



After laying the conceptual foundations of leadership and exploring the evolution of theories, it is essential to focus on the different types and styles of leadership that leaders can adopt. Indeed, there is no single style that would be effective in all situations. An effective leader is one who knows how to adapt their approach based on the context, the stakes, and the people they manage.

Kurt Lewin, one of the pioneers of social psychology, identified three main types of leadership as early as the 1930s: the authoritarian style, the democratic style, and the laissez-faire style. The authoritarian leader makes decisions alone, gives precise directives, and expects their collaborators to execute them without discussion. In contrast, the democratic leader encourages participation, solicits opinions, and seeks consensus before making decisions. As for the laissez-faire leader, they intervene little, grant considerable autonomy to their teams, and exert their authority only when necessary. Each of these styles can prove relevant in a given context: authoritarianism may be necessary in emergency situations, democracy is better suited to complex and innovative environments, while laissez-faire is appropriate for highly mature and autonomous teams.

More recently, authors such as Hersey and Blanchard have refined this typology by proposing a situational approach to leadership. Their model distinguishes four styles, based on the maturity level of collaborators:

The directive style, which resembles Lewin's authoritarianism, is recommended for less competent and less motivated collaborators who need guidance and control.

The persuasive style, which combines a strong focus on tasks and relationships, is suited for individuals who are more motivated but still lack skills. The leader explains their decisions and encourages dialogue.

The participative style is appropriate for competent but not yet fully autonomous collaborators. The leader involves them in decisionmaking and delegates certain responsibilities.

Finally, the delegative style is indicated for collaborators who are both competent and motivated. The leader sets objectives and trusts them to achieve them, while remaining available if needed.

The challenge for the leader is thus to diagnose the maturity level of their collaborators and adjust their style accordingly. This implies a good knowledge of their teams, being attentive to signs of progress or regression, and demonstrating flexibility to adapt their posture over time.

Beyond the maturity of collaborators, other contextual factors can influence the appropriate leadership style. The nature of the activity, the degree of uncertainty in the environment, time pressure, and strategic stakes are all parameters to take into account. In the face of a crisis, for example, a directive style is often necessary to reassure, set a course, and make quick decisions. Conversely, in an innovation and transformation context, a participative style will be more effective in stimulating creativity, garnering support, and managing complexity.

Empirical studies have sought to measure the impact of different leadership styles on team performance and engagement. A metaanalysis conducted by psychologist Robert Hogan in 1994 thus showed that the democratic style was associated with greater satisfaction and involvement among collaborators, while the authoritarian style generated more turnover and resistance to change. However, it would be simplistic to conclude that the democratic style is always superior. Other research, such as that by Victor Vroom, highlighted that the optimal style depended on the characteristics of the decision to be made, such as its strategic importance, the required expertise, or the acceptability of possible options.

Ultimately, an effective leader is one who possesses a wide range of styles and knows how to navigate from one to another with agility and discernment. This requires a good selfawareness, understanding ones natural preferences and comfort zones. A leader with a directive temperament must consciously strive to adopt a more participative approach when the situation demands it, and vice versa. It also involves a capacity to finely perceive their environment, detect weak signals, and anticipate changes. Finally, it requires humility to recognize that one does not always have the solution alone, and that collective intelligence is often superior to individual intelligence.

To illustrate the importance of adapting ones leadership style, lets take the example of Dominique, the director of a biotechnology research center. When she assumed her position, she began by adopting a highly participative approach, holding numerous team meetings and brainstorming sessions to define the strategic directions of the laboratory. This phase of intense consultation allowed her to remotivate researchers who previously

felt unheard and to bring forth innovative ideas. However, after a few months, Dominique sensed a certain fatigue setting in and the need to take action to realize the projects. She then adjusted her style towards more directiveness, by setting precise objectives, clarifying the roles of each team member, and establishing regular checkin points. This alternation between participation and framing proved fruitful, combining team engagement with efficiency in implementation.