

Leadership Styles

<http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/>

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In 1939, a group of researchers led by psychologist Kurt Lewin set out to identify different styles of leadership. While further research has identified more specific types of leadership, this early study was very influential and established three major leadership styles. In the study, schoolchildren were assigned to one of three groups with an authoritarian, democratic or laissez-fair leader. The children were then led in an arts and crafts project while researchers observed the behavior of children in response to the different styles of leadership.

Authoritarian leaders, also known as autocratic leaders, provide clear expectations for what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. There is also a clear division between the leader and the followers. Authoritarian leaders make decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group.

Researchers found that decision-making was less creative under authoritarian leadership. Lewin also found that it is more difficult to move from an authoritarian style to a democratic style than vice versa. Abuse of this style is usually viewed as controlling, bossy, and dictatorial.

Authoritarian leadership is best applied to situations where there is little time for group decision-making or where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group.

Participative Leadership (Democratic)

Lewin's study found that participative leadership, also known as [democratic leadership](#), is generally the most effective leadership style. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members. In Lewin's study, children in this group were less productive than the members of the authoritarian group, but their contributions were of a much higher quality.

Participative leaders encourage group members to participate, but retain the final say over the decision-making process. Group members feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative.

Delegative (Laissez-Faire) Leadership

Researchers found that children under delegative leadership, also known as [laissez-fair leadership](#), were the least productive of all three groups. The children in this group also made more demands on the leader, showed little cooperation and were unable to work independently.

Delegative leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave decision-making up to group members. While this style can be effective in situations where group members are highly qualified in an area of expertise, it often leads to poorly defined roles and a lack of motivation.

Autocratic leadership, also known as authoritarian leadership, is a leadership style characterized by individual control over all decisions and little input from group members. Autocratic leaders typically make choices based on their own ideas and judgments and rarely accept advice from followers. Autocratic leadership involves absolute, authoritarian control over a group.

Characteristics of Autocratic Leadership

Some of the primary characteristics of autocratic leadership include:

- Little or no input from group members
- Leaders make the decisions
- Group leaders dictate all the work methods and processes
- Group members are rarely trusted with decisions or important tasks

Benefits of Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership can be beneficial in some instances, such as when decisions need to be made quickly without consulting with a large group of people. Some projects require strong leadership in order to get things accomplished quickly and efficiently.

Have you ever worked with a group of students or co-workers on a project that got derailed by poor organization, a lack of leadership, and an inability to set deadlines? If so, chances are that your grade or job performance suffered as a result. In such situations, a strong leader who utilizes an autocratic style can take charge of the group, assign tasks to different members, and establish solid deadlines for projects to be finished.

In situations that are particularly stressful, such as during military conflicts, group members may actually prefer an autocratic style. It allows members of the group to focus on performing specific tasks without worrying about making complex decisions. This also allows group members to become highly skilled at performing certain duties, which can be beneficial to the group.

Downsides of Autocratic Leadership

While autocratic leadership can be beneficial at times, there are also many instances where this leadership style can be problematic. People who abuse an autocratic leadership style are often viewed as bossy, controlling, and dictatorial, which can lead to resentment among group members.

Because autocratic leaders make decisions without consulting the group, people in the group may dislike that they are unable to contribute ideas. Researchers have also found that autocratic leadership often

results in a lack of creative solutions to problems, which can ultimately hurt the performance of the group.

While autocratic leadership does have some potential pitfalls, leaders can learn to use elements of this style wisely. For example, an autocratic style can be used effectively in situations where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group or has access to information that other members of the group do not.

Democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership, is a type of leadership style in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision-making process. Researchers have found that this learning style is usually one of the most effective and lead to higher productivity, better contributions from group members, and increased group morale.

Characteristics of Democratic Leadership

Some of the primary characteristics of democratic leadership include:

- Group members are encouraged to share ideas and opinions, even though the leader retains the final say over decisions.
- Members of the group feel more engaged in the process.
- Creativity is encouraged and rewarded.

Benefits of Democratic Leadership

Because group members are encouraged to share their thoughts, democratic leadership can lead to better ideas and more creative solutions to problems. Group members also feel more involved and committed to projects, making them more likely to care about the end results. Research on leadership styles has also shown that democratic leadership leads to higher productivity among group members.

Downsides of Democratic Leadership

While democratic leadership has been described as the most effective leadership style, it does have some potential downsides. In situations where roles are unclear or time is of the essence, democratic leadership can lead to communication failures and uncompleted projects. In some cases, group members may not have the necessary knowledge or expertise to make quality contributions to the decision-making process.

Democratic leadership works best in situations where group members are skilled and eager to share their knowledge. It is also important to have plenty of time to allow people to contribute, develop a plan and then vote on the best course of action.

Laissez-faire leadership, also known as delegative leadership, is a type of leadership style in which leaders are hands-off and allow group members to make the decisions. Researchers have found that this is generally the leadership style that leads to the lowest productivity among group members.

Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by:

- Very little guidance from leaders
- Complete freedom for followers to make decisions
- Leaders provide the tools and resources needed
- Group members are expected to solve problems on their own

Laissez-faire leadership can be effective in situations where group members are highly skilled, motivated and capable of working on their own. While the conventional term for this style is 'laissez-faire' and implies a completely hands-off approach, many leaders still remain open and available to group members for consultation and feedback.

Downsides of Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is not ideal in situations where group members lack the knowledge or experience they need to complete tasks and make decisions. Some people are not good at setting their own deadlines, managing their own projects and solving problems on their own. In such situations, projects can go off-track and deadlines can be missed when team members do not get enough guidance or feedback from leaders.

Leadership Styles

<http://www.essortment.com/styles-leadership-36149.html>

In the past several decades, management **experts** have undergone a revolution in how they define leadership and what their attitudes are toward it. They have gone from a very classical autocratic approach to a very creative, participative approach. Somewhere along the line, it was determined that not everything old was bad and not everything new was good. Rather, different styles were needed for different situations and each leader needed to know when to exhibit a particular approach.

Four of the most basic leadership styles are:

- Autocratic
- Bureaucratic

--Laissez-faire

--Democratic

This article will briefly define each style and describe the situations in which each one might be used.

Autocratic Leadership Style

This is often considered the classical approach. It is one in which the manager retains as much power and decision-making authority as possible. The manager does not consult employees, nor are they allowed to give any input. Employees are expected to obey orders without receiving any explanations. The motivation environment is produced by creating a structured set of [rewards](#) and punishments.

This leadership style has been greatly criticized during the past 30 years. Some studies say that organizations with many autocratic leaders have higher [turnover](#) and absenteeism than other organizations. Certainly Gen X employees have proven to be highly resistant to this [management style](#). These studies say that autocratic leaders:

--Rely on threats and punishment to influence employees

--Do not trust employees

--Do not allow for employee input

Yet, autocratic leadership is not all bad. Sometimes it is the most effective style to use. These situations can include:

--New, untrained employees who do not know which tasks to perform or which procedures to follow

--Effective supervision can be provided only through detailed orders and instructions

--Employees do not respond to any other leadership style

--There are high-volume production needs on a daily basis

--There is limited time in which to make a decision

--A manager's power is challenged by an employee

--The area was poorly managed

--Work needs to be coordinated with another department or organization

The autocratic leadership style should not be used when:

--Employees become tense, fearful, or resentful

--Employees expect to have their opinions heard

--Employees begin depending on their manager to make all their decisions

--There is low employee morale, high turnover and absenteeism and work stoppage

Bureaucratic Leadership Style

Bureaucratic leadership is where the manager manages "by the book" Everything must be done according to procedure or policy. If it isn't covered by the book, the manager refers to the next level above him or her. This manager is really more of a police officer than a leader. He or she enforces the rules.

This style can be effective when:

--Employees are performing routine tasks over and over.

--Employees need to understand certain standards or procedures.

--Employees are working with dangerous or delicate equipment that requires a definite set of procedures to operate.

--Safety or security training is being conducted.

--Employees are performing tasks that require handling [cash](#).

This style is ineffective when:

--Work habits form that are hard to break, especially if they are no longer useful.

--Employees lose their interest in their jobs and in their fellow workers.

--Employees do only what is expected of them and no more.

Democratic Leadership Style

The democratic leadership style is also called the participative style as it encourages employees to be a part of the decision making. The democratic manager keeps his or her employees informed about everything that affects their work and shares decision making and problem solving responsibilities. This style requires the leader to be a coach who has the final say, but gathers information from staff members before making a decision.

Democratic leadership can produce high quality and high quantity work for long periods of time. Many employees like the trust they receive and respond with cooperation, team spirit, and high morale. Typically the democratic leader:

--Develops plans to help employees evaluate their own performance

--Allows employees to establish goals

--Encourages employees to grow on the job and be promoted

--Recognizes and encourages achievement.

Like the other styles, the democratic style is not always appropriate. It is most successful when used with highly skilled or experienced employees or when implementing operational changes or resolving individual or group problems.

The democratic leadership style is most effective when:

- The leader wants to keep employees informed about matters that affect them.
- The leader wants employees to share in decision-making and problem-solving duties.
- The leader wants to provide opportunities for employees to develop a high sense of personal growth and job satisfaction.
- There is a large or complex problem that requires lots of input to solve.
- Changes must be made or problems solved that affect employees or groups of employees.
- You want to encourage team building and participation.

Democratic leadership should not be used when:

- There is not enough time to get everyone's input.
- It's easier and more cost-effective for the manager to make the decision.
- The business can't afford mistakes.
- The manager feels threatened by this type of leadership.
- Employee safety is a critical concern.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

The laissez-faire leadership style is also known as the "hands-off" style. It is one in which the manager provides little or no direction and gives employees as much freedom as possible. All authority or power is given to the employees and they must determine goals, make decisions, and resolve problems on their own.

This is an effective style to use when:

- Employees are highly skilled, experienced, and educated.
- Employees have pride in their work and the drive to do it successfully on their own.
- Outside experts, such as staff specialists or consultants are being used
- Employees are trustworthy and experienced.

This style should not be used when:

--It makes employees feel insecure at the unavailability of a manager.

--The manager cannot provide regular feedback to let employees know how well they are doing.

--Managers are unable to thank employees for their good work.

--The manager doesn't understand his or her responsibilities and is hoping the employees can cover for him or her.

Varying Leadership Style

While the proper leadership style depends on the situation, there are three other factors that also influence which leadership style to use.

1. The manager's personal background. What personality, knowledge, values, ethics, and experiences does the manager have. What does he or she think will work?

2. The employees being supervised. Employees are individuals with different personalities and backgrounds. The leadership style managers use will vary depending upon the individual employee and what he or she will respond best to.

3. The company. The traditions, values, philosophy, and concerns of the company will influence how a manager acts.