Leadership Styles and Traits

The purpose of this lesson is for students to comprehend the different styles of leadership and their appropriateness in different situations

Desired Learning Outcomes:

1. List the traits of authoritarian, democratic, and laissez faire leadership styles.

2. State in which situations the above leadership styles are appropriate.

3. Summarize the path-goal theory and which method is appropriate for which subordinates.

Scheduled Lesson Time: 30 minutes

Introduction

No form of organization has ever existed without leadership. However, an individual need not be the senior officer or commander to be a leader.   Nevertheless, for an organization to function with some degree of efficiency, having a leader at its head is important.   If a leader is also a good manager, that is even better.   While leadership and management are terms that are often used interchangeably, they are not the same.   By definition and in practice, leadership and management are different functions.   Management deals with the "thing" or technical side of a job, relying on control and power by position, while leadership deals with the people side, inspiring trust and power by influence. Thus managers have subordinates, and leaders have followers.   Both, however, are important functions.   This section will deal first with the traits and situational effectiveness of three leadership styles: authoritarian, democratic, and laissez faire, and only casually with management.   Then remarks on leadership definitions, leader traits, and factors influencing style choice will precede a summary of the path-goal theory that identifies four leader behaviors, which depend on situation factors and follower characteristics.

1 and 2. The Traits of Leadership Styles and Their Uses

Traits of authoritarian leadership and situations where this style of leadership is effective:

This style, sometimes called autocratic (do what I tell you), is used when leaders tell their followers what they want done and how they want it accomplished, without input or advice from their followers. The leader identifies a problem, considers alternative solutions, chooses one, and then tells others what to do.   Subordinates neither participate in the decision making process, nor are they consulted in the matter until after the decision is made.   Often the leader will then try to persuade them to accept it. This is frequently used as a primary method of managers.

Appropriate conditions for a leader to use this style would be when one has all the information to solve the problem, time is short, and the staff is well motivated to follow through with the decision, even if not involved in the decision making process.   It would be suitable to use also with an individual who is just learning the job, and is motivated to learn a new skill.

Some people tend to think of this style as a vehicle for yelling, using demeaning language, and leading by threats and abuse of power. This is not the authoritarian style, rather it is an abusive, unprofessional style called **bossing people around**, which has no place in a leader's repertoire.

The authoritarian style should normally only be used on rare occasions, and often is unproductive in a volunteer situation. If a leader has the time and wants to gain more commitment and motivation from others, then the democratic style should be used.

Traits of democratic leadership and situations where this style of leadership is effective:

With this style, also called participative, (Let's work together to solve this) the leader includes one or more other individuals in the decision making process to determine what to do and how to do it. However, the responsibility and authority for making the final decision remains with the leader.   Using this style is not a sign of weakness but rather a sign of strength which others will respect.   The leader presents the problem to the group, requesting ideas on how to solve it.   After hearing the group's viewpoints and suggestions, the leader makes the decision.

This is normally used when the leader has part of the information, and other folks may have other parts or ideas. A leader is not expected to know everything -- this is why a successful leader will make use of knowledgeable and skillful unit members to produce a solution to a problem or a decision on a job. Using this style is of mutual benefit -- it allows others to become part of the team and allows the leader to make better decisions.

This style is also appropriately used with a group of individuals who know their jobs and want to become part of the team. The leader knows the problem, but may not have all the information.   This style is most likely to be effective, more often than not, with volunteers.

Traits of Laissez Faire leadership and situations where this style of leadership is effective:

Laissez faire comes from the French - "to allow to do," and is essentially the noninterference in the affairs of others. In this style, also known as delegative or free reign (you take care of the problem while I go elsewhere); the leader allows others to make the decisions. However, the leader is still responsible for the decisions that are made. In discussing a problem, the leader participates as "one of the group," agreeing

in advance to carry out whatever decision the group makes, within the limits set by regulations and policies from higher headquarters.

This is used when someone else is able to analyze the situation and determine what needs to be done and how to do it. A leader must set priorities and occasionally delegate certain tasks to others. This is not a style to use so that others can be blamed when things go wrong, rather this is a style to be used when you, the leader, fully trusts, and has confidence in, the people working with you. Do not be afraid to use it; however, use it wisely!

A laissez faire style would be appropriate to use with one or more individuals who know more about the job than the leader.   Remember, whether or not you are the leader, one cannot do everything!   Also, the situation might call for the leader to be at other places, doing other things.   However, the individual assigned the job needs to take ownership of the job.

Now that the styles of leadership have been described, how is leadership defined, and what are some traits of a leader?

United States Air Force Doctrine Document 1.1 defines leadership as the art of influencing and directing people to accomplish the assigned mission.   The U.S Army definition is quite similar: "Leadership is influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation -- while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization".   The Army further goes on to define "influence" as a: means or method to achieve two ends: operating and improving.   But there's more to influencing than simply passing along orders. The example a leader sets is just as important as the words s/he speaks.   The leader sets an example -- good or bad -- with every action they take and word they utter, on or off duty.   Through a leader's words and example, s/he must communicate purpose, direction, and motivation [1].

Thus leadership is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people to perform at the very peak of their abilities, and can be placed into one of the three major styles (authoritarian, democratic, or laissez faire) discussed above.   No one style is the "best" method of leadership; each may work effectively under the right conditions.   A good leader must be capable of a wide range of behavior, and, depending on what forces are involved between the followers, the leader, and the situation, may use all three styles, with one of them normally dominant; however, a poor leader tends to stick with one style.

Leader Traits: The qualities necessary for leadership can be seen as a balance, with integrity as the strong, solid base, with respect and responsibility balanced on either side. People with integrity are honest, trustworthy and genuine. They also respect others and have a strong sense of personal responsibility for ensuring standards of moral and ethical conduct [2].   Respect is developed by the qualities of Empathy, Emotional Mastery, Lack of Blame, and Humility.   People who demonstrate respect show unconditional high regard for others, acknowledging their value as human beings,

regardless of their behavior. The respect comes through in all situations, even during times of conflict or criticism.

Demonstrating respect for others requires developing and refining:

(1)   Empathy.   When a leader treats everyone in the organization with consideration, shows genuine concern for others, listens with understanding and is respectful even if nothing is to be gained from the relationship, it helps the leader earn trust. Leaders who are empathetic create strong bonds and are seen as less political.

(2)   Emotional Mastery.   For those in positions of formal power, the most important aspect of emotional mastery may be controlling anger. Outbursts of anger have no spot in the workplace, and can quickly destroy a sense of organizational equity and partnership. A person with this quality says what he or she thinks, but never berates others, and stays calm even in crisis situations.   Anxiety is not allowed to interfere with public speaking or with other things that the leader needs to do.   A leader with this quality thinks before reacting and is able to consciously choose an appropriate response.

(3)   Lack of Blame. People who don't blame others are not defensive; they are able to reflect honestly on their own behavior and are willing to admit mistakes. When things go wrong, they don't spend time assigning blame; they spend time fixing the problem. An individual, who demonstrates this core quality, admits fault when appropriate, and does not look for a scapegoat in a crisis.

(4)   Humility.   Humility is a lack of pomposity and arrogance.   It is the recognition that all people are fallible, that we are all combinations of strengths and weaknesses. Individuals who demonstrate humility, as someone has said, "don't think less of themselves; they just think more of others." Arrogance derails more leaders than any other factor.   A person with the attribute of humility listens to others with an open mind; doesn't brag or name drop; clearly sees and admits their own limitations and failings, and is not afraid to be vulnerable.

Responsibility, at the other end of the integrity base, is the acceptance of full responsibility for personal success and for the success of the project, team and organization. To become responsible requires development and refinement of the following:

(1)   Accountability.   Leaders who are truly accountable expand their view of organizational responsibility and do what they can to get done what needs to get done, no matter where in the organization they have to go. They NEVER say, "It's not my job". They also hold themselves accountable for making relationships work - they don't say, "Well, I'll go halfway if they will". They take 100% responsibility for making any relationship work.   An individual with this feature takes the initiative to get things done; is not afraid to hold others accountable; is willing to cross departmental boundaries to

help with a meaningful project; and takes personal responsibility for organizational success.

(2)   Self-Confidence.   Self-confident folks feel that they are the equal of others, even when those others are in positions of much greater formal power.   They also recognize the value of building the self-confidence of others and are not threatened by doing so. Self-confidence in everyone builds a sense of partnership and helps the organization get maximum effort and ideas from everyone. A self-confident person has a self assured bearing; is flexible and willing to change; easily gives others credit; and isn't afraid to tell the truth.

(3)   Courage.   Courageous persons are assertive and willing to take risks. They ask forgiveness rather than permission, and are willing to try even though they might fail. They are willing to risk conflict to have their ideas heard, balancing that with the respect that makes constructive conflict possible.   These individuals often champion new or unpopular ideas.   Further, they will talk to others, not about others, when there is a problem; accept feedback and really hear what others say, as well as take the ball and run with it, even when there are obstacles.

(4)   Focus on the whole.   People who focus on the whole think in terms of the good for the entire organization, not in terms of what's good for them or their team.

Good leadership refers not only to competence, but to ethics and transforming people as well.   A leader is responsible for influencing followers to perform an action, complete a task, or behave in a specific manner.   Effective leaders influence process, stimulate change in attitudes and values of followers, enhance followers' beliefs in their worth, and foster the leader's vision by utilizing strategies of empowerment.

Ethical leadership requires ethical leaders [3]. If leaders are ethical, they can ensure that ethical practices are carried out throughout an organization.   Ethical leadership is leadership that is involved in leading in a manner that respects the rights and dignity of others.   As leaders are by nature in a position of power, ethical leadership focuses on how leaders use their power in the decisions they make, actions they engage in, and ways they influence others [4].   Leaders who are ethical demonstrate a level of integrity that is important for stimulating a sense of leader trustworthiness [5], which is important for followers to accept the vision of the leader [4]. These are critical and direct components to leading ethically [6]. The character and integrity of the leader provide the basis for personal characteristics that direct a leader's ethical beliefs, values, and decisions [4]. Individual values and beliefs impact the ethical decisions of a leader [7].

Leaders who are ethical are people-oriented, [4] aware of how their decisions impact others [8], and use their power to serve the greater good instead of self-serving interests [4]. In ethical leadership it is important for the leader to consider how decisions impact others [4]. Motivating followers to put the needs or interests of the group ahead of their own is another quality of ethical leaders [9]. Motivating involves

engaging others in an intellectual and emotional commitment between leaders and followers that makes both parties equally responsible in the pursuit of a common goal [6]. Ethical leaders assist followers in gaining a sense of personal competence that allows them to be self-sufficient by encouraging and empowering them [4].

In addition, ethics in leadership are very important in organizational communications as leaders must make decisions that will not only benefit them, but they must also think about how other people will be effected [10]. The best leaders make known their values and their ethics and promote them in their leadership style and actions. It consists of communicating complete and accurate information, where there is a personal, professional, ethical, or legal obligation to do so [11]. When practicing ethics, one gains the respect and admiration of others, with the satisfaction of knowing the right thing was done. [For further discussion on this topic refer to the Ethics lesson of this course].

There is a difference in the way leaders approach others. Positive leaders use rewards, such as education, independence, etc. to motivate individuals; while negative leaders emphasize penalties. While the negative approach has a place in a leader's repertoire of tools, it must be used carefully due to its high cost on the human spirit. Negative leaders act domineering and superior with people. They believe the only way to get things done is through penalties, such as loss of position, reprimanding individuals in front of others, withholding awards and/or promotions, etc. They believe their authority is increased by frightening everyone into a higher level of productivity. Yet what generally happens when this approach is used wrongly is that morale falls; which of course leads to lower productivity, and in the case of volunteers, often a loss of the individual to the unit, or to Civil Air Patrol.

Case Study - You may come to an answer on your own; discuss it with other members of the course or with other members of your unit. No written response is required. How do the above qualities of a leader, relate to CAP's Core Values? [See the Core Values lesson in this course].

Factors that influence the style to be used include:

A. The leader

1. The habits and behavior patterns of the leader and others in working with people.

2. The leader's confidence in his followers.

3. The attitude of the leader toward participation, sharing the decision-making process, and group decision-making.

4. The leader's need for certainty and predictability.

5. Who has the information - you (the leader), your fellow volunteers, or both?

B. The subordinates/followers.

   1. Their level of knowledge and experience.

   2. Their desire to do independent work.

   3. Their ability to assume responsibility.

   4. Their interest in the problem or the overall program.

   5. How well others are trained and how well the leader knows the task.

C. The situation.

   1. How much time is available?

   2. The values, traditions, and policies of the organization.

   3. The unity, cohesiveness, and spirit of the group.

   4. The nature of the problem itself.

D. Other possible factors.

   1. Are relationships based on respect and trust or on disrespect?

   2. Internal conflicts.

   3. Stress levels.

   4. Type of task--is it structured, unstructured, complicated, or simple?

   5. Regulations or established procedures or training plans.

3. The Path-Goal Theory and how to use it to choose the type of leadership style for the situation.

The path-goal theory of leadership was developed by Robert House in 1971[12] and describes the way that leaders encourage and support their followers in achieving the goals that have been set by making the path that should be taken clear and easy.   In particular, leaders clarify the path so subordinates know which way to go; remove roadblocks that stop them going there; and increase the rewards along the route.   Leaders can take a strong or limited approach in these.   In clarifying the path, they may be directive or give vague hints.   In removing roadblocks, they may clear the path or help the follower move the bigger blocks.   In increasing rewards, they may give occasional encouragement or pave the way with awards, promotions, or more

responsibility in the unit. This variation in approach will depend on the situation, including the follower's capability and motivation, as well as the difficulty of the job and other factors.

According to House, the essence of the theory is the proposition that leaders, to be effective, engage in behaviors that complement the environments and abilities of subordinates in a manner that compensates for deficiencies in individual and work unit performance, and is instrumental to subordinate satisfaction [13]. The theory identifies four leader behaviors, (1) achievement-oriented, (2) directive, (3) participative, and (4) supportive, which are dependent on situation factors and follower characteristics. The path-goal model states that the four leadership behaviors are fluid, and that leaders can adopt any of the four depending on what the situation demands. The path-goal model can be classified both as a contingency theory, as it depends on the circumstances, but also as a transactional leadership theory, as the theory emphasizes the give-and-take behavior between the leader and the followers. House and Mitchell [13] further expanded on these four behaviors as follows:

Achievement-oriented leadership sets goals, both in work and in self-improvement; high standards are demonstrated and expected; and the leader shows faith in the capabilities of the follower to succeed. This approach is best when the task is complex.

Directive leadership, where the followers are told what needs to be done and are given appropriate guidance along the way by the leader. This includes giving them schedules of specific work to be done at specific times. Rewards may also be increased as needed and role ambiguity decreased (by telling them what they should be doing). This may be used when the task is unstructured and complex or the follower is inexperienced. This increases the follower's sense of security and control and hence is appropriate to the situation.

Participative leadership, in which the leader consults with followers and takes their ideas into account when making decisions and taking particular actions. This approach is best when the followers are expert and their advice is both needed and they expect to be able to give it.

Supportive leadership, which considers the needs of the follower, shows concern for their welfare and creates a friendly work environment. This includes increasing the follower's self-esteem and making the job more interesting. This approach is best when the work is stressful, boring or hazardous.

Later House and Podsakoff [14] attempted to summarize the behaviors and approaches of "outstanding leaders". The listed leadership behaviors cover:

(1) Vision: outstanding leaders express a vision which matches with the deeply-held values of followers, a vision that describes a better future to which the followers have an alleged moral right.

(2) Passion and self-sacrifice: leaders display a passion for, and have a strong conviction of, what they regard as the moral correctness of their vision.   They engage in outstanding or extraordinary behavior and make remarkable self-sacrifices in the interest of their vision and mission.

(3) Confidence, determination, and persistence: outstanding leaders   display a high degree of faith in   themselves and in the attainment of the vision they articulate. Theoretically, such leaders need to have a very high degree of self-confidence and moral conviction because their mission frequently challenges the status quo and, therefore, may offend those who have a stake in preserving the established order.

(4) Image-building: House and Podsakoff regard outstanding leaders as self-conscious about their own image. They recognize the desirability of followers perceiving them as competent, credible, and trustworthy.

(5) Role-modeling: leader-image-building sets the stage for effective role-modeling because followers identify with the values of role models whom they perceive in positive terms.

(6) External representation: outstanding leaders often act as spokespersons for their respective organizations and symbolically represent those organizations to external constituencies, and

(7) Expectations of and confidence in followers: outstanding leaders communicate expectations of high performance from their followers and strong confidence in their followers' ability to meet such expectations.

Lesson Summary and Closure

Case Study - You may come to conclusions on your own or discuss it with other students in the course or with other members. No written response is required. There is a good likelihood you are familiar with the show M*A*S*H*.   Take a moment and think about the leadership style of the 4077's leaders.   Was the leadership style of Lt Col Henry Blake, Maj. Frank Burns, Col Sherman Potter, Maj. Margaret Houlihan, or even Captain "Hawkeye" Pierce appropriate for the situation and the followers they had? Did they use the path goal theory effectively?   If you are not familiar with M*A*S*H* any other show/movie that is set in a working environment will do.

A good leader must be capable of a wide range of behavior. Today, whether in industry, or in a volunteer organization, a leader will be called upon to function in a wide variety of situations and to work with all kinds of people.   Leaders who are concerned about the human needs of their fellow members build teamwork, help others with their problems, and provide emotional support. There is evidence that leaders who are considerate in their leadership style are higher performers and are more satisfied with their job.   If a leader becomes more considerate, it does not necessarily mean that the leader has become less structured (task oriented) [15].   Further, leadership is most

effective when a leader tries to satisfy group goals and individual goals simultaneously [16].

While leadership is the art of influencing and directing people to accomplish an assigned mission, the manner in which that is done is dependent on many factors: the leader, the followers, the situation, and the style of leadership used by the leader.   Most leaders do not strictly use one or another approach, but are somewhere on a continuum ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative.   People who continuously work at the negative end are bosses, while those who primarily work near the positive end are considered real leaders.   Leaders who show the way and help followers along a path are effectively 'leading'.

This section of the CAP Officer Basic Course has provided material on leadership styles, when and how they can be effectively used, as well as a brief introduction to the path-goal theory on leader behavior actions which can assist individuals develop into effective Civil Air Patrol leaders.   Knowledge of what factors could affect which style of leadership was best to use, depending on the circumstances, plus information on positive and negative leader traits should also be useful for members in understanding how decisions are made.

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