

# Leaders and Motivational Leadership

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## Leadership Theories and Best Practices

Leadership theories generally describe relationships between leaders and tasks. For example, some theories suggest that leadership is a charismatic quality or set of traits that certain people possess. Others suggest that effective leadership depends on the relationship to the issues or culture of the organization. Many of these relationships will be examined in detail throughout this unit.

### Autocratic Leaders

The autocratic leader focuses on observable behaviors. There are clearly defined rules that everyone is expected to follow. The message is clear: Do as I say. In this environment, people mainly follow directives; creative thinking is not encouraged. While this leadership style has been criticized in recent years, it often produces the desired results in crisis situations when critical decisions have to be made in a short period of time.

### Motivational (Charismatic) Leadership

Charismatic leaders seem to know just the right words to say. These leaders inspire followers to take action and keep followers motivated by their charismatic personalities. They help people realize their full potential by focusing on emulating their leader. This style works best in small, closely knit organizations that share values that are clearly defined and commonly agreed upon.

### Transactional Leaders

Transactional leaders use a clearly defined structure and division of roles between leaders and those they lead (Changing Minds, 2009). This may be a formal, written agreement, such as an employment contract, but more often it is an informal set of expectations or company policy. Whenever there is a disagreement, the two parties use the contract as a basis for resolution. The leader may also use rewards or punishment as extrinsic motivators. Subordinates work at the pleasure of the leadership and are expected to do as told. While this may stifle the creative person, others find it comforting to follow a clear set of rules.

### Participative Leaders

Leaders who take a team approach and encourage collaboration may develop a

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stronger social bond within the organization. Leaders may create an inviting atmosphere that, in many cases, extends beyond the walls of the organization. Meetings may be held in a variety of locations and settings; however, there is a broad range to what may be called participation—anything from describing a plan, asking for assent to describing an issue, and making the group fully responsible for creating and implementing the plan.

### Transformational Leaders

While charismatic leaders typically make themselves the focus, transformational leaders are focused on the change itself. The atmosphere is not "who am I" but "what have I done." As change agents, they intend to bridge an identified performance gap or to find an opportunity to make a good organization excellent. Transformational leadership requires salesmanship, being the first to communicate the vision, and then being the one to motivate others to follow. Along the way, there is considerable cheerleading to overcome the natural flow of energy as the vision is implemented. Bass and Steidlmeier (1998) discuss in their essay some of the implications and dangers of organizational transformation. "When the focus is on change, it creates powerful and lasting results; when the focus is on the charismatic person, it may create a cult-like following and loss of personal freedom and identity" (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1998).

### References

- Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1998). *Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership*. Retrieved from the Center for Leadership Studies at Binghamton University Web site: <http://cls.binghamton.edu/BassSteid.html>
- Changing Minds. (2009). *Leadership theories*. Retrieved from [http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/theories/leadership\\_theories.htm](http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/theories/leadership_theories.htm)