

LEADERSHIP STYLE

INTRODUCTION

1. We have seen that it is not what Leaders are but what they do that is important, but how should they lead? There are many examples of sayings such as "Lead from the front" and "Lead by example". But how should someone lead a team? The simple answer is there is no single correct answer, but there are plenty of wrong ones.



2. The reason there is no single answer is that the Leadership style you adopt depends on the group, the task and the situation. The purpose of this section is to explain the basis on which leadership is formed and what styles of leadership exist.

BASIS OF LEADERSHIP

3. The leader of a team can be placed in that position in one of two ways. First the team itself can appoint a leader through whatever process they accept. This may range from a conscious decision to discuss and vote on a leader, or an unconscious decision to accept a self-appointed leader through want of any-one better. Secondly the leader may be appointed within a command or management structure by more senior grades, such as in industry or the armed forces.

4. A leader appointed by the group gains their authority from the group itself. A leader appointed by the organisation gains their authority from the rules and structure of the organisation. In both cases authority has been granted but respect as a leader still has to be earned. If leadership is not provided then the group will turn elsewhere. In the first case the group appointed leader will be voted out. More seriously though within an organisation an unofficial leader of a group will rise to challenge the officially appointed leader.

5. As a junior NCO in the Air Training Corps you have been granted authority by your CO when you were promoted to Corporal. To earn respect as a leader you have to employ the functional leadership skills to real life situations. Functional leadership skills apply not only to "Pine Pole and Oil Drum" exercises but to preparing a room for an inspection or cleaning a crew room after AEF. Clearly a leadership style appropriate to leading a team over an assault course would be too aggressive for normal activities on an average Squadron parade night. This section discusses the leadership styles available to you.

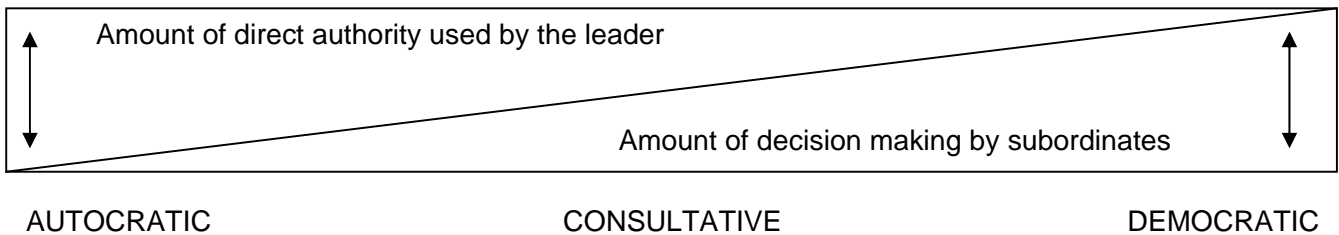
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6. As the situation affects which functions the leader carries out, it would also affect the manner in which the function is performed. There are broadly three types of leader:

- **Authoritarian/Autocratic.** Both words describe the type of leader who gives orders and expects instant obedience without argument. Plans and policies are made in isolation from the group. Orders are given without explanation for the reasons or of future intentions. The autocratic leader does not become part of the team at all, but merely directs it.
- **Passive/Democratic.** Theoretically the best type of leader. The democratic leader makes no suggestions but asks for the groups opinions. The group is left to make its own decisions democratically which, are then "rubber stamped" by the leader.

- **Consultative.** The consultative leader is part way between the autocratic and democratic style. Opinions of the group are sought by the consultative leader who uses this information to make decisions. The group are kept informed about the future and are allowed to debate and proposed changes to long term policy.

7. Figure 6.1 illustrates the range of leadership styles in diagrammatic form. As a leader has to be "all things to all men, at all times", it is impossible to state which style is correct. The benefits of each style can be debated at extreme length and each has its merits in different situations.



TELLS	SELLS	PARTICIPATES	DELEGATES
Leader makes decision	Leader makes decision	Leader presents problem	Leader defines Limitations
Announces it	Sells it	Invites suggestions	
		Leader decides on final solution	Asks team to make a decision

Figure 6.1 Autocratic Democratic Leadership Style Diagram

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

8. **Autocratic.** An autocratic style has several strengths:

- One person can make fast decisions and get quick and aggressive action.
- There is centralised control from one person.
- It is very successful for small groups with relatively simple tasks.

9. **Consultative.** With larger groups and more complex tasks, however, the leader has to delegate sub-tasks to sub-leaders in the group. This involves explanation and communication so that the whole group understands the final objective and the part they play in achieving it. This requires a more consultative style to ensure everyone is motivated. Additionally, research has shown the act of consultation satisfies the Team and Individual needs and improves morale. The advantages of the consultative style are:

- In task needs the solution will be improved if the leader uses all the skills and knowledge of the group. In addition the group will be more motivated to do the task if they have been involved in the decision making.
- In Team maintenance needs, group participation requires the appointment of sub-leaders, increasing communication and team spirit.

- In individual needs participation in decision making gives status to the individual. The greater involvement through their specific skills trains the individual for greater responsibility.

10. **Democratic.** The democratic style is very relaxed and people oriented. With large groups it is unlikely that anything will get done because the group never stops talking about it rather than arriving at decisions. A group has to be well trained in their role for this style to work.

PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD LEADERSHIP

11. The functional leadership model assumes that leaders are not born but can be trained. Training is usually in the form of experience and feedback from superiors and peer groups. Your leadership style depends on the nature of the situation itself. There are several practical steps you can take to create a climate of mutual trust and respect as a foundation to your leadership skills.

12. There are seven principles, which, if practised sincerely and consistently will produce the desired trust and respect:

- **Know your job.** To gain respect you must be competent at your job. You must be able to answer cadets who come to you for advice *or* to answer a question. It is your job to keep yourself up to date on Corps regulations and activities.
- **Know your people and be known yourself.** You cannot lead if you are not known. You must get out of the NCO's room and get to know the cadets under you as individuals not just names.
- **Be frank.** Keep you subordinates well informed. Let the cadets know, in a constructive way, how you view their strengths and weaknesses. Explain how they could improve their performance.
- **Be a good coach.** Set realistic standards and explain why they are needed. If a cadet asks your advice on a problem ask them suitable questions to try and get them to answer it themselves, that way they learn more.
- **Be Impartial.** Nobody likes everyone in this world, however, as an NCO you cannot play favourites. Whether you like them or not you are responsible for their supervision and welfare. You will lose your credibility with other NCOs and your team if you apply differing standards to those whose face fits.
- **Be Sensitive.** You must be aware of your environment and sensitive to the feelings of others who are effected by your actions. Sensitivity allows you to detect the subtle changes in individuals that indicates problems. You must develop a sense of self awareness since your actions, tone of voice and attitudes will be noticed by your team.
- **Be Firm.** Stand up for what you believe is right. This does not mean being inflexible, obstinate or pig-headed. A good leader will use all the information available and make a decision They will not allow themselves to be swayed by individuals who criticise their decisions for personal reasons.

13. The "natural" leader will know by instinct the correct style to use and the functional needs to address at any given time. Those that have been trained in leadership will not find it so easy and must learn from their experiences. That is be aware of your performance in leadership terms, think about how you could improve and put it into practice next time, put more simply "learn from your mistakes" and from others who do it well.

METHODS OF GIVING ORDERS

14. As a JNCO you will have to give orders to junior cadets. Your leadership style will determine how you will give your orders but you must remember the point from the Section on Discipline, that where appropriate orders should be given in a reasonable, courteous and correct manner.

15. There are three ways in which you can phrase an order. You can:

- **Suggest.** This method is used when there is very little pressure and you are working towards the democratic end of the leadership diagram. By suggesting a course of action you are asking the group to agree or disagree with you. NCOs who have a strong natural leadership ability can achieve a lot with this style as it is not threatening to the recipient.
- **Request.** This method is the most effective way of giving orders in a day to day situation. It is the most natural and polite way of asking for something to be done. A request worded as "Please do " or "I would like you to" leaves the recipient in no position to argue with whether it has to be done or not. But beware, a request worded as "Would you please" invites the response "No" because you are asking them if they would do a task and not politely telling them to do a task.
- **Demand.** This is the autocratic way of giving orders and should be used when you want quick and unquestioned obedience of an order. Beware, using this technique all the time will devalue its importance since after a while the recipients cannot tell whether the situation is really urgent or not.

16. When giving orders the tone of voice, along with body language is most important. The tone and actions must match the style in which you give the order or you will send conflicting signals to the recipient. For example, leaning forward and bellowing a suggestion is as inappropriate as quietly demanding action while looking at the ground.

SUMMARY

17. A leader gets their authority by virtue of their appointment to the rank of NCO, however, respect as a leader has to be earned. Leadership is what you do and not what you are and you should follow the principles for good leadership to help earn that respect. The leadership style you choose will depend on the team and situation Make sure the way you give orders matches your leadership style.