Effective Leadership Styles

Institute of Government for County Officials

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"To an extent, leadership is like beauty; it's hard to define, but you know it when you see it."

Warren Bennis

LEADERSHIP

Leaders create loyalty and commitment to the organization's vision. Leadership is accomplished through attitudes and behaviors rather than through specific skill sets. Leaders serve the organization and the people in it. Great leaders recognize that the way you conduct yourself is the most you can expect from your followers.

What are the personal qualities and behaviors you expect to see in leaders?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

ORANGE

"I act on a moment's notice. I consider life as a game, here and now. I need fun, variety, stimulation, and excitement. I value skill, resourcefulness, and freedom. I am a natural trouble-shooter, a performer, and a competitor."

Good at adding spice to any situation
Lives in the moment
Gather information from their intuition
Exuberant and generous in gift-giving
May have short attention span
Especially interested in ACTION
Respond to tactile, tangible activities
Optimistic, bold, eager
Our best performers, athletes, and actors

Characteristics	Strengths	Values	Stressors
☐ What? ☐ Action-Oriented ☐ Upbeat/ Positive ☐ Quick Witted ☐ Competitor/ Performer	☐ Energetic ☐ Engaging ☐ Negotiating ☐ Risk-Taker ☐ Confident ☐ Creative	☐ Freedom ☐ Flexibility ☐ Variety ☐ Competition ☐ Action ☐ Fun	☐ Deadlines ☐ Structure ☐ Tedium ☐ Taking life too seriously

Orange Leadership Style
- Expects immediate action
- Assumes flexibility
- Works in the here and now
- Performance oriented
- Welcomes change
- Institute change quickly
- Expects people to "make it fun"

Bring Out the Best in an Orange by

- Assign tasks which are action-packed or "hands-on"
- Outline the positive results of your solution or plan
- Give them end result and allow them the freedom to accomplish it in their own way
- Get to the point and keep moving
- Be prepared to take action on assignments
- Assign deadlines
- Ensure flexibility
- Be energetic; have fun!
- Praise their performance, their flare

GOLD

"I follow the rules and respect authority. I have a strong sense of what is right and wrong in life. I need to be useful and to belong. I value home, family, and tradition. I am a natural preserver, a good citizen, and helpful."

Value responsibility and sense of DUTY above all else
Will follow through at all costs, dependable, true
Good at organizing vague, random thoughts and putting things into action
Detail oriented, predictable
Serious, duty-oriented, aware of what one is "supposed to do"
Practical and realistic
"Be prepared!"
A deep commitment to the standards of our society
Heritage, history, family and tradition are important values
High priority to belong to social units

Characteristics	Strengths	Values	Stressors
☐ How?	☐ Organization	☐ Efficiency	☐ Change
☐ Planners	☐ Prepared	☐ Routine	☐ Uncertainty
☐ Practical	☐ Dependable	☐ Hierarchy & Tradition	☐ Lack of planning
☐ Detail-Oriented	☐ Helpful		☐ Interruptions
☐ Self-disciplined	☐ Loyal	☐ Fairness	☐ Tardiness
☐ Consistent	☐ Task-Oriented	☐ Family	☐ Disorder
☐ Caring		☐ Roles & Responsibilities	

Leadership Style
- Expects punctuality, order, and loyalty
- Assumes "right" way to do things; sees things in black and white
- Seldom questions tradition
- Rules oriented
- Detailed/ thorough approach, threatened by change
- Prolonged time to initiate change
- Expects people to "play" their roles

Bring Out the Best in a Gold by
- Assign detail-oriented work
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities
- Set goals and milestones
- Present information in a logical, linear fashion
- Be punctual and reliable
- Avoid abrupt changes
- Share in the work
- Take work ethic seriously
- Give feedback; let them know they're on the right track; praise their contributions

BLUE

"I need to feel unique and authentic. I look for meaning and significance in life. I need to contribute, to encourage, and to care. I value integrity and unity in relationships. I am a natural romantic, a poet, and a nurturer."

Value HARMONY above all else
Good at reading people, understanding human dynamics
Sensitive to others
Emotionally-based decision making
Perceptive, "people pleaser", team player
Sympathetic, empathetic, compassionate
See the potential in others
Centered on people, relationships and interaction

Characteristics	Strengths	Values	Stressors
☐ Who? ☐ Optimistic ☐ Emotional Decision Maker ☐ Peacemakers ☐ People Pleasers ☐ Caretakers	☐ Cooperative ☐ Imaginative ☐ Considerate ☐ Helpful ☐ Communicators ☐ Motivators	☐ Harmony ☐ Relationships with others ☐ Honesty ☐ Sincerity ☐ Teamwork ☐ Optimism ☐ Positive Feedback	☐ Lack of Respect ☐ Lack of Support ☐ Conflict ☐ Negativity

Leadership Style
- Expects others to express views; values opinions
- Assumes "family spirit"
- Works to develop others potential (encourager/ motivator)
- Democratic, unstructured approach (fairness, wants to include others and can be flexible to do that)
- Encourage change by appealing to human potential
- Expects people to develop their potential

Bring Out the Best in a Blue by

- Assign people-oriented tasks
- Establish a warm and personal working atmosphere
- Outline how the task will impact people
- Be open and honest
- Promote harmony & avoid conflict
- Acknowledge their creative contributions
- Provide one-on-one feedback
- Remember their name and connect with them personally

GREEN

"I seek knowledge and understanding. I live life by my own standard. I need explanations and answers. I value intelligence, insight, integrity, and justice. I am a natural non-conformist, a visionary, and a problem solver."

Strong urge to be COMPETENT
Good at solving problems, figuring things out, wondering "What if…?" or asking "Why?"
Theoretical, puzzlers, need to know the reasons behind something
Objective, quantitative
Value cause and effect
Help us figure out all the possibilities
Quick to point out mistakes in others
Respects abilities, skills, and ingenuity
Life-long learners
Individualistic
Can be vulnerable to "all work and no play"

Characteristics	Strengths	Values	Stressors
☐ Why? ☐ Analytical ☐ Seek Knowledge ☐ Inventive ☐ Individualistic ☐ Cool, calm, collected	☐ Innovative ☐ Visionary ☐ Intellectual ☐ Objective ☐ Problem Solvers	☐ Competency ☐ Independence ☐ Facts/ Data ☐ Challenge ☐ Justice ☐ Integrity	☐ Tedium ☐ Instant or No Deadlines ☐ Emotions vs. Logic ☐ Lack of knowledge ☐ Indecisiveness

Leadership Style
- Expects intelligence and competence
- Assumes task relevancy
- Seeks ways to improve system
- Visionary
- Analytical
- Encourages change for improvement
- Constantly "in process" of change
- Expects people to follow through

Bring Out the Best in a Green by

- Assign projects that require analytical thinking & problem solving
- Inspire them with futuristic ideas and possibilities

- Realize their need to question, explore, and ponder
- Focus on facts & data, not personal issues
- Meet one-on-one or in small group settings
- Provide logical, objective feedback from an "expert", if possible
- Praise their ingenuity

Goleman's Six Leadership Styles

Style	Purpose	In a phrase	When it works best	What Color?
Commanding	Gains compliance; obedience	*Do what I tell you to do!*	In a crisis; dealing with problem employees	
Visionary	Mobilizes people toward a vision	*Come with me.*	When clear direction is needed	
Affiliative	Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds	*People come first.*	To heal rifts; to motivate in stressful circumstances	
Democratic	Forges consensus through participation	*What do you think?*	To get buy-in; to get valuable input	
Pacesetting	Sets high standards for performance	*Do as I do, now!*	To get immediate results	
Coaching	Develops people for the future	*Try this.*	To get long term results	

Goleman, Daniel, "Leadership that Gets Results" Harvard Business Review. March-April 2000 p. 82-83

Commanding

The commanding leader demands immediate compliance. If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be "Do what I tell you to do." This mostly coercive style is most effective in times of crisis, such as in an organizational turnaround or a takeover attempt, or during an actual emergency like a tornado or a fire. This style can also help control problem people when everything else has failed. However, it should be avoided in almost every other case because it can alienate people and stifle flexibility and inventiveness.

Visionary

The visionary leader mobilizes the organization toward a common vision and focuses on end goals. If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be "Come with me." The visionary style works best when a new vision or clear direction is needed. Authoritative leaders inspire an entrepreneurial spirit and vibrant enthusiasm for the mission. It may not the best fit when the leader is working with a group of experts who know more than him or her.

Affiliative

The affiliative leader works to create emotional bonds that bring a feeling of belonging to the organization. If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be "People come first." The affiliative style works best in times of stress, when employees need to heal from a trauma, or when the organization needs to rebuild trust. This style should not be used exclusively, because a sole reliance on praise and nurturing can foster mediocre performance and a lack of direction.

Democratic

The democratic leader builds consensus through participation. If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be "What do you think?" The democratic style is most effective when the leader needs the group to buy into or have ownership of a decision, plan, or goal, or if he or she is uncertain and needs fresh ideas from qualified employees. It may not the best choice in an emergency situation when employees are not skilled enough to offer sufficient guidance to the leader.

Pacesetting

The pacesetting leader expects and models excellence and self-direction. If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be "Do as I do, now." The pacesetting style works best when the group is already motivated and skilled, and the leader needs quick results. Used extensively, however, this style can overwhelm and squelch innovation.

Coaching

The coaching leader develops people for the future. If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be "Try this." The coaching style works best when the leader wants to help employees build lasting personal strengths that make them more successful overall. It is least effective when employees are defiant and unwilling to change or learn, or if time is of the essence.

Leadership for Change: Case Studies in American Local Government

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Robert O'Neill - Fairfax County, Virginia

Robert O'Neill was widely heralded for his innovative approach to leading change at the local level while he was city manager of Hampton, Virginia, through the 1980s and early 1990s. A little over two years ago, O'Neill was hired as county executive of Fairfax County, Virginia, a county of nearly a million people in the Washington, DC area. O'Neill arrived in Fairfax at a difficult time. The county had just been through a fiscal crisis. The culture of the organization was one that seemed content with operating on a day-to-day basis, largely reacting to the board of supervisors. (Fairfax County is governed by an elected Board of Supervisors consisting of nine members elected by district, plus a chairman elected at large.) Moreover, the county government was organized in a fairly traditional top-down structure, with communications across departmental boundaries being relatively rare.

In the eyes of his employees, O'Neill had several strikes against him, resulting in a healthy skepticism about his tenure. First, he was seen by many employees as coming from a fairly small jurisdiction compared to Fairfax County (Hampton has a population of about 140,000). Second, bolstered by newspaper accounts that O'Neill was coming to "cut out waste," employees feared layoffs by a potential "hatchet man." Third, O'Neill immediately faced several difficult issues that had been before the board for some time before his arrival (for example, the elimination of compensatory time for senior managers and the possible reorganization of several units in county government). Taking on these issues early in his tenure did not necessarily endear O'Neill to county employees.

On the positive side, however, O'Neill immediately started meeting with employee groups, engaging in a variety of conversations, meetings, and brown bag luncheons in all areas of the county. His message in these meetings was contained both in his words and in his actions: he wanted to open communications with employees, he wanted to listen to what they had to say, and he expected to involve them in major decisions facing the county. Similarly, he began a seemingly endless series of meetings with people in the community, including business groups (such as the Chamber of Commerce), civic organizations, and neighborhood associations. In fact, those close to O'Neill marveled at his capacity to be in meetings from early in the morning until late at night throughout the week.

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Finally, O'Neill undertook a fairly systematic effort to establish close working relationships and even personal relationships with the 10 members of the Board of Supervisors. Among other things, he established regular meetings with each of the members of the board and also began a practice of calling each member on Sunday evening prior to each Monday board meeting. (A staff member noted that, in order to make this work, you have to learn such things as which members watch the The X-Files and which go to bed early!) In any case, members soon learned that O'Neill was someone with whom they could discuss issues and someone who wanted much the same things for the community that they did.

Among the early moves O'Neill made, several were particularly striking in terms of the process of leading change. First, there were several opportunities that presented themselves in which major personnel changes occurred. While O'Neill didn't seek major changes in his executive management team, a large number of department heads (nearly half) resigned within the year following O'Neill's appointment. There is no evidence that anyone was directly fired, but rather that a generation of department heads hired many years ago simply reached retirement age together and found this a convenient time to leave the county.

Whatever the reasons for the retirements, O'Neill was presented with the opportunity to hire a number of new people in key positions. (We should note, however, that these appointments were not people "hand-picked" by O'Neill. Rather they emerged through a highly participatory process involving many members of the management team, members of the board, and occasionally representatives of the community at large.) In many cases, however, rather than replacing those who retired, O'Neill used the retirements to restructure the organization, particularly where he felt that the previous organization reflected the strengths and weaknesses of a particular individual rather than the most efficient way of doing business. (In addition to the reorganizations, there are also now fewer deputy county executives, so that department heads have more direct access to O'Neill rather than going through a deputy in charge of several areas.)

Second, O'Neill began placing a greater emphasis on community involvement, using his own involvement in the community as a model. While some Fairfax agencies, like planning and human services, were in the community every day, O'Neill felt that more intense and widespread community involvement was appropriate. So throughout his tenure, he has placed a high priority on personally reaching out to the community, including the development community, professional groups, and civic organizations. In his meetings with these groups, O'Neill tries to open lines of communication and, according to a staff member, doesn't speak to audiences but rather encourages significant dialogue. He listens very carefully to what people say and, as that staff member reported, typically comes back with a long list of items for follow-up. O'Neill has also encouraged departments throughout the county government to play a more involved role in the community, but what has been key so far is the personal model he has established himself.

Third, O'Neill's major effort at internal organizational change has been the establishment of a series of task forces to look into key issues in the organization:

- Development of a Vision Profile,
- Compensation and Gainsharing,
- Piloting the Competition Model,
- Department Head Evaluation System,
- Employee Involvement,
- Flexibility in Personnel Classification,
- Employee Communication and Leadership Development.

Designed by O'Neill but given board approval in the FY1999 budget, each of these task forces consists of between 20 and 40 county employees selected "diagonally" from across the organization. That is, each group includes people from across the various departments and from the top to the bottom of the organization, though each is chaired by a member of the county executive's staff. Where it seemed appropriate, a skilled facilitator was brought in to help the groups work through their tasks, but, in all cases, O'Neill encouraged (indeed almost required) a broad effort to communicate fully with county employees on the work that was being done. For example, the task force on compensation identified a set of problems, then took these problems to focus groups of employees just to ask, "Are these in fact the right problems for us to be working on?" More recently, that same group has been making a series of presentations to employees on its key proposals. The various task forces are expected to conclude their work and bring forward a series of proposals over the coming several months.

While it remains to be seen what the task forces will produce in terms of specific substantive recommendations, what is most interesting from our standpoint is the message that is implied in the process O'Neill designed. Not only was O'Neill seeking solutions to some important organizational problems, but he was communicating to those in the organization that they would be expected to go about their work in a different way. The message to employees was that everyone should communicate with one another across departmental boundaries and up and down throughout the organization.

Through the task forces, O'Neill was modeling a set of behaviors that he thought would be important to the organization, and he was doing so in a non-threatening way. O'Neill put it this way: "If we can keep the strength of the specialties we've developed, but also develop flexibility, responsiveness, and adaptability — if we can build an organization that has both those sets of strengths, then that's what we want to do."

Bob O'Neill is still in the very early stages of his tenure in Fairfax County, yet his work provides great insight into one way that a local government manager can bring about substantial change. In this case, the goal has simultaneously been to address some important organizational issues and to model a new way of doing business in the county. The goal is to address some important concerns, but also to establish a new culture, one in which openness and involvement and widespread communication are the norm, not the exception. A month or two into the work of the task forces, during a particularly engaging discussion, a county employee leaned over to O'Neill in a meeting and said: "This is what you did this for, isn't it?

Questions for Discussion:

1. Although the information in the case is limited, what type of leadership style(s) may have been in place prior to O'Neill's arrival in Fairfax County?

2. What type of leadership style(s) were initially expected from O'Neill based on media and employee expectations?

3. What type of leadership style(s) did O'Neill display in his role as county executive? What are some examples of the leadership style(s)?