

Types of leadership styles

Here are 10 of the most common leadership styles, including benefits, challenges and examples of each:

1. 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're skilled in setting 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.

2. Visionary leadership style

- ▶ Visionary leaders have 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 corporate restructuring.

3. 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 style is an excellent leadership style for organizations of any industry and size but is especially prevalent within nonprofits. These types of leaders are exceptionally skilled in building employee morale and helping people re-engage with their work.

4. Autocratic leadership style

- ▶ Also called the “authoritarian style of leadership,” this type of leader is someone who is focused primarily on results and efficiency. They often make decisions alone or with a small, trusted group and expect employees to do exactly what they’re asked. It can be helpful to think of these types of leaders as military commanders.
- ▶ Autocratic style can be useful in organizations with strict guidelines or compliance-heavy industries. It can also be beneficial when used with employees who need a great deal of supervision—such as those with little to no experience. However, this leadership style can stifle creativity and make employees feel confined.

5. Laissez-faire or hands-off leadership style

- ▶ 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 does not spend their time intensely managing employees, they often have more time to dedicate to other projects.
- ▶ Managers may adopt this leadership style when all team members are highly experienced, well-trained and require little oversight. However, it can also 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.

6. Democratic or participative leadership style

- ▶ The democratic style (also called the “participative style”) is a combination of the autocratic and laissez-faire types of leaders. A democratic leader is someone who asks for input and considers feedback from their team before making a decision. Because team members feel their voice is heard and their contributions matter, a democratic leadership style is often credited with fostering higher levels of employee engagement and workplace satisfaction.
- ▶ Because this type of leadership drives discussion and participation, it’s an excellent style for organizations focused on creativity and innovation—such as the technology industry.

7. Pacesetter leadership style

- ▶ The pacesetter style is one of the most effective for achieving fast results. Pacesetter leaders are primarily focused on performance, often set high standards and hold their team members accountable for achieving their goals. While the pacesetter leadership style is motivational and helpful 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.

8. Transformational leadership style

- ▶ The transformational style is similar to the coach style in that it focuses on clear communication, goal-setting and employee motivation. However, instead of placing the majority of the energy into each employee's individual goals, the transformational leader is driven by a commitment to organizational objectives.
- ▶ Because transformational leaders spend much of their time on overarching goals, this style of leading is best for teams that can handle many delegated tasks without constant supervision.

9. Transactional leadership style

- ▶ A transactional leader is someone who is laser-focused on performance, similar to a pacesetter. Under this leadership style, the manager establishes predetermined incentives—usually in the form of monetary reward for success and disciplinary action for failure. Unlike the pacesetter leadership style, though, transactional leaders are also focused on mentorship, instruction and training to achieve goals and enjoy the rewards.
- ▶ While this type of leader is great for organizations or teams tasked with hitting specific goals, such as sales and revenue, it's not the best leadership style for driving creativity.

10. Bureaucratic leadership style

- ▶ Bureaucratic leaders are similar to autocratic leaders in that they expect their team members to follow the rules and procedures precisely as written.
- ▶ The bureaucratic style focuses on fixed duties within a hierarchy where each employee has a set list of responsibilities, and there is little need for collaboration and creativity. This leadership style is most effective in highly regulated industries or departments, such as finance, [health care](#) or government.

The importance of developing a leadership style

- ▶ In an Indeed survey, 55% of employers cited asking about leadership skills in an interview as the most accurate evaluation of a candidate's ability to succeed in a role. 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.

References

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