

Leadership Styles

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As Leaders, we know that we have responsibilities to balance:

- the achieving of set tasks,
- the development of a group of people,
- the meeting of the needs of individuals.

That is what a leader has to do. Exactly how a Leader goes about these responsibilities is often called the leadership style. There is not one standard, correct style for all leaders in all circumstances at all times. Any group or individual behaves differently. Tasks are different. Each leader has to recognise those differences and adapt according to the situation. Working in this way is sometimes called situational leadership. This means using the most appropriate style to suit the people and circumstances at particular time. People's behaviour depends a great deal on their knowledge, experience and how they see themselves, both generally and in relation to a task. There are four standard possibilities which can be identified:

- 1 people who are *unable* to do a task and who are *unwilling* to have a go
- 2 people who are *unable* to do a task, but are *willing* to have a go
- 3 people who are *able* to do a task, but who are *unwilling* to do so, either through lack of confidence or lack of motivation
- 4 people who are *able* to do a task, and who are *willing* to get on with it.

It is necessary for the leader to prepare for any particular task that's about to be introduced or undertaken, by knowing exactly what the situation is likely to be. The task might be something as simple as introducing a new game or practical skill, or as complex as planning an expedition or major project. We should note that:

- ability can be improved by giving experience, knowledge, and skills;
- willingness can be improved by giving encouragement and motivation.

If we can describe the situation properly, then we can work out the most appropriate style of leadership:

- 1 **Telling (directive)** - the leader gives specific step-by step instructions, and keeps close supervision while those instructions are followed out .
- 2 **Selling (persuading)** - the leader continues to give specific instructions and to keep supervision, but also explains reasons, invites suggestions, and supports progress.
- 3 **Sharing (consulting)** - the leader actively encourages members to give suggestions and try them out, and shares many responsibilities with them.
- 4 **Delegating** - the leader passes responsibility for problem-solving and decision-making to members, even if keeping a monitoring watching brief.

As a group or individual grows in knowledge, experience, and confidence, they adapt their own behaviour. The leader must recognise this, and adapt the leadership style. Alternatively, sometimes a group or individual may appear to go backwards, perhaps as a result of stress or a change of task or environment. Again, the leader should always be sensitive, and adapt to the new situation. The same principles apply whether we are leading a group of young people or a team of other adults. There is no single style which is consistently ideal. Of course, if everything else remained static we should always be trying to share and delegate as much as possible. However situations do change, and the leadership style must be adapted to be appropriate.