

WHAT MAKES A LEADER?

Theories through Time Part 2

While at times there seem to be almost as many Leadership Theories as there are Leaders, this second of two parts of our Leadership examination finishes an overview of the eight commonly accepted theories.

As the study of leadership progressed throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, one theory influenced the next and the understanding of leadership evolved. As a dynamic business and societal issue, leadership theories will always be evolving as we study and understand the characteristic traits that are important for effective leadership. Let's examine another four theories in the journey.

Situational Leadership Theory

Think of this as the custom-tailored approach – Situational Leadership matches how a Leader leads with whom they are leading and the task or objective they are working on. It's one of the more well-known and taught styles. Situational Leadership starts with understanding each follower's individual abilities, readiness and motivation. Based on those realities, the Leader determines style, delegation and the level of independence awarded. Each Leadership relationship is different because no two followers are the same. The success of Situational Leadership relies heavily on accurate assessment of each individual's situation and need for structure. Then, based on that assessment, the Situational Leader determines what can be delegated to whom and the best plan for directing, coaching and supporting each individual.

Path-Goal Leadership Theory

Take Situational Leadership and add another variable – the task at hand – and you have Path-Goal Leadership. It's a complex style to manage, given the moving parts of different tasks. In general, the Path-Goal Theory employs four types of Leadership Behavior:

- > The Directive Leader offers specific direction, with exact directions, goals, standards and evaluation metrics.
- > The Supportive Leader focuses on the individual and the personal needs or challenges of the follower.
- > Participative Leaders include followers in decision-making and planning, increasing commitment to the organization and task completion.
- > An Achievement-Oriented Leader sets clear and challenging goals that require increased commitment to accomplish, with a culture of exceeding expectations.

Servant Leadership Theory

Social concerns and growing philanthropy have led, in part, to Servant Leadership. It's a concept where Leaders focus on followers' needs first – prioritizing individual needs and interests. By doing so, followers become healthier, wiser, more free, more autonomous and more likely to become servants themselves. It places service at the core, ahead of power. Servant Leadership is the result of seven guiding activities:

1. Forming relationships with followers
2. Empowering followers
3. Helping followers grow and succeed
4. Behaving ethically
5. Demonstrating conceptual skills
6. Putting followers first
7. Creating value for others outside the organization

Authentic Leadership Theory

The first step of Authentic Leadership is introspectively understanding one's own values, beliefs and goals. Authentic Leaders adjust their leadership style to reflect their own beliefs, while taking into account the values and beliefs of broader society.

Authentic Leaders are guided by four fundamental truths:

- > Self-Awareness of one's own beliefs, thoughts and feelings that impact their strengths and weaknesses.
- > Internalized moral perspective and ethical standards to which they hold themselves accountable.
- > Balanced processing, which is the ability to analyze data, insights and relevant information to make decisions without personal biases.
- > Relational transparency that enables sharing their true self, information, thoughts and feelings with followers – building trust and consequence-free idea sharing.

Authentic Leaders' relationship and style build loyalty and minimize employee turnover.

What's Next?

How do you lead today? What are your aspirations for tomorrow?

Leaders can be more effective, efficient and successful if they become students of leadership. Determine which leadership theory best fits your style and abilities. Then put a process in place to continuously develop and improve your skills. As a student of leadership, you will be a more effective leader for your teams – helping them achieve their goals and realize your vision for the future.

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