

# Leadership behaviors of the path-goal leadership theory

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



This essay addresses the Leadership Behaviors of Path-Goal Theory. It critically examines their importance while showing how they relate to each other. Citing relevant examples, the essay also discusses how they are utilized in emergency service oversight. The essay concludes by giving an assessment on the strengths and weaknesses of the theory. The Path-Goal Leadership Theory was developed by the American psychologist Robert House to describe the way that leaders encourage and support their subordinates in achieving set goals by making the path that they should take clear and easy.

It states that the leader must inspire subordinates by: one, stressing the relationship between the subordinates' own needs and the organizational goals; two clarifying and facilitating the path subordinates must follow to accomplish their own needs as well as the organization's needs. [House, 1971] The theory is of paramount importance in understanding the effect of a leader's behavior on employee satisfaction and morale.

Moreover, it offers useful insights that would be helpful in guiding the behavior of managers in different situations. Basing from the assumptions of Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory, Path-Goal Leadership Theory elucidates how the leader's behavior causes expectancies/motivations in the subordinate that create effort and satisfaction. The underlying principle is that followers will perform better if they believe they are capable, and if they perceive the work will get results and be worthwhile. Read about difference between behavioural theory and contingency theory of leadership

In the theory, House and Mitchell (1974) describe four styles of leadership- direct, supportive, participative and achievement oriented- depending on the situation, including the follower's capability and motivation, as well as the difficulty of the job and other contextual factors.

**Directive Leadership:** The leader tells followers what needs to be done and gives appropriate guidance along the way. This involves giving them directions of specific work to perform at specific times and in some occasions by rewarding them.

This may be used when the task is unstructured and complex and the subordinates are inexperienced. This increases the subordinate's sense of security and control and hence is satisfying.

**Supportive Leadership:** The leader is friendly and shows concern for the subordinates by directing his behavior towards the satisfaction of their needs and preferences. It may also involve increasing the follower's self-esteem and making the job more interesting. This behavior is especially helpful in situations in which the work is stressful, boring or hazardous.

**Participative Leadership:** Before the leader makes a decision he consults with subordinates and considers their suggestions. This approach is best when the followers are experts and their advice is highly and personally involved in the work.

**Achievement-oriented Leadership:** In this case, the leader sets high goals and expects subordinates to have high-level performance. The leader shows confidence in their capability to meet this expectation. This approach is best

in complex tasks and was most predominant in technical, scientific and engineering jobs.

The four leadership styles discussed above are critical in a number of ways:

The directive leadership style has the most positive effect when the subordinate's role and task demands are ambiguous and intrinsically satisfying. [House, ; Mitchell, 1974] It is especially useful to clarify a new path, for example, a new process in the manufacturing of a product.

Supportive leadership has the maximum impact when the work is stressful or dissatisfying for the employees. It can be applied in dull, uninteresting or hazardous jobs like underground mining so as to increase confidence to achieve outcome [Peter, 2004] .

Through participation in the decision-making process, subordinates learn what actions lead to what goals.

Participation increases the autonomy and control that the individual has over what happens on the job. Under a participative system (where subordinates are involved in the decision-making process), pressure for better performance gets diffused -peer pressure and social pressure also come to play a part.

Achievement oriented leadership will motivate workers to strive for higher standards, and they will have greater confidence in their ability to meet goals. [Peter, 2004]