

## Top Tips for Developing Your Leadership Style

Developing your leadership skills is part and parcel of the management journey. Central to this is your ability to adopt and adapt different leadership styles to make them work for you. These tips will help you to get started.

### Be authentic

It is important to be yourself, or rather a more professional version of yourself at work. If you are not naturally authoritative, suddenly dishing out orders to your team will seem very strange and is unlikely to earn you the respect of those you manage. Instead, **think about your natural manner, strengths and skills**, and how you can use the authority you have in a positive way.

### Be flexible

Different situations will require you to adopt (subtly) different leadership approaches. For example, if you are leading a change initiative, it is important to be inspiring and engaging, in order to ensure others' buy-in and commitment. In a crisis situation, however, you will need to be far more directive in order to convey an appropriate sense of urgency. As well as **adapting your style to different situations**, you should also **be sensitive to the motivations, needs and personalities of individual team members**.

### Be aware of different approaches

While everyone has their own take on leadership, there are some commonly recognised leadership styles. Even if you find you naturally move between different styles, it is helpful to know what the different approaches which are often talked about are:

- **autocratic** - a traditional top-down approach, which is highly directional
- **democratic** - a more consultative and participative leadership style
- **transformational** - a leadership style that is concerned with vision and driving change
- **collaborative** - a leadership approach based on a willingness to share knowledge, power and credit
- **servant leadership** - based on a sense of community and shared decision-making
- **transactional leadership** - a behaviour-based approach that is concerned with the interaction between leader and followers

If you are a relatively new manager, it may be worth talking to a more experienced manager or leader about their experiences. What leadership styles and approaches have they employed? Which have worked for them, and what advice could they pass on to you?

### Use your emotional intelligence

Being emotionally intelligent means tuning in to what is happening in your environment, and being self-aware. Of course we all have a certain ability to identify with the situations and concerns of others, but **there are times when it is particularly important to be emotionally aware**. If there is a threat of redundancy in your department, for example, you will wish to show empathy for your team members. Be careful, however, not to offer false hope or to make assurances that cannot be met.

### Strike a balance

When leading others, you will need to balance the motivations, needs and wants of individual team members against what is best for your department or the wider organisation. When deciding on the most appropriate leadership approach, you will need to consider:

- the nature of the work you and your team are doing
- the different skills, experience and personalities within your team
- your departmental or organisational culture

### Don't be scared to experiment

One of the best ways of finding what leadership style suits you and when, is **trying out some different approaches**. A leadership training course can offer a safe environment in which to do this. Volunteering to lead an initiative or special

interest group within or outside your organisation may also offer you further opportunities to work on different leadership approaches.

### **Seek feedback**

It can be hard to be objective about your own leadership style and how well it is working, so **seeking out constructive feedback is a good idea**. This could be through an online assessment tool or by asking senior colleagues for their observations. You may even wish to solicit the opinions of your team members at individual catch-up meetings or as part of a more formal performance review process. Answers to questions such as 'what else do you need me to do?' or 'what could I do differently to help support you in your role?' can be quite revealing in terms of **how you might adapt or fine tune your leadership approach**.

### **Ask for formal support**

If leading a team is relatively new to you, you may feel daunted at times as you tackle the many tasks, issues and demands that are part of managerial life. It can be useful to **have someone you can call on for some external support**, e.g. a coach or mentor, to help you benchmark your progress, talk through your leadership ideas with, and **identify areas for ongoing development**.

### **Related Items**

#### **Related Resources**

- An Introduction to Leadership Styles
- How To Adapt Your Leadership Style
- My Leadership Style