

# Ilm award first line management essay

Business, Decision Making



Before we discuss what leadership styles there are it is important to firstly define what the difference is between management and leadership. The biggest difference between managers and leaders is the way they motivate people to follow them. Managers have a position given to them by the company. Their subordinates work for them to complete tasks and in turn manage situations as they occur. Leaders on the other hand do not have subordinates when they are leading. Instead, formal control is given up, as to lead is have followers and this is always a voluntary activity. Telling people what to do does not inspire them to follow, rather than to be effective they must want to follow.

There are many forms of leadership styles, but based on Kurt Lewin's models from the 1940's we will discuss the four major traits, authoritarian, democratic, consultative and laissez faire. First, authoritarian leaders are best described as those who dictate orders to the employees and provide clear expectations for what needs to be achieved, when it should be completed, and how. The decisions are quick because there is no consultation or independent input from the rest of the team and typically they make choices based on their own ideas and judgments and rarely accept advice. There is also a clear division between the leader and the followers and will dictate working methods and processes to their team. The problems of relying too much on an autocratic style is that it can lead to poor quality decisions because of the lack of input.

Team morale can be low with leaders being viewed as bossy when they are unable to contribute ideas. This can result in high staff turnover as they will

be unlikely to be felt as valued employees. However, this does not mean there is no place for an autocratic approach.

This style of management is often used in an emergency or when speed is more important to achieve a goal efficiently and the leader may have more experience and knowledge than the team members. For a consultative management approach the views and opinions are surveyed from within their staff allowing them to feel involved and utilise their skills, but the ultimate decision will rest with the leader. In this approach the leader will attempt to use persuasion rather than the direct route of an autocratic style. The leader in this scenario will not make a major decision without first getting the input from those that will be affected. The benefits of consulting with your team members is that it can create ownership when goals and targets are set, and when a problem needs to be solved.

The consequences however can be a delayed decision as it will take time to formulate ideas and discuss the best course of action. Subsequently and, most importantly, if the consultation process is badly managed then it can be seen as manipulation and will not create the correct response of ownership and trust. For the democratic style the manager will delegate away authority and decision making then the team members on a greater level to the consultative style allowing the majority to choose their own solutions where the team leader will act as a coach willing to accept the team's ideas over their own. This encourages a knowledgeable team to be far more effective and can lead to higher productivity. From a motivational perspective by allowing a sense of belonging to the decision making process

the team will feel more involved and committed to ensuring that the end results are achieved. The downsides to the democratic style is the time delay in formulating ideas and solutions which can result in a loss of the bigger picture where roles are unclear and a decision is needed quickly. In some cases the team may lack the knowledge to achieve what is being discussed and a more hands on approach would be needed. Democratic leadership therefore works best in situations where the team members are skilled and eager to share their knowledge.

Time is also a large factor to enable people to contribute and then vote on the plan of action. The final leadership style to be discussed is the laissez faire model. In this approach the manager accepts that a hands off approach is the best way to achieve the targets by allowing the team to work on their own. This can take several forms but is reliant on the manager monitoring what is being achieved and ensuring there is effective communication. This is needed so that the leader can act as a coach and answer questions from the team. Without this control and very experienced teams members there is the possibility that targets and deadlines will be missed and the team will lack the motivation to succeed on their own. What has been determined from the above leadership styles is that there is no "one size fits all" approach to leading. It has been argued that autocratic leadership breeds discontent, however, from the analysis above, each style has its own merits and pitfalls.

Therefore, to be a successful leader it is about knowing when to exhibit a particular approach rather than employing one or another. The leader should

be able to decide depending upon the job role, task in hand, or individually how to manage and utilise their skills. If we start at evaluating certain situations then we can see which key elements of each style are most appropriate at a given time. We can then see how they influence the choice of leadership style and the effect on the team, and whether the team is able and willing to make decisions themselves. If we look at a new employee within my team then we would be much more focused upon them and perhaps advocate a talent map based on an autocratic rather than a laissez faire style to ensure that policy and procedures were adhered too. We would also need to maintain communication so that they had direction and support to develop. This shouldn't be confused with micromanagement, a leader should provide a structured framework so that they can develop and become self-motivated and independent not a dependence on being told what to do all the time.

In the same instance we wouldn't expect to treat the rest of the team in this manner without leading them to lose motivation. For the autocratic style to be effective it would need to be used selectively when a crisis occurred which demanded attention or when a policy from above dictated the response. Once the team is made up of skilled and motivated employees a laissez faire style using one minute management techniques would be more appropriate. In a skilled and experienced team like mine they are motivated to complete their tasks on time without the need for me to be checking their progress. In doing so, the team members have pride and the drive to be successful. This in turn frees up my time so that I can support and offer my

advice as and when it is needed. Within the team structure we hold monthly team briefs where we can discuss openly what the current results and achievements are within the team.

This also allows any issues to be aired on a consultative basis and what solutions can be used at both team and at management level. I feel that this benefits the team as they can see what issues are affecting the organisation. By engaging directly, a sense of involvement is created, even on issues they may not have a final decision on. This still encourages team interaction which would not necessarily occur from a top down solution. When evaluating the use of a democratic style of leadership its use is limited and how this approach would positively affect the team due to the nature of the business. When compared to a consultative style the targets and objects are set across different business units and would add unnecessarily to an already simplified process. This is not to say that a democratic style is unworkable, just that in our department its scope is limited to smaller adjustments to working practising, rather than big policy setting.

In this situation, in my team of five, arranging quarterly meetings has helped to bring into place standards and set working practices. In this case the team had the knowledge and was, therefore, in a better position to write up and decide what are the best policies and processes and where change was needed. The benefit of this was they all had a chance to enter some input and then ratify by agreement what the new arrangements would be. It also allowed an assessment of the individuals within the team by identifying their own strengths and how they responded to each of the four different styles.

This can then be applied to a “ Skill vs Will” matrix to see how they respond and their motivation to tasks they are set, rather than assuming we must use an either or approach. By making a quick assessment of each individual we can see where they are skilled and experienced to complete a task and if they need to be motivated by each style of leadership. Review of Leadership behaviour: Over the past few weeks I have been assessing my leadership styles based on the four examples above.

I was surprised to see that more often than not I am using an autocratic style mixed with a laissez faire and I have tried to evaluate why this is the case. To give an example of the problems that are occurring in the business I have decided to describe a situation that needed an autocratic response. Each week an individual within the team receives data from a different department which in turn is processed and sent back to them. However, this work was in addition to their current day to day tasks and the volume of this work had been gradually increasing and taking longer to process. This was resulting in complaints from several departments as the workload was taking longer and longer to be returned and was resulting in delayed payments to our customers. I, therefore, needed to find out what was causing the disruption. After speaking with the team member it became clear that they had far too much work and needed additional support to bring themselves back up to date. In response to this I asked another member of the team to act as support until the work had been completed.

Whilst this was happening I needed to respond to the complaint to ensure it had been dealt with by stating that the workload would be completed and

the additional back log would be up to date by the end the week. I also put into place a review to see what additional capacity there was within the team to reorganise workloads so that the effect of this would be reduce in the future. By looking at my management style currently, I believe I am to focused on a laissez faire style, and only react with in an autocratic way once a crisis occurs. However, I believe this system works well as the team is capable of hitting its targets.

I would say, however, that I would need to try and utilise a more consultative style when determining workloads and issues that can arise. I would also consider using the Skill vs. Will matrix on tasks to see where an individual falls.

From the example above, the team member is very skilled but needed additional motivation to make sure the task was completed on time. To move onto my own self-assessment if we were to complete an investigation of my presentation skills then we can use a strategic planning method called SWOT which is based on four heading, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to evaluate myself. A SWOT analysis involves specifying an objective and then identifying the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieving the objective. Starting with my strengths I believe that I research the subject well so that I can be knowledgeable about the subject in order to fully explain and then answer any questions. My presentation style is relaxed which helps my body language to be open and in turn how I communicate to the group. Moving on to my weaknesses, sometimes I can be nervous and anxious presenting to groups or people I do



not know. Opportunities to improve on my skills would be to practise doing more presentations and to work on how I visually deliver the information. Finally, to comment on my threats, without additional practice then I will not be able to improve on the above weaknesses and turn them into strengths.

This was shared with my team leader who in turn submitted a few extra points in my assessment. She commented from a weakness the level of detail is sometimes too great which can lose the audience I am aiming to communicate with when presenting at a lower level than my colleagues. She, therefore, offered as an opportunity for me to attend a training course which focuses on improving these skills and also to volunteer to host the monthly inter team meetings so that once completing a course I would be able to put into practice what I had learned. Using the ILM Leadership trust index for 2010 I have discussed with my team leader as to what makes a good leader. The basics of the report is a reflection of how through a time of crisis a good leader should be able to step up and be counted to make to correct decisions for the organisation as a whole. This will sometimes have a negative effect on the current employees and structures. The thrust of the document is that trust is one of the most important qualities that a manager needs.

Without trust leading becomes impossible as you will not get confidence and improved productivity. This is important to management as they are the ones who deal with employees once the leaders make their decisions for better or worse. This is reflected within the document when it reviews that trust in front line managers has “ flat lined” whilst CEOs have driven trust up. The document also shows how CEOs are more willing to use a consultative or

laissez faire style of leader but when the recession hit in 2009 they have had to take the difficult decision based more on an autocratic style. In reflection to my own strengths and weakness, the document shows that a leader at any level needs to be seen as acting fairly in order to foster a strong and effective leadership as without this, trust levels will fall.

With this in mind it is clear that I need to show an increased personal impact on those who follow me. I need to maintain and increase trust levels through credible actions and increase communication to allow the team to become self-motivated and reliant. With this in mind I need to ensure that I can recognise talents within my team and then develop it. This is also linked to making sure that as a manager I can coach and then enhance my team performance through effective feedback with constructive results. In order to do this, however, I need to develop and enhance my own behaviour and personal impact. In order to achieve this we can set ourselves development plans using a SMART program (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, Time) which are useful ways to structure and measure our progress. For myself I have selected to develop my communicational and delivery skills.

In doing so I have developed my plan with my team leader. Firstly, I have selected to focus Specifically on a course designed to improve my presentation skills. To Measure this I will reevaluate after the course completion date by completing a new SWOT analysis. I believe this is an Achievable course to complete and a Realistic aim as it will increase my experience to be a better presenter over Time when I will review my skills at my midyear review. References: Institute of leadership & management and

management today index of leadership trust 2010 Three approaches to Leadership by Andrew Parkinson may 2010 The One Minute Manager, Kenneth Blanchard & Spencer Johnson 1996