

Pocket Guide on

Leadership



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Introduction

You often hear someone say, “That person is a born leader”. But, what does that really mean? What makes a person a leader? What does a leader look like?

Recent studies and research on leadership have concluded that individuals can and do emerge as leaders across a variety of situations and tasks.

The qualities of a person, the demands of the situation, or a combination of these and other factors attract followers who accept a person as their leader. Instead of the authority of position held by an appointed head or chief, the emerging leader uses influence or power.

It is not so much that one is born a leader, rather significant relationships exist between leadership and such individual traits as intelligence, adjustment, extroversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience and general self-efficacy.

Therefore everyone can develop their leadership skills. When a person is committed to, and practises using his leadership capabilities at all levels in his life, then he can and will develop his own potential as a leader.

In this pocket guide we will attempt to explain what leadership is and what qualities a leader should possess. We will also look at the various types of leadership, both good and bad, that exist.

There is no cookie-cutter model for leaders and we do not pretend to teach you how to become a leader; however the information contained in this pocket guide may help you in developing your own talents and possibly become a leader, be it in your workplace, as part of a constituent body of the Institute or in your private life.

Qualities of a Leader

What is a good union leader? A good union leader can be described as **someone who influences and motivates others to take action toward achieving the union goals and objectives.**

Influencing and motivating others is possible through the exercise of a certain amount of power, power which comes in part from the responsibilities and authority delegated to a steward or elected officer and, for the most part, from the qualities of the individual, qualities such as commitment, courage, compassion, knowledge, trust and

determination. Leaders are recognized for the qualities they demonstrate. Leadership is not strictly dependent on title or formal authority.

An individual who is elected to a union position be it on a Group, Sub-Group, Branch or Regional executive gains a certain level of authority linked to the fact that he gets to make decisions, attends union meetings and meetings with the employer and manages funds. However, he must possess adequate personal attributes to match his authority, because authority alone creates a dictator, not a leader.

Many studies have been done and many books and articles have been published on leadership. Through that work, a consistent set of leadership attributes has emerged. The following is a compendium of the qualities that should be found in a good leader.

A leader must have **vision**. He must have a clear, vivid picture of where to go, as well as a firm grasp on what success looks like and how to achieve it. But it's not enough to have a vision; leaders must also share it and act upon it.

A leader must be able to **communicate** his vision in terms that cause followers to buy into it. He must communicate clearly and passionately, because passion is contagious.

A good leader must have the **discipline** to work toward his vision single-mindedly, as well as to direct his actions and those of the team toward the goal. Action is the mark of a leader. A leader does not suffer from inactivity but is always doing something in pursuit of the vision, inspiring others to do the same.

Integrity is the integration of inner values and outward actions. A person of integrity is the same on the inside and on the outside. Such an individual can be trusted because he never veers from inner values, even when it might be expeditious to do so. A leader must have the trust of followers and therefore must display integrity.

Honest dealings, predictable reactions, well-controlled emotions, and an absence of tantrums and harsh outbursts are all signs of integrity. A leader who is centred in integrity will be more approachable by followers.

Dedication means spending whatever time or energy is necessary to accomplish the task at hand. A leader inspires dedication by example, doing whatever it takes to complete the next step toward the vision.

Magnanimity means giving credit where it is due. A magnanimous leader ensures that credit for successes is spread as widely as possible throughout the group. Conversely, a

good leader takes personal responsibility for failures. This sort of reverse magnanimity helps other people feel good about themselves and draws the team closer together. To “spread the fame and take the blame” is the mark of effective leadership.

Leaders with **humility** recognize that they are no better or worse than other members of the team. A humble leader is not self-effacing but, rather, tries to elevate everyone. Leaders with humility also understand that their status does not make them a god.

Openness means being able to listen to new ideas, even if they do not conform to the usual way of thinking. Good leaders are able to suspend judgment while listening to others’ ideas, as well as accept new ways of doing things thought up by someone else. Openness builds mutual respect and trust between leaders and followers, and it also keeps the team well supplied with new ideas that can further its vision.

Creativity is the ability to think differently, to get outside of the box that constrains solutions. Creativity gives leaders the ability to see things that others have not seen and thus lead followers in new directions. The most important question that a leader can ask is, “What if . . .?”

Fairness means dealing with others consistently and justly. A leader must check all the facts and hear everyone's point of view before making a decision. He must avoid leaping to conclusions based on incomplete evidence. When people feel that they are being treated fairly, they reward a leader with loyalty and dedication.

Assertiveness is the ability to clearly state what one expects so that there will be no misunderstandings. It is not the same as aggressiveness. A leader must be assertive to get the desired results. Along with assertiveness comes the responsibility to clearly understand what followers expect from their leader.

A **sense of humour** is vital to relieve tension and boredom, as well as to defuse hostility. Effective leaders know how to use humour to energize followers. Humour is a form of power that provides some control over the work environment. Simply put, humour fosters good camaraderie.

An effective leader will accomplish most, if not all, of the following:

- **Challenge the Process.** Search out challenging opportunities, take risks, and learn from mistakes.

- **Inspire others to come together and agree on a future direction or goal.**
Create a shared vision by thinking about the future, having a strong positive vision, and encouraging others to participate.
- **Help others to act.** Help others to work together, to cooperate and collaborate by developing shared goals and building trust. Help to make others stronger by encouraging them to develop their skills and talents.
- **Set an example.** **Behave** in ways that are consistent with professed values and help others to achieve small gains that keep them motivated, especially when a goal will not be achieved quickly.
- **Encourage others.** Recognize each individual's contributions to the success of a project.
- **Recognize and respond** to the needs of the membership.

Leadership and Emotions

Leadership can be perceived as a particularly emotion-laden process, with emotions entwined with the process. In an organization, the leader's mood has some effects on his group. These effects can be described in three levels:

- **The mood of individual group members.** Groups where the leader is in a positive mood will usually encompass members in a better mood than groups with leaders in a negative mood. Leaders transmit their moods to other group members through the mechanism of emotional contagion. Mood contagion may be one of the psychological mechanisms by which charismatic leaders influence followers.
- **The affective tone of the group.** Group affective tone represents the overall affective reactions within a group. Group affective tone is comprised of a mix of the moods of the individual members of the group. Groups with leaders in a positive mood have a more positive affective tone than do groups with leaders in a negative mood .

- **Group processes like coordination, energy and task strategy.** Public expressions of mood impact how group members think and act. When people experience and express their mood, they send a signal to others. Leaders signal their goals, intentions, and attitudes through their expressions of moods. For example, expressions of positive moods by leaders signal that they deem progress toward goals to be good. The group members respond to those signals in ways that are reflected in the group processes.

Be – Know – Do

Good leaders should continually work and study to improve their leadership skills; they should not be resting on their laurels. To inspire their colleagues into higher levels of teamwork, there are certain things leaders must **be**, **know**, and, **do**. These do not come naturally, but are acquired through continual work and study.

The basis of good leadership is honourable character and selfless service to the organization. In their colleagues' eyes, leadership is everything they do that affects the organization's objectives and their well-being. Respected leaders concentrate on

- what they are [**be**] (such as beliefs and character)
- what they **know** (such as job, tasks, and human nature)
- what they **do** (such as implementing, motivating, and providing direction).

What makes a person want to follow a leader? People want to be guided by those they respect and who have a clear sense of direction. To gain respect, leaders must be ethical. A sense of direction is achieved by conveying a strong vision of the future.

The following eleven principles of leadership were developed in 1983. They summarize what a person needs to do to become a leader:

1. **Know yourself and seek self-improvement.** In order to know yourself, you have to understand your be, know, and do, attributes. Seeking self-improvement means continually strengthening your attributes. This can be accomplished through self-study, formal classes, reflection, and interaction with others.
2. **Be technically proficient.** As a leader, you must know your job and have a solid familiarity with your colleagues' tasks.

3. **Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.**
Search for ways to guide your organization to new heights. And when things go wrong, as they tend to do on occasion, do not blame others. Analyse the situation, take corrective action, and move on to the next challenge.
4. **Make sound and timely decisions.**
Use good problem solving, decision making, and planning tools.
5. **Set the example.** Be a good role model for your colleagues. They must not only hear what they are expected to do, but also see.
6. **Know your people and look out for their well-being.** Know human nature and the importance of sincerely caring for your colleagues.
7. **Keep your colleagues informed.** Know how to communicate with not only them, but also seniors and other key people.
8. **Develop a sense of responsibility in your colleagues.** Help to develop good character traits that will help them carry out their professional responsibilities.
9. **Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished.**
Communication is the key to this responsibility.

10. **Train as a team.** Although many so-called leaders call their organization, department, section, etc. a team, they are not really teams ... they are just a group of people doing their jobs.
11. **Use the full capabilities of your organization.** By developing a team spirit, you will be able to employ your organization, department, section, etc. to its fullest capabilities.

Leadership Styles

Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. Styles of leadership have been the object of a multiplicity of studies and researchers have fine-tuned their analysis, in recent years, to describe in detail numerous styles which can be regrouped under three major styles:

- Authoritarian or autocratic
- Participative or democratic
- Delegative or Free Reign

Although good leaders use all three styles, with one of them normally dominant, bad leaders tend to stick with only one style.

What follows is a brief synopsis of the literature which is readily available describing the various styles of leadership.

Authoritarian or Autocratic Leadership Style (I want you to . . .)

This style is used when leaders tell their followers what they want done and how they want it accomplished, without getting the advice of their followers. Some of the appropriate conditions to use it is when you have all the information to solve the problem, you are short on time, and your colleagues are well motivated.

Some people tend to think of this style as a vehicle for yelling, using demeaning language, and leading by threats and abusing their power. This is not the authoritarian style, rather it is an abusive, unprofessional style called “bossing people around.” It has no place in a leader's repertoire.

Exploitive Authoritative Leadership

An exploitive authoritative leader has a low concern for people and uses such methods as threats and other fear-based methods to achieve conformance. Communication is almost entirely downwards and the concerns of people are ignored.

Autocratic Leadership

An autocratic leader takes decisions without consulting with others. The decision is made without any form of consultation which causes the most discontent.

An autocratic style can work when there is no need for input on the decision, where the decision would not change as a result of input, or where the motivation of people to carry out subsequent actions would not be affected whether they were or were not involved in the decision-making.

Authoritarian Leadership

An authoritarian leader is very much task oriented and hard on his workers (autocratic). There is little or no allowance for cooperation or collaboration. Heavily task oriented people display characteristics such as being strong on schedules; expecting people to do what they are told without question or debate; when something goes wrong they tend to focus on who is to blame rather than concentrate on exactly what is wrong and how to prevent it; they are intolerant of what they see as dissent (it may just be someone's creativity), so it is difficult for their subordinates to contribute or develop.

Commanding Leadership

The commanding leader soothes fears and gives clear directions by his powerful stance, commanding and expecting full compliance (agreement is not needed). They need emotional self-control for success and can seem cold and distant. This approach is best in times of crisis when unquestioned rapid action is required or when dealing with problem employees who do not respond to other methods.

Transactional Leadership

The transactional leader works through creating clear structures where what is required of subordinates is clear and the rewards that they get for following orders are explained ahead of time. Punishments are not always mentioned, but they are also well-understood and formal systems of discipline are usually in place.

The transactional leader allocates work to a subordinate who is considered to be fully responsible for it, whether or not he has the resources or capability to carry it out. When things go right, the subordinate is rewarded; when they go wrong, he is considered to be personally at fault, and is punished for his failure.

Charismatic Leadership

The charismatic leader gathers followers using his personality and charm, rather than using external power or authority. In a gathering of people, the charismatic leader will move from person to person focusing all his attention to the person he is talking to at any one moment, making that person feel like he is, for that time, the most important person in the world.

A charismatic leader pays a great deal of attention by scanning and reading their environment, and is good at picking up the moods and concerns of both individuals and larger audiences. He then will hone his actions and words to suit the situation.

A charismatic leader uses a wide range of methods to manage his image. He may engender trust through visible self-sacrifice and taking personal risks in the name of his beliefs. He will show great confidence in his followers. He is very persuasive and makes very effective use of body language as well as verbal language. He also makes effective use of storytelling, including the use of symbolism and metaphor. Many politicians use a charismatic style, as do religious leaders, and cult leaders.

Participative or Democratic Leadership Style (Let's work together to solve this. . .)

This style involves the leader including one or more colleagues in the decision making process (determining what to do and how to do it). However, the leader maintains the final decision making authority. Using this style is not a sign of weakness, rather it is a sign of strength that your colleagues will respect.

This style is normally used when you have part of the information, and your colleagues have other parts. Remember that a leader is not expected to know everything — this is why he employs knowledgeable and skilful team members. Using this style is of mutual benefit as it allows leaders to become part of the team and allows them to make better decisions.

Democratic Leadership

In the democratic style, the leader involves the people in the decision-making, although the process for the final decision may vary from the leader having the final say to facilitate consensus in the group.

Democratic decision-making is usually appreciated by the people, especially if they have been used to autocratic decisions with which they disagreed. However, it can be

problematic when there is a wide range of opinions and there is no clear way of reaching an equitable final decision.

Participative Leadership

A participative leader seeks to involve other people in the process. However, as it is within the manager's whim to give or deny control to his or her subordinates, the question of how much influence others are given often varies, depending on the manager's preferences and beliefs and on the type of decision being made. Consequently, a whole spectrum of participation is possible:

- Autocratic decision by leader
- Leader proposes decision, listens to feedback, then decides
- Team proposes decision, leader has final decision
- Joint decision with team as equals
- Full delegation of decision to team

Consultative Leadership

The upward flow of information here is still cautious and optimistic to some degree, although the leader is making genuine efforts

to listen carefully to ideas. Nevertheless, major decisions are still largely centrally made.

Team Leadership

The team leader leads by positive example and endeavours to foster a team environment in which all team members can reach their highest potential, both as team members and as people. He encourages the team to reach team goals as effectively as possible, while also working tirelessly to strengthen the bonds among the various members. He normally forms and leads some of the most productive teams.

Affiliative Leadership

The affiliative leader creates people connections and thus harmony within the organization. It is a very collaborative style which focuses on emotional needs over work needs. When done badly, it avoids emotionally distressing situations such as negative feedback. Done well, it is often used alongside visionary leadership.

It is best used for healing rifts and getting through stressful situations as it has a positive impact on climate.

Country Club Leadership

The country club leader uses reward power to maintain discipline and to encourage the team to accomplish its goals. Conversely, he is almost incapable of employing the more punitive coercive and legitimate powers. This inability results from fear that using such powers could jeopardize relationships with the other team members.

Benevolent Authoritative Leadership

When the leader adds concern for people to an authoritative position, a “benevolent dictatorship” is formed. The leader now uses rewards to encourage appropriate performance and listens more to concerns lower down the organization, although what they hear is often optimistic, being limited to what their subordinates think that the boss wants to hear. Although there may be some delegation of decisions, almost all major decisions are still made centrally.

Quiet Leadership

The approach of a quiet leader is the antithesis of the classic charismatic leader in that he bases his success not on ego and force of character but on his thoughts and actions.

Although he is strongly task-focused, he neither bullies nor is unnecessarily unkind and may persuade people through rational argument and a form of benevolent transactional leadership.

Coaching Leadership

The coaching leader connects needs to organizational goals, holding long conversations that reach beyond the workplace, helping people find strengths and weaknesses and tying these to career aspirations and actions. He is good at delegating challenging assignments, demonstrating faith that demands justification and which leads to high levels of loyalty. This style is best used when individuals need to build long-term capabilities. It has a highly positive impact on the climate.

Pace Setting Leadership

The pace setting leader builds challenge and exciting goals for people, expecting excellence and often exemplifying it himself. He identifies poor performers and demands more of them. If necessary, he will roll up his sleeves and rescue the situation himself. He tends to be low on guidance, expecting people to know what to do. He gets short term results but over

the long term this style can lead to exhaustion and decline. Done badly, it lacks emotional intelligence, especially self-management. It is best used for results from a motivated and competent team.

Situational Leadership

When a decision is needed, an effective leader does not just fall into a single preferred style. Factors that affect situational decisions include motivation and capability of followers. This is affected by factors within the particular situation. The relationship between a leader and his followers may be another factor that affects leader behaviour as much as it does follower behaviour.

The leader's perception of the follower and the situation will affect what they do rather than the truth of the situation. The leader's perception of themselves and other factors such as stress and mood will also modify the leader's behaviour.

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leader puts passion and energy into everything. He cares about you and wants you to succeed. It starts with the development of a vision, a view of the future that will excite and convert potential followers.

This vision may be developed by the leader, by the team or may emerge from a broad series of discussions. The next step, which is ongoing, is to constantly sell the vision. This takes energy and commitment, as few people will immediately buy into a new vision, and some will join the show much more slowly than others. Personal integrity is a critical part of the package that he is selling as, in effect, he is selling himself as well as his vision. The final stage is to remain upfront and central during the action. The transformational leader is always visible and will stand up to be counted rather than hide behind his troops. He shows by his attitudes and actions how everyone else should behave. He also makes continued efforts to motivate and rally his followers, constantly doing the rounds, listening, soothing and enthusing.

Delegative or Free Reign Leadership Style (You two take care of the problem while I go. . .)

In this style, the leader allows the team members to make the decisions. However, the leader is still responsible for the decisions that are made. This is used when team members are able to analyze the situation and determine what needs to be done and how to do it. You

cannot do everything! You must set priorities and delegate certain tasks.

This is not a style to use so that you can blame others when things go wrong, rather this is a style to be used when you fully trust and have confidence in the people below you. Do not be afraid to use it; however, use it wisely!

Laissez-Faire Leadership

The laissez-faire leader minimizes his involvement in decision-making, and hence allows people to make their own decisions, although he may still be responsible for the outcome.

Laissez-faire works best when people are capable and motivated in making their own decisions, and where there is no requirement for central coordination.

Impoverished Leadership

An impoverished leader uses a "delegate and disappear" management style. Since he is not committed to either task accomplishment or maintenance; he essentially allows his team to do whatever it wishes and prefers to detach himself from the team process by allowing the team to suffer from a series of power struggles.

As you can see, the three styles of leadership (authoritarian, democratic and free reign) are comprised of numerous types of leadership. While some of them appear to be quite appropriate, others should definitely never be used if you intend to become a good leader. We have nevertheless listed many of them in order to provide you with an idea of scenarios that should be used and those that should be avoided.

It is now up to you to develop your qualities and character traits and discover which style of leadership works best for you. Remember that good leaders use a combination of all three styles, with one of them normally dominant, while bad leaders tend to stick with only one style.

How to Become a Leader

As you can see from the numerous studies cited in this report, there is no fast and easy way to become a leader. While a person may possess many of the qualities desirable to be a leader, this does not necessarily mean that the person is a leader.

Many courses exist to train people in becoming leaders, the most famous one having been developed by Dale Carnegie. His book,

How to Win Friends and Influence People, first published in 1937, has sold over 15 million copies globally and was one of the first bestselling self-help books ever published. It served as the basis for the development of a training course on leadership.

In his book, Carnegie explains the fundamental techniques of handling people, ways to make people like you, tricks to persuade people, methods to change people without resentment and dozens of other tips for successful interpersonal relations.

The book has four major sections which provide advice and tips on how to become a better person and possibly a good leader. The core principles of each section are quoted below.

Fundamental Techniques in Handling People

1. Don't criticize, condemn, or complain.
2. Give honest and sincere appreciation.
3. Arouse in the other person an eager want.

Six Ways to Make People Like You

1. Become genuinely interested in other people.
2. Smile.

3. Remember that a person's name is to him the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
4. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
5. Talk in the terms of the other person's interest.
6. Make the other person feel important and do it sincerely.

Twelve Ways to Win People to Your Way of Thinking

1. Avoid arguments.
2. Show respect for the other person's opinions. Never tell someone they are wrong.
3. If you're wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically.
4. Begin in a friendly way.
5. Start with questions the other person will answer yes to.
6. Let the other person do the talking.
7. Let the other person feel the idea is his/hers.
8. Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view.

9. Sympathize with the other person.
10. Appeal to noble motives.
11. Dramatize your ideas.
12. Throw down a challenge and don't talk negatives when the person is absent; talk about only positives.

Be a Leader: How to Change People Without Giving Offence or Arousing Resentment

1. Begin with praise and honest appreciation.
2. Call attention to other people's mistakes indirectly.
3. Talk about your own mistakes first.
4. Ask questions instead of directly giving orders.
5. Let the other person save face.
6. Praise every improvement.
7. Give them a fine reputation to live up to.
8. Encourage them by making their faults seem easy to correct.
9. Make the other person happy about doing what you suggest.

Being a Leader in a PIPSC Environment

Now that we have described what leadership is and what qualities are required to become a good leader and provided you with some advice on how to become a leader, let's take a look at how you can apply this into your everyday role as a steward or as a member of a PIPSC constituent body.

Giving Feedback

Whether you recognize it or not, as a steward you are constantly providing feedback to your members. How you provide that feedback will often spell the difference between success and failure.

Silence. When you don't give an answer to your colleagues or members, you are actually encouraging a decrease in their performance as well as their confidence over the long term. They don't know if their actions are appropriate. Silence can create paranoia.

- Always reply to members when they contact you. If you do not know the answer to the question being asked, let the member know that you are researching the issue and will get back to him.

Negative Criticism. When trying to stop unwanted behaviour or results, you may criticize a colleague. This often hurts the relationship you have with them. Their confidence decreases, they may start to avoid you and other “good” behaviours of the member are affected. This can overpower all other feedback given.

- When working on a group project, don't criticize. Rather, offer constructive suggestions. Praise the members who have contributed something even though it may not be what you wanted or expected.

Advice. When you tell a member what behaviours or results you want and how you would like them done, you improve the member's confidence and your relationship with them. Increased performance will be the result.

- When working in a group, clearly explain what is expected of each person so there is no misunderstanding.

Positive Reinforcement. This takes the advice feedback one step further by identifying how much you would appreciate the member's assistance in reaching the desired behaviours or results. This kind of feedback will give you the best results by increasing the motivation, confidence and performance of your member.

- If you are working in a group, and ask a member to complete a task, let him know that you are asking him to do this because he is good at this type of job, or because you know he can get the required information, etc.

Advice and positive reinforcement should be the only types of feedback you give to a member. Try relating your feedback to the action, behaviour or result you want. Consider your timing. Try to give feedback before the event in the form of advice, or afterwards in the form of positive reinforcement.

Accepting Feedback

Knowing how to accept feedback is another leadership skill that will help you become a better leader. Resist the temptation to resist the feedback. Don't explain, defend or deny. Listen silently to try to understand clearly what the other person is saying. You don't have to agree with the feedback you get, but be receptive to getting the feedback.

- If a member of a working group you are leading comes to you and gives you feedback on something he is required to do, listen carefully. Stay open to new ideas and suggestions.

Listening

The ability to listen well is a cornerstone of good leadership. To listen well:

- Stop talking. Before you speak, remember that people are more receptive to your input if they feel you have a clear understanding of their situation.
- Watch for non-verbal clues. Most of the meaning of our messages is in the vocal and visual components. Sighs and slumped shoulders may mean depression. Animated expressions and gestures usually mean excitement. Ask yourself “Do the non-verbal clues match the words?”
- Give visual feedback with non-verbal expressions and gestures (e.g. nodding). These let your speaker know that you are listening and understanding what they have to say.
- Be patient. Our desire to provide quick fix solutions to the problems of others puts up roadblocks. “You don’t have to finish, I know what you are going to say” is a sure way of letting the speaker know that you have little time or confidence in their ability to solve their problem.
- Don’t mentally argue. If you are developing arguments in your mind as the speaker

talks, you are probably missing much of the message.

- Use reflective listening skills. Use paraphrasing to let the speaker know that you have heard.
- Acknowledge their ideas. This doesn't necessarily mean that you agree with the speaker, but it does mean that you feel their ideas are worth listening to.
- Keep alert. Effective listening requires energy and concentration. Avoid distractions.
- Listen carefully when a member comes to you with a problem. Do not think about finding a solution to his problem while he is speaking. Listen and summarize orally what he has said, then start thinking about potential solutions to his particular problem.

Delegating Leadership

To decide whether you can delegate tasks to others, ask yourself:

- What am I doing now that I would like to see someone else do?
- Which skills among the members of the group can be used more effectively, by giving someone more responsibility?
- What could I do if I had more free time?

Once you have decided to delegate, you need to:

- Know your members, what they have done and what they can do.
- Listen to the membership so you can pick up information about what they want to do.
- Let them know that you are willing to share authority.
- Give them a purpose so members know why the task is important.
- Give credit where credit is due and show appreciation for their efforts.
- Don't try to do everything yourself. Gather members around you who have the qualities required to complete a project and delegate parts of the work to those best suited to accomplish them.

Handling Group Discussions

The majority of the work accomplished at a meeting is done through group discussion. This is significant as discussions are a time where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to a group. Group discussions are usually more beneficial to your organization than when a single individual is working on a project. The ideas generated within a group

often don't come alive when one person is working alone. However, discussions within a meeting is also the time when frustrations build.

How can you avoid being frustrated yet still have a productive meeting? Identify why the group is having a discussion. There are three reasons to have a discussion: to gather information, to exchange ideas and to make decisions. If you know why you are discussing an issue, it's easier to participate, keep the discussion on track and get results.

Be aware of how the discussion is progressing. Two things can be happening during a discussion: the development of information, ideas or issues, or the evaluation of information, ideas or issues.

Usually, developing and evaluating get mixed together. This is when you run into problems like discussions that go around in circles and frustrate participants. To avoid this scenario, you need to develop the information, idea or issue. Don't let people evaluate at this stage or it will discourage participation. Once the ideas are out, start evaluating. This progression keeps the group moving forward and avoids having a similar debate for each idea or comment.

Keeping development and evaluation separate also helps in avoiding the trap of the first idea or the last idea (the survivor of a lengthy frustrating debate) being the best idea. If you only have one idea, of course it looks like the best idea.

- Encourage group discussions as they generate ideas. Remember to keep the discussion focussed on the topic at hand. List all ideas before debating them.

Handling Difficult Conversations

The best intentions of a leader for holding a meeting within a reasonable time frame can be destroyed if members put obstacles in the way.

An **orator** is an able speaker who likes to practise his speaking skills and may tend to talk for a long time. The leader must judge how much time is enough for this person and then get his attention by saying something like “Excuse me, Jack, but we’re running short on time and several other members have some points they would like to make. We’d all appreciate it if you could please wind up your comments in the next minute or two.”

A **wanderer** tends to bring up an entirely unrelated topic. A leader can get the meeting back on track by saying something like “Linda,

I'm sorry to break in like this, but I think you are getting away from the subject. Remember we'd like to settle the issue of xxx and we would appreciate it if you could confine your remarks to that subject. Thanks."

The **repeater** talks numerous times on the same subject while other members haven't had a chance to talk. You can give the person a rest and the others a chance to talk by saying something similar to, "Dave, before we hear from you again, I would like to hear how Debbie and Rick feel about this subject. Thank you." An alternative could be to go around the table in turn and ask the others to comment on the subject.

An **interrupter** tends to interrupt others as they are speaking on a subject. The leader may have to interrupt the interrupter by saying "Before you say anything more, Jason, please wait until Shirley has finished and then you will have an opportunity to make your point. Thank you."

- Keep control of the meeting. Allow everyone to speak. Don't let one person hog the microphone. Make sure everyone stays on topic. Try to keep interruptions to a minimum. By following these tips, your meeting will stay focussed and should be productive.

Conclusion

Good leaders are **made**, not born. Good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience. If you have the desire and willpower, you can become an effective leader.

“Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and discipline . . . Reliance on intelligence alone results in rebelliousness. Exercise of humaneness alone results in weakness. Fixation on trust results in folly. Dependence on the strength of courage results in violence. Excessive discipline and sternness in command result in cruelty. When one has all five virtues together, each appropriate to its function, then one can be a leader.”

— Sun Tzu¹

1. An ancient Chinese military general, strategist and philosopher, Sun Tzu is believed to have authored the Art of War, an influential book on military strategy. He would have lived during the period ranging between 722 and 481 BC.

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