Leadership in Groups

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What Is Leadership?

All groups need leadership. Without leadership, a group may be nothing more than a collection of individuals lacking the coordination and motivation to achieve a common goal. Cathcart and Samovar maintain, “There are no successful groups without leaders. . . . Leaders lead because groups demand it and rely on leaders to satisfy needs.”

Leadership is the ability to make strategic decisions and use communication to mobilize group members toward achieving a shared goal.

A leader and leadership are not the same. Leader is the title given to a person; leadership refers to the action that a leader takes to help group members achieve shared goals. Some groups have no official leader but instead have one or more members who engage in leadership behaviors. Other groups may have designated leaders who fail to behave in ways typically associated with leadership.

Another way to understand the nature of leadership is to contrast it with the functions of management. Whereas managers often focus on efficiency, leaders are concerned with effectiveness. Whereas managers become absorbed in getting an assigned job done, leaders focus on the ultimate direction and goal of the group. Note how the employee in the following situation describes the difference between a manager and a leader.

Lee is the manager of our department, so he’s technically our leader. Lee always follows procedures and meets deadlines for paperwork, so I guess he’s a good manager. But we don’t get much guidance or motivation from him. I just think managing tasks and real leadership of people are somehow different. Allison supervises the other department. She seems to inspire her workers. They’re more innovative and work closely with each other. We do our job, but they seem to be on a mission. I’ve always thought that working for Allison would be more fulfilling and fun.

TOOLBOX 8.1 Chairing a Meeting

The person who chairs a meeting may not be the same person who serves as a group’s leader. Although a leader often calls and conducts meetings, that responsibility may also be delegated to someone other than the leader, particularly when a group breaks into subcommittees or when a leader wants to be a more active participant in a group’s deliberations.

Maintaining order during a meeting and facilitating a productive discussion are the primary responsibilities of the chairperson. Chapter 14: Planning and Conducting Meetings describes the methods and tools available to group members who have the responsibility of planning and chairing a meeting.
Leadership and power

It is impossible to understand effective leadership and the skills of an effective leader without understanding the importance of power. Bennis and Nanus contend that power is “the quality without which leaders cannot lead.”\(^2\) In the hands of a just and wise leader, power is a positive force; in the hands of an unjust and foolish leader, power can be destructive.

Power is the ability or authority to influence and motivate others. One of the traditional ways to analyze power in a group is found in the categories of power developed by French and Raven.\(^3\) They divide power into five categories: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power.

#### Reward Power

Reward power derives from the leader’s authority to give group members something they value. Whether the reward is a cash bonus, a promotion, or a convenient work schedule, its effectiveness depends on whether group members value the reward. Some leaders may think they have power because they control group rewards, only to discover that those rewards have little value for members. Employees may not want a promotion if the new job is less appealing than their current job. Only when the reward is worthwhile will group members respond to a leader who uses this kind of power.

#### Coercive Power

If the carrot approach doesn’t work, a leader may resort to using a stick: coercive power. Another way to describe coercive power is to call it punishment power. When leaders can discipline, demote, or dismiss group members, they have coercive power. Hackman and Johnson contend that “coercion is most effective when those subject to this form of power are aware of expectations and
are warned in advance about the penalties for failure to comply. Leaders using coercive power must consistently carry out threatened punishments. However, coercive power can be counterproductive. A skillful leader uses coercive power sparingly and only when all other means of influence have failed to mobilize group members toward achieving their shared goal.

- **Legitimate Power**

  Legitimate power resides in a job, position, or assignment rather than in a person. For example, elected officials have the power to vote on the public’s behalf; committee chairpersons are authorized to take control of their assigned tasks; supervisors have authority over their workers. The word *legitimate* means “lawful” or “proper.” Most people believe it is lawful and proper that a judge make decisions and keep order in a courtroom. Group leaders may call meetings, assign tasks, and evaluate members as part of their legitimate duties.

- **Expert Power**

  Expert power is assigned to someone who has demonstrated a particular skill or special knowledge. Just as we may accept the advice of a doctor when we’re ill or that of an auto mechanic when we’ve broken down on the highway, we are more likely to grant power to an expert. When, however, the advice of supposed experts proves incorrect, their power will fade and even disappear. A leader can rely on expert power only if the group has recognized the leader as a well-informed and reliable authority.

- **Referent Power**

  Hackman and Johnson explain that referent power is role model power—the ability to influence others that arises when one person admires another. Referent power is the personal power or influence held by people who are liked, admired, and respected. When certain individuals demonstrate that they are effective communicators, talented organizers, shrewd problem solvers, and good listeners, we are more likely to be influenced by them. We often feel honored to work with someone who has strong referent power. Referent or personal power is very influential because it is recognized and conferred by the group rather than by an outside source.

  In most groups, a leader employs several kinds of power, depending on the needs of the group and the situation. Some leaders may have the power to reward and coerce as well as having legitimate, expert, and referent power. In other groups, a leader may depend entirely on one type of power to get a group to work cooperatively toward a goal. The more power a leader has, the more carefully the use of that power must be balanced with the needs of the group. If
you exert too much power, your group may lose its energy and enthusiasm. If you don’t exert enough power, your group may flounder and fail. Gaining power is not the same as using it wisely.

Becoming a Leader

Anyone can become a leader. Abraham Lincoln and Harry S. Truman rose from humble beginnings and hardship to become U.S. presidents. Corporate executives have worked their way up from the sales force (Ross Perot) and secretarial pools (Ardis Krainik, former General Director of the Lyric Opera of Chicago) to become chief executive officers. Yet as inspiring as these examples may be, leaders are not necessarily the hardest workers or the smartest employees. The path to a leadership position can be as easy as being in the right place at the right time or being the only person willing to take on a difficult job. Becoming the leader of a group occurs in many different ways.

■ Designated Leaders

Designated leaders are deliberately and purposely selected by a group or an outside authority. You may be hired for a job that gives you authority over others. You may be promoted or elected to a leadership position. Your boss may create a special work team or subcommittee and assign you to be its leader. In all these cases, the selection of the leader depends on an election or an appointment. Unfortunately, less-than-deserving people are sometimes appointed or elected to powerful positions. Electing a compromise candidate or appointing a politically connected member as a leader is too common a practice and no guarantee of leadership ability. Is it possible, then, for a designated leader to be an effective leader? Of
course it is. When a leader’s abilities match the needs of the group and its goal, there is a greater likelihood of success.

Unique challenges face a leader chosen by a source outside the group. When a new leader enters a well-established group, there can be a long and difficult period of adjustment for everyone. One student described this difficult process as follows:

For five summers, I worked as a counselor at a county day camp for underprivileged children. Harry was our boss and all of us liked him. We worked hard for Harry because we knew he’d look the other way if we showed up late or left early on a Friday. As long as the kids were safe and supervised, he didn’t bother us. When Harry was promoted into management at the county government office, we got Frank. The first few weeks were awful. Frank would dock us if we were late. No one could leave early. He demanded that we come up with more activities for the kids. Weekend pool parties were banned. He even made us attend a counselors’ meeting every morning rather than once every couple of weeks. But, in the end, most of us had to admit that Frank was a better camp director. The camp did more for the kids and that was the point.

Both Harry and Frank were leaders with legitimate power. What made them different were the various kinds of power available to them. Because Harry had earned the admiration and respect of the staff, he could rely on his personal, or referent, power. Frank, however, had to use coercive power to establish order.

When a leader is elected or appointed from within a group, the problems can be as difficult as with a leader from outside the group. If the person who once worked next to you becomes your boss, the adjustment can be problematic. Here is the way a business executive described how difficult it was when she was promoted to vice president:

When I was promoted, I became responsible for making decisions that affected my colleagues, many of whom were close friends. I was given the authority to approve projects, recommend salary increases, and grant promotions. Colleagues who had always been open and honest with me were more cautious and careful about what they said. I had to deny requests from people I cared about while approving requests from colleagues with whom I often disagreed. Even though I’m the same person I was as a manager, I was treated differently and, as a result, I behaved differently.

Being plucked from a group in order to lead it can present problems because it changes the nature of your relationship with the other group members. Even though the members know you well, you still must earn their trust as a leader. Initially, try involving the group in decision making as much as possible. Discuss ground rules for interaction with friends within the group while assuring them of your continued friendship. Finally, openly and honestly addressing leadership concerns with group members and seeking their suggestions may resolve many potential problems.\textsuperscript{6}
Emergent Leaders

Very often, the most effective leadership occurs when a leader emerges from a group rather than being promoted, elected, or appointed. The leaders of many political, religious, and neighborhood organizations emerge. Emergent leaders gradually achieve leadership by interacting with group members and contributing to the achievement of the group’s goal. The leader who emerges from within a group has significant advantages. He or she does not have to spend time learning about the group, its goals, and its norms. In addition, a leader who emerges from within a group has some assurance that the group wants him or her to be the leader rather than having to accept leadership because an election or outside authority says it must. Such leaders usually have referent power—a significant factor in mobilizing members toward the group’s goal.

Strategies for Becoming a Leader

Although there is no foolproof method, there are strategies that can improve your chances of emerging or being designated as a group’s leader. The following strategies require a balanced approach, one that takes advantage of opportunities without abusing the privilege of leadership:

- Talk early and often (and listen).
- Know more (and share it).
- Offer your opinion (and welcome disagreement).

Talk Early and Often (and Listen). Of all the strategies that can help you attain the position of group leader, the most reliable have to do with when and how much you talk. According to Hollander, the person who speaks first and most often is more likely to emerge as the group’s leader.\(^7\) The number of contributions is even more important than the quality of those contributions.

Effective listening is one of the hallmarks of successful leadership. If you talk early and often but ignore or misinterpret what other group members say, you will not emerge or be highly successful as a leader. Effective leaders devote their full attention to making sure that they comprehend what is said. They also follow the golden listening rule: Listen to others as you would have them listen to you. In other words, suspend your own needs in order to listen to someone else’s. Chapter 6: Listening in Groups offers guidelines for becoming a more effective and appreciated listener.
The quality of contributions becomes more significant after you become a leader. The link between participation and leadership “is the most consistent finding in small group leadership research.” Although talking early and often does not guarantee you a leadership position, failure to talk will keep you from being considered as a potential leader. Don’t overdo it, though. If you talk too much, members may think that you are not interested in or willing to listen to their contributions. As important as it is to talk, it is just as important to demonstrate your willingness and ability to listen to group members.

**Know More (and Share It).** Leaders often emerge or are appointed because they are seen as experts—people who know more about an important topic. Even if a potential leader is only able to explain ideas and information more clearly than other group members, she or he may be perceived as knowing more. Groups need well-informed leaders; they do not need know-it-alls. Know-it-alls see their own comments as most important; leaders value everyone’s contributions. Knowing more than other members may require hours of advance preparation. Members who want to become leaders understand that they must demonstrate their expertise without intimidating other group members.

**Offer Your Opinion (and Welcome Disagreement).** When groups are having difficulty making decisions or solving problems, they appreciate someone who can offer good ideas and informed opinions. Very often leaders will emerge when they help a group out of some difficulty. Offering ideas and opinions, however, is not the same as having those ideas accepted. Criticizing the ideas and opinions of others runs the risk of causing resentment and defensiveness. Bullying your way into a leadership position can backfire. If you are unwilling to compromise or listen to alternatives, the group may be unwilling to follow you. Effective leaders welcome constructive disagreement and discourage hostile confrontations. “They do not suppress conflict, they rise and face it.”
Implications. The strategies for becoming a leader are not necessarily the same strategies needed for successful leadership. Once you become a leader, you may find it necessary to listen more than talk, welcome better-informed members, and criticize the opinions of others. Once you have emerged as leader, your focus should shift from becoming the leader to serving the group you lead.

Leadership Theories

Leadership is a quality that seems to defy accurate measurement. Bennis and Nanus point out that “no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders, and perhaps more important, what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders. . . .”10 Despite such inconclusive results, there is a lot to be learned from the many theories of leadership. In the following sections, we explain five different theoretical approaches to leadership.

- Trait Theory

The trait theory is often called the “Great Man” theory. It is based on what many people now believe is a myth—that leaders are born, not made. Trait theory attempts to identify and prescribe individual characteristics and behaviors needed for effective leadership.

Think of some of the leaders you most admire. What traits do they have? Most of us can come up with a list of desirable leadership traits that includes intelligence, ability to communicate, confidence, enthusiasm, organizational talent, and good listening skills. Most of us would gladly follow a leader with these qualities. The problem is that there is no guarantee that someone possess-
ing these traits will be an effective leader. Furthermore, there are many effective leaders who possess only a few of these traits. Harriet Tubman, an illiterate runaway slave, did little talking but led hundreds of her people from bondage in the South to freedom in the North. Ross Perot, a little guy with big ears and a squeaky voice, became a business leader and serious contender for the U.S. presidency. Depending on the group and its circumstances, one set of traits may be less effective than another. Yet some important implications of this theory are of value to anyone seeking and gaining a leadership position.

**Implications of Trait Theory.** According to proponents of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, as described in Chapter 3, there is a set of traits that characterize “life’s natural leaders.” These “extroverted thinkers” (the ENTJ type) use reasoning ability to control and direct those around them. They are usually enthusiastic, decisive, confident, organized, logical, and argumentative. They love to lead and can be excellent communicators.

However, although they often assume or win leadership positions, they may not necessarily be effective leaders. Extroverted thinkers may intimidate and overpower others. They may be insensitive to the personal feelings and needs of group members. Women with such traits, moreover, are often perceived as arrogant and confrontational. Although many extroverted thinkers become leaders, they may need a less intense, more balanced approach in order to be effective leaders.

**Styles Theory**

As a way of expanding the trait approach to the study of leadership, researchers began reexamining the traits they had collected. Rather than looking for individual leadership traits, they developed the styles theory of leadership—a collection of specific behaviors that could be identified as unique leadership styles. Actors work in different styles—tough or gentle, comic or tragic. Even sports teams differ in style; the South American soccer teams are known for their speed and grace, the European teams for their technical skill and aggressiveness. Different styles are attributed to leaders, too.

One of the first attempts to describe different leadership styles yielded three categories: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire.
An autocrat is a person who has a great deal of power and authority, someone who maintains strict control over the group and its discussion. The autocratic leader tries to control the direction and outcome of a discussion, makes many of the group’s decisions, gives orders, expects followers to obey orders, focuses on achieving the group’s task, and takes responsibility for the results.

A democratic leader promotes the interests of group members and believes in and practices social equality. This type of leader shares decision making with the group, helps the group plan a course of action, focuses on the group’s morale as well as on the task, and gives the entire group credit for success.

Laissez-faire is a French phrase that means “to let people do as they choose.” A laissez-faire leader lets the group take charge of all decisions and actions. In mature and highly productive groups, a laissez-faire leader may be a perfect match for the group. Such a laid-back leadership style can generate a climate in which open communication is encouraged and rewarded. Unfortunately, there are laissez-faire leaders who do little or nothing to help a group when it needs decisive leadership.

Implications of Styles Theory. Many people assume that democratic leadership is always the best. There are, however, circumstances in which an autocratic style may be more effective. During a serious crisis there may not be enough time to discuss issues or consider the wishes of all members. In an emergency, a group may want its leader to take total responsibility.

In groups with democratic leadership, members are often more satisfied with the group experience, more loyal to the leader, and more productive in the long run. Whereas members often fear or distrust an autocratic leader, they usually
enjoy working with a democratic leader. Autocratic leaders may stifle critical opinions and creativity whereas a democratic leader can create a climate in which members’ opinions and ideas are welcome. Not surprisingly, groups led by democratic leaders exhibit lower levels of stress and conflict along with higher levels of innovation and creative problem solving.\footnote{13}

It may be worthwhile to assess your own leadership style. If you have a tendency to interrupt group members who seem to be wasting time, to start meetings on time regardless of the social interaction occurring in the group, or to confront members with terse questions, you may be more of an autocratic than a democratic leader. There are costs to using the autocratic approach. By exerting too much control, autocratic leaders may lower group morale and sacrifice long-term productivity. Unfortunately, many autocratic leaders defend such authoritarian actions by arguing that the group can’t get the job done without the strict control of the leader.

Dr. Sandy Faber, a world-renowned astronomer, wrote about her experience as the leader of a group of six astronomers who developed a new theory about the expansion of the universe. An unfortunate back injury made her take a new look at her leadership style:

My usual style would have been to take center stage . . . and control the process. My back problem was at its worst . . . and instead I found myself lying flat on a portable cot in Donald’s office. It is very hard to lead a group of people from a prone position. My energies were at a low ebb anyway. I found it very comfortable to lie back and avoid taking central responsibility. . . . It was the best thing that could have happened to us. The resultant power vacuum allowed each of us to quietly find our own best way to contribute. This lesson has stood me in good stead since. I now think that in small groups of able and motivated individuals, giving orders or setting up a well-defined hierarchy may generate more friction than it is designed to cure. If a good spirit of teamwork prevails, team leadership can be quite diffuse.\footnote{14}

If you have a tendency to ask open and general questions of the group as a whole, encourage participation from all members regardless of their status, and avoid dominating the group with your own opinion, you may be a democratic leader. Here, too, there are costs. Democratic leaders may sacrifice productivity by avoiding direct leadership. Many democratic leaders defend this approach by arguing that, regardless of the circumstance, the only way to make a good decision is to involve all group members. However, by failing to take charge in a crisis or curb a discussion when final decisions are needed, democratic leaders may be perceived as weak or indecisive by their followers.

Laissez-faire leaders are most effective in groups with very mature and productive members. Whether for lack of leadership skill or interest, laissez-faire leaders avoid taking charge or taking the time to prepare for complex and lengthy discussions.
Knowing whether your primary leadership style is autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire is helpful only if you also understand the ways in which that style affects the members of your group and the goal your group is working to achieve. Effective leadership cannot be classified like a chemical molecule or a style of automobile. Effective leaders must seek a balance between their instinctive style and their ability to use other leadership strategies adapted to different group situations.

Situational Theory

The situational approach assumes that leaders are made, not born, and that nearly everyone can be an effective leader under the right circumstances. Moreover, situational theory explains how leaders can become more effective once they have carefully analyzed themselves, their group, and the circumstances in which they must lead. Rather than describing traits or styles, the situational approach seeks an ideal fit between leaders and leadership jobs.

The most influential theory of situational leadership was developed by the researcher Fred Fiedler. Fiedler’s Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness is based on his study of hundreds of groups in numerous work settings. The contingency model of situational leadership suggests that effective leadership occurs only when there is an ideal match between the leader’s style and the group’s work situation.

Leadership Style. Rather than classifying leaders as autocratic or democratic, Fiedler characterizes them as either task-motivated or relationship-motivated. Task-motivated leaders want to get the job done; they gain satisfaction from completing a task even if the cost is bad feelings between the leader and group members. Task-motivated leaders may be criticized for being too bossy and too focused on the job rather than on the morale of the group. Sometimes task-motivated leaders take on the jobs of other group members because they’re not satisfied with the quality or quantity of work done by others.

Relationship-motivated leaders gain satisfaction from working well with other people even if the cost is neglecting or failing to complete a task. Relationship-motivated leaders may be criticized for paying too much attention to how members feel and for tolerating disruptive members; they may appear inefficient and weak. Sometimes relationship-motivated leaders take on the jobs of other group members because they can’t bring themselves to ask their colleagues to do more.

The Situation. Once you have determined your leadership style, the next step is to analyze the way in which your style matches the group’s situation. According to Fiedler, there are three important dimensions to every situation: leader-member relationships, task structure, and power.
Fiedler claims that the most important factor in analyzing a situation is understanding the relationship between the leader and the group. Because leader-member relations can be positive, neutral, or negative, they can affect how a leader goes about mobilizing a group toward its goal. Are group members friendly and loyal to the leader and the rest of the group? Are they cooperative and supportive? Do they accept or resist the leader?

The second factor is rating the structure of the task. Task structure can range from disorganized and chaotic to highly organized and rule-driven. Are the goals and task clear? Is there an accepted procedure or set of steps for achieving the goal? Are there well-established standards for measuring success?

The third situational factor is the amount of power and control the leader has. Is the source of that power an outside authority, or has the leader earned it from the group? What differences would the use of reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and/or referent power have on the group?

Matching the Leader and the Situation. Fiedler’s research suggests that there are ideal matches between leadership style and the group situation. Task-motivated leaders perform best in extremes—such as when the situation is highly controlled or when it is almost out of control. Task-motivated leaders shine when there are good leader–member relationships, a clear task, and a lot of power. They also do well in stressful leadership jobs where there may be poor leader–member relationships, an unclear and unstructured task, and little control or power. Task-motivated leaders do well in extreme situations because their primary motivation is to take charge and get the job done.

Relationship-motivated leaders do well when there is a mix of conditions. They may have a structured task but an uncooperative group of followers. Rather than taking charge and getting the job done at all costs, the relationship-motivated leader uses diplomacy and works with group members to improve leader–member relationships. If there are good leader–member relations but an unstructured task, the relationship-motivated leader may rely on the resources of the group to develop a plan of action. Whereas a task-motivated leader might find these situations frustrating, a relationship-motivated leader will be quite comfortable.

Implications of Situational Theory. According to the situational approach, once you know your leadership style and have analyzed the situation in which you must lead, you can begin to predict how successful you will be as a leader. If you are a task-motivated leader, you should feel confident if asked to take on a highly structured or highly unstructured task. If completing the group’s task is your major concern and motivation, you should feel confident if asked to lead a group that is unable and unwilling to pursue its goal.

Relationship-motivated leaders have different factors to consider. If there is a moderate degree of structure, a relationship-motivated leader may be more successful. If people issues are your major concern, you should feel confident if asked to lead a group that is able but somewhat unwilling to complete its task.
Unfortunately, you cannot always choose when and where you will lead. You may find yourself assigned or elected to a leadership situation that does not match your leadership style. Rather than trying to change your leadership style, you may find it easier to change the situation you are leading. For example, if leader–member relations are poor, you may decide that your first task is to gain the group’s trust and support. You can schedule time to listen to members’ problems or take nonmeeting time to get to know key individuals in the group.

If your task is highly unstructured, you can exert your leadership by providing structure or by dividing the task into smaller, easier-to-achieve subunits. On the other hand, you may find yourself in a leadership situation where the task is so highly structured there is almost no need for leadership. The group knows exactly what to do. Rather than allowing the group to become bored, ask for or introduce new and less structured tasks to challenge the group.

Finally, you may be able to modify the amount of power you have. If you are reluctant to use coercive power or if you don’t have enough legitimate power, you can earn referent power by demonstrating your leadership ability. If you have a great deal of power and run the risk of intimidating group members, you may want to delegate some of your duties and power.

All the preceding strategies rely on leaders who understand who they are, who recognize the way in which they are motivated to lead, and who have analyzed the group’s situation. Rather than wishing you were born with leadership traits or waiting for situations that match your style, the situational approach suggests ways to improve your leadership ability.

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**FIGURE 8.5**

Contingency Model of Leader Effectiveness

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<tr>
<th>Task-Motivated Leaders</th>
<th>Relationship-Motivated Leaders</th>
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<td><strong>High Control of Leader-Member Relations, Task Structure, and Power</strong></td>
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T = Task-Motivated  R = Relationship-Motivated
Functional Theory

Like the situational approach, the functional theory of leadership assumes that people are not born as leaders but learn to function as leaders. Unlike the situational approach, the functional approach focuses on what a leader does rather than who a leader is. Even more significant, the functional approach does not assume that leadership is the sole responsibility of the leader. Instead, it assumes that anyone in a group can and should help the group achieve its goal. There are no rules dictating that only the leader can motivate group members, provide procedural suggestions, or solve group problems. Leadership is a job, not a person. And, according to the functional approach to leadership, any capable group member can assume leadership functions when necessary.

Implications of Functional Theory. Although the functional approach can shift leadership responsibilities to anyone capable of performing them, doing so does not mean that leadership is unnecessary. Just the opposite may be true. If one participant is better at motivating members while another member excels at keeping the group on track, the group may be better off with both members assuming such leadership functions than if it relies on a single person to assume these important responsibilities.

Another significant implication to the functional approach to leadership is its focus on communication strategies and skills. Rather than relying on a leader’s natural traits, styles, or motivation, the functional approach concentrates on what a leader says and does in a group situation. An information-giver, a compromiser, or even a dominator functions by communicating. Given the nature of group discussions, most of these functional leadership behaviors require effective communication skills.

TOOLBOX 8.3 and Participation

Because functional theory maintains that any group member can assume specific leadership tasks, it may be more of a participation theory than a leadership theory. As a theory of participation, functional theory assumes that the behavior of every member is critical to the group’s success or failure. The theory divides group members’ behaviors into three categories: (1) group task functions such as information giver, evaluator, and energizer; (2) group maintenance functions such as compromiser, tension releaser, and gatekeeper; and (3) self-centered functions such as blocker, dominator, and recognition seeker. An effective leader would assume most task and maintenance roles described by functional theory while minimizing or avoiding self-centered functions. Chapter 3: Participation in Groups uses functional theory to describe the most common roles found in groups.
Transformational Leadership Theory

In the late 1970s, researchers took a new and more sophisticated look at a special set of leadership traits. What qualities, they asked, are common to leaders who change the world in which they live—leaders such as Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and the “giants” of corporate industries? The result of this investigation was the development of transformational leadership theory, which looks at the ways in which leaders transform followers into a unified group with an inspired purpose. House and Shamir describe the effects that transformational leaders have on followers:

Such leaders transform the needs, values, preference, and aspirations of followers from self-interests to collective interests. Further, they cause followers to become highly committed to the leader’s mission, to make significant personal sacrifices in the interests of the mission, and to perform above and beyond the call of duty.16

Several terms describe the characteristics of transformational leaders: charismatic, creative, empowering, inspirational, interactive, intellectually stimulating, passionate, and perhaps most important of all, visionary.

Bennis and Goldsmith list four qualities that most group members want from their leaders: vision, trust, optimism, and action.17 The ability to create and communicate a compelling vision or purpose for the group separates transformational leaders from most other leaders. And it can’t be “any old purpose, either, but must be one that galvanizes, energizes, and enthralls people.”18 In addition to having an inspiring vision, transformational leaders generate and maintain trust and openness, twin qualities that strengthen member commitment and loyalty. Transformational leaders are also optimistic and hopeful. According to Bennis and Goldsmith, “their optimism stems from their clear vision of the future and their commitment to get there and bring everyone on their team along for the ride.”19 Last but not least, transformational leaders are doers—they convert their vision into action. They take risks, learn from their mistakes, and never lose sight of or faith in their vision.

Implications of Transformational Leadership Theory. Most of us will never be world-famous transformational leaders. We can, however, learn a great deal from such leaders. The most essential feature of the transformational puzzle is a compelling vision. President John F. Kennedy envisioned the United States putting a man on the moon. Walt Disney’s famous quotation—“If you can dream it, you can do it”—sits high atop a sign at the Epcot Center at Disney World Orlando. Developing answers to the following questions can help you form the images that can shape a compelling vision.

1. What, if anything, is unique or special about your group and/or its purpose?
2. What are your values, and how do they shape your priorities for the future?
3. What do the people or group members you serve really need that you could provide?
4. What would make you personally commit your mind and heart to this vision for the foreseeable future?
5. What do you really want your group to accomplish so that you and they will be committed to and proud of their association with the group?

With a compelling vision, trust and openness among group members, confident optimism, and purposeful action, a leader can transform a group into a remarkable and productive team of colleagues.

The 4-M Model of Leadership Effectiveness

Given the millions of words published about leadership by scholars, management gurus, and popular press writers, you may have difficulty sorting out the “dos and don’ts” of effective leadership. To help you understand and balance the contributions made by these many differing approaches, we offer an integrated model of leadership effectiveness that emphasizes specific communication strategies and skills.

The 4-M Model of Leadership Effectiveness divides leadership tasks into four interdependent leadership functions: (1) Modeling leadership behavior, (2) Motivating members, (3) Managing group process, and (4) Making decisions. These strategies incorporate the features of several theories and provide a set of behaviors characteristic of effective leadership.

Modeling Leadership Behavior

All of us have expectations about what an ideal leader should say and do. Model leaders project an image of confidence, competence, trustworthiness, and optimism. They rely on referent or role model power to influence others. Chemers refers to this function as image management and notes that when “image management is particularly successful, the leader may be described as charismatic.”

Yet no matter how much you may want to be seen as a model leader, only your followers can grant you that honor. We recommend the following strategies for modeling effective leadership:

1. Publicly champion your group and its goals.
2. Speak and listen effectively and confidently.
3. Behave consistently and assertively.
4. Demonstrate competence and trustworthiness.
5. Study and improve your own leadership skills.

**Motivating Members**

Chapter 11, “Motivation in Groups,” emphasizes the importance of enhancing individual and group motivation. Motivating others is also a critical skill for leaders. Effective leaders guide, develop, support, defend, and inspire group members. They develop relationships that “match the personal needs and expectations of followers.”

Five leadership skills are central to motivating members:

1. Secure member commitment to the group’s shared goal.
2. Appropriately reward the group and its members.
3. Help solve interpersonal problems and conflicts.
4. Adapt tasks and assignments to member abilities and expectations.
5. Provide constructive and timely feedback to members.

**Managing Group Process**

From the perspective of group survival, managing group process may be the most important function of leadership. If a group is disorganized, lacks sufficient information to solve problems, or is unable to make important decisions when they are called for, the group cannot be effective. Five leadership skills can enhance this important function:

1. Be well organized and fully prepared for group meetings and work sessions.
2. Understand and adapt to member strengths and weaknesses.
3. Help solve task-related and procedural problems.
5. Secure resources and remove roadblocks to group effectiveness.

**Making Decisions**

A leader’s willingness and ability to make appropriate, timely, and responsible decisions characterizes effective leadership. Too often we hear disgruntled group members talk about their leader’s inability to make critical decisions. A high school teacher described this fatal leadership flaw as follows:

Everyone agrees that our principal is a “nice guy” who wants everyone to like him. He doesn’t want to “rock the boat” or “make waves.” As a result, he doesn’t make decisions or take decisive action when it’s most needed. He
Leadership in virtual groups

Leadership is both pervasive and necessary in successful virtual groups. But, according to Lipnack and Stamps, "although virtual teams may have single leaders, multiple leaders are the norm rather than the exception." Why? Consider some of the added responsibilities required of someone who organizes and leads a virtual group—be it a simple teleconference, an email discussion, or an intercontinental videoconference.

Long before the actual meeting, someone must set up the unique logistics for a virtual get-together. When participants live in different cities or time zones, arranging a meeting is much more difficult than calling a regular staff meeting in a conference room down the hall. In order to make sure that members are fully prepared for a virtual meeting, a detailed agenda must be prepared and sent to all members well in advance. At the same time, someone must make sure that the technology required for the conference is up and running when it’s needed. Finally, someone must lead a discussion in which participants may neither see nor hear each other in real time.

Effective virtual groups manage these added tasks by sharing leadership roles rather than by assuming that one super-human leader can handle all of these complex challenges.

The 4M Model of Leadership Effectiveness also applies to the unique responsibilities of a virtual group leader. When virtual groups first “meet,” they often depend on a leader to model appropriate behavior. The leader must demonstrate effective participant behavior for other virtual group members. Motivating a virtual group can be more difficult than motivating participants in a face-to-face discussion. Unmotivated members may ignore messages or respond infrequently. When this happens, a group is vulnerable to miscommunication, poor quality of work, missed deadlines, lack of cohesion, inefficiencies, and disaffected team members.

A virtual group leader also has additional managerial duties. Resources may be needed to train group members on specialized software. A leader may need to set guidelines for how and when the virtual group will do its work. Finally, making decisions in a virtual group can be difficult when group members are not communicating in real time. In virtual groups, the leader may be responsible for determining when the virtual group will “meet,” the rules of interaction, and the criteria for group decision making.

By sharing leadership functions, virtual group members have the opportunity to become a highly cohesive and democratic team of coworkers, all of whom embrace the challenge of leading and working in groups to achieve a worthy goal.
all, “For if you are seen as chronically indecisive, people won’t let you lead them.” The following five leadership strategies can help you determine when and how to intervene and make a decision.

1. Make sure that everyone has and shares the information needed to make a quality decision.

2. If appropriate, discuss your pending decision and solicit feedback from members.

3. Listen to members’ opinions, arguments, and suggestions.

4. Explain the rationale for the decision you intend to make.

5. Make and communicate your decision to everyone.

When President Harry S. Truman said that “the buck stops here,” he was describing the penultimate responsibility of a leader. Hersey and Blanchard contend that effective leaders intervene and tell members what to do when a group lacks confidence, willingness, and an ability to make decisions. When, however, group members are confident, willing, and skilled, a leader can usually turn full responsibility over to the group and focus on helping members implement the group’s decision. As a leader, you can make decisions yourself with little or no group input when time and efficiency are important, or you can engage group members in the decision-making process, particularly when the support and involvement of group members takes priority over efficiency. In short, as a leader, you have to decide what decision-making strategies best serve your group and its purpose.

When it’s time to assess your leadership ability, the way in which you make and implement decisions will be the basis on which you will be judged. As the leader, you have the right and the responsibility to decide which strategies will be most effective in achieving your group’s goal. If you want to be an effective leader, act like one, support your members, make sure that your group has the resources it needs, and be decisive.

**Diversity and Leadership**

Until recently, most leadership studies concentrated on the traits, styles, and functions of white male leaders. However, the global economy and the increasing diversity of the American population have made a white-males-only leadership perspective a thing of the past. Today, successful organizations and groups must understand, respect, and adapt to diversity if they hope to tap the potential of their members. At the same time, female and culturally diverse leaders must understand that, even under the best of circumstances, negative stereotypes about them can still handicap their ability to lead.
Gender and Leadership

In the early studies of leadership, there was an unwritten but additional prerequisite for becoming a leader: Be a man. Yet, despite the achievements of exceptional women leaders, some people still question the ability of women to serve in leadership positions. These doubts are based on long-held prejudices rather than on valid evidence.

In a summary of the research on leadership and gender, Shimanoff and Jenkins conclude that “women are still less likely to be preselected as leaders, and the same leadership behavior is often evaluated more positively when attributed to a male than a female.” In other words, even when women talk early and often, are well prepared and always present at meetings, and offer valuable ideas, a man who has done the same things is more likely to emerge as leader. After examining the research on gender and leadership, Napier and Gershenfeld conclude that “even though male and female leaders may act the same, there is a tendency for women to be perceived more negatively or to have to act differently to gain leadership.”

Deborah Tannen has described the difficulties that women have in leadership positions. If their behavior is similar to that of male leaders, they are perceived as unfeminine. If they act “like a lady,” they are viewed as weak or ineffective. One professional woman described this dilemma as follows:

I was thrilled when my boss evaluated me as “articulate, hard-working, mature in her judgment, and a skillful diplomat.” What disturbed me were some of the evaluation comments from those I supervise or work with as colleagues.

In 2001, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi was elected House Democratic Whip, making her the highest-ranking woman in the history of the U.S. Congress. Why did it take so long for a woman to achieve this status? (© Joe Marquette/AP-Wide World Photos)
Although they had a lot of good things to say, a few of them described me as “pushy,” “brusque,” “impatient,” “has a disregard for social niceties,” and “hard-driving.” What am I supposed to do? My boss thinks I’m energetic and creative while other people see the same behavior as pushy and aggressive.

The preference for male leaders may come down to a fear of or an unwillingness to adjust to different kinds of leaders. Because many people have worked in groups that were led by men, they may feel uncomfortable when the leadership shifts to a woman. Even though extensive research indicates only slight differences between men and women leaders, stereotypical, negative expectations still persist. These expectations make it more difficult for women to gain, hold, and succeed in leadership positions. Our best advice is that instead of asking whether a female leader is different from a male leader, it is more important to ask whether she is an effective leader.

Cultural Diversity and Leadership

Groups are now using technology to communicate not only with the enormous proliferation of ethnic minorities in America, but also with colleagues around the globe. Effective leaders in the twenty-first century must be able to meet the many challenges inherent in working with diverse groups. Cultural diversity impacts leadership in two ways: Leaders, regardless of their cultural background, must know how to lead groups composed of diverse members. At the same time, group members must learn to respect and adapt to culturally diverse leaders.

The ways in which a leader models leadership behavior, motivates group members, manages group process, and makes decisions may not match the cultural dimensions of all group members. For example, if as a leader, you model leadership behavior by strongly and publicly advocating group goals, you may be upsetting members from high-context cultures who would be less direct and open about such matters. Your way of modeling leadership behavior may not reflect their view of a model leader.

A member’s cultural background can also influence a leader’s choice of motivational strategies. For example, Western cultures (United States, Canada,
Europe) assume that members are motivated by personal growth and achievement. However, when group members’ cultural backgrounds suggest a more collective, long-term, and high-context perspective, the same motivational strategies may not work. A collective-oriented member might desire a close relationship with the leader and other group members rather than personal gain or growth. The same member may act out of loyalty to the leader and the group rather than for personal achievement or material gain. Another member with a long-term perspective may become frustrated when a leader pursues short-term objectives.

Managing group process in a group composed of culturally diverse members can be difficult if, for example, you want to give the group the freedom to decide how to structure a task. Members from uncertainty-avoidance cultures will want more structure and instruction from a leader. If your leadership style is more feminine (nurturing, collaborative, caring), you may find yourself fighting a losing leadership battle with more masculine members who are competitive, independent, and aggressive. Your feminine leadership style may be interpreted as weakness or indecision.

Finally, the decision-making style of a leader may not match that of a culturally diverse group. If members come from a low-power-distance culture, they will not welcome an authoritarian leader who takes control of all decision making. Conversely, a leader who prefers a more democratic approach to decision making may frustrate members who come from high-power-distance cultures in which leaders make all the decisions with little input from group members.

Stereotypes about a culturally diverse leader can diminish a group’s effectiveness. Unfortunately, we do not have a lot of research on American ethnic minority leaders (such as African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Jewish Americans, or Muslim Americans). The research that is available indicates that minority leaders, like women leaders, do not differ from dominant-culture leaders in behavior, performance, or satisfying member expectations. Nonetheless, negative stereotypes about minority leaders are prevalent, and such individuals have more difficulty moving up the leadership ladder.

Culturally diverse groups and leaders are here to stay. An effective leader helps group members work together, achieve their potential, and contribute to the group’s shared goal. Balancing the needs of culturally diverse group members may be difficult, but the ability to do so is essential to providing effective leadership in the twenty-first century.

Balanced Leadership

The leader performs the most difficult balancing act in a group. Much like a tightrope walker who juggles during a death-defying walk across open space, a group leader must juggle many interests and issues while propelling a group toward its goal. The leader must exert control without stifling creativity.
leader must balance the requirements of the task with the social needs of group members. The leader must resolve conflict without losing the motivation and energy that results from conflict and must encourage participation from quiet members without stifling the enthusiasm and contributions of active members. The effective leader juggles all of these variables while mobilizing a group’s resources in pursuit of a common goal that unifies both leaders and followers. The job of a juggling tightrope walker may seem easy compared to balancing all of these leadership tasks.

Kevin Freiberg claims that effective “leaders have both the desire and ability to create an environment where the wants and needs of followers can be satisfied. They are particularly adept at using their skills and insight to establish a balance between cooperative common action and the fulfillment of individual goals.” Achieving balanced leadership does not depend on developing a particular trait or style but depends rather on a leader’s ability to analyze a situation and select leadership strategies that help mobilize a group to achieve its goal.

**Summary Study Guide**

- A leader mobilizes group members toward a goal shared by the leader and followers. Leadership is a process that requires the ability to make strategic decisions and use communication to mobilize others toward achieving a shared goal.

- Leadership power can be categorized as reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power.

- Designated leaders are selected by an outside authority or elected by a group; emergent leaders come from within a group and gradually assume leadership functions.

- Strategies for becoming a leader include talking early and often, knowing more, and offering opinions.
Trait theory attempts to identify individual characteristics and behaviors needed for effective leadership.

Styles theory describes the strengths and weaknesses of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leaders.

Situational theory seeks an ideal fit between a leader’s style (task or relationship motivated) and three dimensions of the group’s work situation (leader-member relations, the task structure, and the leader’s power).

Functional theory focuses on what leaders do rather than on who leaders are; anyone in a group can assume leadership functions.

Transformational leadership theory focuses on the characteristics of extraordinary leaders whose transcendent vision motivates followers to devote unprecedented time and effort to achieving the group’s goal.

The 4-M Model of Leadership Effectiveness includes four essential functions of leadership: modeling leadership behavior, motivating members, managing group process, and making decisions.

Virtual groups often require multiple leaders because of the added dimensions of setting up and facilitating virtual interaction, arranging and maintaining technical support, and motivating members to contribute from a distance.

Women are less likely to be selected as leaders; the same leadership behavior is often evaluated more positively when attributed to a man rather than to a woman.

Cultural diversity presents special challenges for leaders and group members that require an understanding of, respect for, and adaptation to different cultural dimensions and behaviors.

GroupWork

**Wanted: A Few Good Leaders**

**Goal**
To analyze and discuss different perceptions of effective leadership

**Participants** Groups of three to seven members

**Procedure**
1. Each student should complete *The Least-Preferred Coworker Scale* that follows this GroupWork exercise.
2. After all students have completed the scale, they should form groups based on similar individual results, e.g., all relationship-motivated students in one set of groups and all task-motivated students in another set of groups.

3. Each group should then work to write a description of the desired characteristics, skills, and/or duties of a potential leader in the form of a want ad for the employment section of a newspaper. Each advertisement should begin with “WANTED: LEADER The ideal candidate for this job should . . .”

4. Each group should post its leadership want ad and have a spokesperson explain it to the class.

5. The class should then discuss the following questions:

- What are the similarities among the want ads?
- What are the differences among the want ads?
- Which leadership theories apply to each want ad?
- In what ways did group members’ preferences for relationship motivation or task motivation affect the words they chose to include in each want ad?
- Who was the leader in each group? Did the group designate a leader or did one emerge?
Assessment

The Least-Preferred Coworker Scale

Directions All of us have worked better with some people than with others. Think of the one person in your life with whom you have worked least well, a person who might have caused you difficulty in doing a job or completing a task. This person may be someone with whom you have worked recently or someone you have known in the past. This coworker must be the single individual with whom you have had the most difficulty getting a job done, the person with whom you would least want to work.

On the scale below, describe this person by circling the number that best represents your perception of this person. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not omit any items, and circle a number for each item only once.

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Scoring

Obtain your Least-Preferred Coworker (LPC) score by adding up the numbers you circled on the preceding scale. Your score should range between 18 and 144.

Relationship-Motivated Leader: If your score is 73 or above, you derive satisfaction from good relationships with group members. You are most successful when a situation has just enough uncertainty to challenge you: moderate leader-member relations, moderate task structure, and moderate power.
Task-Motivated Leader. If your score is 64 or below, you derive satisfaction from getting things done. You are most successful when a situation has clear guidelines or no guidelines at all: excellent or poor leader-member relations, highly structured or unstructured tasks, and high or low power.

Relationship- and Task-Motivated Leader. If your score is between 65 and 72, you may be flexible enough to function in both leadership styles.


Notes

5. Hackman & Johnson, p. 137.
and Yetton’s Normative Decision Theory, and Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership.
20. Questions are adapted from those suggested by Bennis & Goldsmith, pp. 107–108.
32. Chemers, p. 150.
33. Chemers, p. 126.