

## 12.2 Who Is a Leader? Trait Approaches to Leadership

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn the position of trait approaches in the history of leadership studies.
2. Explain the traits that are associated with leadership.
3. Discuss the limitations of trait approaches to leadership.

The earliest approach to the study of leadership sought to identify a set of traits that distinguished leaders from nonleaders. What were the personality characteristics and the physical and psychological attributes of people who are viewed as leaders? Because of the problems in measurement of personality traits at the time, different studies used different measures. By 1940, researchers concluded that the search for leadership-defining traits was futile. In recent years, though, after the advances in personality literature such as the development of the Big Five personality framework, researchers have had more success in identifying traits that predict leadership. House, R. J., & Aditya, R. N. (1997). The social scientific study of leadership: Quo Vadis? *Journal of Management*, 23, 409–473. Most importantly, charismatic leadership, which is among the contemporary approaches to leadership, may be viewed as an example of a trait approach.

The traits that show relatively strong relations with leadership are discussed below. Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W. (2002). Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 765–780.

## Intelligence

**General mental ability**, which psychologists refer to as “g” and which is often called “IQ” in everyday language, has been related to a person’s emerging as a leader within a group. Specifically, people who have high mental abilities are more likely to be viewed as leaders in their environment. House, R. J., & Aditya, R. N. (1997). The social scientific study of leadership: Quo Vadis? *Journal of Management*, 23, 409–473; Ilies, R., Gerhardt, M. W., & Huy, L. (2004). Individual differences in leadership emergence: Integrating meta-analytic findings and behavioral genetics estimates. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 12, 207–219; Lord, R. G., De Vader, C. L., & Alliger, G. M. (1986). A meta-analysis of the relation between personality traits and leadership perceptions: An application of validity generalization procedures. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71, 402–410; Taggar, S., Hackett, R., & Saha, S. (1999). Leadership emergence in autonomous work teams: Antecedents and outcomes. *Personnel Psychology*, 52, 899–926. We should caution, though, that intelligence is a positive but modest predictor of leadership, and when actual intelligence is measured with paper-and-pencil tests, its relationship to leadership is a bit weaker compared to when intelligence is defined as the perceived intelligence of a leader. Judge, T. A., Colbert, A. E., & Ilies, R. (2004). Intelligence and leadership: A quantitative review and test of theoretical propositions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89, 542–552. In addition to having a high IQ, effective leaders tend to have high emotional intelligence (EQ). People with high EQ demonstrate a high level of self awareness, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The psychologist who coined the term *emotional intelligence*, Daniel Goleman, believes that IQ is a threshold quality: It matters for entry- to high-level management jobs, but once you get there, it no longer helps leaders, because most leaders already have a high IQ. According to Goleman, what differentiates effective leaders from ineffective ones becomes their ability to control their own emotions and understand other people’s emotions, their internal motivation, and their social skills. Goleman, D. (January, 2004). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, 82(1), 82–91.

Figure 12.2



Many observers believe that Carly Fiorina, the ousted CEO of HP, demonstrated high levels of intelligence but low levels of empathy for the people around her, which led to an overreliance on numbers while ignoring the human cost of her decisions. Karlgaard, R. (2002, February 18). Vote Carly. *Forbes*, 169(4), 37.

Source:  
<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:CarlyFiorina49416.jpeg>.

Big 5 Personality Traits

Psychologists have proposed various systems for categorizing the characteristics that make up an individual’s unique personality; one of the most widely accepted is the “Big Five” model, which rates an individual according to Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Several of the Big Five personality traits have been related to leadership emergence (whether someone is viewed as a leader by others) and effectiveness. Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W. (2002). Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 765–780.

Figure 12.3 Big Five Personality Traits

Trait	Description
<b>O</b> penness	Being curious, original, intellectual, creative, and open to new ideas.
<b>C</b> onscientiousness	Being organized, systematic, punctual, achievement-oriented, and dependable.
<b>E</b> xtraversion	Being outgoing, talkative, sociable, and enjoying social situations.
<b>A</b> greeableness	Being affable, tolerant, sensitive, trusting, kind, and warm.
<b>N</b> euroticism	Being anxious, irritable, temperamental, and moody.

For example, extraversion is related to leadership. *Extraverts* are sociable, assertive, and energetic people. They enjoy interacting with others in their environment and demonstrate self-confidence. Because they are both dominant and sociable in their environment, they emerge as leaders in a wide variety of situations. Out of all personality traits, extraversion has the strongest relationship with both leader emergence and leader effectiveness. This is not to say that all effective leaders are extraverts, but you are more likely to find extraverts in leadership positions. An example of an introverted leader is Jim Buckmaster, the CEO of Craigslist. He is known as an introvert, and he admits to not having meetings because he does not like them. Buckmaster, J. (2008, May). How does he manage? Classified website boss. *Management Today*, 15. Research shows that another personality trait related to leadership is *conscientiousness*. Conscientious people are organized, take initiative, and demonstrate persistence in their endeavors. Conscientious people are more likely to emerge as leaders and be effective in that role. Finally, people who have *openness to experience*—those who demonstrate originality, creativity, and are open to trying new things—tend to emerge as leaders and also be quite effective.

Figure 12.4



Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft Corporation, is an extraverted leader. For example, to celebrate Microsoft's 25th anniversary, Ballmer enthusiastically popped out of the anniversary cake to surprise the audience.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Steve\\_ballmer\\_2007\\_outdoors\\_2.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Steve_ballmer_2007_outdoors_2.jpg).

### Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is not one of the Big Five personality traits, but it is an important aspect of one's personality. The degree to which a person is at peace with oneself and has an overall positive assessment of one's self worth and capabilities seem to be relevant to whether someone is viewed as a leader. Leaders with high self-esteem support their subordinates more and, when punishment is administered, they punish more effectively. Atwater, L. E., Dionne, S. D., Camobreco, J. F., Avolio, B. J., & Lau, A. (1998). Individual attributes and leadership style: Predicting the use of punishment and its effects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19, 559–576; Niebuhr, R. E., & Davis, K. R. (1984). Self-esteem: Relationship with leader behavior perceptions as moderated by the duration of the superior-subordinate dyad association. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 10, 51–59. It is possible that those with high self-esteem have greater levels of self-confidence and this affects their image in the eyes of their followers. Self-esteem may also explain the relationship between some physical attributes and leader emergence. For example, research shows a strong relationship between being tall and being viewed as a leader (as well as one's career success over life). It is proposed that self-esteem may be the key mechanism linking

height to being viewed as a leader, because people who are taller are also found to have higher self-esteem and therefore may project greater levels of charisma as well as confidence to their followers. Judge, T. A., & Cable, D. M. (2004). The effect of physical height on workplace success and income: Preliminary test of a theoretical model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89, 428–441.

### Integrity

Research also shows that people who are effective as leaders tend to have a moral compass and demonstrate honesty and integrity. Reave, L. (2005). Spiritual values and practices related to leadership effectiveness. *Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 655–687. Leaders whose integrity is questioned lose their trustworthiness, and they hurt their company's business along the way. For example, when it was revealed that Whole Foods Market CEO John Mackey was using a pseudonym to make negative comments online about the company's rival Wild Oats Markets Inc., his actions were heavily criticized, his leadership was questioned, and the company's reputation was affected. Farrell, G., & Davidson, P. (2007, July 13). Whole Foods' CEO was busy guy online. *USA Today*, Money section, p. 04B.

Figure 12.5 Key Traits Associated With Leadership



There are also some traits that are negatively related to leader emergence and being successful in that position. For example, agreeable people who are modest, good natured, and avoid conflict are less likely to be perceived as leaders. Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W. (2002). Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 765–780.

Despite problems in trait approaches, these findings can still be useful to managers and companies. For example, knowing about leader traits helps organizations select the right people into positions of responsibility. The key to benefiting from the findings of trait researchers is to be aware that not all traits are equally effective in predicting leadership potential across all circumstances. Some organizational situations allow leader traits to make a greater difference. House, R. J., & Aditya, R. N. (1997). The social scientific study of leadership: Quo Vadis? *Journal of Management*, 23, 409–473. For example, in small, entrepreneurial organizations where leaders have a lot of leeway to determine their own behavior, the type of traits leaders have may make a difference in leadership potential. In large, bureaucratic, and rule-bound organizations such as the government and the military, a leader's traits may have less to do with how the person behaves and whether the person is a successful leader. Judge, T. A., Bono, J. E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M. W. (2002). Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 765–780. Moreover, some traits become relevant in specific circumstances. For example, bravery is likely to be a key characteristic in military leaders, but not necessarily in business leaders. Scholars now conclude that instead of trying to identify a few traits that distinguish leaders from nonleaders, it is important to identify the conditions under which different traits affect a leader's performance, as well as whether a person emerges as a leader. Hackman, J. R., & Wageman, R. (2007). Asking the right questions about leadership: Discussion and conclusions. *American Psychologist*, 62, 43–47.

Figure 12.6



Condoleezza Rice had different responsibilities as the provost of Stanford University compared to her role as secretary of state for the United States. Do you think these differences affected her behavior as a leader?

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Condoleezza\\_Rice\\_cropped.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Condoleezza_Rice_cropped.jpg).



### KEY TAKEAWAY

Many studies searched for a limited set of personal attributes, or traits, which would make someone be viewed as a leader and be successful as a leader. Some traits that are consistently related to leadership include intelligence (both mental ability and emotional intelligence), personality (extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, self-esteem), and integrity. The main limitation of the trait approach was that it ignored the situation in which leadership occurred. Therefore, it is more useful to specify the conditions under which different traits are needed.

### EXERCISES

1. Think of a leader you admire. What traits does this person have? Are they consistent with the traits discussed in this chapter? If not, why is this person effective despite the presence of different traits?
2. Can the findings of traits approaches be used to train potential leaders? Which traits seem easier to teach? Which are more stable?
3. How can organizations identify future leaders with a given set of traits? Which methods would be useful for this purpose?
4. What other traits can you think of that would be relevant to leadership?

## 12.3 What Do Leaders Do? Behavioral Approaches to Leadership

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the behaviors that are associated with leadership.
2. Identify the three alternative decision-making styles leaders use and the conditions under which they are more effective.
3. Discuss the limitations of behavioral approaches to leadership.

### Leader Behaviors

When trait researchers became disillusioned in the 1940s, their attention turned to studying leader behaviors. What did effective leaders actually do? Which behaviors made them perceived as leaders? Which behaviors increased their success? To answer these questions, researchers at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan used many different techniques, such as observing leaders in laboratory settings as well as surveying them. This research stream led to the discovery of two broad categories of behaviors: task-oriented behaviors (sometimes called **initiating structure**) and people-oriented behaviors (also called **consideration**). **Task-oriented leader behaviors**<sup>4</sup> involve structuring the roles of subordinates, providing them with instructions, and behaving in ways that will increase the performance of the group. Task-oriented behaviors are directives given to employees to get things done and to ensure that organizational goals are met.

**People-oriented leader behaviors**<sup>5</sup> include showing concern for employee feelings and treating employees with respect. People-oriented leaders genuinely care about the well-being of their employees, and they demonstrate their concern in their actions and decisions. At the time, researchers thought that these two categories of behaviors were the keys to the puzzle of leadership. See House, R. J., & Aditya, R. N. (1997). The social scientific study of leadership: Quo Vadis? *Journal of Management*, 23, 409–473. However, research did not support the argument that demonstrating both of these behaviors would necessarily make leaders effective. Nystrom, P. C. (1978). Managers and the hi-hi leader myth. *Academy of Management Journal*, 21, 325–331.

4. Structuring the roles of subordinates, providing them with instructions, and behaving in ways that will increase the performance of the group (also called initiating structure).
5. Showing concern for employee feelings and treating employees with respect (also called consideration).



When we look at the overall findings regarding these leader behaviors, it seems that both types of behaviors, in the aggregate, are beneficial to organizations, but for different purposes. For example, when leaders demonstrate people-oriented behaviors, employees tend to be more satisfied and react more positively. However, when leaders are task oriented, productivity tends to be a bit higher. Judge, T. A., Piccolo, R. F., & Ilies, R. (2004). The forgotten ones? The validity of consideration and initiating structure in leadership research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89, 36–51. Moreover, the situation in which these behaviors are demonstrated seems to matter. In small companies, task-oriented behaviors were found to be more effective than in large companies. Miles, R. H., & Petty, M. M. (1977). Leader effectiveness in small bureaucracies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 20, 238–250. There is also some evidence that very high levels of leader task-oriented behaviors may cause burnout with employees. Seltzer, J., & Numerof, R. E. (1988). Supervisory leadership and subordinate burnout. *Academy of Management Journal*, 31, 439–446.

Figure 12.7



Behavioral approaches to leadership showed that task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors are two key aspects of leadership.

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### Leader Decision Making

Another question behavioral researchers focused on involved how leaders actually make decisions and the influence of decision-making styles on leader effectiveness and employee reactions. Three types of decision-making styles were studied. In **authoritarian decision making**<sup>6</sup>, leaders make the decision alone without necessarily involving employees in the decision-making process. When leaders use **democratic decision making**<sup>7</sup>, employees participate in the making of the decision. Finally, leaders using **laissez-faire decision making**<sup>8</sup> leave employees alone to make the decision. The leader provides minimum guidance and involvement in the decision.

6. What occurs when leaders make the decision alone without necessarily involving employees in the decision-making process.
7. What occurs when leaders and employees participate in the making of the decision.
8. What occurs when leaders leave employees alone to make the decision. The leader provides minimum guidance and involvement in the decision.

As with other lines of research on leadership, research did not identify one decision-making style as the best. It seems that the effectiveness of the style the leader is using depends on the circumstances. A review of the literature shows that when leaders use more democratic or participative decision-making styles, employees tend to be more satisfied; however, the effects on decision quality or employee productivity are weaker. Moreover, instead of expecting to be involved in every single decision, employees seem to care more about the overall participativeness of the organizational climate. Miller, K. I., & Monge, P. R. (1986). Participation, satisfaction, and productivity: A meta-analytic review. *Academy of*

*Management Journal*, 29, 727–753. Different types of employees may also expect different levels of involvement. In a research organization, scientists viewed democratic leadership most favorably and authoritarian leadership least favorably, Baumgartel, H. (1957). Leadership style as a variable in research administration. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2, 344–360. but employees working in large groups where opportunities for member interaction was limited preferred authoritarian leader decision making. Vroom, V. H., & Mann, F. C. (1960). Leader authoritarianism and employee attitudes. *Personnel Psychology*, 13, 125–140. Finally, the effectiveness of each style seems to depend on who is using it. There are examples of effective leaders using both authoritarian and democratic styles. At Hyundai Motor America, high-level managers use authoritarian decision-making styles, and the company is performing very well. Deutschman, A. (2004, September). Googling for courage. *Fast Company*, 86, 58–59; Welch, D., Kiley, D., Ihlwan, M. (2008, March 17). My way or the highway at Hyundai. *Business Week*, 4075, 48–51.

Figure 12.8



Google cofounders Larry Page and Sergey Brin (shown here) are known for their democratic decision-making styles.

Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Sergey\\_Brin,\\_Web\\_2.0\\_Conference.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Sergey_Brin,_Web_2.0_Conference.jpg).

The track record of the laissez-faire decision-making style is more problematic. Research shows that this style is negatively related to employee satisfaction with leaders and leader effectiveness. Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89, 755–768. Laissez-faire leaders create high levels of ambiguity about job expectations on the part of employees, and employees also engage in higher levels of conflict when leaders are using the laissez-faire style. Skogstad, A., Einarsen, S., Torsheim, T., Aasland, M. S., & Hetland, H. (2007). The destructiveness of laissez-faire leadership behavior. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12, 80–92.

## Leadership Assumptions about Human Nature

Why do some managers believe that the only way to manage employees is to force and coerce them to work while others adopt a more humane approach? Douglas McGregor, an MIT Sloan School of Management professor, believed that a manager's actions toward employees were dictated by having one of two basic sets of assumptions about employee attitudes. His two contrasting categories, outlined in his 1960 book, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, are known as Theory X and Theory Y.

According to McGregor, some managers subscribe to **Theory X**<sup>9</sup>. The main assumptions of Theory X managers are that employees are lazy, do not enjoy working, and will avoid expending energy on work whenever possible. For a manager, this theory suggests employees need to be forced to work through any number of control mechanisms ranging from threats to actual punishments. Because of the assumptions they make about human nature, Theory X managers end up establishing rigid work environments. Theory X also assumes employees completely lack ambition. As a result, managers must take full responsibility for their subordinates' actions, as these employees will never take initiative outside of regular job duties to accomplish tasks.

In contrast, **Theory Y**<sup>10</sup> paints a much more positive view of employees' attitudes and behaviors. Under Theory Y, employees are not lazy, can enjoy work, and will put effort into furthering organizational goals. Because these managers can assume that employees will act in the best interests of the organization given the chance, Theory Y managers allow employees autonomy and help them become committed to particular goals. They tend to adopt a more supportive role, often focusing on maintaining a work environment in which employees can be innovative and prosperous within their roles.

One way of improving our leadership style would be to become conscious about our theories of human nature, and question the validity of our implicit theories.

Source: McGregor, D. (1960). *Human side of enterprise*. New York: McGraw Hill.

9. A theory of human nature which assumes that employees are lazy, do not enjoy working, and will avoid expending energy on work whenever possible.

10. A theory of human nature which assumes that employees are not lazy, can enjoy work, and will put effort into furthering organizational goals.

## Limitations of Behavioral Approaches

Behavioral approaches, similar to trait approaches, fell out of favor because they neglected the environment in which behaviors are demonstrated. The hope of the researchers was that the identified behaviors would predict leadership under all circumstances, but it may be unrealistic to expect that a given set of behaviors would work under all circumstances. What makes a high school principal effective on the job may be very different from what makes a military leader effective, which would be different from behaviors creating success in small or large business enterprises. It turns out that specifying the conditions under which these behaviors are more effective may be a better approach.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

When researchers failed to identify a set of traits that would distinguish effective from ineffective leaders, research attention turned to the study of leader behaviors. Leaders may demonstrate task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors. Both seem to be related to important outcomes, with task-oriented behaviors more strongly relating to leader effectiveness and people-oriented behaviors leading to employee satisfaction. Leaders can also make decisions using authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire styles. While laissez-faire has certain downsides, there is no best style, and the effectiveness of each style seems to vary across situations. Because of the inconsistency of results, researchers realized the importance of the context in which leadership occurs, which paved the way to contingency theories of leadership.

### EXERCISES

1. Give an example of a leader you admire whose behavior is primarily task oriented, and one whose behavior is primarily people oriented.
2. What are the limitations of authoritarian decision making? Under which conditions do you think authoritarian style would be more effective?
3. What are the limitations of democratic decision making? Under which conditions do you think democratic style would be more effective?
4. What are the limitations of laissez-faire decision making? Under which conditions do you think laissez-faire style would be more effective?
5. Examine your own leadership style. Which behaviors are you more likely to demonstrate? Which decision-making style are you more likely to use?

## 12.4 What Is the Role of the Context? Contingency Approaches to Leadership

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn about the major situational conditions that determine the effectiveness of different leadership styles.
2. Identify the conditions under which highly task-oriented and highly people-oriented leaders can be successful based on Fiedler's contingency theory.
3. Describe the Path-Goal theory of leadership.
4. Describe a method by which leaders can decide how democratic or authoritarian their decision making should be.

What is the best leadership style? By now, you must have realized that this may not be the right question to ask. Instead, a better question might be: Under which conditions are certain leadership styles more effective? After the disappointing results of trait and behavioral approaches, several scholars developed leadership theories that specifically incorporated the role of the environment. Specifically, researchers started following a contingency approach to leadership—rather than trying to identify traits or behaviors that would be effective under all conditions, the attention moved toward specifying the situations under which different styles would be effective.

### Fiedler's Contingency Theory

The earliest and one of the most influential contingency theories was developed by Frederick Fiedler. Fiedler, F. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill; Fiedler, F. E. (1964). A contingency model of leader effectiveness. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, vol. 1 (pp. 149–190). New York: Academic Press. According to the theory, a leader's style is measured by a scale called Least Preferred Coworker scale (LPC). People who are filling out this survey are asked to think of a person who is their least preferred coworker. Then, they rate this person in terms of how friendly, nice, and cooperative this person is. Imagine someone you did not enjoy working with. Can you describe this person in positive terms? In other words, if you can say that the person you hated working with was still a nice person, you would have a high LPC score. This means that you have a people-oriented personality, and you can separate your liking of a person from your ability to work with that person. On the other hand, if you think that the

person you hated working with was also someone you did not like on a personal level, you would have a low LPC score. To you, being unable to work with someone would mean that you also dislike that person. In other words, you are a task-oriented person.

According to Fiedler’s theory, different people can be effective in different situations. The LPC score is akin to a personality trait and is not likely to change. Instead, placing the right people in the right situation or changing the situation to suit an individual is important to increase a leader’s effectiveness. The theory predicts that in “favorable” and “unfavorable” situations, a low LPC leader—one who has feelings of dislike for coworkers who are difficult to work with—would be successful. When situational favorableness is medium, a high LPC leader—one who is able to personally like coworkers who are difficult to work with—is more likely to succeed.

How does Fiedler determine whether a situation is “favorable,” “medium,” or “unfavorable”? There are three conditions creating situational favorableness: leader-subordinate relations, position power, and task structure. If the leader has a good relationship with most people and has high position power, and the task at hand is structured, the situation is very favorable. When the leader has low-quality relations with employees and has low position power, and the task at hand it relatively unstructured, the situation is very unfavorable.

Figure 12.9 *Situational Favorableness*

Situational favorableness	Leader-subordinate relations	Position Power	Task structure	Best Style
Favorable	Good	High	High	Low LPC Leader
	Good	High	Low	
	Good	Low	High	
Medium	Good	Low	Low	High LPC Leader
	Poor	High	High	
	Poor	High	Low	
	Poor	Low	High	
Unfavorable	Poor	Low	Low	Low LPC leader

Sources: Based on information in Fiedler, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill; Fiedler, F. E. (1964). *A contingency model of leader effectiveness*. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, vol. 1 (pp. 149–190). New York: Academic Press.

Research partially supports the predictions of Fiedler's contingency theory. Peters, L. H., Hartke, D. D., & Pohlmann, J. T. (1985). Fiedler's contingency theory of leadership: An application of the meta-analysis procedures of Schmidt and Hunter. *Psychological Bulletin*, 97, 274–285; Strube, M. J., & Garcia, J. E. (1981). A meta-analytic investigation of Fiedler's contingency model of leadership effectiveness. *Psychological Bulletin*, 90, 307–321; Vecchio, R. P. (1983). Assessing the validity of Fiedler's contingency model of leadership effectiveness: A closer look at Strube and Garcia. *Psychological Bulletin*, 93, 404–408. Specifically, there is more support for the theory's predictions about when low LPC leadership should be used, but the part about when high LPC leadership would be more effective received less support. Even though the theory was not supported in its entirety, it is a useful framework to think about when task- versus people-oriented leadership may be more effective. Moreover, the theory is important because of its explicit recognition of the importance of the context of leadership.

### Situational Leadership

Another contingency approach to leadership is Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey's Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) which argues that leaders must use different leadership styles depending on their followers' development level. Hersey, P.H., Blanchard, K.H., ' Johnson, D.E. (2007). *Management of Organizational Behavior: Leadership human resources*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. According to this model, employee readiness (defined as a combination of their competence and commitment levels) is the key factor determining the proper leadership style. This approach has been highly popular with 14 million managers across 42 countries undergoing SLT training and 70% of *Fortune* 500 companies employing its use. <http://www.situational.com/Views/SituationalLeadership/RightHereRightNow.aspx>

The model summarizes the level of directive and supportive behaviors that leaders may exhibit. The model argues that to be effective, leaders must use the right style of behaviors at the right time in each employee's development. It is recognized that followers are key to a leader's success. Employees who are at the earliest stages of developing are seen as being highly committed but with low competence for the tasks. Thus, leaders should be highly directive and less supportive. As the employee becomes more competent, the leader should engage in more coaching behaviors. Supportive behaviors are recommended once the employee is at moderate to high levels of competence. And finally, delegating is the recommended approach for leaders dealing with employees who are both highly committed and highly competent. While the SLT is popular with managers, relatively easy to understand and use, and has endured for decades, research has been mixed in its support of the basic assumptions of the model. Blank, W., Green, S.G., ' Weitzel, J.R. (1990). A test of the situational leadership theory. *Personnel Psychology*, 43, 579–597; Graeff, C. L.



(1983). The situational leadership theory: A critical review. *Academy of Management Review*, 8, 285–291; Fernandez, C.F., ' Vecchio, R.P. (2002). Situational leadership theory revisited: A test of an across-jobs perspective. *Leadership Quarterly*, 8, 67–84. Therefore, while it can be a useful way to think about matching behaviors to situations, overreliance on this model, at the exclusion of other models, is premature.

Table 12.1

Follower Readiness Level	Competence (Low)	Competence (Low)	Competence (Moderate to High)	Competence (High)
	Commitment (High)	Commitment (Low)	Commitment (Variable)	Commitment (High)
Recommended Leader Style	Directing Behavior	Coaching Behavior	Supporting Behavior	Delegating Behavior

Situational Leadership Theory helps leaders match their style to follower readiness levels.

Path-Goal Theory of Leadership

Robert House’s path-goal theory of leadership is based on the expectancy theory of motivation.House, R. J. (1971). A path goal theory of leader effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16(3), 321–338. The expectancy theory of motivation suggests that employees are motivated when they believe—or expect—that (a) their effort will lead to high performance, (b) their high performance will be rewarded, and (c) the rewards they will receive are valuable to them. According to the path-goal theory of leadership, the leader’s main job is to make sure that all three of these conditions exist. Thus, leaders will create satisfied and high-performing employees by making sure that employee effort leads to performance, and their performance is rewarded by desired rewards. The leader removes roadblocks along the way and creates an environment that subordinates find motivational.

The theory also makes specific predictions about what type of leader behavior will be effective under which circumstances.House, R. J. (1996). Path-goal theory of leadership: Lessons, legacy, and a reformulated theory. *Leadership Quarterly*, 7, 323–352; House, R. J., & Mitchell, T. R. (1974). Path-goal theory of leadership. *Journal of Contemporary Business*, 3, 81–97. The theory identifies four leadership styles. Each of these styles can be effective, depending on the characteristics of employees (such as their ability level, preferences, locus of control, and achievement motivation) and characteristics of the work environment (such as the level of role ambiguity,

the degree of stress present in the environment, and the degree to which the tasks are unpleasant).

### Four Leadership Styles

**Directive leaders**<sup>11</sup> provide specific directions to their employees. They lead employees by clarifying role expectations, setting schedules, and making sure that employees know what to do on a given work day. The theory predicts that the directive style will work well when employees are experiencing role ambiguity on the job. If people are unclear about how to go about doing their jobs, giving them specific directions will motivate them. On the other hand, if employees already have role clarity, and if they are performing boring, routine, and highly structured jobs, giving them direction does not help. In fact, it may hurt them by creating an even more restricting atmosphere. Directive leadership is also thought to be less effective when employees have high levels of ability. When managing professional employees with high levels of expertise and job-specific knowledge, telling them what to do may create a low-empowerment environment, which impairs motivation.

**Supportive leaders**<sup>12</sup> provide emotional support to employees. They treat employees well, care about them on a personal level, and they are encouraging. Supportive leadership is predicted to be effective when employees are under a lot of stress or performing boring, repetitive jobs. When employees know exactly how to perform their jobs but their jobs are unpleasant, supportive leadership may be more effective.

11. Leaders who provide specific directions to their employees. They lead employees by clarifying role expectations, setting schedules, and making sure that employees know what to do on a given work day.

12. Leaders who provide emotional support to employees. They treat employees well, care about them on a personal level, and they are encouraging.

13. Those who make sure that employees are involved in the making of important decisions.

14. Those who set goals for employees and encourage them to reach their goals.

**Participative leaders**<sup>13</sup> make sure that employees are involved in the making of important decisions. Participative leadership may be more effective when employees have high levels of ability, and when the decisions to be made are personally relevant to them. For employees with a high internal locus of control (those who believe that they control their own destiny), participative leadership is a way of indirectly controlling organizational decisions, which is likely to be appreciated.

**Achievement-oriented leaders**<sup>14</sup> set goals for employees and encourage them to reach their goals. Their style challenges employees and focuses their attention on work-related goals. This style is likely to be effective when employees have both high levels of ability and high levels of achievement motivation.

The path-goal theory of leadership has received partial but encouraging levels of support from researchers. Because the theory is highly complicated, it has not been fully and adequately tested. House, R. J., & Aditya, R. N. (1997). The social scientific

study of leadership: Quo Vadis? *Journal of Management*, 23, 409–473; Stinson, J. E., & Johnson, T. W. (1975). The path-goal theory of leadership: A partial test and suggested refinement. *Academy of Management Journal*, 18, 242–252; Wofford, J. C., & Liska, L. Z. (1993). Path-goal theories of leadership: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management*, 19, 857–876. The theory’s biggest contribution may be that it highlights the importance of a leader’s ability to change styles depending on the circumstances. Unlike Fiedler’s contingency theory, in which the leader’s style is assumed to be fixed and only the environment can be changed, House’s path-goal theory underlines the importance of varying one’s style depending on the situation.

Figure 12.10 Predictions of the Path-Goal Theory Approach to Leadership

Situation	Appropriate Leadership Style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When employees have high role ambiguity</li><li>• When employees have low abilities</li><li>• When employees have external locus of control</li></ul>	Directive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When tasks are boring and repetitive</li><li>• When tasks are stressful</li></ul>	Supportive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When employees have high abilities</li><li>• When the decision is relevant to employees</li><li>• When employees have high internal locus of control</li></ul>	Participative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When employees have high abilities</li><li>• When employees have high achievement motivation</li></ul>	Achievement-oriented

Sources: Based on information presented in House, R. J. (1996). Path-goal theory of leadership: Lessons, legacy, and a reformulated theory. *Leadership Quarterly*, 7, 323–352; House, R. J., & Mitchell, T. R. (1974). Path-goal theory of leadership. *Journal of Contemporary Business*, 3, 81–97.

Vroom and Yetton’s Normative Decision Model

Yale School of Management Professor Victor Vroom and his colleagues Philip Yetton and Arthur Jago developed a decision-making tool to help leaders determine how much involvement they should seek when making decisions.Vroom, V. H. (2000). Leadership and the decision making process. *Organizational Dynamics*, 68, 82–94; Vroom, V. H., & Yetton, P. W. (1973). *Leadership and decision-making*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press; Jago, A., & Vroom, V. H. (1980). An evaluation of two alternatives to the Vroom/Yetton Normative Model. *Academy of Management Journal*, 23, 347–355; Vroom, V. H., & Jago, A. G. 1988. *The new leadership: managing participation in organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. The model starts by