

Leadership Styles for Dealing with People Part 2: Putting Effective Leadership Styles to Work for You

John I. Cornelius, M.S., PMP

This paper is a continuation of the article, Leadership Styles for Dealing with People by Dr. Ed Cornelius.

This article features a downloadable self-scoring Leader Style Questionnaire and some practical ideas for putting effective leadership styles to work for you.

- Do people react differently depending upon how you approach them?
- Is there an optimum style for influencing others?
- What is your leadership style?
- Should a leader change his or her style when interacting with different people and different situations?



Do people react differently depending upon how you approach them?

In Part One of this article, we defined leadership styles as the broad, characteristic way in which a leader interacts with others in various situations and occasions. We presented the leader style continuum shown below.



We learn at an early age that people react differently depending upon how we approach them. As toddlers we learn that if we say “please,” adults are more likely to respond favorably to us. As young adults, most of us learn that we must first demonstrate to our parents that we can operate within our existing boundaries before we can expand our future boundaries. Ideally, before we enter the world of work, we learn how to make on-the-spot adjustments to our communication and behavior styles to increase the likelihood that we will achieve our desired outcomes.

Thus the answer to our first question is that people *do* change their behavior depending on how they are approached.



Is there an optimum style for influencing others?

Yes! When we choose *assertive* leader behaviors and eliminate *submissive* and *aggressive* behaviors from our style inventory, we are optimizing our effectiveness for influencing others

Our experience is that when leaders approach people using one of the low, mid, or high assertive styles they are more likely to get positive results. People are more likely to feel involved, respected, and willing to respond with openness and honesty.

When leaders approach others using an aggressive style, the response is often one of reluctant compliance. The psychological affect might be one of hurt, withdrawal, or even displaced anger. Aggressive leaders tend to gain compliance from others, but don't usually get loyalty or respect.

When leaders use a submissive style the response is not always healthy for the employee, the organization, or the leader. Submissive leaders are often seen as unable or unwilling to provide the support that is needed by the employees or the organization. The level of morale in their workgroups is characteristically low.

What is Your Leadership Style?

How would you score yourself on this leader style continuum? Click on the following link to download the self-scoring *Leader Style Questionnaire*.

Should a leader change his or her style when interacting with different people and different situations?

We must be able to adapt our style choices to the specific people or situations we face. Here are some examples of when to use each style choice:

Use the Low-Assertive, or Caring, approach

- To encourage someone to express his or her ideas more fully.
- To help people become more self-sufficient by encouraging them to think through issues.
- To teach people how to take more individual responsibility and ownership for their tasks and responsibilities.
- To help people understand the consequences of their behavior choices by using an open, questioning style.

Use the Mid-Assertive, or Collaborative, approach

- To get someone actively involved in meaningful discussions about problems and issues.
- To encourage an interactive sharing of ideas and opinions.
- To help a person understand how to manage multiple tasks in a work process or project.
- To share decision making with others.

Use the High-Assertive, or Compelling, approach

- To clearly state expectations.
- To demonstrate a more affirmative and direct tone in your communications.
- To communicate when time is short and there is little time for discussion.
- To deal with a procrastinator.
- To persuade highly opinionated people to see your point of view.

Summary

Leaders have choices in how they deal with people and situations. By consciously choosing a leader style that is most likely to give you the outcome response that is needed, your effectiveness as a leader will increase significantly.