

# 8 Common Leadership Styles (Plus How To Find Your Own)

By Indeed Editorial Team



At some point in your career, you may take on a leadership role. Whether you're leading a meeting, project, team or an entire department, you might consider identifying with or adopting a defined leadership style.

Most professionals develop their own style of leadership based on factors like experience and personality, as well as the specific needs of a company and its organizational culture. Every leader is different, but there are eight leadership styles commonly used in the workplace.

In this article, we'll cover eight of the most common leadership styles and provide examples and common characteristics of each.

## **Types of leadership styles**

Here's an overview of eight common leadership styles, from autocratic to visionary, with a look at the benefits and challenges of each style:

## 1. Autocratic leadership style

Also called the “authoritarian style of leadership,” this type of leader is someone who's focused primarily on results and team efficiency. Autocratic leaders often make decisions alone or with a small and trusted group and expect employees to do exactly what they're asked.

Autocratic leaders typically have self-confidence and are self-motivated. They communicate clearly and consistently, are dependable and follow the rules. They value highly structured environments and are proponents of supervised work environments.

The benefits and challenges of an autocratic leadership style include:

<b>Benefits:</b> Autocratic leaders can promote productivity through delegation, provide clear and direct communication and reduce employee stress by making decisions quickly on their own.	<b>Challenges:</b> Autocratic leaders are often prone to high levels of stress because they feel responsible for everything, plus their lack of flexibility can lead to team resentment.
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## 2. Bureaucratic leadership style

Bureaucratic leaders are similar to autocratic leaders in that these leaders expect their team members to follow the rules and procedures precisely as written. The bureaucratic style focuses on fixed duties within a hierarchical system, where each employee has a set list of responsibilities, and there's little need for collaboration and creativity.

This leadership style is most effective in highly regulated industries or in departments like finance, health care or government. This style may fit your leadership approach if you're detail-oriented and task-focused, value rules and structure, are strong-willed and self-disciplined and have a great work ethic.

The benefits and challenges of a bureaucratic leadership style include:

**Benefits:** This style can be efficient in organizations that need to follow strict rules and regulations. These leaders separate work from relationships to avoid clouding the team's ability to hit goals.

**Challenges:** This style doesn't promote creativity, which can feel restricting to some employees. This leadership style is also slow to change and does not thrive in an environment that needs to be dynamic.

### **3. Coaching leadership style**

A coaching leader is someone who can quickly recognize their team members' strengths, weaknesses and motivations to help each individual improve. This type of leader often assists team members in setting smart goals and then provides regular feedback with challenging projects to promote growth. They set clear expectations and creating a positive, motivating environment.

The coach leadership style is one of the most advantageous for employers as well as the employees they manage. Unfortunately, it's often also one of the most underused styles—largely because it can be more time-intensive than other types of leadership. Coaching leaders are supportive and value learning as a way of growing. They're self-aware, offer guidance instead of giving commands and ask guided questions.

The benefits and challenges of a coaching leadership style include:

**Benefits:** Coaching leadership is positive in nature and promotes the development of new skills, empowers team members and fosters a confident company culture. They're often seen as valuable mentors.

**Challenges:** While this style has many advantages, it can be more time-consuming as it requires one-on-one time with employees which can be difficult to obtain in a deadline-driven environment.

#### **4. Democratic leadership style**

The democratic style (aka the "participative style") is a combination of the autocratic and laissez-faire types of leaders. A democratic leader asks their team members for input and considers feedback from the team before they make a decision. Because team members feel their contributions matter, a democratic leadership style is often credited with fostering higher levels of employee engagement and workplace satisfaction.

Democratic leaders value group discussions and provide all information to the team when making decisions. They promote a work environment where everyone shares their ideas and are characteristically rational and flexible.

The benefits and challenges of a democratic leadership style include:

**Benefits:** Working under the democratic leadership style, employees can feel empowered, valued and unified. It has the power to boost retention and morale. It also requires less managerial oversight, as employees are typically part of decision-making processes and know what they need to do.

**Challenges:** This leadership style has the potential to be inefficient and costly as it takes time to organize group discussions, obtain ideas/feedback, discuss possible outcomes and communicate decisions. It also can add social pressure to members of the team who don't like sharing ideas in group settings.

## **5. Laissez-faire leadership style**

The laissez-faire style is the opposite of the autocratic leadership type, focusing mostly on delegating many tasks to team members and providing little to no supervision. Because a laissez-faire leader doesn't spend their time intensely managing employees, they often have more time for other projects.

Managers may adopt the laissez-faire style when all team members are highly experienced, well-trained and require little oversight. However, it can cause a dip in productivity if employees are confused about their leader's expectations, or if some team members need consistent motivation and boundaries to work well.

The benefits and challenges of a laissez-faire leadership style include:

**Benefits:** The laissez-faire leadership style encourages accountability, creativity and a relaxed work environment, which often leads to higher employee retention rates.

**Challenges:** This style typically doesn't work well for new employees, as they need guidance and hands-on support in the beginning. Other employees may not feel properly supported.

## 6. Pacesetter leadership style

The pacesetter style is one of the most effective for achieving fast results. Pacesetter leaders primarily focus on performance, often set high standards and hold their team members accountable for achieving their goals.

While the pacesetter leadership style can be motivational in fast-paced environments where team members need to be energized, it's not always the best option for team members who need mentorship and feedback.

The benefits and challenges of a pacesetter leadership style include:

**Benefits:** Pacesetter leadership pushes employees to hit goals and accomplish business objectives. It promotes high-energy and dynamic work environments.

**Challenges:** Pacesetter leadership can also lead to miscommunications and stressed-out employees as they are always pushing toward a goal or deadline.

## 7. Servant leadership style

Servant leaders live by a people-first mindset and believe that when team members feel personally and professionally fulfilled, they're more effective and more likely to regularly produce

great work. Because of their emphasis on employee satisfaction and collaboration, they tend to achieve higher levels of respect.

Servant leaders motivate their teams and have excellent communication skills. You may find this leadership style a match for your own style if you tend to encourage collaboration and engagement among team members and if you commit to growing your team professionally.

The benefits and challenges of a servant leadership style include:

**Benefits:** Servant leaders have the capacity to boost employee loyalty and productivity, improve employee development and decision-making, cultivate trust and create future leaders.

**Challenges:** Servant leaders can become burnt out as they often put the needs of their team above their own. They may have a hard time being authoritative when they need to be.

## 8. Visionary leadership style

Visionary leaders possess a powerful ability to drive progress and usher in periods of change by inspiring employees and earning trust for new ideas. A visionary leader is also able to establish a strong organizational bond. They strive to foster confidence among direct reports and colleagues alike.

Visionary style is especially helpful for small, fast-growing organizations, or larger organizations experiencing transformations or restructuring. Visionary leaders tend to be persistent and bold, strategic and open to taking risks. They're often described as inspirational, optimistic, innovative and magnetic.

The benefits and challenges of a visionary leadership style include:

**Benefits:** Visionary leadership can help companies grow, unite teams and the overall company and improve outdated technologies or practices.

**Challenges:** Visionary leaders may miss important details or other opportunities, like recognizing their teams, because they're so focused on the big picture.

## How to choose a leadership style

As someone who's interested in the leadership path or looking for more structure in their current leadership approach, it can be helpful to choose a leadership style that feels authentic to you. Some questions you may ask yourself when trying to determine which style is right for you include:

- *What do I value more—goals or relationships?*
- *Do I believe in structure or freedom of choice?*
- *Would I rather make a decision on my own, or collectively?*
- *Do I focus on short or long-term goals?*
- *Does motivation come from empowerment or direction?*
- *What does a healthy team dynamic look like to me?*

## Strategies for choosing

The above are just a few examples of questions to ask yourself while reading through leadership styles to help you decide on which style you relate with most. To develop your leadership style consider these four strategies:

1. **Experiment.** Try out varied approaches in different circumstances and pay attention to the outcome.
2. **Seek a mentor.** Consulting a leader with more experience than yourself can offer great insight into how they developed their style and what worked for them.
3. **Ask for feedback.** Constructive feedback helps you grow into a successful leader. Seek feedback from individuals you trust that will give you an honest answer.



4. **Be authentic.** Trying to perfect a leadership style that's in opposition to your personality or morals will come across as inauthentic. Try to choose a leadership style that's in alignment with your strengths and work to improve it.

## What to keep in mind

While a certain leadership style may be impactful in a specific job—for example, autocratic leaders tend to do well in military settings—the best leadership is using a blend of styles. Knowing what style to enforce in workplace situations comes with time, practice and through emotional intelligence.

While you may have excelled in a past role using one style of leadership, another position may require a different set of habits to ensure your team is operating most effectively. By understanding the different leadership types, and the outcomes they're designed to achieve, you can select the right leadership style for your current situation.

## Why develop a leadership style

In an Indeed survey, 55% of employers cited asking about leadership skills in a job interview as the most accurate evaluation of a candidate's ability to succeed in a role.<sup>1</sup> As you develop leadership skills, you'll likely use different processes and methods to achieve your employer's objectives and meet the needs of the employees who report to you. To be effective as a manager, you might use several different leadership styles at any given time.

By taking the time to familiarize yourself with each of these types of leadership, you might recognize certain areas to improve upon or expand your own leadership style. You can also identify other ways to lead that might better serve your current goals and understand how to work with managers who follow a different style than your own.

<https://youtu.be/T23U1Ewm3Cc>

### Show Transcript

#### Video: How To Choose and Develop Your Leadership Style

*Jenn, a career coach, explains how to choose and develop your leadership style and provides examples to help you identify which style is right for you.*