

In my current industry, a significant disruption occurred when our organization underwent a major shift from traditional in-person learning methods to fully digital and remote learning platforms. This shift was prompted by the rapid advancement of technology and changes in learner expectations, particularly driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leading through this change required adapting leadership styles to meet the demands of the situation.

At the initial planning stage of this change, a logical leadership style was crucial. The focus was on gathering data about technological solutions, identifying challenges in digital adoption, and formulating a strategy. According to Reardon, Reardon, and Rowe (1998), leaders in this phase need to emphasize careful gathering and creative idea generation, using both logical and inspirational leadership styles to chart the course for change.

When the organization began enabling the change, the leadership needed to shift towards empowering employees. Many staff members had limited experience with digital tools, so a supportive style was adopted, encouraging open communication and aiding in adjusting to the new learning platforms. This was effective because, as the leadership framework suggests, a combination of logical, inspirational, and supportive styles works best during this phase to involve and energize employees. By creating a sense of inclusion and support, the leadership ensured that employees felt confident and capable of embracing the changes.

During the launch of the new digital platforms, commanding leadership style became necessary to ensure that deadlines were met, and that the implementation was completed efficiently.

Resistance to change, particularly among more traditional staff, required a clear and authoritative direction. By addressing concerns directly and providing clear goals, the leadership helped reduce anxiety and motivated employees to move forward with the new systems.

Reflecting on this process, it was effective because the leadership adapted its style to meet the demands of each phase. The flexibility to switch between logical, inspirational, and supportive approaches allowed for smoother transitions and greater buy-in from staff. However, one challenge that arose was the speed of the change, which caused stress among some employees. In hindsight, greater emphasis on the maintenance phase—offering ongoing support and addressing long-term challenges—could have improved the overall outcome.

From this experience, I learned that effective leadership in times of disruption requires a deep understanding of the different stages of change and the ability to adopt multiple leadership styles. No single leadership style works for every phase of change, and success often depends on the ability to adapt and involve others in the process, as described by Reardon et al. (1998).

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Reference:

Reardon, K. K., Reardon, K. J., & Rowe, A. J. (1998). Leadership styles for the five stages of radical change. *Acquisition Review Quarterly*, 129-146.

<https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/AD1024285.pdf>