

## Leadership Styles

*Read each of the following descriptions of leadership styles. Rank yourself on a scale of 1-10 for each style on the grid attached. If your understanding of that leadership style is different from the one you read here, make a note of it and rank yourself according to your understanding of that style. Be prepared to share your description with the group.*

*The Idealist* is a true believer, led by right ideas. Idealists are valuable because they bring tremendous clarity to the task of leadership. They set precise expectations, according to the idea, they hold dear, and they brook no compromise or lollygagging in implementation. The idea they are devoted to can come from anywhere—from reading, from an example set by someone else, from a set ideology or some life experience.

Idealists are like dogs—their devotion to their ideas makes them models of perseverance and hard work. When Idealists are good communicators, they are terrific motivators, because they fill you with the same excitement that they feel themselves. If your team is up against the wall and needs a do-or-die effort, Idealists are great.

Idealists can run into problems, however. What if their ideas suck? What if the clarity and beauty they perceive in the idea isn't apparent to anyone else? Idealists can become nags when the idea becomes the only thing they care about. They find it easy to perceive others as foot-draggers and even saboteurs.

*The Mentor* is a people-builder, a leader who sees it as the primary function to delegate, coach, and develop people until they become, in effect, self-leading. They genuinely care about other people, and want to see good things happen for them. Mentors easily step up to accidental leadership because they are acceptable to everyone and threatening to none.

People like being around this kind of leader, because they generate such positive feelings. Mentors tend to be no doctrinaire, flexible-minded people with an eye fixed on the long term. Because of their gifts of empathy, they are great at cultivating a spirit of customer satisfaction. If you think of the best boss you ever had, chances are you're thinking of a Mentor.

Nevertheless, nobody's perfect, because the fuzzy focus of the Mentor can be inappropriate in an emergency, do-or-die situation. Because they form attachments to some workers, other workers may feel they play favorites. After all, they are only human, and they tend to extend their love to people who are like them. At the remote end of the spectrum, these giving people sometimes burn out and feel that no one ever quite reciprocated with them. Sadly, some of these warm fuzzies go out in a sizzling hissy fit.

The Achiever is the ebullient leader who radiates energy and has a resume as long as a tall man's arm. Achievers are the ultimate motivators and delegators, clear communicators and talented networkers. They get things done, and that is why they get the big money.

*Achievers* are good at getting the best and the most from their teams, because it is almost impossible to say no to them. Achievers are probably the single commonest type tagged for

accidental leadership, because their virtues are so obvious and so attractive to superiors who want results at any cost.

On the downslope, Achievers can sometimes be a little nuts. They are prone to workaholism, which can cause them to crack up and break down, or cause you to do that, if you work for one. Also, because they are so devoted to results, they can trample people in the rush to achieve them. Also again, Achievers radiate such positive energy that they strike normally lackadaisical people as unreal or even phony. A few Achievers are so success-oriented that they have trouble with failure, and turn inside out when things don't go well.

*The Innovator* is the original round peg in the square hole, a person who just can't help seeing things from a slightly different perspective from everyone else. The Innovator's leadership is rooted in creativity and the pursuit of change.

It is not unusual for Innovators to be tagged for accidental leadership, because Innovators attract attention with their ideas. A single idea, folded once and inserted in a suggestion box, has launched many an accidental career.

Innovators have many gifts that blossom in positions of responsibility. They bring energy, intensity, and thoughtfulness to the table. Their ingenuity can change the way a team sees itself and the spirit its members bring to their business. Further, they tend to be tolerant of other people's individuality, because they tend to be such individuals themselves.

Alas, Innovators aren't perfect, either. While they have wonderful high highs, they have low lows to go with them. No one can burn as intensely as they do, day after day. When the ideas don't come, they get depressed. Adversities that other people shrug off easily can flatten them. Worst of all, they need stimulation, and they can feel hemmed in by the policies and procedures that are at the heart of most managerial positions.

*The Synthesizer* is an eclectic, a thinker, a pragmatist, a "whatever works" kind of leader. Synthesizers have the gift of being able to stand back from a problem, survey great amounts of information and multiple points of view, and then determinedly make good decisions. Their great attribute is the ability to examine seemingly unrelated information and discern meaningful patterns in it.

Synthesizers aren't often tagged as accidental leaders because they seldom toot their own horns, and in lowly positions are hard to notice. They do their best work in quiet reflection, away from the give-and-take of meetings and disagreements. Their strong suit as leaders is strategy and tactics. They are careful, reliable, and calm.

The problem with some Synthesizers is that they are too private; they lack daring and are unlikely candidates for motivational speaking. Don't look to a Synthesizer for warmth or support, or for the hard-driving exhibitionism of the Achiever. In fact, there are times when Synthesizers must be led themselves, as when they allow themselves to become too withdrawn, aloof, and disrespectful of the analytical abilities of others.

*The Partner* is somewhat like the Mentor. Both are “people people,” but while the Mentor hands wisdom down to someone younger or less experienced, the Partner is skilled at teaming with peers and working side by side with them. Partners are the consummate team players, conscientious, collaborative, and ego-free.

Think of Partners as football players, the kind that are always available to lend a shoulder, throw a block, do whatever needs doing to move the chains. Partners frequently arise accidentally because their skills and energies are on frequent display and it is impossible to object to their steadiness and modesty. A team led by a Partner will have an invincible spirit and a tight-knit, no-nonsense core.

On the other hand, Partners are prone to accusing others of not being team players and trying to oust them from the team. They may not be the most original people around, and that leads them to undervalue originality. They often insist on doing things all together. When your plane has been struck and is going down in flames is no time to be taking roll call.

*The Enthusiast.* Setting aside brains, a leader can have no more valuable attributes than the ability to communicate energy, and the Enthusiast has this ability in spades. Enthusiasts often become accidental leaders because their infectious passion for the task at hand is apparent to everyone. Even if they are only tagged as interim leaders, their energy as change agents will likely carry the day.

Enthusiasts are a bit like Idealists because they care a great deal about something. But that something is the mission of the group. They are consummate cheerleaders who attach themselves to the mission like barnacles. They are often a lot of fun, and in addition, they are stalwart. Long after everyone else is sick of the mission and wishes it would go away, they will still find it compelling and worthwhile.

So their strength can also be their undoing, as when they are a bad match for their team. Putting an upstart gung-ho leader in charge of a team of been-there, done-that professionals is a recipe for fragging. It takes a lot to get through to some Enthusiasts, but once you hurt their feelings, they are no good to anyone.

*The Advocate* has one of the strongest leadership styles. Advocates take their responsibility very seriously. The mission becomes their client, and they will always see it through to completion. The Advocate is like a fierce guardian who protects the mission along with the team, and is willing to suffer on their behalf.

Advocates are rare birds because they are usually the most mature people in an organization, the people who know the price of things and are willing to write a check. They don't avoid conflict, and they don't mince words. Advocates take the blame when things go wrong, and spread the credit when they go right. Most team members would kill for their Advocate leaders, and the feeling is mutual.

If a team has a task that requires the best effort from everyone, their best chance is with an Advocate at the helm. Contrariwise, the Advocates' intensity is unnecessary through times of

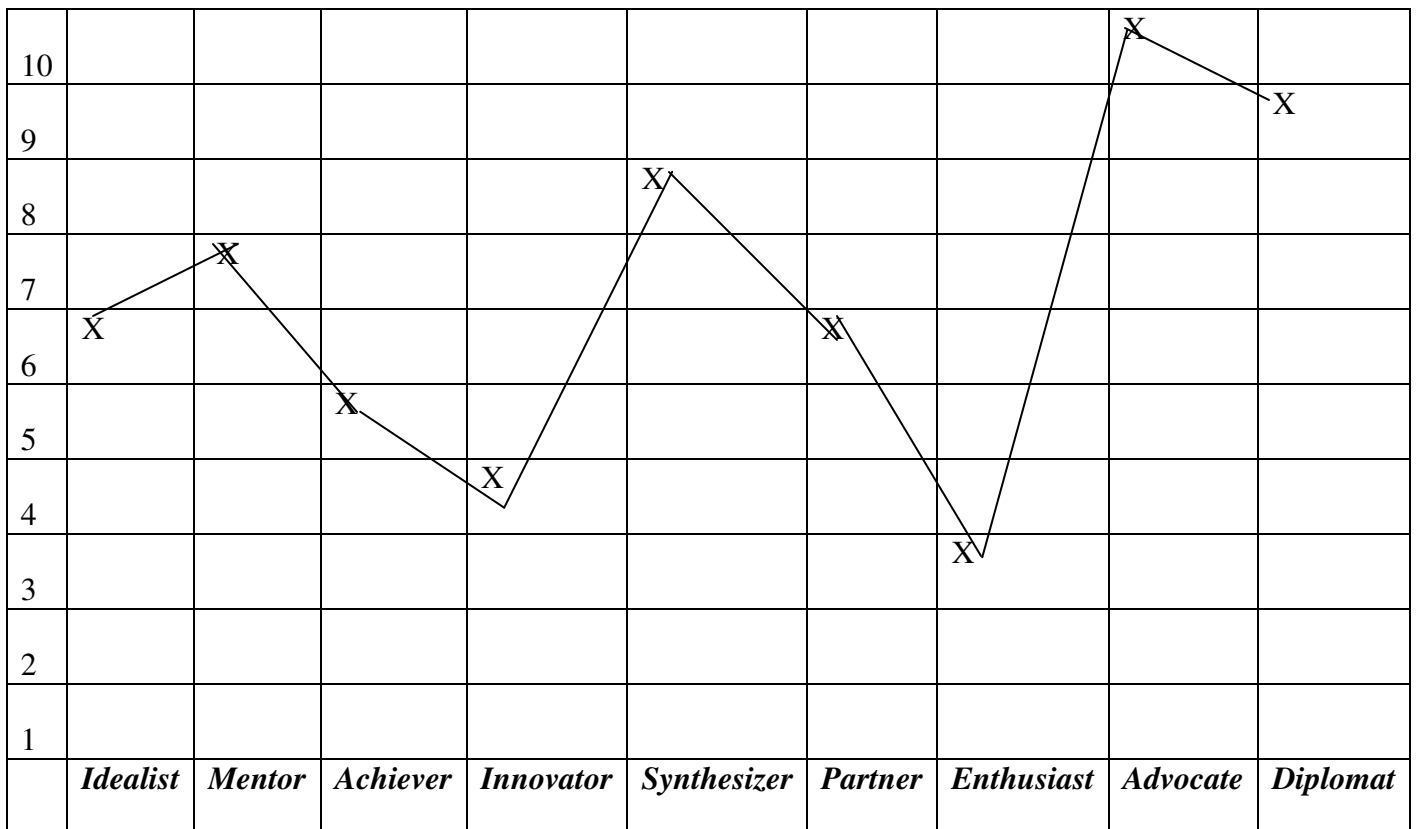
smooth sailing. Finally, their intensity can become a point of contention, as they heartily disdain the gamut of human weaknesses-dishonesty, incompetence, laziness, and complaining.

*The Diplomat*, our final leadership style, is as rare as the Advocate. Diplomats are genuinely wise about working with other people. Diplomats know that the person they are working with is as real as they are, and so they have an extraordinary capacity for respect. They are caring, and patient, and always purposeful. They are superb mediators.

Diplomats have cornered the market on a lot of old-fashioned values: moderation, excellent listening skills, a no threatening, low-key demeanor that puts everyone at ease, and a natural modesty that deflects attention from themselves.

Why don't we stock our organizations with Diplomats? For one thing, because people with gifts like this are rare. For another, most organizations are about as placid as a frog in a blender, and they simply don't have the luxury of putting philosopher-kings in charge, even if they can be found. Diplomats often make better counselors than leaders, because leaders are called to something even more demanding than meditation-action.

Leadership Styles Grid Sample



### Leadership Styles Grid

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1									
	<i><b>Idealist</b></i>	<i><b>Mentor</b></i>	<i><b>Achiever</b></i>	<i><b>Innovator</b></i>	<i><b>Synthesizer</b></i>	<i><b>Partner</b></i>	<i><b>Enthusiast</b></i>	<i><b>Advocate</b></i>	<i><b>Diplomat</b></i>