



MENTORÉ



Leadership Style **Self-Assessment**

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To expand your impact on the organization, the motivation you possess to get smarter and do great work should be directed at **making OTHERS successful through the quality, delivery and execution of *their* work**. That is the job of a leader! But in order to be an effective leader, you need to understand how you lead. Does your leadership and communication style resonate with your team? Could you be more effective?

Six Leadership Styles

(As described by [Scott W. Spreier et. al.](#))

1. Directive

This is the traditional command and control technique that is very specific with questions of who, when, and how. This style is used effectively when there is a need for immediate compliance or working with new team members to give clear, precise, nonnegotiable direction. The directive style is less effective when the team is skilled, where they construe specific instructions as micromanagement.

2. Visionary

This style is also characterized as authoritative. The style is one of clear direction and an explanation for why a particular course of action is required. The “visionary” label is appropriate because the leader describes a future state, where things are headed. This style emphasizes clarity both in terms of general direction and individual responsibilities. The “authoritative” label captures something less than immediate compliance but still conveys that the leader is in charge and knows where he and the team are headed. This style is less effective when a routine or known assignment is given to a team of experienced players.

3. Affiliative

This style embodies the concept of maintaining close, personal relationships. The style attends to the needs of individuals, which makes it effective in situations of personal crisis or team turmoil. The affiliative style is less effective when an individual or team is not performing to standards, or when clear direction is needed because of a change in priorities, problems, or issues.

4. Participative

This style is also characterized as democratic because it uses dialogue to get buy-in and commitment. It is a highly collaborative style intended to build consensus through shared decision making. This style works well when a leader has highly skilled players. This style is less effective when immediate compliance or clarity is required.

5. Pacesetting

To call pacesetting a leadership style is a bit of a stretch because there is little to no engagement on the part of the leader with an individual or team. This is like a cross-country race, where everyone lines up at the starting line, waits for the signal, and everyone, including the leader, runs to the finish line. This style is effective when a leader supervises a team of highly skilled people working on automatic pilot. Members share a sense of high standards and quality work and need little if any supervision. They can run this cross-country course in their sleep.

All too often, the pacesetter style is used by a high achiever who is put in charge of a team or organization. If everyone is running to goal and doing his or her job, no communication is required. However, when the leader thinks that standards or expectations are not met, the negative side of the pacesetter creeps in, which is a tendency to be coercive, to take over the work, or give it to someone else. The underlying premise for pacesetting is that people don't need to be told what to do and shouldn't have to be told how to do it. That's their job and that's what they get paid for. But if performance is inconsistent or doesn't meet standards, or if priorities and direction change, then the leader needs to change styles to communicate and actively engage with the team as opposed to people "getting it" on their own. **When is pacesetting less effective? Most of the time.**

6. Coaching

The term “coaching” is often used to describe a broad range of interactions between a leader and a direct report. As a leadership style, coaching is an ongoing process focused on the employee’s professional development. It speaks more to the process than any one particular event. Coaching works best when there is active engagement on the employee’s part. It is a highly interactive, iterative, and ongoing dialogue. It is less effective when an individual is new to the position or needs direction to accomplish specific assignments. Some may think that you “coach” someone when he or she is new, but if using this terminology, you are probably more “directive” or “authoritative” in the beginning.

Adaptive leader behavior manifests itself in different styles, from highly directive and in charge, to collaborative and shared, to employee directed. **One style of leadership does not fit all situations.** Style is a tool for handling change on a routine if not daily basis to continuously align expectations, people, and outcomes.

Activity

Answer the following questions:

1. Which style or styles (listed above) do you most often use?
Consider a situation when that style was most effective. Then think of a time you used that style and it was not effective. What style might you have used instead?
2. Which style or styles do you use less frequently? In what types of situation might you use these effectively?
3. Keep in mind that your use of different styles speaks to your ability to effectively impact individual and team performance regardless of the situation. Keep a log for the next 2 weeks of the situations in which you consciously use a particular leadership style and the extent to which it was effective for the situation.

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Develops Talent

The third critical competency in the alignment and execution stage is the development of talent. As a philosophy, talent development is intended to get the most out of people by tapping into, developing, and unleashing individual potential and performance on the organization. While it relates to the yearly ritual of the performance review, it is much broader. Yearly appraisals typically focus on today's necessities and not tomorrow's requirements or opportunities. Talent development goes for the long haul, where faith in the future and the development of individual capability is rewarded with ongoing organizational productivity and increased capacity.

As a strategy, talent development is both high reward and high risk. The reward is increased organizational competence created through a highly trained, skilled, and invested workforce. The risk is that trained talent is in high demand. They could leave the organization. They will. The reality is that everyone leaves the organization at some point. There is an upside, however.

Several years ago, I was one of several presenters at a workshop for CPA's working in business and industry. One of the other presenters was the chief financial officer (CFO) of a large telecommunication organization I had met and worked with on two previous occasions. His topic was how he transformed the finance and accounting organization into a customer-focused organization. The transformation took five years. He described how some people were let go, some new people were hired, and how everyone participated in a massive training and development initiative. His vision was not only to improve his organization's impact on the business, but to make the business "an employer of choice." After the presentation, someone asked the question that I suspect was on the minds of

several people: “What happens if you train them and they leave?” His answer was immediate, clear, and resolute: “Everyone leaves at some point. But the good news is there is now a line of people at our door wanting to come work for the organization.” According to this CFO, talent development has its risks, but they are outweighed by the rewards.

Leadership Requirements for Talent Development

From a leadership perspective, developing talent has five requirements:

1. Focus on an individual’s strengths with laser-like intensity
2. Lead as a coach and teacher
3. Use deliberate practice to build skills that improve performance
4. Delegate for development
5. Scan the landscape for development opportunities

Laser Focus on Individual Capabilities and Strengths

Going against the grain of common practice at the time, Marcus Buckingham opened a new discussion on the topic of talent development when he asked, “Should talent development focus on improving a person’s weaknesses or building a person’s strengths?” Buckingham asserts that talent development should be about “developing your talents, capitalizing on your strengths and managing around your weaknesses.” He defines talents as those “naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior.” The combination of talent, knowledge, and skill creates a strength, defined as “consistent near perfect performance in an activity.”

With the full weight of the Gallup organization and research conducted with more than two million people at the time of publication, the concept of strengths is mainstream thinking in today’s discussion of talent development.

How does this approach impact a leader's responsibilities?

- First, a leader must spend the time with an employee to identify natural talents and strengths. This requires observation, focus, and attention. The intent is to identify not only a person's individual strengths, but also how they combine to create unique personal values.
- Second, a leader has to identify opportunities and methods of working with that individual that capitalize on strengths.
- Third, a leader must work with the employee to understand his weaknesses and how to minimize them. The issue of working to improve a person's weaknesses is still a source of debate. In some cases, a person's weakness is easy to work around by making slight improvements or creating support systems. For example, a person who is not good with details can partner with someone whose strength is handling the specifics. In other situations, it may be necessary to stop "doing" the weakness. From my experience, the issue here is one of magnitude and impact. Sometimes, a weakness or blind spot is damaging, like an individual who continuously and publicly chastises colleagues for doing "lousy work." In this case, I would argue that there is no workaround. The behavior is detrimental and needs to stop.
- Fourth, a leader must balance an individual's strengths with the needs of the organization. This is an issue of matching assignments with talent and organizational requirements with individual strengths.

Leader as Coach and Teacher

As a college basketball fan, March Madness is like Christmas for me. Growing up in my family, I was genetically wired to play my very important part in what ESPN claims is one of the top five sports rivalries of all times: Carolina-Duke basketball. When Will Blythe wrote *To Hate Like This Is to Be Happy Forever: A Thoroughly Obsessive, Intermittently Uplifting, and Occasionally Unbiased Account of the Duke-North Carolina Basketball Rivalry*, I felt as if he had a front-row seat in my living room. I am proud to say that I bleed Carolina blue, which Duke Fans could argue is a reason for me to never donate blood. In addition to a great rivalry and a slew of great players from both teams, there are two legendary coaches in Mike Krzyzewski of Duke, and Dean Smith, the former coach at Carolina. Each has been a remarkable coach and a less than remarkable player. We know that the best players, like

the best salespeople or the best engineers, do not necessarily make the best coaches. In making the transition from player to coach and teacher, people like Dean Smith and Coach K have connected their personal success with team success. They bring value to the organization not because they played the game but because they *teach* the game and create the conditions for successful performance.

The concept of leader as coach and teacher is used more broadly than the use of “coaching” as a leadership style. The coach and teacher role in this case refers to ongoing performance and execution—the overall approach of scoping out the work, making sure assignments are clear, and working with the team and team members to execute effectively and make improvements as needed. However, the role is also “coaching” in the professional development sense by working with people individually to increase their capabilities over time.

When it comes to “on-the-field” performance, coaches succeed or fail based on their ability to:

- set standards;
- clarify expectations;
- give ongoing performance feedback;
- motivate and challenge.

Set standards.

A major responsibility of the leader as a coach is to set clear goals and objectives for both the team and each individual team member. Standards mark the level of performance required for successful execution.

Clarify expectations.

A successful coach sets clear expectations. It doesn’t mean that every role is clearly scripted for every possible scenario. It does mean, however, that each person needs to make sure he or she understands expectations and ask for clarity if they don’t have it.

Give ongoing feedback.

Feedback is to coaching as oxygen is to breathing. As a coach, giving feedback is most effective when it:

- is objective and specific, using examples to explain what did or did not happen;
- is actionable, meaning that there is an action an individual can take to continue or eliminate the behavior;
- describes the impact of the observed behavior;
- engages the receiver;
- defines next steps that commit both coach and player to take action.

Feedback is both positive and constructive, used in situations when a team or team member meets or misses the mark. Feedback ranges from the formal and planned, as in a meeting scheduled for that purpose, to the informal and spontaneous, as in a quick follow-up to a conversation. In each case, the “rules” for the previously listed feedback should be used.

Motivate and challenge.

Setting standards, clarifying expectations, and giving feedback are reflected in the daily ritual and natural way of doing business between the leader as coach and their team. The ability to motivate and challenge takes these interactions up a notch. Coaches who truly inspire others know when and how to motivate and challenge them. It’s personal, a mark of personal interest and belief from the coach to the player, the leader to a direct report. It’s an emotional connection made by knowing what’s important to each person, and showing how their performance helps fulfill their needs and aspirations.

Use Deliberate Practice to Improve Performance

What is the one thing that Wolfgang Mozart, Jerry Rice, and Tiger Woods have most in common that has made them successful? Is it the following:

1. Superstar designation by their rivals
2. Child prodigies
3. Unique natural talents
4. Deliberate practice

Tempted to answer one of the first three responses? Geoff Colvin, author of *Talent is Overrated*, argues that the correct answer is the fourth one, deliberate practice. Colvin uses examples from such fields as chess (Bobby Fisher), sports (Jerry Rice), music (Itzhak Perlman), and business (Bill Gates) to make the point that it is deliberate practice, not simply natural talent, that creates outstanding performers. Colvin bases his argument on the research conducted by Anders Ericsson and his research team:

The search for stable heritable characteristics that could predict or at least account for the superior performance of eminent individuals has been surprisingly unsuccessful...The difference between expert performers and normal adults reflects the life-long period of deliberate effort to improve performance in a specific domain.

Deliberate practice is not what you see around the house every day. What Colvin describes is a unique process that has unique impact:

- It is designed specifically to improve performance
- It can be repeated “a lot”
- Feedback on the results is continuously available
- It’s highly demanding mentally (even for physical endeavors)
- It’s not much fun

In addition to its impact on performance, Colvin argues that what makes deliberate practice powerful is that it changes how top performers think and how they see the world. When compared to average performers, top performers:

- tend to see things sooner;
- understand the significance of certain indicators, such as details that might be indicative of a trend or pattern;
- look further ahead;
- make finer distinctions;
- remember more;
- know more from seeing less.

You may be thinking that the concept of deliberate practice is more applicable to coaching college all-stars or teaching performance violinists than it is to leading a business or organization. Actually, the principles directly apply to the responsibilities of a leader as coach and teacher. Colvin describes how the best organizations incorporate these principles into a culture of talent development. In these organizations, you could expect to see an environment of continuous feedback, learning from failures as well as successes, going back to the drawing board, and heading down to the practice field to try it again. Deliberate practice sharpens skill sets, builds organizational capacity, and potentially impacts the ability of people to broaden their thinking horizons, to see farther down the road, to anticipate situations, and to make better decisions.

Delegate for Development

Delegation is the leader's Swiss army knife. It is a unique multipurpose capability for leading change, developing talent, and creating greater organizational capacity. Delegation is generally defined as giving someone the authority to complete a task or assignment. The purpose covers a range of situations, from needing an extra pair of hands to complete a single task to the major responsibilities attached to managing a piece of the business.

In the middle of this spectrum are often opportunities for a leader to delegate assignments such as learning and development assignments.

- For example, an individual approaches a manager for how to handle a specific issue or problem. Rather than giving an answer, the manager turns the question around by asking the individual to clearly define the issue, provide supporting data, suggest options for taking action, and make a recommendation. These are the "teachable moments" that give someone experience now, making it possible to delegate these decisions or assignment to them in the future.
- There's also the "see one, do one, teach one" method of delegation, the so-called intern model used in the medical field.
- There are situations where a manager delegates responsibilities to a specific employee as part of a strategic process to broaden that individual's experience and skill set.

Effective delegation has several important benefits:

- It expands an employee's skill sets and broadens his or her capabilities.
- It motivates those who crave for new and challenging assignments.
- It enables the leader to take on more responsibility from their manager.
- It prepares successors for the roles they will one day inherit.
- It builds and expands organizational capability and competence.

Scan the Landscape for Development Opportunities

In addition to coaching, the leader is continuously on reconnaissance to find development opportunities for his or her employees for both current and future roles. While some organizations have designed on-the-job development programs, such as rotational assignments or internships, the vast majority of these are opportunistic in nature. Leaders seize on these opportunities when they have:

1. a clear understanding for what skills and experiences an individual wants and needs based on strengths, interests, and motivation;
2. a vast network and connections throughout the business;
3. good negotiation skills to secure these positions once they are located;
4. the ability to go nonlinear in terms of finding opportunities in different parts of the business that could broaden someone's strengths and talents.

The key is that the leader as coach is constantly vigilant, always on the prowl for development opportunities while motivating and challenging team members to expand their capabilities in their current roles.

Where and How Are You Spending Time as a Teacher and Coach?

In your role as the teacher and coach, you have an opportunity to favorably impact a person's career development *and* increase the capability of the team and consequently the business.

Here is some food for thought for making the coaching role a priority.

1. Coaching is an interactive process for development planning and implementation with each team member with routinely scheduled coaching meetings for feedback, engagement, and measuring progress against goals.

a) **For new team members**, these meetings are often directed to learning the fundamentals of the job and role, ongoing feedback, and lessons learned.

b) **For experienced individuals**, coaching often takes the form of development assignments and stretch goals to provide challenging, engaging, and exciting opportunities that broaden an individual's base of expertise and credibility.

c) **For the seasoned professional**, it's focusing on where that individual is headed, broadening that person's visibility across the business, and developing the skills and experiences needed to have a broader impact on the business.

2. Effective coaching is a function of both the amount and quality of time spent in professional development for the purposes of increased personal competence.

Do the math: To what extent are you spending time teaching and coaching each individual team member on a routine basis? Weekly? Monthly? Quarterly? Yearly? None of the above? Do not count weekly project updates or problem resolution meetings *unless* a portion of that time is devoted to feedback, skill development, and lessons learned.

Recommendation: *Spending one hour monthly with each person or the equivalent of three hours quarterly coaching each individual is a manageable and solid routine.*

3. Is there a development plan with professional development goals for each team member? These are not the functional or business goals needed in the annual performance appraisal. These are specifically dedicated to skill, competency, and behavioral development to improve and expand personal capability. Harness the impact of goals because they create action, intent, and specificity.

4. A good development plan consists of:

- two to three *SMART* goals;
- If you are not familiar with *SMART*, an effective goal must be specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-phased. An often used example is the statement that “I want to lose weight,” a desirable state but not a *SMART* goal. “I am going to lose 10 pounds in the next 60 days by watching my diet and working out at the YMCA five times per week”—now that’s *SMART*, in more ways than one.
- a statement of the desired impact;
- specific development activities for specific and deliberate practice;
- measures of success.

5. While your role as coach is critical, the accountability for the professional development plan rests with the team member. You and the organization provide the context and opportunity for development. When the team member takes ownership of his or her development, it’s a win-win outcome all the way around.

Leads by Example

“The Shocker: I Am the Problem”

Successful leaders know that others scrutinize their behavior, sometimes their every move. They know this comes with the territory and use this knowledge to their advantage. They understand their impact on others and use their *presence* to lead by example.

To lead by example is to lead with intent.

Ralph Stayer, the chief executive officer (CEO) of Johnsonville Sausage, is one person who understands what this means. Stayer describes how he came to the realization that the “victim mentality” he had demonstrated over the years was mirrored throughout his organization. One day it hit him. Stayer realized that he had to make the change “from being a victim to being responsible.” The question he asked himself: “What am I doing or not doing that causes the situation I don’t like?”

As a result, Stayer changed his behavior to demonstrate what he expected others to do, to take responsibility and ownership over what they could control, or to influence the situation for a favorable outcome when they didn’t. “No more ‘victimitis.’” Stayer modeled the behavior he expected of others. Today these behaviors are imbedded in the culture known as the Johnsonville Way. And it started with one shocking realization: “I am the problem.”

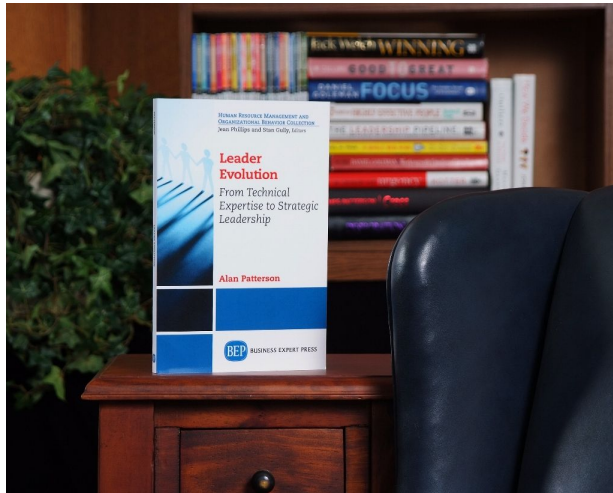
Conclusion

Leaders adapt by making adjustments in their styles for how they lead. They understand that the situation and people involved determine what style of leadership—from providing specific direction to allowing the team to call the shots—is best.

Becoming an effective leader takes awareness, focus and deliberate practice. Over time, deliberate practice can change how someone thinks and acts to make better decisions and to move an organization from managing performance to developing talent, which leads to increased capabilities and expands organizational capacity.

Leader Evolution: From Technical Expertise to Strategic Leadership

[Learn more about Dr. Alan Patterson's book](#)



The book provides a pragmatic approach for self-motivated individuals to take control of their professional development by giving them the concepts, tools, techniques and assignments to develop their leadership effectiveness where it counts the most—on the job. In addition to new and existing managers, the book is ideally suited for technical leaders—those professionals in technical organizations who are looking to develop critical leadership behaviors that are distinct from technical expertise.