

Scoring and Understanding Your Leadership Style

What is Leadership?

The concept of leadership seems familiar enough. Yet defining the word precisely can prove challenging, perhaps because leadership is a concept rather than a thing. You cannot see it, or hear it, or touch it.

How, then, can you begin to define leadership?

One good way to construct a definition is to list those things you must observe to know that leadership is occurring. To build a definition from the ground up, think of an empty stage. What do you need to place there for leadership to occur? Surely you need a leader. At the same time that you put a leader on stage, you must also put a follower there, for a leader can exist only in relation to a follower. What must occur between the two actors if leadership is present? The leader must influence the behavior of the follower. In what way? A leader influences a follower to achieve a predetermined goal. Now all the conditions are in place, and you can observe leadership in action.

What is Style?

Style can be defined as the way a person usually behaves when he or she is able to do things his or her own way. Often you can predict how someone whom you know well will behave in a given situation. Your hunches usually prove accurate because you have already observed a certain pattern in the other person's behavior. For example, think of someone with whom you work every day. You can probably predict how that person would act if he or she were in charge of a project. Your behavior as a leader follows recognizable patterns, too. *What's My Leadership Style?* Provides you with an opportunity to increase your awareness of your own behavior patterns, helping you to understand how your style manifests itself in the way you lead others.

Leadership + Style = Leadership Style

Put leadership and style together, and you get a definition of leadership style: *A person's unique way of influencing others to work toward goals.* Different people have different ways of influencing others. One leader may characteristically influence others to achieve goals by appealing to their sense of fun. Another leader may simply direct others to get down to business. Yet another leader may set out a detailed "road-map" for others to follow, while still another leader may provide encouragement and support as others work toward a goal. Your responses to the items in *What's My Leadership Style?* Reveal your own style of influencing others. Research demonstrates that style can best be understood by measuring the extent to which a person's typical behavior demonstrates *assertiveness* and *expressiveness*. Because we are measuring assertiveness and expressiveness in this assessment, we call these broad categories of behavior dimensions. Assertiveness describes the degree to which a person's behavior is forceful or directive. Highly assertive people like to take control of situations while less assertive people may be more comfortable in less visible roles. Expressiveness describes the degree to which a person's behavior is emotionally responsive or expressive. Highly expressive people like to show their emotions and from interpersonal relationships while less expressive people tend to keep their emotions to themselves. Combining the two dimensions produces four styles.

What's My Leadership Style? Response and Scoring Form

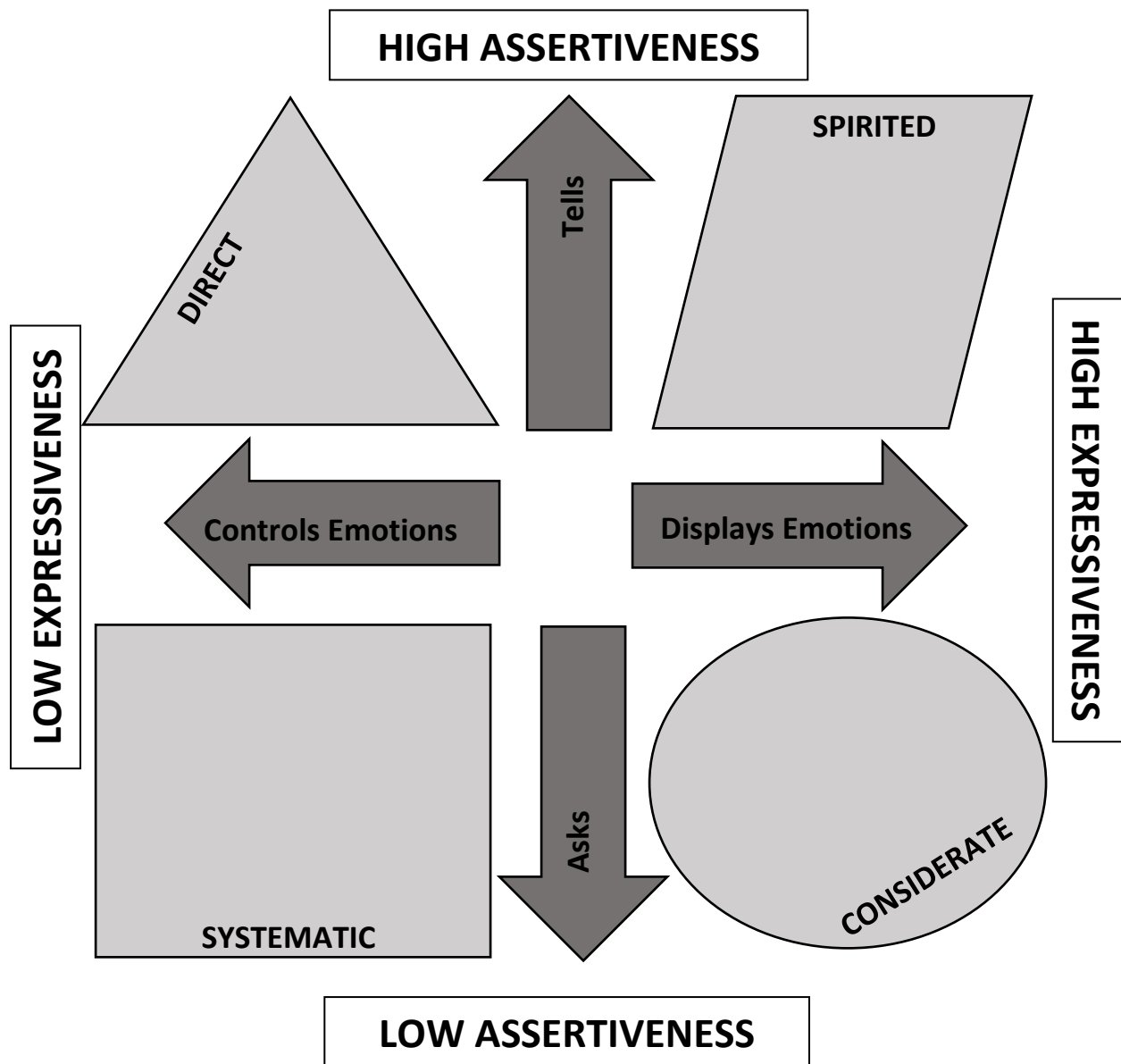
Directions: For each pair of leadership actions below, assign a total of 5 points by dividing the points between both actions. Use any combination that adds up to 5 points, but DO NOT USE FRACTIONS.

When getting others to work towards a goal, I am likely to...

		Equal to 5			
1.	Generate excitement.			Act decisively.	1.
2.	Take charge.			Offer guidance.	2.
3.	Provide encouragement.			Provide structure.	3.
4.	Point out omissions.			Seek everyone's input.	4.
5.	Emphasize goals.			Outline a sequence of steps.	5.
6.	Promote positive thinking.			Push to beat the competition.	6.
7.	Maintain a comfortable work space.			Get down to business.	7.
8.	Define tasks.			Require speed.	8.
9.	Direct others.			Create a free environment.	9.
10.	Listen to suggestions.			Provide challenges.	10.
11.	Plan things carefully.			Focus on the deadline.	11.
12.	Create a sense of urgency.			Spark creative thinking.	12.
13.	Offer inspiration.			Promote cooperation.	13.
14.	Monitor progress closely.			Improvise along the way.	14.
15.	Adopt a familiar approach.			Brainstorm new approaches.	15.
16.	Make it fun.			Set high standards.	16.
17.	Rally team spirit.			Show appreciation.	17.
18.	Demonstrate enthusiasm.			Analyze the situation first.	18.
19.	Request accuracy.			Foster teamwork.	19.
20.	Promote logical thinking.			Help out.	20.
Totals for Each Style					
Spirited			Direct		
Considerate			Systematic		

What's My Leadership Style? Response and Scoring Form Part 2

Directions: Copy the totals for each style from the previous page into the chart below. This is your leadership style profile.



Interpreting Your Score

Each of the four styles can be described based on the degree of assertiveness or expressiveness used.

Direct	High assertiveness, low expressiveness, leads by taking charge
Spirited	High assertiveness, high expressiveness, leads by inspiring
Considerate	Low assertiveness, high expressiveness, leads by building group harmony
Systematic	Low assertiveness, low expressiveness, leads by planning carefully

People generally develop a leadership style they are most comfortable using. That is their dominant style. Take a look at your Leadership Style Profile. Did you score higher than 16 on any style? If so, you probably prefer to use this style whenever you can. Did you score below 10 on any styles? These are probably leadership styles that you do not use often. Some people have one clearly dominant style. Those people generally use that style to the exclusion of others. Other people may use a variety of styles. They would have a relatively even distribution of points in their Leadership Style Profiles.

Is There a Best Leadership Style?

In a word, no. Current theory suggests that different situations require different leadership styles. In fact, the most important take-away from this assessment is this: *The most effective leaders are the ones who adapt their styles to the requirements of the situation.* Leadership Style Effectiveness shows the strengths and weaknesses of different leadership styles depending on the situation.

Direct • Produces quick results • Gets people moving • Takes charge no matter how challenging MOST EFFECTIVE in crisis situations or rapidly changing situations in which bold action and quick decisions are needed. LESS EFFECTIVE in situations requiring careful planning and in situations requiring tact and sensitivity to other's feelings.	Spirited • Inspires others to develop fresh, new approaches • Create a fun atmosphere by acting spontaneously • Rallies support MOST EFFECTIVE in situations in which people need to be motivated to develop fresh innovative ideas. LESS EFFECTIVE in urgent situations in which deadlines must be met and in situations in which long-term planning is vital.
Systematic • Makes decisions based on facts • Asks for specific details • Is analytical MOST EFFECTIVE in situations calling for careful, long-term planning, accuracy and objective analysis. LESS EFFECTIVE in situations requiring quick decision-making or flexibility because of ambiguity or interpersonal conflict.	Considerate • Listens actively • Works cohesively • Considers others' feelings MOST EFFECTIVE in sensitive situations requiring patience, tact, and diplomacy. LESS EFFECTIVE in situations requiring quick adjustments because of unforeseen changes and situations in which the need to take charge of others is crucial.

Too Much of a Good Thing?

You probably find yourself most comfortable leading others in those situations in which your dominant style is most effective. But sometimes you may need to move outside of your comfort zone so that you can adapt your style to the demands of a particular situation. Otherwise, your leadership style strengths may become weaknesses. Each style has definite strengths. However, some strengths, when taken to an extreme, can become weaknesses.

DIRECT

Direct leaders, when stressed, may cross the line from taking charge to being overbearing.

Direct leaders, like to get things done quickly, which is usually a plus. However, if some of their followers work at a slower pace, they may feel pressured by their direct leader's drive. In addition, direct leader's sensed of urgency may cause them to be reluctant to delegate.

Direct leaders like to compete, which may give their organizations an edge over others. However, taken to extremes, their competitive spirit may intimidate those they lead.

Direct leaders work hard. But when they expect the same high-octane performance from those they lead, they may cause their followers to burn out.

SYSTEMATIC

Systematic leaders provide structure for activities, which usually helps tasks or projects progress without a hitch. However, when systematic leaders impose too much structure, their followers may chafe under so much control.

Systematic leaders make sure that no one overlooks the important details. But taken to the extreme, their conscientiousness may make the people they lead feel bogged down.

Systematic leaders make sure that all the data is in before making decisions, which is usually a sound policy. However, when urgent situations call for quick action, systematic leaders' thoroughness may be counterproductive.

Systematic leaders insist on objectivity and accuracy above all else. As a result, those they lead may view them as impersonal or picky.

SPIRITED

Spirited leaders are good at generating enthusiasm among their followers. Yet taken to an extreme, their persuasive abilities may become manipulative.

Spirited leaders know how to prompt those they lead to develop fresh new approaches. However, their emphasis on thinking of new ways to do things sometimes comes at the expense of making sure that things are carried through to completion.

Spirited leaders inspire their followers by providing them with a vision. But in presenting the big picture, they may sometimes gloss over the important details.

Spirited leaders enjoy motivating their followers from center stage, but sometimes they forget that they also need to provide their followers with an audience, by listening to them.

CONSIDERATE

Considerate leaders provide their followers with a sense of reassurance when times are difficult or rapidly changing. However, their desire to keep things comfortable by keeping them the same may cause them to resist change, rather than helping their followers adapt to it.

Considerate leaders build a loyal following by demonstrating their support for others. However, some of their followers may view their support as permissiveness.

Considerate leaders recognize the importance of taking their followers' views into account. But taken to an extreme, their willingness to accommodate others' views may cause them to cave in or appear to cave in.

Considerate leaders are good at maintaining team harmony, but, in some cases, their desire to maintain harmony may cause them to avoid constructive conflict.

The Bottom Line

Current research shows that people representing all four behavioral styles can and do function effectively as leaders. Here is the bottom line: Rather than asking yourself, "Do I have what it takes to be a leader?" it is far more productive to ask yourself, "What does this particular situation require from me?" Then you will be able to decide whether you need to adjust your leadership style, and, if so, how?

Action Planning

Now that you have identified your own leadership style, how can you put it to work? Use the following questions to guide your thinking.

1. Based on the information you obtained from this assessment, what do you view as your personal strengths as a leader?
2. What are your areas for improvement as a leader?
3. Think of a specific situation in which you will need to influence others to accomplish a goal. What strengths can you use to your advantage? How do you plan to adapt your leadership style to meet the requirements of the situations.