

# Definition of Leadership

There is much discussion on the definition of leadership and there are many different definitions and descriptions one can refer to. In fact the debate around defining leadership and leadership traits seems endless.



However most people agree that leadership involves an influence process, so here we use a broad definition that encompasses many of the current approaches to the concept of what leadership is.

The general definition of leadership is:

*"Leadership is the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals"*

## Leadership Styles

Leadership is not a "one size fits all" approach but a matter of adapting your approach to best fit a specific situation, follower or group.

Although an individual will have a basic leadership style a good understanding of the common styles of leadership allows the development of the style of leadership that effectively fits the circumstances.

## The major leadership styles include:

- **authoritarian** - tells followers what to do and how to do it without input from others. Keeps close control over followers. This can be appropriate if the followers are inexperienced and lack confidence (new employees) and when explicit instructions and quick decisions are required such as in times of crisis or where time is critical.

- **participative** - includes followers in the decision-making process but makes the final call. Encourages discussion and debate. It is effective when followers are skilled and confident, willing to share knowledge and there is sufficient time for a democratic process to take place.
- **delegative** - allows the follower to make the decision but maintains responsibility for the decisions made. Delegates tasks to followers and provides direction or support only when asked. This style is appropriate when followers are highly skilled, experienced, secure and motivated and have proven to be reliable and trustworthy.

Other types of leadership style are:

### Transactional leadership

Transactional leaders guide their followers towards established goals by clarifying role and task requirements and providing structure. Motivation is provided through a system of reward and punishment.

### Transformational leadership

These leaders pay close attention to the concerns and needs of individual followers. They motivate and encourage followers to make the extra effort to achieve group goals by inspiring passion and commitment.

## Leadership Traits

Research has attempted to identify traits that are consistently associated with leadership. Eight traits that appear to differentiate leaders from non leaders are:

- ambition
- energy
- the desire to lead
- self-confidence
- intelligence
- honesty
- integrity
- job-relevant knowledge

However it has proved difficult to conclusively establish the traits that characterize leaders. Instead leadership research has sought to identify the behavioral styles that leaders exhibit.

## Leadership Behaviors

The primary behaviors identified are **initiating structure** through organizing work tasks, work relationships, work standards and work goals and **demonstrating consideration** by showing concern for followers' well-being and satisfaction, developing mutual trust and respecting subordinates.

What are your [Strengths and Weaknesses](#) as a leader?

## Leadership versus Management

Not all leaders are managers and not all managers are leaders. The definition of leadership differs from the definition of management.

Just because managers are given formal authority by an organization does not mean that a manager is able to lead effectively. These are some of the main differences that researchers have found between managers

and leaders:

- managers take an impersonal attitude towards goal achievement, leaders take a personal attitude towards goals
- managers interact with people according to the role the person plays in an activity or process, leaders interact with people on a more intuitive level
- management is about establishing direction through order and formal processes, leadership establishes direction through the development of a vision and inspiring the group towards the vision

*Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things -Peter Drucker*

[What Makes a Good Manager?](#)

## Quotes about Leadership



*Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it*  
- **Dwight D. Eisenhower**

*A leader is someone willing to give his strength to others that they may have the strength to stand on their own* - **Beth Revis**

*Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality* - **Warren G. Bennis**

*The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority* - **Kenneth Blanchard**

*If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader - **John Quincy Adams***

*The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been - **Henry Kissinger***

*A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus - **Martin Luther King, Jr.***

Leadership is a much debated concept but the definition of leadership generally includes the keywords influence, vision, inspire and achieve.



A basic understanding of leadership will help you to answer [leadership interview questions](#) successfully.

It will assist you with defining what it means to be a manager and handling [manager interview questions](#) confidently.

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