

EVERY DAY—YOUR STYLE IS SHOWING

Shirley C. Eagan, Ed.D.
Extension Specialist—Volunteer Leadership

Did you know that your style of leadership, and thus behavior, affects how you interact with people... react to certain situations... or get a job done? Our natural style of leadership and behavior does affect the way we work, play, and behave. However, it is possible to be flexible and work on trying to use the style of behavior that fits a particular situation.

This program topic will help participants:

- ♥ understand how each style affects you as a leader or follower
- ♥ recognize your predominant leadership style
- ♥ identify ways of working with various people.

Introduction

Activity: Draw the following four logos on a sheet of paper: a triangle, square, circle, and a Z. Ask participants to choose the logo they feel is most like them. Once each has had opportunity to choose one figure, discuss the characteristics of each as it relates to leadership. You may want to see how many members choose each figure. Triangle - These people are logical and analytical, very task-oriented. They value achievement, challenge and variety. Square - This person is orderly, rule-oriented, and a risk-minimizer. He/she values conformity, stability, and standards. Z people are innovative, future-oriented, opportunistic, and proactive. They value change and challenge. Circle people are intuitive, and are people- and process-oriented. They tend to be lovers. They value belonging and interpersonal relationships. Your club probably has some of each in its membership. It has been suggested that a good mix

is 45 percent triangles, 30 percent squares, 15 percent Zs and 10 percent circles.

Each person's leadership style has an important bearing on how effectively a family, group, or organization reaches its objectives. The leadership style you adopt in different situations can influence both how well your family or group accomplishes its goals and how well it maintains itself.

Your leadership style in a given situation consists of your behavior patterns as you deal with the group. These patterns emerge as you succeed or fail in confronting group events. Eventually, most of us develop a dominant style for all group situations. Through experience, group members expect-even predict-certain behavior patterns from us. How well do you know the members of the group? *You may want to take a few minutes and discuss this. Refer to the above activity or use the quiz in the participant leaflet and discuss.*

Styles of Leadership

For the most part, we learn leadership behavior by imitating others—parents, peers, other leaders. Leadership is not something we spend hours thinking about or planning for. Therefore, it is not surprising that so many of us have acquired and used only a small number of the possible leadership styles. We usually discover a few actions that become part of our behavior range, but seldom do we develop our full potential for leadership.

It is important to realize that having a repertoire of leadership styles is not a manipulative act of artificial behavior. It is a matter of changing our behavior to fit the situation. Flexible leadership

styles are essential for more effective and productive group action.

An important key is to know how, when, and how much of what leadership style is needed in a particular situation. The choice is a judgment of the leader. Actually, most leaders have a dominant style of leadership, and developing the ability to use all the styles isn't easy.

There are five leadership styles that can be used in different situations. These were developed by Roy A. Clifford, president of Applied Management Research, Inc., and Jerry W. Robinson, extension sociology specialist in Illinois.

In many situations we hear of the three styles of leadership—autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Today we will be discussing five styles—similar, yet different.

Suggestion: To make the discussion of these five styles more fun, gather five hats or props to depict the five styles: baseball cap, a hard hat, a crown, a party hat, and a kerchief. As you discuss the five styles, put one of the hats on. They can also be used for role play and later discussion.

Activator (Baseball cap)

What does the baseball cap suggest to you about this style of leadership?

The activator style is one in which others are involved and the leader contributes to the group's ability to solve its own problems. This style is similar to the democratic style of leadership. The activator wants to expand the group's interest in group work. He/she believes teamwork is essential for achieving a task. This leader may initiate the subject, but puts people at ease so they can discuss it. He/she involves and stimulates participation, helps assimilate data into a usable form, reinforces others, and helps solidify the group's action. The activator motivates by involving others.

In a group, when the activator is absent, the group can continue to function. There will be a slight letdown, but task work continues.

Controller (Hard hat)

What does this hat indicate to you about this leader?

The controller, like the autocratic leader, uses his/her power for leadership. The controller tends to tell people what to do and when. He/she uses behavior to strengthen the leadership position and frighten people into action in the situation. This leader believes people need supervision and regimentation and that one must apply power to stimulate and motivate. The controller often rewards and punishes people in front of peers.

When this leader is absent, there is little productivity. Work stops, a lookout is posted, and horseplay occurs.

Can you identify some times when this style of leadership might be useful?

Martyr (Kerchief)

The martyr's leadership style revolves around guilt-producing activities. This leader imposes personal values and policy on everyone. Rules may become an end in themselves rather than a means to an end. The martyr is oriented inward and seeks to win support from group members by making them feel guilty if they violate organizational norms or are disloyal. This leader might be likened to the "poor me" syndrome. Sometimes this person likes to have a "pity party."

Martyrs often overwork themselves by carrying the biggest burden, accepting all the jobs, doing everything. They often believe that followers will feel compelled to help. In reality, when this leader leaves, the activity of the group may change depending on the level of guilt the group has.

Can you think of a time when this style of leadership might be useful?

Cavalier (Party hat)

What does the hat symbolize?

The cavalier's style is a pleasure-providing role. This leader wins the group over through fun and games—and wants to be liked by everyone. There is an unstructured, permissive work environment. Cavaliers are extremely flexible, yet active.

The cavalier tends to want to entertain the group and is constantly seeking approval. This leader avoids judging participants or work. When the cavalier leader is absent, the group may speed up "fun and games" or be more productive.

When might the cavalier style of leadership be useful?

Abdicator (Crown)

The abdicator's style is one of withdrawal. Like the laissez-faire leader, this leader desires to withdraw from all situations of responsibility, postpones action, and uses the situation to create a leadership vacuum. He/she tends to avoid responsibility and wants to shift it to someone else.

The abdicator is absent—even when present—and is not likely to have much influence on the group. Other people are required to take over, make decisions, and promote group activity.

Activity: Practice the various styles by having members wear the different hats. You might want to define some role plays that relate to your group: i.e., committee to plan the next fund-raising event, group to select programs for next year, executive committee meeting, etc. Assign hats to the various people. Let them role play being the leader and or member in certain situations.

Style Flexibility

The skilled leader should use a wide variety of leadership styles. Ideally, it would be nice for everyone always to be activators and for that motivating style of leadership to work at all times. But that doesn't always happen! Sometimes we

must maximize the situation by combining many styles.

The real key is flexibility. We use one style most of the time, but we need to be confident to use others as the need arises. We need to gain insight into ourselves. We decide which style we will use by the forces within us, the group or family in which we work, and the situation.

If we are aware of and can assess these forces, we are better able to choose the pattern of behavior which might be most appropriate.

Being both insightful and flexible, a leader is less likely to see problems of leadership as a dilemma. For example:

- * The **activator** style is not the quickest way to get things done. It is probably the most difficult style to become consistent in. It can be used easiest with ongoing growing groups.
- * In a "hand me down the orders" organization, the **controller** can survive a long time. Sometimes the subtle use of power is what many groups need to get going.
- * People can feel pretty good if the **martyr** style of leadership is used only occasionally.
- * No one wants to work all the time. Sometimes a little **cavaliering** can help release tension. You may need to give someone else a chance to entertain if you do not feel comfortable with this style.
- * Doing the same thing may be a way of **abdicating** leadership at times, such as when the group needs to overcome differences.

Suggestions for the Future

You might want to suggest that members take a look at their leadership behavior. Were they surprised about their dominant style and how it

affected others? Suggest that they answer the following:

- a. *What leadership roles are you in at this time? What style do you tend to use? (You may find your style in a group meeting is different from the one you use at home.)*
- b. *What are some strong, positive things you like about your style?*
- c. *What are some weak, negative things you don't necessarily like?*
- d. *What might you do to correct the weaknesses and thus enhance your positives?*

Summary

A leadership style is the way a leader leads. If the leader chooses inappropriate ways of leading, he or she is likely to fail at the task at hand, as well as fail to maintain positive relationships with group members.

Members respond to leaders based on leader behavior. If the members see a leader as a cold

autocratic-controller, they will respond accordingly to that impression.

A leader needs to analyze personal abilities, the group, and the situation, before selecting the best leadership style. A leader who analyzes the situation, chooses the most appropriate style, and has the self-discipline to adopt it, is likely to maximize the group's success.

Resources

Eagan, Shirley. "The Concept of Leadership and Styles of Leadership." Part of Leadership Development Short Course. WVU Extension Service.

"Interpersonal Relations" from **Be A Better Leader**. Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

Leadership and Groups. FCL Module developed by Washington State FCL Program.

Sharpe, Dave. **Choosing Leadership Styles**. Montana Cooperative Extension Service. 1984.

1996: 1M