

Six Leadership Styles

by Barbara Bean-Mellinger, Demand Media

"Six Leadership Styles" refers to the theory put forth by Daniel Goleman in his work, "Leadership that Gets Results," which was published by the Harvard Business Review in 2000. Goleman and his team of researchers studied about 3,000 mid-level managers to see what styles they used effectively in which situations, and six styles emerged. They found that the best leaders were self aware and had empathy for others. Most interesting is that instead of having one distinct management style based on their personalities, Goleman found that successful managers are able to switch styles as needed, depending upon the situation.

Coercive

Goleman describes the "coercive" leadership style as, "Do as I say." It's good only when it's important that others know to take orders without question, such as after a natural disaster. It might also be effective when a company needs a complete turnaround to stay in business. In most business situations, though, the coercive style is too overbearing and can squash employees' motivation and morale.

Authoritative

A company that is floundering might be helped when a leader uses the authoritative, "come with me" approach. Instead of giving orders, the leader gives the goal but lets team members decide how they're going to get there. Authoritative approaches work well when the team needs a new vision, but the members are self-directed enough to figure out how to accomplish it.

Affiliative

In using an affiliative style, the leader puts great emphasis on the team members to build their morale and help them feel good about working together as a team. Everyone's contributions are stressed, and everyone is important to the team. It's a good way to build trust and team harmony. A leader who only uses the affiliative style, however, often fails to correct poor employee actions, and the company can suffer as a result.

Democratic

Giving everyone a voice and a vote sounds fair, said Goleman, but it can bog down the company's operations. It's a good way to encourage everyone to speak up and offer ideas, which is especially useful when the direction to take is uncertain and new thoughts are needed. Giving everyone a say takes time, though, so it's not a good style for crisis situations or any time a decision is needed quickly.

Pacesetting

Leaders who set high standards for themselves and encourage others to meet these standards are setting the pace for high achievement. It works for highly self-motivated employees, but others can feel constantly pushed to excel. Pacesetting can harm the company's overall climate when everyone feels pushed to do more and at a faster pace. When they can't keep up the pace, they begin to feel as if they're failing, regardless how much they might be achieving.

Coaching

Coaching is great for helping employees who want to improve their habits and are eager to have help doing so. It doesn't work as well for those who are resistant to change or don't believe they need to do so. It can also undermine a person's self-confidence if he feels he is being coached too much and not allowed to think for himself.