

Effective Leadership – Creating an Effective Leader

One popular theory about leadership styles is called "situational leadership", where no one style of leadership is appropriate for every occasion or situation. The most effective style to use depends upon the situation and whether the group members are willing and able to take on the responsibility. To be effective as a leader, it's important to know your group in terms of knowledge, ability, desire and willingness, and be ready to adapt your style to suit the occasion.

The telling leader - This leader "tells" the members what to do and doesn't worry too much about the feelings or relationships within the group. This is appropriate where members are new, inexperienced, lacking in confidence or need a lot of help and direction in order to get the job done. The leader should give clear directions and provide follow-up and feedback.

The selling leader - This leader often needs to "sell" or persuade the group to "buy into" a job. The group is a little more responsible or experienced, but direction and guidance by the leader is still needed at this level. The leader should explain the decisions and give a lot of opportunity for clarification.

The participating leader - The leader and the group members participate in making the decisions and carrying them out together. The group has the ability to do the job, but might lack the confidence to carry it out properly. The leader puts more emphasis on the group relationship than on the task to be done. They encourage and compliment the members.

The delegating leader - The leader trusts the group to decide and carry out the responsibility on its own. The members have the desire and are experienced and capable of doing the job. The members are responsible for directing their own affairs.

Leadership Qualities

Effective leaders have many common qualities. Good group leaders make an effort to learn and practice skills so they can:

- listen openly to others
- offer and accept constructive suggestions
- give clear directions
- set and meet deadlines
- give formal and informal presentations
- help members identify and solve problems
- set an example of desired behavior
- show appreciation of others' contributions
- show understanding
- encourage members to exchange ideas
- handle conflict
- guide the group in goal setting and decision making
- delegate responsibilities
- ask questions of the group to prompt responses
- create a productive atmosphere

Effective Leaders

- They are honest. This gives them credibility, resulting in the trust and confidence of their people. Credible leaders foster greater pride in the organization, a stronger spirit of cooperation and teamwork, and more feelings of ownership and personal responsibility.
- They do what they say they will do. They keep their promises and follow through on their commitments.

- They make sure their actions are consistent with the wishes of the people they lead. They have a clear idea of what others value and what they can do.
- They believe in the inherent self worth of others.
- They admit to their mistakes. They realize that attempting to hide a mistake is damaging and erodes credibility.
- They create a trusting and open climate.
- They help others to be successful and to feel empowered.
- They don't push too much. They encourage members to do more, but know when it's too much.
- They roll up their sleeves. They show the members they aren't just the figurehead or decision maker. Members respect leaders more when they show the willingness to work alongside them.
- They avoid phrases that cause resentment, reluctance and resistance. For instance, instead of saying you have to do something, effective leaders request or recommend that members do something.