1. Leadership

Leadership can be defined as the ability of the management to make sound decisions and inspire others to perform well. It is the process of directing the behavior of others towards achieving a common goal. In short, leadership is getting things done through others.

Importance of Leadership

Leadership is very important in a firm as it leads to higher performance by the team members, it improves motivation and morale within the members, and helps to respond to change.

Leadership facilitates organizational success by creating responsibility and accountability among the members of the organization. In short, it increases value in an organization.

Leaders often assume the “management” responsibilities around a team, like coaching, handling disciplinary issues, reviewing performance, training and communication. In addition, team leaders need to take on these four roles:

- Liaisons with external constituencies. The team leader represents the team to all external parties, including upper management, customers and suppliers. In this capacity, the team leader can obtain resources for the team, clarify expectations with outside parties and seek information necessary for the team to do its job.
- Troubleshooter. Team leaders are often called upon to solve team problems, whether they’re internal or whether they need external intervention, like gaining additional resources.
- Conflict managers. When disagreements occur, the team leader helps to manage them in an equitable way and tries to minimize the disruption of the disagreement.
- Coaches. Team leaders are looked upon to provide coaching and even some cheerleading, to support and improve the team’s performance.

It’s with these four roles that team leaders focus on managing the team’s external boundary and facilitate the team’s process.

Leadership Styles

Different leadership styles exist in work environments. The culture and goal of an organization determine which leadership style fits best. Some organizations offer different leadership styles within an organization, depending on the necessary tasks to complete and departmental needs.

We find five different leadership styles in the corporate world. They are as follows –

Laissez-Faire

A laissez-faire leader does not directly supervise employees and fails to provide regular updates to those under his supervision. Highly experienced and trained employees with minimal requirement of supervision fall under the laissez-faire leadership style.

But, not all employees possess these features. This leadership style blocks the production of employees needing supervision. The laissez-faire style implements no leadership or supervision efforts from managers, which can lead to poor production, lack of control and increasing costs.

Autocratic

The autocratic leadership style permits managers to make decisions alone without the input of others. Managers access total authority and impose their will on employees. No one opposes the decisions of autocratic leaders. Countries like Cuba and North Korea operate under the autocratic leadership style.

This leadership style benefits those who require direct supervision. Creative employees who participate in group functions detest this leadership style.

Participative

This is also known as the democratic leadership style. It values the input of team members and peers, but the responsibility of making the final decision rests with the participative leader. Participative leadership motivates employee morale because employees make contributions to the decision-making process. It accounts to a feeling that their opinions matter.

When an organization needs to make changes within itself, that is internally, the participative leadership style helps employees accept changes easily as they play a role in the process. This leadership style meets challenges when companies need to make a decision in a short period of time.

Transactional

Transactional leadership style is formed by the concept of reward and punishment. Transactional leaders believe that the employee's performance is completely dependent on these two factors. When there is an encouragement, the workers put in their best effort and the bonus is in monetary terms in most of the cases. In case they fail to achieve the set target they are given a negative appraisal.

Transactional leaders pay more attention to physical and security requirements of the employees.

Transformational

Transformational leadership has the ability to affect employee's perceptions through the returns that organization gets in the form of human capital benefits. These leaders have the ability to reap higher benefits by introducing knowledge management processes, encouraging interpersonal communication among employees and creating healthy organizational culture.

It helps in flourishing organizational innovation by creating a participative environment or culture. It promotes a culture where the employees have autonomy to speak about their experiences and share knowledge.

It has been seen that transformational leaders are more innovative than transactional and laisse-faire leaders.

Key Leadership Theories

1. Great Man Theory

According to the Great Man Theory (which should perhaps be called the Great *Person* Theory), leaders are born with just the right traits and abilities for leading – charisma, intellect, confidence, communication skills, and social skills.

The theory suggests that the ability to lead is inherent – that the best leaders are born, not made. It defines leaders as valiant, mythic, and ordained to rise to leadership when the situation arises. The term “Great Man” was adopted at the time because leadership was reserved for males, particularly in military leadership.

2. Trait Theory

The Trait Theory is very similar to the Great Man Theory. It is founded on the characteristics of different leaders – both the successful and unsuccessful ones. The theory is used to predict effective leadership. Usually, the identified characteristics are compared to those of potential leaders to determine their likelihood of leading effectively.

Scholars researching the trait theory try to identify leadership characteristics from different perspectives. They focus on the physiological attributes such as appearance, weight, and height; demographics such as age, education, and familial background; and intelligence, which encompasses decisiveness, judgment, and knowledge.

3. Contingency Theory

The Contingency Theory emphasizes different variables in a specific setting that determine the style of leadership best suited for the said situation. It is founded on the principle that no one leadership style is applicable to all situations.

Renowned leadership researchers Hodgson and White believe that the best form of leadership is one that finds the perfect balance between behaviors, needs, and context. Good leaders not only possess the right qualities but they're also able to evaluate the needs of their followers and the situation at hand. In summary, the contingency theory suggests that great leadership is a combination of many key variables.

4. Situational Theory

The Situational Theory is similar to the Contingency Theory as it also proposes that no one leadership style supersedes others. As its name suggests, the theory implies that leadership depends on the situation at hand. Put simply, leaders should always correspond their leadership to the respective situation by assessing certain variables such as the type of task, nature of followers, and more.

5. Behavioral Theory

In Behavioral Theory, the focus is on the specific behaviors and actions of leaders rather than their traits or characteristics. The theory suggests that effective leadership is the result of many learned skills.

2. Ergonomics

Ergonomics refers to the science of designing a workplace to fit the needs of the users. It involves increasing efficiency and comfort and reducing workplace injuries that can result from poor design or workflow process. For example, in an office cubicle environment, the angle of a computer monitor and the distance from the chair's seat to the floor can make a difference in a person's experience of neck strain and back pain. In the fulfillment center, the positioning of conveyor belts can make a difference in a person straining their back to reach an item.

Goals and Purpose of Ergonomics

One of the purposes of ergonomic studies is to make a space fit the person who uses it. The goals of ergonomic ideology involve increasing productivity by reducing unnecessary, unnatural or repetitive movements. Another goal of ergonomics is to increase comfort and flexibility in the workplace. For example, a person who has to use a computer all day could benefit from having an option to sit in a desk chair, on a balance ball or stand while they do their work. A person might want to have all of these options available in order to reduce back, shoulder and neck pain and stiffness.

EXAMPLES OF ERGONOMIC FACTORS

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), human factors (or ergonomic factors) generally consist of three interconnected aspects—the job, the individual and the organisation.

THE JOB

To be thought of as ergonomic, a job (and the tasks it involves) should be designed to acknowledge the physical and mental limitations and strengths of the person doing it. This includes things such as:

- what the role entails
- the workload
- how equipment is designed (size, shape, suitability for tasks etc.)
- the working environment (temperature, humidity, lighting, noise, vibration etc.)
- how information is used and accessed

THE INDIVIDUAL

An ergonomic approach to the individual employee means designing jobs and working equipment that will help make best use of the person's capabilities, while at the same time protecting their health and safety and increasing the organisation's overall productivity.

This covers aspects such as the person's:

- physical characteristics (body size and shape)
- fitness, strength and posture
- vision, hearing and touch
- skills and competence
- knowledge and experience
- personality and attitude
- training

THE ORGANISATION

How employees behave at work can't usually help but be influenced by the characteristics of the organisation employing them. Assessing an organisation from an ergonomic, human factors perspective means looking at how business-level considerations affect people's behaviour and actions.

This includes aspects such as:

- organisational culture
- management, supervision and leadership
- teamwork
- working patterns and hours
- communications
- Resources

USING ERGONOMIC FACTORS TO DESIGN WORKSTATIONS

Ergonomic factors have a huge influence over employees' working behaviour, health and wellbeing. When businesses make decisions with these human factors in mind, it ensures that they are meeting the needs of all their workers and keeping people safe and free of risk.

Designing workspaces and workstations means considering ergonomic principles while taking into account issues around cost, efficiency and the effectiveness of technology. Creating a workstation for a specific employee means considering that person's:

- body size and shape

- posture
- muscle strength
- freedom of movement

The aim is to create a workstation that gives the employee the widest range of comfortable movement and allows them to maintain a proper posture.

Lacking the freedom to work properly can cause a number of health issues, particularly pain and discomfort in the muscles of the body. This is why people who work sedentary jobs and are seated for large portions of the day are advised to change their working position on a regular basis.

Employees should have enough space to perform their duties and easy access to all the areas in which they work. This means considering their physical characteristics and making sure the workspace accounts for those specific body dimensions, as well as the clothing or other equipment they wear as part of their job. Height-adjustable work surfaces (such as sit-stand desks) are ideal for creating workstations that fit the employee's body dimensions in the best possible way.

3. DECISION MAKING

Decision making is an important process in organizational set up. It involves identifying and choosing other solutions that result in the desired action. It includes diverse processes that are all intermediate steps between thought and action. They are the antecedents to behavior. Organizational decision-making is the precise decision-making of an intellectual entity composed of autonomous elements. Decisions making in an organization occurs at all levels. In all organizations, managers make decisions using both rational and intuitive processes, but organization-level decisions are not usually made by a single manager. Many organizational decisions involve several managers. Problem identification and problem solution involve many departments, multiple viewpoints, and even other organizations, which are beyond the scope of an individual manager. Organizational decision-making is the process by which one or more organizational units make a decision on behalf of the organization.

TYPES OF DECISION MAKING

Researchers have studied the decision-making process as much as anything else, and they've come away with some different ideas and models that help us understand how we can make decisions more carefully and successfully. Let's take a look at the five best known of those decision making models.

Rational Decision Making

The rational decision making model assumes decisions are based on an objective, orderly, structured information gathering and analysis. The model encourages the decision maker to understand the situation, organize and interpret the information, and then take action. There are eight steps in the rational decision making process:

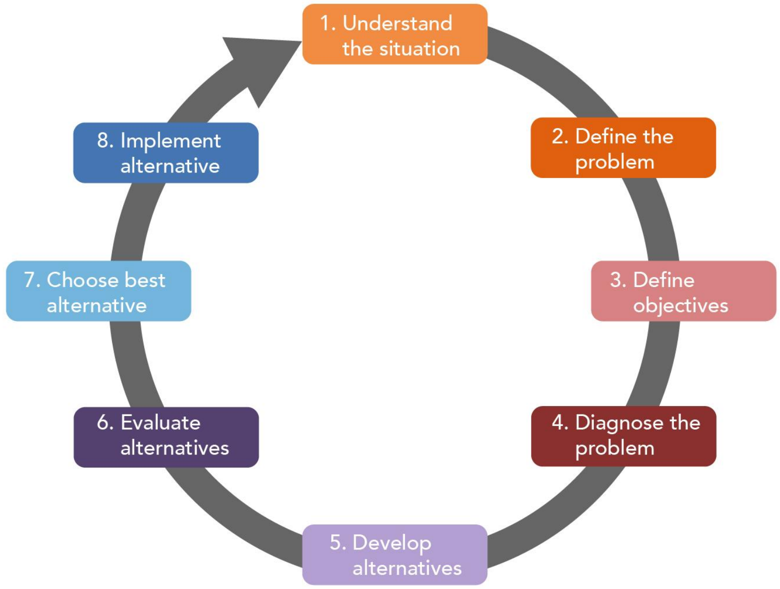

Figure 1. The Rational Decision Making Process

The goal of the rational decision making model is to eliminate possibilities for error and biases. It assumes the following:

- Managers have all the information about the situation.
- Managers are aware of all alternative options and are equipped to evaluate them properly.
- Managers are looking to make the best possible decision.
- Managers are capable of eliminating misperceptions and biases.
- There are no cost or time constraints.

In a perfect world, where all of those assumptions are met, this model is how the decision making process works best. But we know that those assumptions can't all be met. And that's why we have the bounded rationality model.

Bounded Rationality Model

The bounded rationality model assumes numerous organizational and individual factors restrict rational decision making. This is the version of decision making that occurs most often in organizations, because the assumptions of this model are much closer to the truth:

- Early alternatives and solutions are quickly adopted because of perceptual limitations.
- Managers often don't have access to all the information they need.
- Managers are not aware of all the alternatives and can't predict the consequences of each one.
- Organizational goals constrain decisions.
- Conflicting goals of multiple stakeholders can force a compromise of a decision.

Because a human being is limited in the amount of information he or she can process, when a complex decision needs to be made, he or she will reduce the problem to a manageable size. By limiting the number of choices and the amount of necessary information, the product is a decision that's acceptable and satisfactory. This is sometimes referred to as the Satisficing model.

In the bounded rationality model, the same steps are used in the decision making process, only instead of reviewing all information and all alternatives, those aspects are limited to the amount the decision maker is willing to gather.

Linear Model of Decision Making

Linear decision making involves listing positive and negative factors of each decision alternative. If you've ever made a list of pros and cons around a certain decision, then you've embarked on linear decision making. In order for it truly to be linear decision making, the decision maker must then assign a numerical "weight" to each of his pros and cons, and arrive at a total score for each side. This makes it easy for you to tally up both sides and add them together. A positive score suggests you should implement a decision, and a negative score suggests you should not.

Intuitive Decision Making

Intuitive decision making is a model that assumes managers make decisions by relying on past experience and their personal assessment of a situation. This model of decision making is often used when there are high levels of uncertainty or complexity around a particular problem, or when the decision is novel and the managers don't have past experience with this kind of problem.

If managers are faced with uncertain, complex situations and they can't get the right information to make a good decision quickly, they are apt to rely on hunches and intuition. Given the choice between this model and a linear model (like the one discussed above), managers should reach for the linear model.

Garbage Can Model

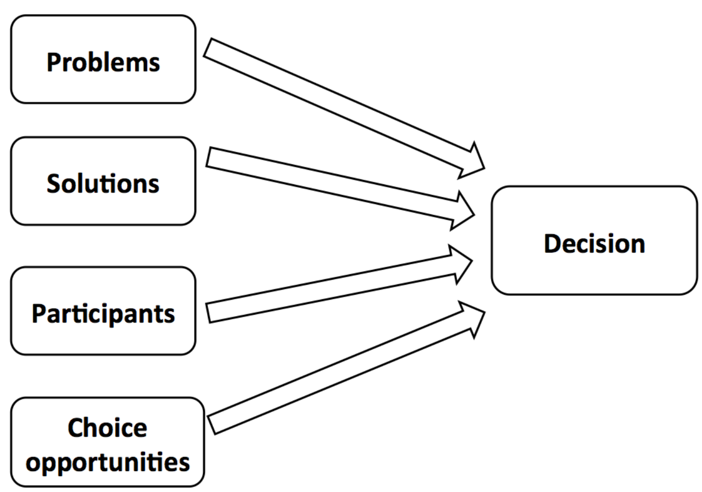

Figure 2. The Garbage Can Method

The garbage can model is one where managers use information about problems, participants, solutions and opportunities haphazardly to generate ideas and potential decisions. Unlike the other decision making models we discussed, the garbage can model does not always lead to satisfactory solutions, because the problem does not always precede alternatives and solutions.

For instance, the corporate office of an organization might have been recently informed of the benefits of going to an “open environment” where people can talk and collaborate freely. Senior management may get behind this idea and start looking for ways to knock down cube walls and make their environment more collaborative before it’s even been determined that their office has issues being collaborative.