliative, Democratic, Pacesetting, and Commanding. It also shows how each style can affect the emotions of your team members.

Flamholtz and Randle's Leadership Style Matrix

First published in 2007, Flamholtz and Randle's Leadership Style Matrix shows you the best leadership style to use, based on how capable people are of working autonomously, and how creative or " programmable" the task is.

The matrix is divided into four quadrants – each quadrant identifies two possible leadership styles that will be effective for a given situation, ranging from " autocratic/benevolent autocratic" to " consensus/laissez-faire."

Transformational Leadership

These leadership style frameworks are all useful in different situations, however, in business, " transformational leadership " is often the most effective leadership style to use. (This was first published in 1978, and was then further developed in 1985.)

Transformational leaders have integrity and highemotional intelligence. They motivate people with a shared vision of the future, and they communicate well. They're also typically self-aware , authentic , empathetic , and humble .

Transformational leaders inspire their team members because they expect the best from everyone, and they hold themselves accountable for their actions. They set cleargoals, and they have good conflict-resolution skills . This leads to high productivity and engagement.

However, leadership is not a " one size fits all" thing; often, you must adapt your approach to fit the situation. This is why it's useful to develop a thorough understanding of other leadership frameworks and styles; after all, the more approaches you're familiar with, the more flexible you can be.

Specific Leadership Styles

As well as understanding the frameworks that you can use to be a more effective leader, and knowing what it takes to be a transformational leader,

it's also useful to learn about more general leadership styles, and the advantages and disadvantages of each one.

Let's take a look at some other leadership styles that are interesting, but don't fit with any of the frameworks above.