

Leadership That Gets Results

The Six Leadership Styles at a Glance

(Source: Daniel Goleman, Harvard Business Review, Mar-Apr 2002, *“Leadership That Gets Results”*)

Leaders use six styles, each springing from different components of emotional intelligence. Here is a summary of the styles, their origin, when they work best and their impact on an organisation’s climate and thus its performance.

	Mobilising	Affiliative	Democratic	Coaching	Pacesetting	Commanding
The leader’s modus operandi	Mobilises people toward a vision	Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds	Forges consensus through participation	Develops people for the future	Sets high standards for performance	Demands immediate compliance
The style in a phrase	“Come with me.”	“People come first”	“What do you think?”	“Let’s look at ideas for you to decide which to try.”	“Do as I do, now.”	“Do what I tell you.”
Underlying emotional intelligence competencies	Self-confidence, empathy, change catalyst	Empathy, building relationships, communication	Collaboration, team leadership, communication	Developing others, empathy, self-awareness	Conscientiousness, drive to achieve, initiative	Drive to achieve, initiative, self-control
When the style works best	When changes require a new vision, or when a clear direction is needed	To heal rifts in a team or to motivate people during stressful circumstances	To build buy-in or consensus, or to get input from valuable employees	To help an employee improve performance or develop long-term strengths	To get quick results from a highly motivated and competent team	In a crisis, to kick start a turnaround, or with problem employees
Overall impact on climate	Most strongly positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Negative	Negative

The Mobilising style

- Displays enthusiasm and communicates a clear vision
- Ensures that the mission statement is built into the company's strategic planning
- Articulates that local managers are the key to the company's success and are free to find new ways to implement
- Frames the individual tasks within a grand vision
- Defines standards that revolve around that vision
- Gives performance feedback – whether positive or negative – connected to whether or not that performance furthers the vision
- Standards for success are clear to all
- States the end but generally gives people plenty of leeway to devise their own means
- Gives people the freedom to innovate, experiment and take calculated risks
- Works well in almost any business situation
- Particularly effective when a business is adrift
- Will not work in every situation, for instance, when a leader is working with a team of experts or peers who are more experienced than him
- In the extreme, a manager trying to be mobilising can become overbearing.
- A mobilising leader who wants to add the democratic style to his repertoire might need to work on the capabilities of collaboration and communication.

The Affiliative Style

- “Come with me,” “People come first”
- Manages by building strong emotional bonds and then reaping the benefits of such an approach, namely fierce loyalty
- Drives up flexibility; resulting in high levels of trust, habitual innovation and responsible risk taking
- Offers ample positive feedback
- Builds a sense of belonging
- The Affiliative style is a good all-weather approach
- Employ the Affiliative style when trying to build team harmony, increase morale, improve communication, or repair broken trust
- The Affiliative style should not be used alone
- The Affiliative style can allow poor performance to go uncorrected; employees may perceive that mediocrity is tolerated
- People need clear directives to navigate through complex challenges; the affiliative style leaves them rudderless
- Use the Affiliative style in close conjunction with the Mobilising style
- Alternate Mobilising with the caring, nurturing approach of the affiliative leaders, and you have a potent combination

The Democratic Style

- Includes people in the business issues of the organisation
- Asks for their ideas on ways to handle the difficult issues
- Spends much of the time just listening and allowing obvious conclusions to be accepted
- By allowing each stakeholder to reach their decision collectively, none of the backlash that would have accompanied such a change
- The alternative of informing stakeholders of a complex decision of change can take years to resolve the disputes before ultimately proceeding
- Drawbacks: its impact on climate is not as high as some of the other styles and it can have exasperating consequences such as endless meetings
- Ideal when a leader is himself uncertain about the best direction to take and needs ideas and guidance from able employees
- Even if a leader has a strong vision the democratic style works well to generate fresh ideas for executing that vision
- Much less sense when employees are not competent or informed enough to offer sound advice
- Building consensus is wrongheaded in times of crisis

The Coaching Style

- Acts more like a counsellor than a traditional boss. (For example instead of blowing up, he sits down with his rebellious direct report and talks over not just the decision to close the division but also the employee's future.)
- Coaching leaders help employees identify their unique strengths and weaknesses and tie them to their personal and career aspirations
- Excels at delegating
- Gives employees challenging assignments, even if that means the tasks won't be accomplished
- Puts up with short-term failure if it furthers long-term learning
- Coaching style is used least often as most leaders don't take the time
- Leaders who ignore this style are passing up a powerful tool: its impact on climate and performance are markedly positive
- Paradox on coaching focuses primarily on personal development, not on immediate work-related tasks. Even so, coaching improves results. Dialogue (through coaching) has a way of pushing up every driver of climate.
- Coaching style is most effective when people on the receiving end are "up for it"
- Works particularly well when employees are already aware of their weaknesses and would like to improve their performance
- Works well when employees realise how cultivating new abilities can help them advance
- By contrast, the coaching style makes little sense when employees are resistant to learning or changing their ways
- Coaching style flops if the leader lacks the expertise or is simply inept at coaching

The Pacesetting Style

- The approach works well when all employees are self-motivated, highly competent, and need little direction or coordination – for example it can work for leaders of highly skilled and self-motivated professionals
- The Pacesetting style should be used sparingly
- Leader sets extremely high performance standards and exemplifies them himself. He is obsessive about doing things better and faster, and he asks the same of everyone around him - demands more from them. You would think such an approach would improve results, but it doesn't
- Employees feel overwhelmed by the pacesetter's demands for excellence, and their morale drops in the long term
- People often feel that the pacesetter doesn't trust them to work in their own way or to take initiative
- If the leader should leave, people feel directionless – they're so used to "the expert" setting the rules
- Pacesetting leaders, who want to be able to use the affiliative style more often, may need to improve their level of empathy and, perhaps, skills at building relationships or communicating effectively

The Commanding Style

- Makes the tough decisions that should have been executed years before
- A few occasions when it works masterfully
- During a turnaround or when a hostile takeover is looming
- Always appropriate during a genuine emergency
- Can work with problem employees with whom all else has failed
- If leader relies solely on this style, the long-term impact will be ruinous

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Referring to the 6 leadership styles, consider the following questions:

- Which of these styles have you seen others use?

- What worked and what did not work?

- Which styles do you use most?

- Which appeal least to you?

- What situation(s) are you involved in now where you might alter your usual style to match the situation? In what ways?