

Lesson 2

Leadership Reshuffled



Key Term

approach

What You Will Learn to Do

- Compare leadership styles

Linked Core Abilities

- Take responsibility for your actions and choices
- Treat self and others with respect

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Describe how leadership has evolved
- Compare different approaches to leadership
- Discuss what leadership styles work best in different situations
- Define the key word contained in this lesson

Introduction

History shows that there has been a great interest in determining what makes a good leader. In fact, studies can be traced back as far as the end of the nineteenth century during the industrial revolution. As a result, leadership studies have been categorized into three general eras:

- **Traits—1800s to 1940s**
- **Behaviors—1940s to 1970s**
- **Contingency—1960s to present**

In this lesson, you learn what it takes to be a leader, and examine different leadership styles.

Traits Approach

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, it was believed that leaders were born. It was a man's heritage that provided this innate ability to lead. One was born with special characteristics or traits to enable him to lead others effectively.

To prove this philosophy, spanning some 40 years, researchers studied existing political, industrial, and religious leaders. They expected to find that these leaders would possess certain characteristics that would distinguish them from their followers (see Figure 1.2.1).

The researchers were unable to provide evidence to support their belief that leaders are born. Their findings identified a number of traits that were common to those in leadership positions; traits such as intelligence, dependability, sociability,



Figure 1.2.1: Are humans born with the ability to lead or is this a developed trait?

Courtesy of Bettman/Corbis Images.

aggressiveness, originality, popularity, and humor. However, they also found different situations required the use of different traits. Others concluded there was no evidence to support that just having those traits would help one become a leader, much less an effective leader.

These inconsistent findings led others to continue the search for predictions and understanding of how effective leaders lead. There was an accepted belief that a combination of traits was one element of the equation. Personality alone, however, was not proven to be the only or even the dominant factor in leading others.

Behavior Approach

At the advent of World War II, researchers began to expand their search for the source of leader effectiveness. They began to look at and categorize the “behaviors” of effective leaders. They felt this was a more positive research **approach** because behaviors can be observed much more objectively, they can be measured more precisely, and they can be taught.

A researcher by the name of Kurt Lewin (1938) provided the foundation for the behavior approach of leadership. He identified a continuum of leadership behaviors that included the following:

- **Democratic style of consulting with their followers and allowing them to participate in decision making**
- **Autocratic style of making the decisions alone**
- **Laissez-faire style of providing no direction at all**

Note

Kurt Lewin, born in Germany in 1890, was considered by some to be the most charismatic psychologist of his time. His formal training in psychology began in 1910 in Berlin and led to a Ph.D. in the experimental study of associative learning. To learn more about Lewin, go to <http://www.utexas.edu/coc/journalism/SOURCE/j363/lewin.html>.

Although very different behaviors were identified, there was no evidence as to which style was most effective and which style to use in what situation. Additionally, each style created different reactions from different followers; therefore, the researchers could not clearly articulate the best way to lead effectively.

The Ohio State Leadership Studies, held at Ohio State University starting in 1945 and continuing through the 1960s, continued the search for leader behaviors. Almost 2,000 behaviors were identified and subsequently reduced to a more manageable number; however, two primary leadership behaviors stood out among the many: relationship and structure.

Relationship behaviors dealt with the concern for people and included behaviors such as treating team members as equals, being friendly and approachable, making work pleasant, listening to other’s ideas, and looking out for the personal well-being of others.

Key Note Term

approach – to draw closer to

Structure behaviors dealt with the concern for task and included such behaviors as setting and communicating expectations, establishing work schedules, sharing work procedures, and making work assignments.

There was some evidence coming forth that people-oriented leaders were linked with follower satisfaction levels and that effective leadership required both task and relationship behaviors. However, a few questions remained. Does effective leadership come from just the traits and behaviors of the leader? How are traits and behaviors influenced by the type of task and the type of work group?

Contingency Approach

Even though there was the desire to include situational factors in leadership effectiveness studies, this inclusion did not happen until the 1960s. This approach assumes that the effectiveness of the leader's personality, style, and behavior is contingent upon the requirements of the situation and further supports the belief that

- **There is no one best way to lead.**
- **The situational factors will determine the most effective style and behaviors.**
- **You can teach leadership behaviors.**
- **The leader does have an impact on group or organization effectiveness.**
- **Leadership effectiveness is affected by the interaction between situational factors and personal characteristics.**

Modern approaches to leadership effectiveness have a somewhat integrated view of traits, behavioral, and contingency approaches. Historically, researchers have studied leader behaviors by observing executives in a variety of organizations. If the definition of leadership is agreed as “the ability to influence, lead, or guide others to accomplish a mission in the manner desired by providing purpose, direction and motivation,” should the behaviors of anyone who influences others be examined? Are *all* humans, leaders in families, schools, communities, and life?

As a result of these historical perspectives, several approaches to leadership style have been identified. Those most common are the trait approach, the situational approach, the follower approach and the contingency model.

- **The trait approach maintains that a person either does or does not possess the specific traits that are considered to be the essentials of leadership.**
- **The situational approach assumes that certain situations call for specific types of leadership behaviors and that the leaders will be those who best fit the requirements of the situation.**
- **The follower approach holds that the needs of group members determine who will lead. Leadership, then, is a coincidence between the needs of the group and the abilities a person happens to have.**
- **The contingency model maintains that personal styles and situational characteristics combine to determine leadership. A proper match between styles and situations is essential.**

What does all this mean to you? To answer that, return to the definition of leadership:

Leadership is the ability (or process) to influence, lead, or guide others so as to accomplish a mission in the manner desired by providing purpose, direction, and motivation.

There have been studies over a number of years directed at gaining more understanding about effective leadership. The desire to assist people in the behaviors that effectively influence, lead, and guide others remains a highly regarded search. The more you understand the behaviors that create the desire to follow, the more you will be able to determine the leadership behaviors that will work best for you; more importantly, the ones that do not.

Have you ever wondered how some leaders influence, excite, stimulate, and energize others? When you were influenced, excited, stimulated, or energized by someone else to do something you thought impossible, did you reflect on those times so you could copy the behaviors you liked? Think of those teachers you remember most. What was it they did that made you remember them?

Conclusion

As researchers continue to study the characteristics of leaders, and as the world continues to change through technology and human growth, one common key ingredient to leading others successfully is the ability to successfully lead oneself. Leading from the inside out is the foundation to building successful relationships in your family, church, community, and school. Your relationships with others are the foundation of trust, and trust is the foundation to empowerment and alignment of the mission you are leading others to accomplish.

The following lesson takes a look at leadership from the inside out. You will examine what it takes to be an effective leader by looking inward.

Lesson Review

1. What are the three general eras into which leadership studies have been categorized?
2. Compare and contrast the traits, behavior, and contingency approaches to leadership.
3. Give a definition of leadership.
4. Which two behaviors stood out from the rest in the Ohio State Leadership Studies?