

FACT SHEET 2 – LEADERSHIP STYLES

There is no one right way to lead or manage that is effective in all situations. There are many leadership styles and a good leader will find they switch instinctively between styles according to the people, task or situation they are dealing with at any one time.

Choosing the most effective approach for you requires you to appreciate and consider;

- the skill levels and experience of your group
- the work involved either new, routine or creative
- the organisational environment (stable, changing, conservative or adventurous)
- your own preferred or natural style

An examination of the leadership styles indicates that there are many styles to choose from but the most consistent comprise the following attributes:

1. Directing or Telling Style.

In this 'autocratic' style the leader provides specific instructions, closely supervises the implementation of the instructions with the minimal amount of consultation or interaction with the group members.

The Directing/Telling style is most effective in dangerous situations where safety is paramount and the leadership has to be direct, firm and without ambiguity. A leader of a surf life saving group patrolling the beach during heavy seas will need to be very direct in leading a surf rescue team to help rescue swimmers caught in the surf. A pistol shooting coach will be very direct in her instructions when teaching a group of 15-16 year olds to shoot pistols on a range for the first time.

2. Problem Solving or Selling Style.

In this style the leader identifies and clarifies the goals, identifies any problems, seeks input and suggestions from others but still directs the group by choosing the best solution.

The Problem Solving/Selling style is generally used where a broad strategy and /or goal have been set by the organisation and the group's task is to determine the best way of implementing the ideas. A coach of a netball team may seek input from her players as to options and strategies to play an opposition team that they are to meet in the finals after having played them three times during the season. The players discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of the opposition players and their style and then the coach determines the strategy for the game.

3. Democratic or Participative Style.

This style requires the leader to be consultative and seek consensus and high levels of collaboration in establishing and implementing the task. There is a focus on team work including organising, supporting and developing the people in the group.

The Democratic/Participative style is often used in situations where the group is developing creative ideas and concepts such as a marketing strategy or planning social events. For example, Mary is the PR/Marketing coordinator for her basketball association and has established a small group to help devise a marketing and communications plan for the sport.

Mary encourages the group to think creatively about how to get the best PR and marketing for their sport including stories and different approaches for print, TV and radio mediums. The group throws around ideas and Mary encourages them to think 'outside the box'. They discuss how they might use players, angles for stories etc and eventually develop a plan that they think will work and can be achieved with their involvement as a group.

4. Delegating Style

The leader empowers members of the group to make decisions and take action in areas where they have expertise and is simply kept informed of decisions.

The Delegating style is often used by establishing committees or working groups where the task is clearly identified and the group is free to act to achieve the task. For example, the Board of a State Hockey Association has established a Development Committee to help drive grass roots development, including programs for juniors and clubs. The Board has developed a clear terms of reference for the committee, has called for nominations and appoints the committee and appoints Clare as the chair of the committee. Clare leads the group to develop strategies and help implement programs in conjunction with clubs. Clare informs the Board of the committee's progress each three months and takes recommendations to the Board when seeking approval for new programs or resources.

All of these styles are used frequently in sporting situations and all can be very effective based on the situation.