

Developing leadership styles

OVERVIEW

Why is it important for you to develop your understanding of Goleman's leadership styles?

In the 'Leadership that Gets results' article, Goleman uses the analogy of a golfer and their set of clubs. Each club is suited to a different playing condition, and the golfer will select the best one to support their game.

The same applies to leadership. Each of the leadership styles have a different effect on people's emotions, and each has strengths and weaknesses in various situations. The goal for you as a leader is to be able to choose the right one for the situation you're faced with.

The following pages provide you with tips on how to develop each of the leadership styles. Remember, the best leaders can use any of Goleman's styles, and move easily between them.

DEMOCRATIC

Why?

Don't have all the answers? Teamwork, collaboration and creating consensus may be key. This style draws on input from others and helps if a situation requires you to build buy-in.

How?

- **Facilitation skills:** Focus on asking 'What do we want to achieve here?' and helping others to develop the answer. Facilitation skills can really only be developed by trying things out, and seeking feedback on how you were perceived. Ideally, work alongside an experienced facilitator who can give you feedback and help you if you get stuck.
- **Giving and receiving feedback:** Effective feedback is heard and acted upon. To be effective, it helps if feedback is: about behaviour; about the effect the behaviour had; specific to the situation; about something recent; and must be given at the right moment. To receive feedback, you must be prepared to listen.
- **Build listening skills:** Listen, don't just hear. Concentrate on those who are speaking, so that they you're aware of their body language, and what they're not saying, as well as what they are. Pick up ideas, not just words, and reflect back to the speaker what they have said to make sure that you've understood.
- **Ask questions:** Both to start discussions, and to clarify what others have said. Questioning is key to gathering information. Closed questions are those to which there is a clear answer – often yes or no. Open questions call for reflection, and can therefore elicit a lot more information. Both have their place. Try practising both, and observe the effect that they have on the person being questioned, and on the conversation. This will help you to use them appropriately.

COACHING

Why?

Do you want to help people think their way through the problem until they reach a solution? This style helps improve the performance of people and build on the long-term competencies of your team.

How?

- **Be a process facilitator:** Adopt the view that everyone holds the answers to their own problems, and that your role is to help them think through the issues. You're not a subject expert, you're there to facilitate thinking.
- **Strong questioning skills:** Use a lot of 'what?', 'how?' and 'why?' questions. They are designed to make the other person really think about their motivation and key concerns. Focus more on the individual and how you can help them solve their problem. Common questions are:
 - What do you see as the problem?
 - How could you address that?
 - What are your possible options for taking this forward?
 - What do you think would be the best?
- **Build listening skills:** Listen, don't just hear. Concentrate on those who are speaking, so that you're aware of their body language, and what they're not saying, as well as what they are. Pick up ideas, not just words, and reflect back to the speaker what they have said to make sure that you've understood. Reflect emotions, because these are often key to working through a problem.

AUTHORITATIVE

Why?

Is the team in need of a fresh revamp, a new vision or a new direction? This style helps develop and articulate a clear and compelling vision that others will buy into.

How?

- **Self-confidence:** Develop confidence through practise. Identify what you struggle to believe you can do, and encourage yourself to do it. For example, you may find it difficult to give presentations. Practise until your confidence improves and seek feedback from colleagues about your progress.
- **Strong empathy:** Put yourself into others' shoes. Think about their needs, concerns and feelings from their point of view. Listen to others, because they will almost always tell you about their feelings, needs and concerns if you are interested enough to find out.
- **Think strategically:** Identify where you need to be and how you're going to get there. First, understand where you are now. Then think about where you need or want to be; your ideal future position. Next, work out potential milestones involved in getting from 'here' to 'there'. Finally, work out what you need to do to achieve each milestone, and how you will keep the process on track.
- **Apply creative thinking to problems:** Think differently, or 'outside the box'. Apply useful techniques to tap into 'right brain' or creative thought processes. For example, brainstorming, drawing pictures such as mind-maps, and using role plays.
- **Communication skills.** It's no good having the most wonderful vision if you cannot communicate it. Seek feedback from others about the strengths and weaknesses in your communication skills. Once you know the areas you would like improve on you can work on them, seeking regular feedback from others about progress. If possible, find a mentor who will help you work on issues that are more challenging.

AFFILIATIVE

Why?

Do you want to foster healthy relationships, build a united team or resolve brewing conflicts? This style will help. It can also support people in overcoming stressful situations and keep them focused on the task at hand.

How?

- **Build emotional intelligence:** Increase your ability to recognise and manage your own emotions, and those of the people and groups around you. It starts with knowing yourself and your drivers, and being conscious of and able to manage your own emotional responses. This allows you to better recognise and understand emotions in others, and in turn, respond to them. There's no quick way to develop emotional intelligence. It takes time, support and feedback. You may find it worthwhile to seek a mentor, preferably someone with high emotional intelligence.
- **Strong empathy:** Put yourself into others' shoes. Think about their needs, concerns and feelings from their point of view. Listen to others, because they will almost always tell you about their feelings, needs and concerns if you are interested enough to find out.
- **Build listening skills:** Listen, don't just hear. Concentrate on those who are speaking, so that you're aware of their body language, and what they're not saying, as well as what they are. Pick up ideas, not just words, and reflect back to the speaker what they have said to make sure that you've understood.
- **Build rapport with others:** Rapport is a harmonious connection with another person or group. Use both verbal and non-verbal techniques to build rapport. Verbal techniques include finding and building on common ground: a shared interest, a shared concern about something that is happening, or even a shared liking. Non-verbal techniques include smiling, using open body language, and making eye contact when speaking with someone.

COERCIVE

Why?

Need to manage a crisis? Time for clear and immediate leadership. Be prepared to make decisions on the spot. It's most effective in times of crisis or when a major turnaround is needed. Remember, this style can lead to damaged culture and performance, so be aware of this in how you use it.

How?

- **Be self-confident:** The best way to develop confidence is to practise. Identify what you struggle to believe you can do, and encourage yourself to do it. Then, and perhaps most important, seek feedback.
- **Have good self-control:** Be very aware of your emotions to be able to command what you show. Take time to identify the emotions that you feel or felt in different circumstances. Think about them afterwards to more easily identify them as they happen.
- **Be optimistic, and believe that things will improve:** Encourage others to do so too. Positive thinking is a very powerful force. If you find yourself thinking negatively, make an effort to identify at least one positive thing about the situation, or the people involved, before you say anything else.
- **Be assertive:** While clear in standing up for their own rights and beliefs, coercive leaders also respect those of others. Practise being open about your feelings, thoughts and beliefs, and encourage others to do the same. Respect their beliefs and asking them to respect yours.
- **Show courage:** There is a fine balance between caution and confidence. To develop courage, consider on which side of the balance you tend to err. If you tend to be a bit over-cautious, ask yourself why. What are you really afraid of? Is it the right thing? If you tend to be a bit cocky, stop and ask yourself whether or not you should take on that risk, and consider what might go wrong.

PACESETTING

Why?

On a short-term project, with demanding deadlines? Do you need to improve results fast? Pacesetting involves setting challenging, short-term goals to spur performance. But be aware that overuse can negatively impact workplace culture.

How?

- **Be self-motivated:** Understand what motivates / drives you and others, and use those motivations to achieve goals. Having identified your own motivators, craft goals so that you maximise the use of your key motivators.
- **Create a motivational environment:** What motivates your team and how you can motivate them to do what you want them to do? Appreciate what your team does, and demonstrate that, either through praise or more tangible rewards. Consider re-designing work to avoid boredom and provide more variety, or allowing more interaction with people. Set challenging, but achievable, goals.
- **Be resilient:** First, be aware of what's going on: what is your emotional response to the situation, and why? Then think about the situation by gathering more information, thus allowing you to make an informed decision. Also think about alternative explanations for the scenario. Know when you need help, and be prepared to reach out to others and ask for that help. Finally, maintain good physical and mental health.
- **Strong self-control:** Be aware of your own emotional responses and try to control them. Exercise control over impulses and don't indulge in them too often. To improve your self-control, you need to practise applying reason to your desire or impulse. Ask yourself how much you want the desired outcome, and whether or not it's an appropriate amount. Stop to take the time to think about these things. Applying reason is the first step to mastering instinct.