

A No-Doze Leadership Class: Outline For A Practical Class On Leadership Styles

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Here's a leadership class I do that no one can sleep through ... unless they can doze on their feet like giraffes. Besides keeping people active, I've found it creates a safe forum to discuss people's differences. It also legitimizes their differences. I wait until the honeymoon is over to do this exercise, as the better people know each other, the better the information people receive.

STEPS

1. Outline a long continuum line with two ends defined as something akin to:

- (extreme far left side) - **water** (or some other funny name like "marshmallow" or "amoeba") - *"I don't often voice strong opinions, particularly if I think it will cause hurt or be a waste of time. I put others before myself pretty consistently. I'm very flexible. You probably don't really know where I stand on issues, or what I think about you, unless you ask very directly. It's hard for me to state my own needs."*
- (extreme far right side): -**wind**- (or some other funny name like "gun slinger" or "pitbull") *"I state my opinion and take stands easily. People know exactly what I think, feel and want. I'm an open book, and you don't even have to read the words because I tell them to you, especially if you try to cross one of my lines. Fight or flight? Let's get real—I stay right here and tell it like it is. I don't have a problem saying "my way or the highway" if need be."*

2. Students (and other instructors if you choose) place themselves anywhere on the continuum where they view themselves. Call the precise middle out of bounds.

3. Ask the group if they are willing to get and give some information about how they are being perceived on their social/leadership style. Remind them that this will be **information, not definition**. If the answer is no, skip this step and simply do the exercise as they see themselves. If the answer is yes, ask those who want to, **one at a time**, to step out of the line and move people to where they see them on the continuum. Then step back into their last placement in line and have someone else take a turn. I've found it works best if people don't feel they need to justify why they moved anyone yet. It can all be done silently or with a few words like "I'm going to put you here."

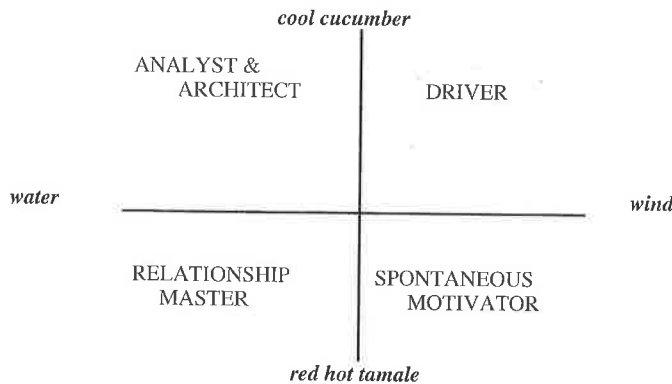
4. After those who want to have taken their turn moving people, tell everyone to go stand in the place where the most people placed them. If someone was moved all over the continuum, average it out or even do an informal vote of where that person is generally viewed by this particular group.

5. Without moving from their place in this left/right line, next have people move themselves along a second continuum with the far ends of up and down defined as:

- up—emotionally cool (*cool cucumbers*)
- down—emotionally hot (*red hot tamales*)

These refer to how the person feels they are internally. People can then move individuals to how they "see" them.

6. At this point everyone will be standing somewhere in one of four quadrants: Try to explain the factors of the continuum in a non-judgmental way or else everyone will be on top of each other in the middle.



7. Explanation of styles

- Talk about leadership strengths, weaknesses and functions of each quadrant; (see chart at end of article).
- Since people likely have another comfortable quadrant, ask them to move there and discuss this new view.
- Finally, ask them to go to the quadrant that is the hardest for them to be in and let people talk about this.
- I find it is important in the exercise to let students know what your dominant style is (or have them place you). This demonstrates that instructors have different style preferences too but may alter functions depending on context and group and their role in the instructor team.
- If someone is way out in the corner of one particular quadrant, it indicates, at least in this situation, they are

<p style="text-align: center;">ARCHITECTS & ANALYSTS</p> <p><i>Emphasizes meaning and conceptual functions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + information and opinion seekers + good at analysis and process observation + prefer to make decisions based on facts + prefer as much information as possible before deciding + can come out with totally off the wall solutions, that work + translate feelings and experiences into ideas <p>Δ can be slow in making decisions or dogged in the facts Δ can happily leave most decisions to others and focus on only one decision Δ have to watch out for non-involvement or unrealistic ideas if they get into their world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a leader has this style, honor their need for information while also requesting them to tell you how they will decide or delegate and when. <p><i>Some Affects on Group</i></p> <p>Architects and analysts are often in the minority but the function in essential. If a group doesn't pay attention to this area, it will miss out on significant learning that comes from observation and analysis. The group may also be missing important process steps or other ways to view a situation. Too much of this style in a group and the group may not move on much, because the discussion, laissez-faire attitude and analysis allows opportunity to pass.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DRIVERS</p> <p><i>Emphasizes action and directing functions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + information and opinion givers + decision making is easy for them + often the keeper of the vision in a group + great at taking a stand, being direct and making things happen + usually not too shaken by critical feedback <p>Δ often will urge "let's decide" as indecision can drive them crazy Δ will sometimes decide without input from others and step on toes Δ make mistakes when moving too quickly without adequate info Δ can come across as too impersonal and lose connection with their group Δ have to be careful not to "over-lead" if strongly in this quadrant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a leader has this style, be as direct as possible. Bring problems and opinions to them as they expects this. <p><i>Some Affects on Group</i></p> <p>If a group does not have drivers, they must pick up driver functions or they can fail to meet far reaching goals. Mature drivers are non-reactionary individuals with much ability in the other quads and help ground a group. When this style is not mature, there may be too much individuality or structure. Turf battles or a lack of member autonomy and collaboration ensue.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">RELATIONSHIP MASTERS</p> <p><i>Emphasizes caring function</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + excellent at building and sustaining community + work well on a team + great at building rapport, consensus, commitment, seeking feedback + support, praise, are concerned + display high regard for other's wishes, viewpoints and actions <p>Δ may not take an unpopular stance if it puts a relationship at risk Δ can put so much emphasis on relationship that task and decision-making fall behind Δ can forget or down play their own needs, to their detriment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a leader has this style, you may need to ask them to be more specific in outlining their expectations. Encourage critical feedback from them and tell them when you want to know what they think and want. <p><i>Some Affects on Group</i></p> <p>You cannot have too much caring and respect as part of your capacity-it is the connective glue and essential for a functional group. As a leader, it is powerful when combined with other quadrant functions. If it is the only style a group has, the group may not take enough risks or make enough decisions to move forward significantly. The group may also avoid conflict to the extent that there is lack of depth in genuine connection and innovation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SPONTANEOUS MOTIVATORS</p> <p><i>Emphasizes emotional stimulation function</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + often voice their ideas and supply passion to follow those ideas; energizers + great at motivating people as they possess a sense of mission or vision + good at energetic dialogues with other group members <p>Δ can be emotionally bound to their ideas; objectivity can be their biggest challenge Δ can create a highly emotionally charged climate if they put too much emphasis on challenging others and confronting assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a leader has this style, know your own stance/position and don't be afraid to voice it. Ask them to give concrete examples to back up their viewpoints. <p><i>Some Affects on Group</i></p> <p>Spontaneous motivators are often light bulbs. Groups need this function to sparkle, create, prod, stir the pot and impassion. A group without this style may be functional, but somewhat lackluster. When mature people with this style can choose to be detached or attached and monitor their emotional involvement. This is highly effective. If too much of this style is present in a leader, or when not mature, a group can be overly reactive, or so impassioned around their ideals, that they loose touch with other realities. Interestingly many charismatic leaders and cult leader, come from this quadrant.</p>

heavily oriented to one role. What are the benefits and drawbacks to this?

8. Developing Yourself as a Leader. Everyone returns to their main quadrant and the discussion part of the class begins. Some ideas:

- Have people sit down with the others in their main quadrant and talk about what it is like to lead from their place. Then have them report this back to the larger group.
- Have the quadrants talk to each other about what it is like to follow that style of leadership; what they want more of or less of from that style when leading; what they like about that style.
- Tie this to John McConnell's article on the study of Four Functions of Leadership (*Newsletter Oct. 1996*) — what quadrant does more of which function?
- Come up with leadership situations where certain functions are critical.

Summary

The four quadrants represent key aspects needed in leadership and functional groups. Leaders come from all quadrants. Preferred style is less important than maturity of that style and the ability to move around the quadrants as

needed. A goal of developing yourself as a leader is to be aware of your comfortable quadrants and less comfortable quadrants. This can help you know your strengths and work on your weaker areas, listen to other ways of doing things, try new things and seek appropriate help. People need to lead with a style that fits them, fits the situation, and fits the group. If groups are missing people in some of the quads or have everyone bunched in one or two, have the group discuss what the implications of this might be.

This exercise often acts as a segue for subsequent discussions about such topics as gender and leadership styles; how your role and situation can dictate your style; what styles society (and NOLS) views as good leadership; whether it is possible to be a good leader if you reside mainly in one quadrant; what happens to leadership styles under stress, etc.

Reference

- Pfeiffer, J.W., & Jone, J.E. (eds.), (1972-1980) *The Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*. San Diego, CA: University Associates.

