**Leadership Styles**

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Leadership Styles

One of the most important characteristics of a leader their leadership style, as it dictates the way they approach challenges and manage their team (Robbins & Judge, 2013). To select a leadership style new leaders often imitate behaviors of former managers and supervisors. This requires enumerating previous experiences to identify successful strategies.

# Interpersonal Skills

The first dimension that stands out for an employee, is their leaders inter personal skills. Does the person project the perception that they want to help us grow or do they mechanically want us to punch the time-clock (Yukl, 2013)? For instance, Dave is a member of the senior leadership at Microsoft. Despite his busy schedule he will stay after work to meet with his staff and their subornments to discuss growth potential. He is honest in his opinions, does not sugar coat the answers, but is also careful not to come across as rude.

Though this can be taken too far, as demonstrated by Jeff a former manager. He focused too much on interpersonal skills and not enough on the tasks at hand. Because of this his staff had an excellent work life balance, but operated as though he wasn’t in charge. Jeff is a great guy, but also represented a blank check for the staff. They could get away with anything and know that their boss would cover for them.

# Knowledgeable

The next dimension of a good leader is they are knowledgeable about the problem space they are working within (Lopp, 2012). For example, Nat is a principal engineering manager at Microsoft. He lacks the ability to personally fix even the simplest bugs within his feature area. However, he has the understanding of the feature within the larger context of the business level objectives. The skill diversity of technical and business competencies leads to more efficient solutions (Cascio, 2013). This enables his team to combine expertise both in *how* to build features and *which* features to build.

# Political Influence

Curt was a supervisor at Arby’s who had worked the same job for ten plus years, knew it inside and out and was also very approachable. However, he was not a good leader because he had no political influence. He couldn’t change a process if it hindered his team, nor could make exceptions to the rules. Another challenge for leaders without political influence is that it gives the perception that their peers do not respect that leader. If the peer of the leader do not respect them, why should that person’s directs? They could be a good person, but they will not lead change.

In contrast Ryan was a supervisor at a consulting firm, he was had great interpersonal skills and a deep technical knowledge of the work and business. When he wanted something done he would just smile and politely ask in an almost flirtatious way. People responded to his asks and everyone in the company wanted to help him be successful. This made him a great leader as he not only participated in change, he drove it.

# Authority versus Authority Figure

Controlling a team is a complex task as the manager does not want to be overwhelming. This was a challenge that JJ faced in his new lead position, due to inability to trust his team. Because of the lack of trust, he would micromanage his staff and continuously hound them for status. The staff in turn would go to great lengths to avoid him, they went so far as too write software tools to manipulate JJ’s automated monitors. If the staff feels the need to filter, be silent, and even disable alerts it is a sign of poor leadership (Yukl, 2013). Leaders need to be more in touch with the needs of their followers and demonstrate trust.

Instead of being an authority, good leaders like Shezad operate as an authority figure. Which means that his staff feel they are gaining value by providing him with every detail. He is capable of internalizing it and then recommending the best course of action. Because there is value provided to his directs, they are incentivized to give him the save view that JJ strived for.

# Organization and Communication

Organization without the ability to communicate it afterward, is a waste of time and effort. Good leaders such as Sujit, are able to demonstrate both of these characteristics in parallel. For example, most of his projects are large with lots of moving parts spanning multiple functional teams. He does not rely on memory and instead writes everything down, crossing it off once it has been filed and reported to all stake holders. As tasks need to be delegated to his team, he will spend time to explain how it fits in the larger plan. Lastly instead of handing off the task and let it be out of site out of mind, he records the estimated time to completion. Once the time has passed, he will come back and ask for status updates.

Another leader that comes to mind is Steve, who would always speak clearly and completely during meetings and over email. By communicating the strategy, necessity, and means that the task will be measured, it is easier to get expected results (Ahuja, 2013). For instance, he would not ask for “a report on adoption rates;” instead he asked for “a report that showed the trend of user adoption, which can be used by the sales department.” The specificity of the need helped scope the work; resulting in exactly what the business needed, nothing more or less.

# Conclusions

New leaders are effective rarely by chance and more often because they imitate former leaders and mentors from earlier in their career. From taking the time to think about their leadership styles, it enables one to shape their own style. Some of the key traits that need to be selected include interpersonal skills, influence, organization, communication, and being an authority figure. The greater our coverage of these talents the easier it will be to lead future projects.

# References

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