Team Leadership Styles

Leadership Skills

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Preface

This eBook has been written for managers who find themselves in a team leadership role. It uses three real-life examples to illustrate how different leadership styles can be applied to suit different types of team.

You will learn:

- Where transactional leadership will be appropriate and where it is counter-productive to the team's objective.

- How transformational leadership can enhance motivation, morale, and performance by creating a sense collective identity.

- The four key elements of transformational leadership and how to apply them in your interactions with your team.

- How situational leadership can be used to alter your leadership style to suit the ability and motivation of your team to.

- How to give your team sufficient freedom to maximize their personal development and job satisfaction, while still achieving their targets.

Preface

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Introduction

Probably the most important part of becoming any sort of leader in the modern work-place is to be the person that others choose to follow. Even where compulsion is possible, it tends not to work very well.

If people decide that they don't want to do things your way, then they can find any number of ingenious ways to undermine your wishes. Even if the obstructive behavior justi-fies dismissal, firing someone always has negative consequences for morale, focus, and productivity.

In fact, you can end up spending so much time and effort defending your decision to your boss, co-workers, or an employment tribunal that you don't have any time left to do your job properly.
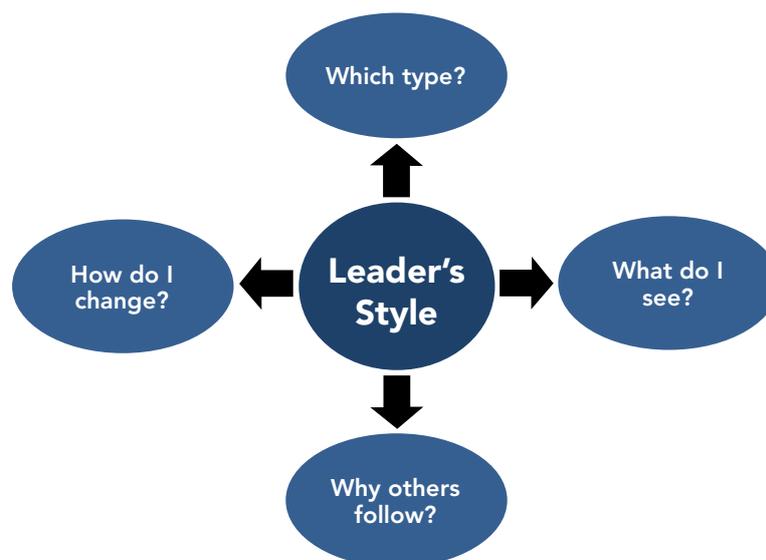
If you want to take a leadership role, then the most important questions you can ask are:

Which leadership style is the most appropriate?

Which leadership style is most prevalent in your organization?

Why should my team follow my lead?

How can I alter my competencies and behaviors to become this type of leader?

The answers to these questions depend on your role, your team, and the task at hand. Whilst there are some skills that you will need to develop in order to be an effective leader, your role, your team, and the task will all affect which of these skills you use.
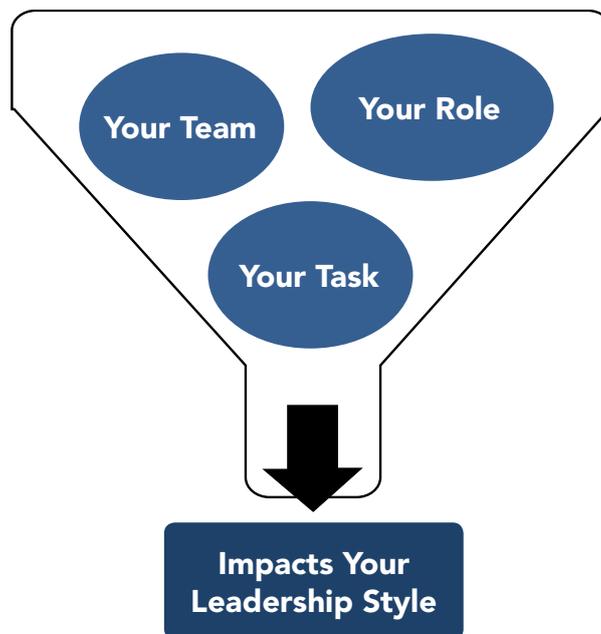
Before getting down to answering the question of why people would choose to follow your lead, you will need to understand the different styles of leadership available and the different types of team that are found in the workplace.

The fact that there are such a variety of possible types of team makes it impractical to generalize too much when discussing leadership styles. Throughout this eBook we will use three real-life examples of teams that are very different in their purpose and make-up.

KEY POINTS

- ✔ Being the person that others *choose* to follow is the key to effective team leadership.
- ✔ The optimum leadership style will depend on your role, your team, and the task at hand.

Team Examples

You should be aware from experience of the wide variety of teams that exist throughout modern organizations. The remainder of this eBook will use three real-life examples of teams to illustrate how different team leadership styles can be applied to suit different types of team.

These same team examples have been used in our 'Principles of Team Building' eBook. If you are familiar with each one's size, function, and structure you can go straight to the 'Leadership Theories' section.

The example teams are:

- The Development Team
- The Customer Support Team
- The Steering Team

Each of these teams is quite different in its purpose and structure, and has a different size, function, and composition. They will illustrate that there is no 'best way' to manage a team and that you will need to use your own judgment and understanding of your organization when considering 'best' how to manage your own team.
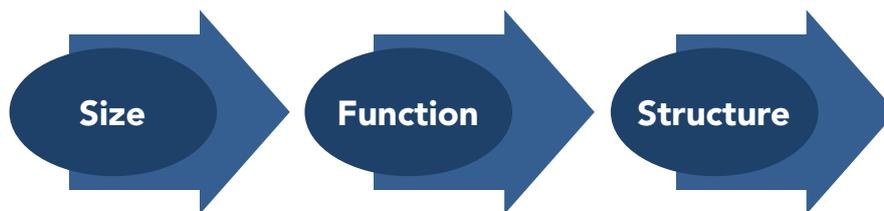
All of these example teams work within a public utility company, a Water Company. They are based on real-life teams and are described in detail so that you can appreciate the differences between them and how these affect the way they are managed.

Background Information

These teams work within a large public utility company that was originally set up to provide water services. The company was originally owned by the state but has been privatized and now operates as a commercial organization.

The Water Services Watchdog is responsible for ensuring that it continues to provide a quality service to all its customers and offers 'value for money.' This body ensures also that the water company adheres to all the required legislative regulations.

In the past, the company has operated with a traditional authoritarian management style, but it is endeavoring to alter this to a more commercial and empowered style of management through its change management program. All managers are expected to develop, coach, and mentor their staff so that they adopt the competencies required by the new commercial organization.

Each of these teams requires a different type of leadership to make it successful. How and which style is best for you to adopt is discussed in the section 'Leadership Theories.'

Development Team Example

The IT department is headed up by a new director who has been brought in from a software company to update the organization's IT systems so that operations become more efficient and profitable.

Project Leader

In this scenario, you have been with the organization for five years and witnessed its evolution from a traditional water authority to a modern water company. You are currently a team leader and have just been given the responsibility of managing a key IT project for the next twelve months. You are responsible for ensuring that the project is delivered on time and within budget.

Project Objective

Your objective is to develop a suite of software programs to enable the company to monitor water quality throughout its catchment area. This will be a web-based IT system that allows water quality data collected from remote locations to be entered into a central database where it can be analyzed by the water quality department.

Composition of Team

The members of this team are all university graduates, their ages vary between 25 and 45 years, and they are all consider themselves relatively well paid. Five of the team members work directly for the company and three are freelance contractors.
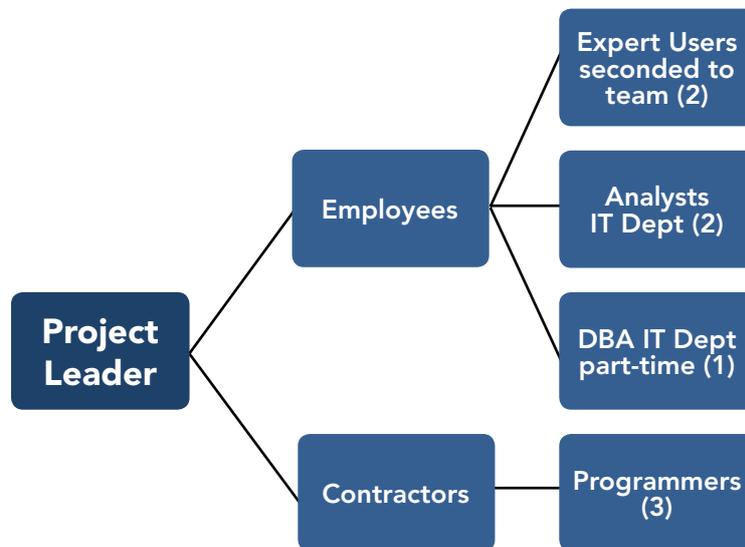
As you can see from the organizational chart above:

- The team has eight members excluding yourself
- Five of them are company employees
- Two have been seconded to the project from the water quality department
- One member, the database analyst, is only available to the team on a part-time basis
- Three of the team are external contractors

The first thing to notice about this particular team is that it is operating under what is known as a Matrix Management Environment. The expert users belong to the water quality department and the analysts and the DBA belong to the IT department. They are only assigned to you for the duration of the project, and when it is completed they will return to their respective departments. You do not have any direct control over them out-side of the day-to-day running of the project. They still report to their own line managers, who are responsible for their appraisals, remuneration, promotions, etc.

The freelance contractors are all independent workers who have contracts with the com-pany for the expected duration of the project. They have all worked for the company on previous projects and are keen to add another successful project to their resumes.

Customer Support Team Example

Customer Support is one area of the Customer Services department, which is managed by the Customer Services Director who has been with the organization for over twenty years. His role has two main objectives relating to customer service:

1. To ensure customer complaints are resolved quickly and to both parties' satisfaction.

2. To ensure the number of complaints referred to the watchdog are minimized.

Customer Support Manager

In this scenario, you have been working in the customer support area for three years and have recently been promoted to Customer Support Manager. You are responsible for ensuring that:

- Calls received by the support desk wait no longer than five minutes to be answered.

- 90% of issues are resolved on the first call.

Composition of Team

Your team is a group of 22 permanent members of staff who all report to you. The age of your team ranges from 16 to 28 years, with 18 of the staff being under 24 years. Ten members of the team are graduates and only seven members of the team have been with the organization for six months or more.

Management Issues are:

81% of team under 24 yrs

55% non-graduates

Only 1/3 team have 6mths+ experience

Members have no autonomy

The team members have virtually no autonomy over their work because their workflow is handled by an automated telephone system which routes queued calls to the first available team member.
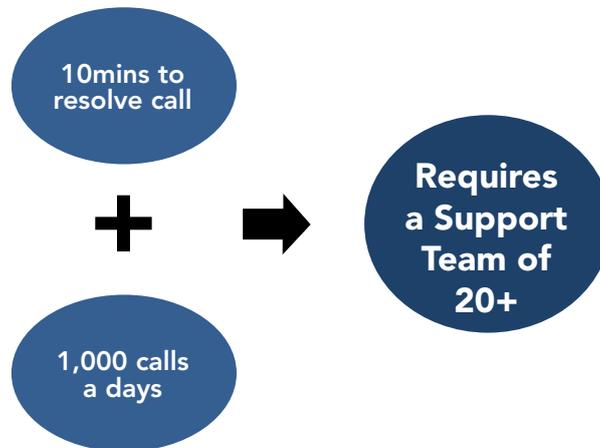
The average time it takes to deal with a call is ten minutes and the average number of incoming calls per day is one thousand, which means that the team needs around 20 members to handle demand.

Steering Team Example

Many corporations make use of Steering Teams in their drive to stay ahead of competitors, research future market trends, and plan for changes in legislation that will affect them. Organizations that operate in highly regulated sectors also use this type of team to consider the impact of new rulings on the business.

Steering Team Leader

In this scenario, you are the Business Development Executive of the water company. You have been an employee for two years. Your previous experience includes commercial legal expertise and management of deregulation in the leading telecommunications corporation. Your team's long-term objective is to identify the most profitable business opportunities that are available to the water company following the deregulation of their operations. The legislation removes the restrictions that previously meant that the organization could only sell water services.

The team also has a short-term objective to present a report on the potential opportunity and profitability of selling insurance to the water company's existing customer base of 14 million households.

Composition of Team

The Steering Team has some permanent members and some who have been brought in to look at specific issues. The permanent membership is made up of a senior person from each department within the company and the function of this group is to identify new business opportunities as described earlier.

In order to evaluate an opportunity, the team leader will need to bring in additional expertise from both inside and outside of the company.

For example, when investigating the possibility of selling insurance to its customer base the Steering Team would need to bring in representatives of:

- Customer Services Department
- IT Department
- Finance Department
- Regional Directors
- Marketing Department
- Law Firm
- Potential Partner Insurance Company
- Insurance Watchdog

This is a total of seventeen people as shown in the diagram below.
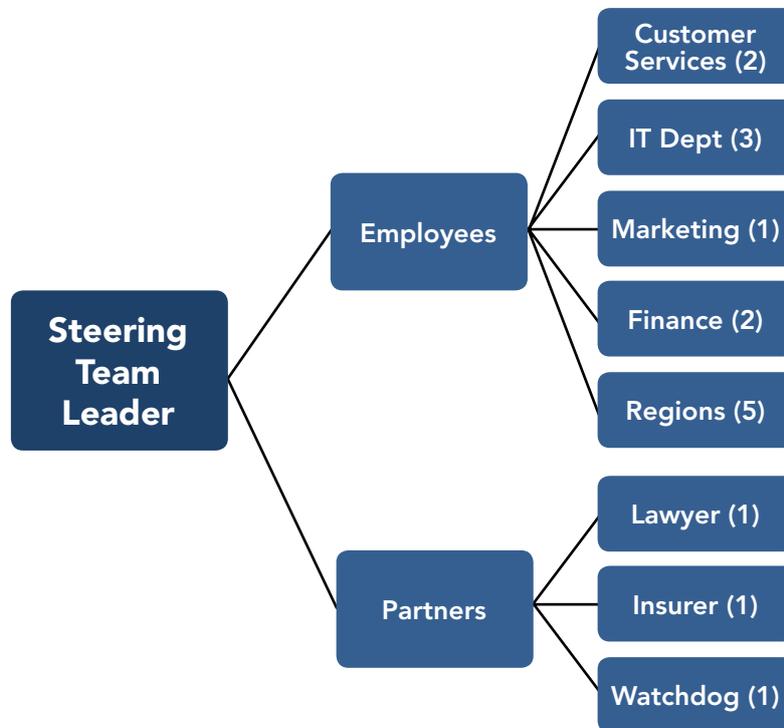
Each team member has his or her own responsibilities and career path, and even the permanent members of the team are only assigned to it on a part-time basis. Your team size of seventeen people is on the large side but it is necessary to have all the departments and partners represented who could be impacted by the decision to sell insurance. An informed decision simply cannot be made without involving all of these parties.

Leadership Theories

The subject of Leadership has been studied since antiquity. Literature on the topic reveals an evolving succession of theories. The earliest tend to focus on the character and personality of successful leaders, whilst later theories concentrate on what leaders actually do rather than on their innate qualities.

The earlier studies, which focused on the distinct qualities of how leaders behaved and the persona of individual leaders, are collectively known as 'Trait Theories.'

Early Trait Theories

These theories attempted to list the personal qualities associated with leadership and looked at the type of behaviors such individuals exhibited. Such studies saw these as the aspects that enabled leaders to influence others' behavior and get them to help their leader achieve his or her goal.

From these studies can be discerned six basic qualities that describe the behavioral traits of leaders:

1. **Honesty and integrity**—words such as 'trustworthy,' 'reliable,' and 'open' would be used to describe the leader.

2. **Emotional maturity**—describes a person who is well adjusted and does not suffer from severe psychological disorders.

3. **Motivation**—can be described as an intense desire to lead others to reach shared goals.

4. **Self-confidence**—depicts someone who shows an unwavering belief in one's self, one's ideas, and one's ability.

5. **Cognitive ability**—portrays an individual that is capable of exercising good judgment, shows strong analytical abilities, and is conceptually skilled.

6. **Achievement drive**—refers to the high level of effort, ambition, energy, and initiative that leaders exhibit.

There is also a seventh quality, 'Other,' which pulls together certain traits that were felt not to fit into the six listed above. These are such things as charisma, creativity, and flexibility, which are often used when describing a respected leader.

'Other' traits: **Charisma** **Creativity** **Flexibility**
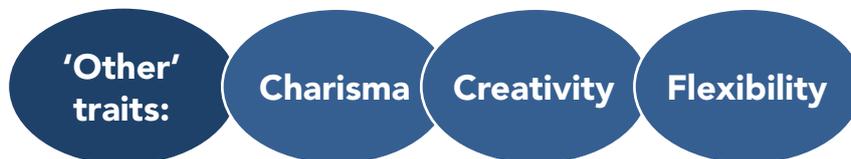
While it is true that some of the great political and military leaders of the past have shared these personal qualities, there are just as many exceptions. For example, three world-renowned military leaders of the Second World War illustrated a deficiency in at least one of the traits described above.

- Winston Churchill—the British wartime leader suffered from severe clinical depression.

- Josef Stalin—the Soviet leader could hardly be described as trustworthy, reliable, and open.

- Adolf Hitler—the German leader, among many other deficiencies, showed a lack of judgment when he went against the advice of almost all of his generals and chose to invade the Soviet Union, an act that was directly responsible for his ultimate defeat.

| Trait Theories | Make it an invalid theory for Management | Too many well-known Leaders lacked necessary traits! |

By simply selecting these three great leaders one can illustrate that trait theories do not stand up to scrutiny even in the context of political or military leadership, and are usually the product of wishful thinking and nationalistic hero worship.

KEY POINTS

✔ Early leadership theories tend to focus on the character and personality of successful leaders, whilst later theories concentrate on what leaders actually do.

✔ Trait theories do not stand up to scrutiny even in the context of political or military leadership

Leadership for Management

The need for effective leaders within organizations has led to theories and methodologies that rely on behaviors that can be learned rather than 'traits' that a person either does or does not have.

Managers are now expected to actively develop their leadership skills and to know how to adapt them to best accomplish the task at hand.

Team Leadership	Defines	Steers	& Guides	their team to best serve the organization

For the purpose of this eBook 'leadership' in the context of team building means defining, steering, and guiding your team members down the path that you believe will best serve the interests of the organization.

There are four practical leadership styles that you need to consider, whether you are a Customer Support Manager, Project Manager, or Steering Team Manager. You need to assess how adopting each style would benefit or hinder you in the role of team leader.

Practical Leadership Styles	→	Transactional

Transformational → Situational®

Leadership Continuum
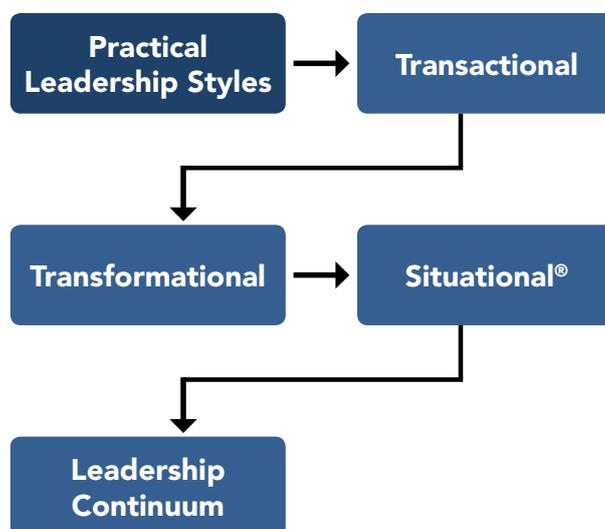
These practical leadership styles are:

- Transactional Leadership
- Transformational Leadership
- Situational Leadership
- The Leadership Continuum

The most important aspect of being a leader is deciding how much freedom to give your team. Too much, and they may not achieve their targets. Too little, and you will restrict their personal development and job satisfaction.

There is no easy answer to this problem and the best course of action is to consider each case on its merits with a clear appreciation of the risks involved of giving too much autonomy.

KEY POINTS

- ✔ Managers are expected to actively develop their leadership skills and to know how to adapt them to best accomplish the task at hand.
- ✔ There are four practical leadership styles you should be aware of: Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Situational Leadership and The Leadership Continuum.

Transactional Leadership

The fundamental requirement for this style of leadership is that a 'transaction' exists between the leader and the team members. This transaction has two aspects:

1. It involves the organization paying wages to team members in return for effort and compliance.
2. The leader/manager has the right to discipline an employee if their work does not meet an appropriate standard.

The power of transactional leaders comes from their formal authority and level of responsibility within the organization. Such leaders are primarily concerned with estab-

lishing the criteria for rewarding team members for good performance. This is referred to as 'Contingent Reward,' e.g. praise. Team members are rewarded for their efforts—for example for completing set goals on time, or in recognition of handling a difficult situation well.
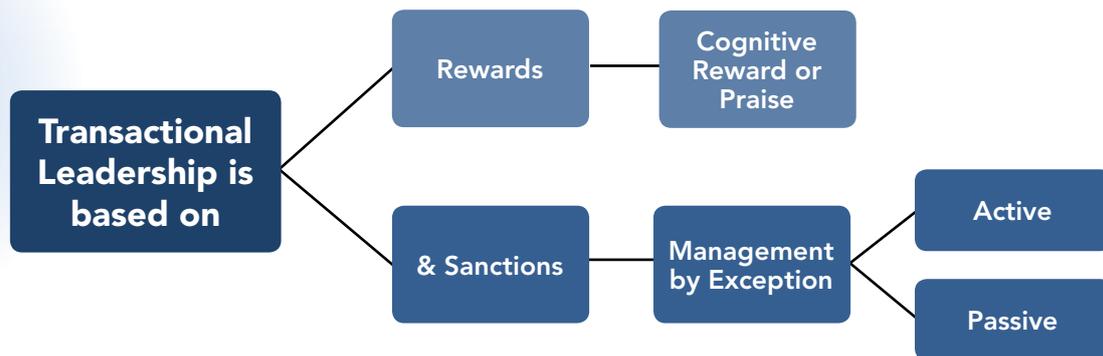
In situations where the team member's performance is below the acceptable standard, you will need to apply appropriate sanctions. This is known as 'Management by Exception.' This corrective action can either be active or passive. If you adopt an active sanction then you are continually monitoring the team member's performance and correcting any errors as they occur. Alternatively you can use a passive sanction where you wait for issues to come up before fixing the problems.

If you adopt this style of leadership then you will focus your activities on the processes of supervision, organization, and group performance. You will be concerned with efficiency rather than forward-thinking ideas. You will have to be comfortable with being authoritative and always telling your members what to do.

This type of leadership makes certain assumptions about your team. Firstly, that they are only motivated by reward or punishment; they have no self-motivation. Secondly, that they know from the outset that they must obey your instructions without question and expect to be closely monitored and controlled.

Equipped with these facts you will be aware that this style of leadership is only appropriate in certain situations.
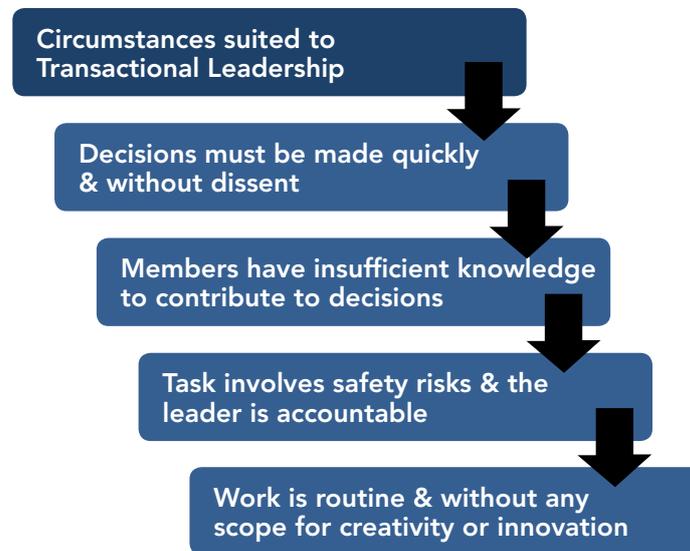
The situations where transactional leadership is appropriate are where:

- Decisions must be made quickly and without dissent
- Subordinates do not have sufficient knowledge to contribute to decisions
- The work involves safety risks and the leader will be held accountable
- The work is routine and there is no scope for creativity or innovation

If you find yourself in such a situation then you may want to adopt this style of leadership.

Applied to the Team Examples

Looking at our three example teams you can easily ascertain where transactional leadership will be appropriate and where it is counter-productive to the team's objective.

Development Team

The nature of this team requires its members to use their own knowledge and skills to solve the issues raised during the development cycle of the new web-based systems. They are also by character self-motivated and are expected to and want to work independently of the team leader in how they deliver the tasks and goals they have been set by the project manager.

As project manager you also expect considerable input into discussions as part of the decision-making process from all team members, often seeking forward-thinking and innovative approaches to problems you come across during the development process.

These characteristics of the project team make it impossible for you as manager to adopt a transactional style leadership.

Customer Support Team

As Customer Support Manager you may find that many of the benefits of the Transactional Leadership style suit your team structure. The nature of the work is often repetitive and the vast majority of tasks require the members to follow a predefined path, which leaves little or no room for creativity and innovation.

Your main focus is to ensure that an acceptable level of service is maintained and you will be continually monitoring the call statistics. By its very nature of continual observation you are adopting 'active management by exception' in your approach to leadership.

Throughout the day you, as well as the team members, can see the total number of calls received and how well you are meeting your targets. The software enables you to closely monitor and control your team. It also reports on how well each member is executing their role, so you are quickly able to identify anyone who is underperforming and praise those who are working well.

Consistent underperformers usually leave the team of their own accord quite quickly, so sanctions do not often have to be instigated. This is because other team members will be constantly aware of a poor performer and may react negatively towards this person, as they have to work harder to compensate for a poor performer; if they don't, the whole team suffers. Motivation comes as a result of not wanting to let the team down rather than any personal sense of achievement.

This is one of the reasons why most call centers having a high rate of absenteeism and staff turnover. The latter also reflects the fact that the Customer Support Team is one of the few workgroups within the organization that will actually dismiss people during their probationary period if the team leader feels that they are not able to perform. It can also indicate that some people resent being treated in an autocratic way.

One reason for these problems in customer support teams arises from the stressful and unrewarding nature of the job. As manager you can try to counterbalance this by providing an opportunity for some autonomy by letting the members decide who works which shifts (within strict guidelines to maintain service quality) and who has what break and lunch times. This small freedom in an otherwise highly structured environment can do a lot to boost morale.

Transactional Leadership		
Development Team	**Customer Support**	**Steering Team**
Unsuitable as task requires self-motivation & innovation	**Routine work & performance statistics suit this leader style**	**Inappropriate as members highly motivated decision makers**

Steering Team

Since all members of the Steering Team have been selected for their ability to contribute their knowledge to benefit the investigation and the organization, they are by their very nature self-motivated and innovative thinkers and decision makers.

The responsive nature of the transactional leader is out of place in this type of team, and the team's very existence questions the current organizational composition through its need to think innovatively. In some instances as manager of the Steering Team you may need to use transactional leadership to impose a decision on a relatively minor issue to avoid wasting time trying to reach a consensus.

KEY POINTS

✔ The power of transactional leaders comes from their formal authority and level of responsibility within the organization.

✔ If you adopt this style of leadership then you will focus your activities on the processes of supervision, organization, and group performance.

✔ The situations where transactional leadership is appropriate are where: decisions must be made quickly and without dissent, subordinates do not have sufficient knowledge to contribute to decisions, the work involves safety risks and the leader will be held accountable or where the work is routine and there is no scope for creativity or innovation.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is based on the ability of the leader to motivate followers through their charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. J.M. Burns first described it in the context of political leaders as a process in which 'leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation.'

Burns showed that the leader encourages followers to come up with new and unique ways to challenge the status quo and to alter the environment to support being successful. Such leaders enhance motivation, morale, and performance by creating a sense of identity and self to the project for followers, as well as a collective identity with the organization.

These leaders offer a role model that inspires, interests, and challenges their followers to take greater ownership for their work. A transformational leader understands the strengths and weaknesses of each follower and assigns tasks that enhance each individual's performance.
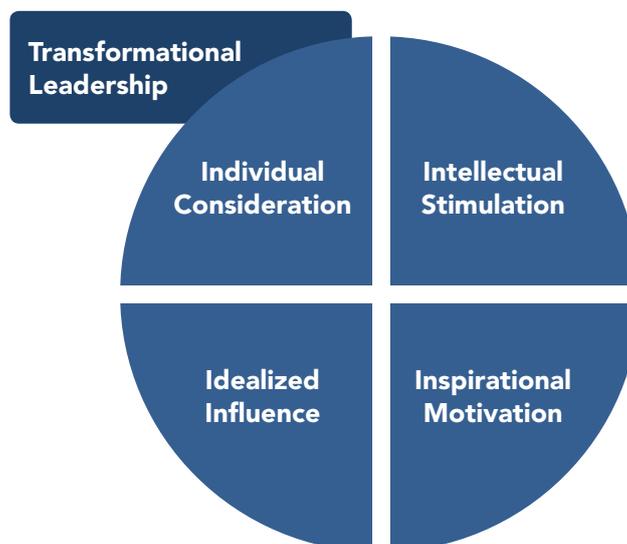
As a result, followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect for the leader, which means they are willing to put in whatever effort is required to achieve the goal, not just to gain benefit for themselves. There are four elements of transformational leadership:

1. **Individualized Consideration**—as leader you mentor your team, rewarding creativity and innovation. You actively listen to concerns and needs, offering support and empathy. You treat and challenge members according to their talents and knowledge, recognizing their contribution.

   You maintain open communications and empower your members to make decisions and support them as they are implemented. This helps member self-development and their intrinsic motivation.

2. **Intellectual Stimulation**—your leadership encourages innovation, looks for better ways to execute tasks, and challenges previous assumptions, thereby nurturing independent thinking. You encourage new ideas without criticism and see the unexpected as a learning opportunity.

3. **Inspirational Motivation**—this forms the foundation of your transformational leadership in the promotion to your members of a consistent vision or mission, which is so compelling and understandable that members know what they want from every interaction.

   It offers them a set of values that provide a sense of meaning and challenge that is motivational. Members work enthusiastically as a team and are committed to invest considerable effort in order to attain their tasks, having a firm belief in their abilities.

4. **Idealized Influence**—as leader your influence is based on members seeing you as a role model they want to emulate. They view you as someone who practices what you preach. This gains members' trust and respect, as they see that your ethical conduct places their needs over your own. This shows that you and your team strive to attain organizational goals.

Transformational leadership is something that many people aspire to, and the idea of being a truly inspirational leader is very appealing. The problem is that it can be difficult to implement in a competitive and unforgiving workplace where team members are working to tight deadlines and where any mistakes would have serious consequences.

The prevailing culture of your organization and the extent to which it values the development of managerial leadership skills will affect the practical application of this leadership style.

Applied to the Team Examples

The truth is that whilst this style of leadership is the subject of countless leadership courses and seminars, its practical application is very limited. Most managers will be judged on this quarter's performance figures or whether a particular project has been delivered on time and within budget.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Transformational Leadership</td></tr>
<tr><td>Development Team</td><td>Customer Support</td><td>Steering Team</td></tr>
<tr><td>50+% of team outside your direct influence</td><td>Unsuitable as tasks are routine & prescribed</td><td>Suits its purpose of investigating innovative & revolutionary ideas</td></tr>
</table>

Development Team

As a manager of the Development Team you will be able to utilize some of the aspects of transformational leadership, but you will be limited by the fact that not all of your team come from within the IT department—25% are seconded to you, and 38% come from outside the organization.

You may be able to assist in others achieving their personal goals but you will not be their only role model. As project manager, your performance will almost certainly be assessed in terms of the successful and timely completion of the project rather than from a staff development standpoint.

Customer Support Team

The nature of the routine and stressful work, plus the lack of opportunity for personal aspirations to be attained makes it difficult to see how this style of leadership can be incorporated into your Customer Support Team.

With virtually no promotion prospects, members see little opportunity or requirement for personal development, so adopting this style of leadership would be counterproductive for you as manager. This may seem harsh but it does reflect the reality of many low-level and poorly paid jobs.

Steering Team

As manager of the Steering Team your whole raison d'être is to investigate innovative and often revolutionary ideas, which may change the direction of the organization. For example:

- The sale of expertise to developing countries
- The setting up of a separate software company
- Breaking into new markets, e.g. insurance
- Acquisition of other utility companies
- Acquisition of suppliers, etc.

It is not difficult to imagine transformational leadership working well in the environment of a steering team as all four of the elements are both necessary and desirable if team members are to fully explore radical changes and approaches to the current business model. The majority of, if not all, members see their participation in your team as furthering their self-development and career progression.

KEY POINTS

✔ Transformational leadership is based on the ability of the leader to offer a role model that inspires their followers to take greater ownership for their work.

✔ A transformational leader understands the strengths and weaknesses of each follower and assigns tasks that enhance each individual's performance.

✔ There are four elements of transformational leadership: Individualized Consideration, Intellectual Stimulation, Inspirational Motivation and Idealized Influence.

✔ It can be difficult to implement in a competitive and unforgiving workplace where team members are working to tight deadlines.

Situational Leadership®

In contrast to the static nature of the environment required for both transactional and transformational leadership, you may find the ethos behind Situational Leadership® better suited to the needs of your day-to-day team management.

Situational Leadership® is a registered trademark of the Center for Leadership Studies, Inc.—**www.situational.com**

The Situational Leadership® model was developed in the early 1980s by Ken Blanchard and Paul Hersey. This model states that there is no single style of leadership that is effective in all circumstances.
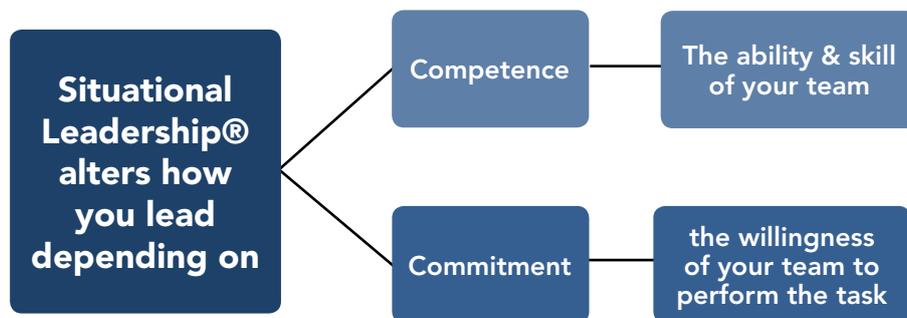
The most successful leaders and managers adapt their leadership style depending on the 'competence' and 'commitment' of the group, team, or individual being led.

As a manager you would alter your style to suit the ability of your team whether high or low (Competence) combined with the willingness or motivation of the team to do the task (Commitment), which is also either high or low. This offers you four possible combinations of what the model refers to as Maturity Levels (M1–4). These are listed below, together with a brief explanation about how a team at this level operates.

- **Maturity Level 1 (M1)**—Low Competence/Skill & High Commitment/Will
  Your team would lack the ability to do the task you set them, but the members would be enthusiastic and willing to overcome this in order to complete the task.

- **Maturity Level 2 (M2)**—Low Competence/Skill & Low Commitment/Will
  At this level your team would still lack the ability to do the task, but the members would display no enthusiasm or willingness to overcome this lack of knowledge.

- **Maturity Level 3 (M3)**—High Competence/Skill & Low Commitment/Will
  This team is capable of performing the task but shows no willingness to actually do it.

- **Maturity Level 4 (M4)**—High Competence/Skill & High Commitment/Will
  This is a desirable team, as it is both able to complete the task and displays an enthusiasm and willingness to do so.

Within these four options at any one time, whether you look at the maturity levels vertically or horizontally, there is always a constant. On the vertical axis the level of skill is constant and on the horizontal axis the level of willingness is constant, whether you look at the top or bottom pair.

These Maturity Levels are also task-specific. So if you ask a team that normally has a maturity level M4 (High Skill / High Will) to perform a task it do not have the skills for it will have a maturity level M1 (Low Skill / High Will) for that particular task, and you will have to adapt your leadership accordingly.
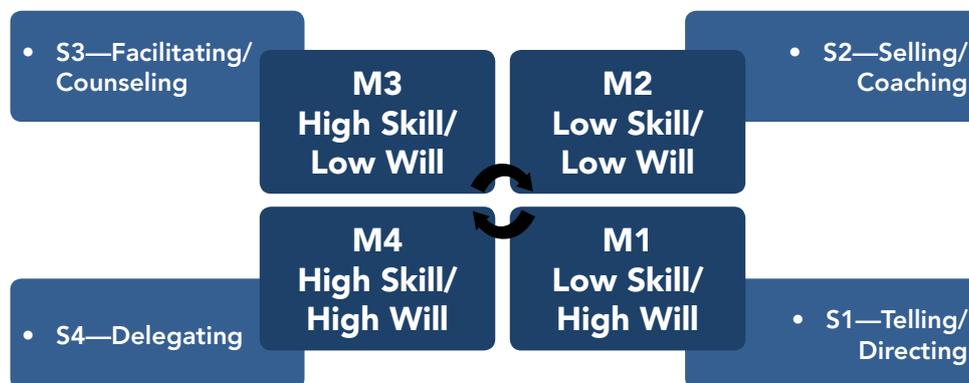
For each 'M' (Maturity) level there is a most effective leadership style you can adopt. This style not only suits the team or person you are managing but the task, role, or function that is required. The Situational Leadership® model suggests that there are four leadership styles (S1 to S4), which map onto the maturity levels (M1 to M4) of the team respectively.

- **Leadership Style S1**—Telling and Directing for M1 (Low Skill & High Will)
  To successfully manage this type of team you harness the team's enthusiasm to overcome their lack of knowledge. You would need to give explicit instructions

throughout the task, telling your members exactly what their roles are, plus how and when to accomplish the task.

- **Leadership Style S2**—Selling and Coaching for M2 (Low Skill & Low Will)
  With this type of team you need to 'sell the task' and actively communicate with the members to provide the necessary information. You must provide the direction and the emotional support that will influence the team sufficiently to buy into the process, and be motivated to complete it.

- **Leadership Style S3**—Facilitating and Counseling for M3 (High Skill / Low Will)
  Managing this team requires you to focus more on the relationship, sharing the decision-making and motivating the team to accomplish the task. Your team possesses the necessary skills but lacks the willingness to actually do it.

- **Leadership Style S4**—Delegating for M4 (High Skill / High Will)
  Your role with this team is to monitor progress, allowing the members to use their ability and enthusiasm to manage the process and decision-making in order to complete the task.

Applied to the Team Examples

You can see that leadership styles S1 and S2 are best suited to situations where the focus is on getting the task done. But if your circumstances are more concerned with developing team members' abilities to work independently, leadership styles S3 and S4 are the ones you need to adopt.

| Adapt Your Style to the: | Team | Role | Task |

For each of our team examples you would adopt the leadership style best suited to its function and situation.

Development Team

For this team, leadership style S4-M4 would be most appropriate as the team is well motivated and all of the team members are keen to add another successful project to their resumes.

Your role as manager is mainly one of monitoring, but in some instances or for certain individuals you may need to alter to S1-M1 if the skill levels require such a change. For example, you could be asked to join another project team that is mired in problems for a few weeks. You might then ask a competent member of you team to stand in for you, but whilst they are technically skilled they lack the experience of project management.

Situational Leadership®

Development Team	Customer Support	Steering Team
In most cases adopt S4-M4 as your team is highly skilled & motivated	Alternate between S2-M2 & S3-M3 to suit members' experience	Use style S4-M4 as your team is highly skilled & motivated

Customer Support Team

As Customer Support Manager you will have to be more adaptive in your leadership style as in most instances it will relate more to the individual than the task. You will probably find that for the majority of your time you oscillate between styles S2-M2 with your newer members who have low skill and little motivation, and style S3-M3 as you try to ensure your more experienced members participate, and try to motivate them to perform well.

Steering Team

Your management style for the Steering Team is almost certainly S4-M4 as your whole team comprises highly skilled and knowledgeable individuals who are all extremely self-motivated. These individuals need you to encourage and promote creativity to ensure that innovative and sound business decisions result from the team's activities.

Situational Leadership® shows you that your team will be most successful when you adapt your leadership style to suit the team and situation. There is no one style that is optimal for you to use all the time. As an effective leader you need to be flexible and adapt yourself to the situation.
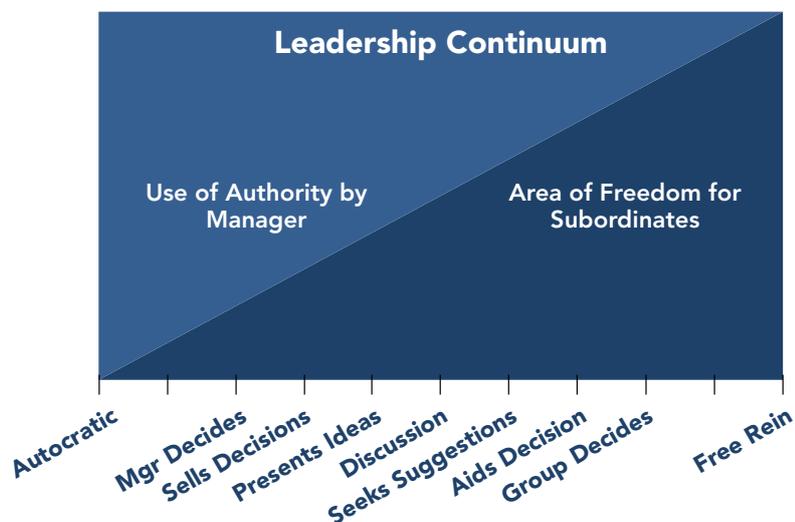

KEY POINTS

✔ The Situational Leadership® model states that there is no single style of leadership that is effective in all circumstances.

✔ It suggests that you should alter your leadership style to suit the ability and motivation of the team to do the task.

The Leadership Continuum

The final approach you can use is to ensure that your leadership arises out of the information you know about the task and members of your team. This approach is similar to Situational Leadership® in that it does not see leadership as a static state, but one that alters along a continuum so that your behavior best suits the situation you are dealing with.

In 1958 Tannenbaum and Schmidt wrote of the Leadership Continuum for the first time. It describes a continuum of possible leadership behavior available to you as a manager, along which many leadership styles may be placed. This offers you flexibility to adapt your leadership style to suit the situations you face every day at work.

Leadership Continuum

Use of Authority by Manager   Area of Freedom for Subordinates

Autocratic   Mgr Decides   Sells Decisions   Presents Ideas   Discussion   Seeks Suggestions   Aids Decision   Group Decides   Free Rein

The continuum shows a range of actions that relate to the degree of authority used by the team leader and to the amount of freedom available to your members in arriving at decisions.

At one extreme there is 'autocratic,' often referred to as 'Boss-Centered' leadership, where you as manager would have total authority to make decisions and announce these to your team. This is unlikely to exist in your workplace because your decisions will frequently have to be made after consultation with senior management or shareholders, sometimes both.

As a manager or leader you are characterized according to the degree of control that you retain in the decision-making process. The four styles of leadership are known as 'Tells' (for the autocratic leader), then 'Sells', followed by 'Consults,' and finally 'Delegates.'

**Tells** **Sells** **Consults** **Delegates**
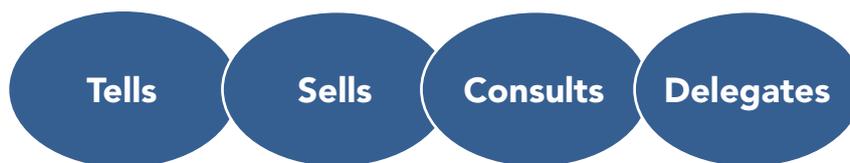
You may work in an environment that requires you to resolve problems and inform your team of what they must do to address these problems without any consultation. In this instance you would be using the 'Tells' style of leadership within the continuum. Alternatively, your team may need to be persuaded by you to accept your decision before they will act. In this case you would adopt a 'Sells' style.

As the situation you work in evolves, your leadership style may move further along the continuum and you will be able to alter your style to that of 'Consults.' Your style becomes that of a facilitator: you present the problem to your team to resolve and the decision is jointly owned. The final style on the leadership continuum is known as 'Delegates.' This is where you define the framework your team works within to resolve a problem without interference.

The three factors that will help your decide which leadership style to adopt along the continuum are your own personality, the team itself, and the environment you are working in. Your own values, knowledge, and experience will influence your selection of a style.

The second factor affecting your chosen style will be the composition, character, distribution of skills, knowledge, and attitude of your members. You need to ask yourself whether or not your members are willing and able to accept responsibility for decision making. You will also need to assess how well they identify with and comprehend your organization's goals.
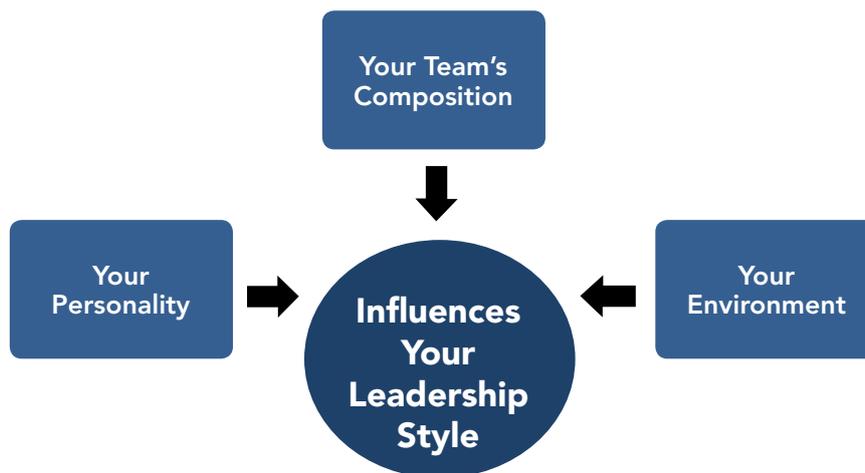
The third and final factor is the environment you find yourself working in. This is made up of three aspects: the type and ethos of your organization, the nature of the problem you face, and the timescales within which it needs to be resolved.

According to the continuum theory, as leaders become more successful they learn to recognize and then portray the most appropriate behavior to suit the circumstances they face.

Applying this Style to the Team Examples

The most likely leadership style you would adopt along the continuum for each of our team examples would be:

Development Team

Your selected leadership style would be heavily dictated by the experience of your team. With a more experienced team you would be able to adopt a 'Consults' style where you present the problem and act as a facilitator in discussions to arrive at a jointly owned decision.

With a less experienced team you would adapt your style to 'Sells,' persuading your members to accept your decision using your more extensive experience to break down their resistance and hesitancy resulting from a lack of knowledge.

Continuum Leadership

Development Team	Customer Support	Steering Team
'Consults' & 'Sells' most used styles	Most frequent style is 'Tells', sometimes 'Sells'	Oscilates between the 'Delegates' & 'Consults' styles

Customer Support Team

As manager of this team you are most likely going to lead using a 'Tells' style. This is because you will identify a problem (often from reviewing the call statistics), come up with a solution, and then announce to your members what they need to do. Your members will not be involved in the decision-making process or the timescale.

At other times you may be able to adapt to a 'Sells' style where you persuade your team to accept your decision and act accordingly.

Steering Team

The nature and composition of your team allows you as manager to use a leadership style of 'Delegates.' The investigation of the Steering Team defines the parameters your team must work within, and you need to allow them to work within those limits without interference.

Often within this type of team you will have some sub-groups that require more guidance. In these instances you would adopt a 'Consults' style where you present the problem to your team and facilitate a shared solution.

KEY POINTS

✔ This approach suggests that leadership behavior should change to best suit the situation you are dealing with.

✔ The four styles of leadership are known as 'Tells' (for the autocratic leader), then 'Sells', followed by 'Consults,' and finally 'Delegates.'

✔ The three factors that will help your decide which leadership style to adopt along the continuum are your own personality, the team itself, and the environment you are working in.

Summary

Over the last 40 years, dozens of leadership theories have been published by academics or by management consultancies looking to create a proprietary leadership method from which they can then make money. As a result, there is a huge body of work available on leadership, much of which makes the claim that this is the latest approach, the most scientific approach, the most effective approach, and so on.

If you decide to study the available information on leadership, then you should do so knowing that most of what you read is simply a rehash of existing theories with some unique selling point or 'spin' grafted on in order to turn it into a saleable method.

In addition, most books on leadership can't resist the temptation to deal with this topic as if every manager really did have the potential to become the next Steve Jobs or Bill Gates. Whilst this might make for a thrilling read, it is usually quite difficult for you to apply any of the advice given unless you're on the board of directors or are working for a small organization where you really do have a lot of influence and authority.

For you as a manager, the most important aspect of your leadership is deciding how much freedom to give your team. Too much, and they may not achieve their targets, too little, and you will restrict their personal development and job satisfaction which can cause problems with motivation and productivity.

There is no easy answer to this problem and the best course of action is to consider each case on its merits with a clear appreciation of the risks involved of giving too much autonomy.

Other Free Resources

The Free Management eBooks website offers you over 100 free resources for your own professional development. Our eBooks, Checklists, and Templates are designed to help you with the management issues you face every day. They can be downloaded in PDF, Kindle, ePub, or Doc formats for use on your iPhone, iPad, laptop or desktop.

eBooks—Our free management eBooks cover everything from accounting principles to business strategy. Each one has been written to provide you with the practical skills you need to succeed as a management professional.

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Checklists—When you are working under pressure or doing a task for the first time, it is easy to overlook something or forget to ask a key question. These management checklists will help you to break down complex management tasks into small control-lable steps.

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