

LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER 15

Leadership is the process of influencing others so that their work efforts lead to the achievement of organizational goals. A key challenge for students of leadership is related to how it is measured. How do you decide how effective someone is as a leader? This chapter will focus on three of the most common measures used by leadership researchers: leader effectiveness, follower satisfaction, and group performance.

LEADERSHIP TRAITS

Traits are personal characteristics that are relatively stable. Early research in leadership sought to identify characteristics that differentiated leaders from non-leaders by analyzing great leaders. Indeed, over the years researchers have examined hundreds of traits to see if they are related to leadership. However, these personality traits have been the most studied:

Conscientiousness: achievement oriented, responsible, persevering, dependable

Agreeableness: good natured, cooperative, trustful, caring, gentle, not jealous

Extraversion: sociable, talkative, assertive, adventurous

Emotional Stability: calm, placid, poised, not anxious or insecure

Openness to Experience: intellectual, original, imaginative, cultured, curious

Taken together, research suggests that these personality traits account for almost 20% of the variation in overall leadership effectiveness. In other words, if you know the personality trait scores of leaders you can use that information to make more accurate predictions about how effective they will be perceived to be.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS

Researchers have studied well over 100 different categories of leader behaviors, many of which overlap with each other. However, there is some agreement that all these behaviors can be combined into three different clusters or types of leadership behavior (task-oriented, relationship-oriented, and change-oriented), and a fourth type that might be called non-leadership behavior (avoidance).

Task-oriented behaviors

Plan, organize, and coordinate work activities; establish goals and standards for tasks. Organize tasks into jobs and roles. Explain tasks and standards, and priorities regarding task objectives. Monitor activities. Ensure tasks are performed in an efficient and reliable way. Develop and follow systems that motivate and encourage members to meet standards.

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Relationship-oriented behaviors

Build social connections with members. Recognize members for their accomplishments and contributions. Encourage cooperation and mutual trust among group members. Build group identity using stories, symbols, and rituals. Express confidence and support for members, especially those facing a difficult task. Manage conflicts constructively. Inform, consult with, and empower members regarding decisions affecting them

Change-oriented behaviors

Engage in strategic planning, especially developing a new vision and performing SWOT analyses. Engage in change management, especially recognizing need/opportunity for change and preparing for change. Encourage, announce, facilitate, and celebrate the implementation of change. Model intrapreneurship

Avoidance/Non-leadership behaviors. Exhibit passive indifference to followers and to the task. Ignore problems and follower needs. Avoid engaging in task-, relationship-, or change-oriented leadership behaviors

As shown in Table 15.3, empirical research suggests that taken together these four leadership behaviors account for almost half (46%) of the variance across all three measures of leadership. In other words, how well and how appropriately you exhibit these four behaviors will explain about half of your effectiveness as a leader.

Table 15.3: Leadership behaviors and measures of effective leadership

Leadership behaviors	Leadership effectiveness	Satisfaction with leader	Group performance	Ave.
Task-oriented	14.3%	11.8%	8.4%	11.4%
Relationship-oriented (consideration)	9.2	31.4	3.3	14.6
Change-oriented - transformational & servant / active management-by-exception	12.1	16.2	6.8	11.7
Avoidance	11.5 (negative)	10.6 (negative)	1.5 (negative)	7.9
Overall variance explained by four types of behavior	47%	70%	20%	46%

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Task-oriented behaviors involve *designing, implementing, and explaining organizational structures and systems that enable and motivate members to perform their tasks*. Task-oriented behaviors are often associated with *transactional leadership*, so named because it focuses on the instrumental transaction that takes place between self-interested members and their employer who offers benefits in exchange for members performing tasks assigned to them. The focus here is on the task itself, and not on the social relationships in the workplace.

Relationship-oriented behaviors involve *showing concern and respect for group members, being friendly and approachable, treating other members as equals, and being open to their input*. Mutually trusting relationships, where leaders and followers both expect the best from each other, are ideal, and influence a vast range of outcomes, including turnover, job performance, commitment, satisfaction, and willingness to help. In exhibiting relationship-oriented behaviors leaders not only improve their own relationships with followers but also encourage members to focus on the well-being of the group as a whole. Relationship-oriented behaviors are often described using the term consideration.

Change-oriented behaviors involve *monitoring and understanding the work unit's larger environment, discovering innovative ways of working within it, and promoting the implementation of major changes in strategy, structures and systems, or in the array of goods and services that are offered*. Among scholars who research leadership, the most common example of change-oriented leadership is called transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership has been described in many different ways by many different authors. However, there is some agreement that it has at least four components, known as the 4 I's: intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration.

Servant leadership shares many components with transformational leadership, including a focus on identifying new opportunities to solve problems (intellectual stimulation), adding meaning to task performance (inspirational motivation), being a role model who is able to forgo self-interests to benefit others (idealized influence), and attending to the concerns and needs of followers (individualized consideration). Where servant leadership differs from transformational leadership is in the leader's focus. Transformational leaders focus on building follower commitment to meet the objectives of the organization, whereas servant leaders focus on serving their followers and others. Servant leaders actively promote the well-being of others even if it does not maximize financial well-being for the firm.

FBL, TBL, AND SET APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS

Leaders with FBL, TBL, and SET management approaches may use any combination of task, relationship, change, and even avoidance behaviors. However, we can expect some differences in how these behaviors are put into action within the three approaches to management.

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First, with regard to task-oriented behaviors, all three approaches are interested in achieving efficiencies within the organization, but SET managers will be more attuned to socio-ecological externalities associated with how tasks are designed and the results of performing them. In short, SET leaders include socio-ecological externalities when thinking about costs and efficiency associated with the tasks performed by followers.

Second, with regard to relationship-oriented behaviors, an FBL approach will focus on managing relationships in order to optimize followers' motivation and performance, whereas a SET approach will be more attuned to developing relationships that provide a sense of community, belongingness, and meaningful work (see Chapters 5, 16, and 17). As will be described more fully in Chapter 16, there is a difference between managing social relationships to maximize follower efficiency and productivity (the FBL approach) and managing social relationships to develop work units that perform tasks well while creating a life-enhancing community (the SET approach). Hallmarks of creating a sense of community include fostering an ethic of care and embracing healthy conflict. An *ethic of care* accepts that persons are morally relational and interdependent; this ethic is evident in organizations in ongoing relationships and behaviors that value the growth of the persons who are cared for (see Chapters 5 and 17).

Third, with regard to change-oriented behaviors, while all three approaches value transformational leadership, there will also be differences. This is most evident in terms of the content of changes being promoted. FBL and TBL approaches will focus on change-oriented behaviors that serve to maximize financial well-being, and the SET approach will be most likely to include behaviors that enhance socio-ecological well-being (see also Chapter 13). Whereas FBL leaders will exhibit a traditional transformational leadership focus on building follower commitment to meet the objectives of the organization, the SET approach will also embrace a servant leadership focus on serving followers and other stakeholders.

LEADERSHIP CONTINGENCIES

Just as our understanding of leadership improves when we consider both leadership *traits* and leadership *behaviors*, it can be improved even more by recognizing that the appropriate leadership behaviors depend on the situation facing leaders. Researchers have developed contingency models of leadership, where the *situation* determines which leadership behaviors are most effective at maximizing productivity (FBL management) or optimizing socio-ecological well-being (SET management).

Leadership contingency theories recognize that a successful leadership style in one situation may not necessarily work in another situation. For example, a task-oriented leadership style may be appropriate to train new technicians, but not for leading seasoned financial planners. Similarly, a leadership style well-suited to the demands of an army general is not likely to fit well with the demands of a university president.

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In some cases, *substitutes for leadership* act as situational factors that reduce the need for leaders to exhibit task-, relationship-, and change-oriented leadership behaviors. Specific characteristics of the task and work environment may substitute for the behaviors of leaders, neutralize the influence of leaders, or enhance the influence of leaders. For example, task-oriented leadership behavior may not be necessary when experienced followers have mastered their task and/or when a task is highly formalized with specific policies and procedural rules. Similarly, in highly cohesive teams, or when followers perform work that they find intrinsically interesting, it may not be as necessary for the leader to exhibit relationship-oriented behavior in order to ensure productivity.

Several contingency models explaining the relationship between leadership styles and specific situations have been developed. Among the most-influential are Fiedler's contingency theory, House's path-goal model, and Hersey and Blanchard's variations of situational leadership theories. These theories all focus on two dimensions of leader behavior: task-oriented and relationship-oriented.

LEADERSHIP CONTINGENCIES AND CHANGE

While earlier studies of leadership contingencies tended to focus on the two dimensions of task- and relationship-oriented leadership behaviors, more recently researchers have begun adding contingencies associated with change-oriented leadership behaviors. Indeed, today leadership research focuses on transformational leadership behavior ten times more frequently than it focuses on task- and relationship-oriented leadership behaviors. As our understanding of change-oriented leadership has grown, so too has our understanding of the contingencies associated with it. For example, research suggests that:

- the more turbulent the environment, the greater the need for change-oriented leadership behaviors;
- the greater the diversity among members in a work group, the greater the need for change-oriented (and relationship-oriented) leadership behaviors;
- the more problems there are in overall working conditions (e.g., related to workplace safety or pay) the greater the need for change-oriented (and task-oriented) leadership behaviors.

Research also suggests that there is interplay among the appropriate types of leader behavior as changes unfold over time.

Shared leadership

It is important to note that leadership behaviors can be distributed, or shared, among the members of an organizational unit. In other words, it is not necessary for the formal leader of an organizational unit to be equally adept at task-oriented, relationship-oriented, and change-oriented leadership behaviors.

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Research suggests that shared leadership may explain additional variance in a team's performance than the leadership provided by the nominal leader alone. This may be especially true when leadership is shared in the top management teams of new start-ups (see also Chapter 16). Shared leadership increases ability and confidence within groups. When groups face challenging situations they can turn to members who have the necessary leadership expertise to deal with the situation, and do not need to rely on a single, nominal leader to be an expert at everything. Shared leadership can also provide greater opportunities for members to interact with, get to know, and be intellectually stimulated by their co-workers, which may increase their motivation, competence, and performance. Research also suggests that the relationship between shared leadership and a group's performance becomes stronger the more the group's work is knowledge-based and members work with each other interdependently (for more on interdependence, see Chapter 16). While the sharing of task- and relationship-oriented leadership behaviors contributes to team effectiveness, the sharing of change-oriented leadership behaviors is particularly valuable.