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## **LEADERSHIP, EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND THEORIES ON LEADERSHIP**

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# Leadership, Effective Leadership and Theories on Leadership

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**Abstract – “If there is a trait which does characterize leaders it is opportunism. Successful people are very often those who steadfastly refuse to be daunted by disadvantage and have the ability to turn disadvantage to good effect. They are people who seize opportunity and take risks. Leadership then seems to be a matter of personality”**

- John Viney

**“The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.”**

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

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In order to get an understanding on the concept of Leadership the researcher began with looking at the most common definitions of leadership. During this examination it was felt by the researcher that there has to be some link between the issues and the concept of leadership. A study and analysis of the popular definitions on leadership reveals that most definitions tend to focus on the individual traits and characteristics. Eminent personalities had their own views and hence have defined leadership. Some of the definitions on leadership are as follows Leadership is an attempt at influencing the activities of followers through the communication process and toward the attainment of some goal or goals. Leadership is an influence process that enable managers to get their people to do willingly what must be done, do well what ought to be done. (Cribbin, J.J. ‘Leadership: strategies for organizational effectiveness’) Leadership is defined as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement.(Rauch & Behling.) Leadership is discovering the company's destiny and having the courage to follow it. ( Joe Jaworski - Organizational Learning Center at MIT.). Leadership is interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals. Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good. Leadership is that process in which one person sets the purpose or direction for one or more other persons and gets them to move along

together with him or her and with each other in that direction with competence and full commitment.

“Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don’t interfere as long as the policy you’ve decided upon is being carried out.” - Ronald Reagan

“Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.” - Stephen R. Covey

“Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it’s amazing what they can accomplish.” - Sam Walton

“All of the great leaders have had one characteristic in common; it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership.” - John Kenneth Galbraith

Leadership is a fascinating subject for many people. The term conjures up a familiar scene of a powerful, heroic, triumphant individual with a group of followers returning home after winning a national championship or a war against the evil enemy. They all march through town surrounded by a crowd waving flags. Or an enthusiastic orator delivers an energetic speech, hands waving in the air, to thousands of people gathered in a plaza. The widespread

fascination with leadership may be because of the impact that leadership has on everyone's life. Stories of heroic leadership go back thousands of years: Moses delivering thousands of Hebrews from Egypt or Alexander the Great building a great empire. Certain leaders are able to inspire and mobilize so many people. In recent decades, many researchers have undertaken a systematic and scientific study of leadership. Leadership is defined in so many different ways that it is hard to come up with a single working definition. Leadership is not just a person or group of people in a high position; understanding leadership is not complete without understanding interactions between a leader and his or her followers. Neither is leadership merely the ability or static capacity of a leader. One need to look into the dynamic nature of the relationship between leader and followers. In these unique social dynamics, all the parties involved attempt to influence each other in the pursuit of goals. These goals may or may not coincide: Participants actively engage in defining and redefining the goal for the group and for themselves.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Early students of leadership examined great leaders throughout history, attempting to find traits that they shared. Among personality traits that they found were determination, emotional stability, diplomacy, self-confidence, personal integrity, originality, and creativity. Intellectual abilities included judgmental ability, knowledge, and verbal communication ability. In addition, physical traits cannot be ignored, such as age, height, weight, and physical attractiveness. It is not only inborn personality traits that are important but also styles and behaviors that a person learns. Strong autocratic leaders set their goals without considering the opinions of their followers, and then command their followers to execute their assigned tasks without question. Consultative leaders solicit the opinions and ideas of their followers in the goal-setting process but ultimately determine important goals and task assignments on their own. Democratic or participative leaders participate equally in the process with their followers and let the group make decisions. Extremely laid-back leaders, so called laissez-faire leaders, let the group take whatever action its members feel is necessary.

Inspired and led by Renis Likert, a research team at the University of Michigan studied leadership for several years and identified two distinct styles, which they referred to as job-centered and employee-centered leadership styles. The job-centered leader closely supervises subordinates to make sure they perform their tasks following the specified procedures. This type of leader relies on reward, punishment, and legitimate power to influence the behavior of followers. The employee-centered leader believes that creating a supportive work environment ultimately is the road to superior organizational performance. The employee-centered leader shows great concern about the

employees' emotional well-being, personal growth and development, and achievement.

A leadership study group at Ohio State University, headed by Harris Fleishman, found similar contrasts in leadership style, which they referred to as initiating structure and consideration. The leadership style of initiating structure is similar to the job-centered leadership style, whereas consideration is similar to the employee centered leadership style. It was the initial expectation of both research groups that a leader who could demonstrate both high initiating structure (job centered) and high consideration (employee centered) would be successful and effective in all circumstances. Many students of leadership today believe that there is no one best way to lead, believing instead that appropriate leadership styles vary depending on situations. Fred Fiedler (1967), for instance, believes that a task-oriented leadership style is appropriate when the situation is either extremely favorable or extremely unfavorable to the leader.

### THEORIES ON LEADERSHIP

The Managerial grid model theory Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lipitt, and Ralph White developed in 1939 the seminal work on the influence of leadership styles and performance. The researchers evaluated the performance of groups of eleven-year-old boys under different types of work climate. In each, the leader exercised his influence regarding the type of group decision making, praise and criticism (feedback), and the management of the group tasks (project management) according to three styles: (1) authoritarian, (2) democratic and (3) laissez-faire. Authoritarian climates were characterized by leaders who make decisions alone, demand strict compliance to his orders, and dictate each step taken; future steps were uncertain to a large degree.

### TRAIT THEORY

Trait theory tries to describe the types of behavior and personality tendencies associated with effective leadership. This is probably the first academic theory of leadership. Thomas Carlyle (1841) can be considered one of the pioneers of the trait theory, using such approach to identify the talents, skills and physical characteristics of men who arose to power. Ronald Heifetz (1994) traces the trait theory approach back to the nineteenth-century tradition of associating the history of society to the history of great men. Proponents of the trait approach usually list leadership qualities, assuming certain traits or characteristics will tend to lead to effective leadership. Shelley Kirkpatrick and Edwin A. Locke (1991) exemplify the trait theory. They argue that "key leader traits include: drive (a broad term which includes achievement, motivation, ambition, energy, tenacity, and initiative), leadership motivation (the desire to lead but not to seek power as an end in itself), honesty, integrity, self-confidence (which is

associated with emotional stability), cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. According to their research, "there is less clear evidence for traits such as charisma, creativity and flexibility".

## **CONCLUSION**

Although trait theory has an intuitive appeal, difficulties may arise in proving its tenets, and opponents frequently challenge this approach. The "strongest" versions of trait theory see these "leadership characteristics" as innate, and accordingly labels some people as "born leaders" due to their psychological makeup. On this reading of the theory, leadership development involves identifying and measuring leadership qualities, screening potential leaders from non-leaders, then training those with potential.

## **BEHAVIORAL AND STYLE THEORY**

In response to the criticism of the trait approach, theorists began to research leadership as a set of behaviors, evaluating the behavior of 'successful' leaders, determining a behavior taxonomy and identifying broad leadership styles. David McClelland, for example, saw leadership skills, not so much as a set of traits, but as a pattern of motives. He claimed that successful leaders will tend to have a high need for power, a low need for affiliation, and a high level of what he called activity inhibition (one might call it self-control).