

# Leadership style: what do people do when they are leading research paper sample

[Business](#), [Employee](#)



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## **Introduction**

Nowadays lots of books, manuals and trainings are worked out to teach people leadership. All of them introduce completely different visions of what leadership actually is. According to Richard L Daft (2008), most common definitions of leadership include such elements as influence, intention, personal responsibility and integrity, change, shared purpose and followers (5).

Five most important leadership practices, singled out by James M. Kouzes& Barry Z. Posner, are modeling the way, inspiring shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act and encouraging the heart (26).

According to R. Thomas (2008), crucibles of leadership include capacity to adapt to ever changing inner and outer conditions, being able to learn from difference, prevailing over the darkness and meeting expectations (43-50).

Successful going through these crucibles lets us distinguish a true leader

from the one, who is not able to cope with problems, which can emerge at different stages of the process of vision's implementation.

Since leadership became of interest to scholars, a debate on whether it is an art, a science or a combination of art and science, takes place. The search for the traits of leaders has been ongoing in different parts of the world for centuries. As it was stated by A. Weth (2007), the general traits, needed to be a leader, are intelligence; adjustment; extraversion; conscientiousness, open-mindedness and self-efficacy (7-12). Different combinations of aforementioned traits are required to adhere to different styles of leadership. Leadership style is a leader's style of providing group of people or organization with guidance and direction, formulating vision and setting goals and motivating people. According to Peter Guy Northouse (2010), leadership style consists of two styles of a person's behaviour, which are task (directive) and supportive (relationship) behaviours (91). For the leader it is critical to be able to match styles to competence and commitment of subordinates or match to the situation. In this paper I would like to discuss four main leadership styles: LMX (leader-member exchange or vertical dyad linkage theory), authentic, servant and democratic.

## **LMX**

According to leader-member exchange theory, leaders, who adhere to LMX style, form different kinds of relationships with subordinates. By-turn, the group of subordinates divides into in-group and out-group. Members of the in-group receive sizably more attention from the leader and have more access to both communicating the leader directly and resources. The

relationships between the leader and the in-group are characterized by a sense of mutual trust and obligations. Role responsibilities of members of in-group tend to be expanded and negotiated. They often serve as assistants or advisers, who have high-quality personalized exchanges with the leaders, which help him/her, get the insight into the process of vision's implementation and identify difficulties, which characterize this process. On the other hand, relationships between the leader and out-group are limited to a more formal dimension of employment contract or defined roles. Application of LMX style is often predetermined by institutional structure of groups, which aim at implementing particular goals. For instance, structure of the government provides for the Prime Minister to form dyadic relationships with his associates, so that they can inform the Prime Minister about the activities of different ministries and help him implement his functions. The major criticism of this theory can be associated with favouritism. In other words, leaders can fail to assess performance of members of the in-group objectively. On the other hand, in-group members tend to have high rates of satisfaction with their jobs, so they work effectively. LMX style of leadership is widely applied not only by state actors, but by leaders of private enterprises and nonprofit groups.

### **Authentic style**

Authentic leadership style is based on three main perspectives: intrapersonal, interpersonal and developmental. Authentic leaders are people, who have profound sense of purpose and definite personal values. Moreover, they have a longing to serve other people by their leadership.

According to Bill George (2004), a well-known theoretician of leadership, authentic leader should exhibit the following qualities: understanding the purpose, practicing solid values, leading with heart, establishing enduring relationships and demonstrating self-discipline. (30-34) Authentic leadership is believed to emerge from particular life experiences, which help the leader understand his purpose and solidify his values. Authentic leaders often tend to lead from conviction. Conviction can be a compelling factor, which helps the leader get commitment of his potential followers.

Authentic leaders are also likely to be found among military personalities. For instance, one of the most prominent U. S. war personalities of the twentieth century Harold Gregory (“ Hal”) Moore, who demonstrated a brilliant initiative during the American-Vietnamese. Before leaving for Vietnam, he told his troops that he could not promise to bring all of them home alive, but promised to be the first to set foot on the field and the last to set off. Considering famous examples of authentic leadership, I cannot help concluding that it is far more than a science. Clear vision of the goal, real values, fiery passion to reach the goal and even readiness to sacrifice life for the goal are things, which are not likely to be obtained through attending some courses in management or even becoming a leader of some company. To my mind, true authentic leadership stems from life changing experience and, therefore, is extremely valuable, as it helps to reach goals, which can be hardly reached by a group of people without being led by an authentic leader.

## **Servant style**

The servant leadership concept was formulated by Robert K. Greenleaf.

According to this concept, servant leaders act in order to first and foremost meet the needs of others. Their main motivation for leadership should lie in desire to serve others. Servant leaders tend to respect equality and, therefore, seek to promote professional and personal development of other people. Servant leadership style is often associated with participative leadership. The highest priority for the servant leader is to encourage, empower and enable subordinates to let them use full potential and capabilities. Servant leader can be characterized with the following main traits: listening (as the core communication skill); empathy (attempt to understand subordinates feelings); ability to view situation from an integrated, holistic position; commitment to promoting growth of people and community-building.

One of U. S. leaders, who is usually considered to have used servant style of leadership, was Abraham Lincoln. The American Civil War provided a platform for Lincoln to demonstrate servant leadership. His servant leadership style is brightly exemplified by his desire to serve greater good for more people, which found its reflection in him freeing slaves and, therefore, extending the opportunity for liberty for more people. During his Presidency Lincoln promoted such values as liberty, life and the pursuit of happiness and used his Presidency to make these values accessible for as many Americans as possible.

## **Democratic style**

Democratic (participative) style of leadership is based on involvement of the followers and providing them with the opportunity to participate in the process of guiding and directing themselves. Real democratic leader keeps communication open, focuses on discussion and respects all the ideas and opinions of the followers. In his book “ Leading Change: The Argument for Values-Based Leadership”(1996) James O’Toole argues that leadership based on values is far more effective than the one based on fear. In his book he uses examples of CEO profiles to prove his statement. One of the profiles can be considered a beautiful example of democratic leadership. Corning CEO James R. Houghton turned a company, formerly branded as a “ dictatorship” into a company that is interested in empowering employees. Famous Corporation Google also shares democratic leadership style, giving every employee a chance to make a contribution into functioning of the company without dealing with a variety of bureaucratic issues. According to Houghton’s message, every employee should be a leader. The main advantage of participative leadership style lies in the fact that employees feel they are listened to and respected, and, therefore, work more productively, because they feel that lots of things depend on their performance. So, nowadays, leaders of global corporations, who are interested in new ideas and start ups, tend to make use of democratic leadership style.

## Conclusion

Concluding, I would like to mention that each of aforementioned leadership styles has its own advantages and drawbacks. Moreover, I do not think that it is possible to apply one leadership style “ clearly”. Leadership style of a particular leader can be almost always characterized with the traits, which are typical for different leadership styles. Moreover, application of particular leadership style is highly dependent on situation and possible implications of this style’s usage. It is evident that basing leadership on shared values is far more effective than making employees be afraid of the leader. Despite the fact that leadership can be often considered an art or even inherent capability of a person (authentic leadership), it can be also viewed as a science, which one can master if he really seeks to.

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