



Six Leadership Styles

According to Daniel Goleman, there are six leadership styles which are associated with the various elements of emotional intelligence in different combinations.

The art of leadership is to master all of the styles and use each style appropriately as the circumstances demand, just as a multilingual person would speak in the language appropriate to the country or audience.

Goleman's six styles are as follows – and I have added my own name to describe each style in vivid terms:

The Coercive Style

'The Dictator'

This is the dominant 'macho' leadership style. It is appropriate in emergencies and severe situations, but otherwise will tend to disempower and disillusion subordinates.

The Authoritative Style

'The Visionary'

This style focuses on the goal or vision of the future and inspires others to follow. This is appropriate when a new direction is required or a clarification of the goals to be achieved.

The Affiliative Style

'The People Person'

Here there is a focus on people, teambuilding, bonding and forging alliances. This style is useful in creating teams or for healing dysfunctional relationships.

The Democratic Style

'The Listener'

This is a useful style to adopt when attempting to involve a wide range of people in decision making or building a consensus.

The Pacesetting Style

'The Superman/Superwoman'

Using this style, the leader sets an example by working to extremely high standards of

performance. This is useful to raise the stakes when a competent and motivated team is working well.

The Coaching Style

'The Nurturer'

This style focuses on helping to improve people's strengths, and is especially useful in building skills to develop managers and future leaders.

Most people will tend towards one particular style as their 'natural' or default style, but be comfortable and competent in two or three different roles. The complete leader, however, will be 'fluent in all languages', a master of all six, using them skilfully as appropriate, being one minute a 'dictator' and later a 'listener' as events require.

All of these styles are useful at different times, but used at the wrong time they can be disastrous, for example, too much listening when immediate action is required, or only providing a vision when a team needs building or rebuilding.

Four of the styles will consistently improve the 'climate' of an organisation, (ie people's commitment, confidence, creativity and clarity of purpose), whereas two are potentially damaging to this climate and must therefore be used sparingly. The two potentially negative styles are the Coercive (Dictator) and Pacesetting (Superman/woman) styles.

Research has shown that it is the Authoritative [Visionary] Style of leadership that has the greatest consistently positive effect on the 'climate' of an organisation.

"The best leaders don't know just one style of leadership – they are skilled at several, and have the flexibility to switch between styles as the circumstances dictate."

- Daniel Goleman