

DEVELOPING YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE – A WORKSHOP

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ABSTRACT

Definitions of leadership styles are provided and traits of leadership are described. Two assessment exercises are used to help determine both an individual's dominant leadership style and a follower's learning style. After a brief look at the research describing learning styles and leadership attributes, participants will explore their own leadership styles and discuss methods to develop or expand the traits they need to adopt if they are going to take leadership roles in their organizations. It is suggested that 75 minutes be allotted for the workshop. Appendixes include the objectives for this workshop, an expansion of the Blake/Mouton grid, a list of 50 traits and skills for leaders, sample discussion questions, and an evaluation form.

INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

At the present time, the library profession and its organizations are facing tremendous challenges within the workplace and within organizations. The current economic situation makes it very difficult to encourage and sustain membership in professional associations or to attract members to attend conferences. Yet, professional associations are excellent venues to hone leadership skills, and the profession needs strong leaders in hard times.

In 1790, Abigail Adams in a letter to Thomas Jefferson said, "These are the hard times in which genius would wish to live. Great necessities call forth great leaders." Because we are facing hard times, we need great leaders to come forward to create and develop our vision in this time of crisis. Many of these potential leaders are in the embryo stage. How do we find them and nurture them? The question of how one becomes a leader, born or made, continues to be debated. Some paths to leadership include:

- Born into the role: Kings and Queens
- Assassination: Sometimes a military coup, sometimes a crazed person
- Inherit the position: Different from being born into the role because a predecessor paved the way, e.g., your father was Henry Ford.
- Elected to it: By vote of membership may signal charismatic rather than rational choice
- Picked for it: Selection committee approves person.

- Learner leader: Apprentice-role in organization such as vice-president, president-elect.
- Ladder leader: Begin at the bottom, work way to the top.
- Trained for the role if not for a specific position: the symphony director, the football coach, the hospital director who learned, practiced, had their dream fulfilled.
- Title hound: Persons who seek the position's title and may have little idea about complexity of the assignment or whether they have the skills to carry out the leadership role.
- Oldest child: Sibling who tells anyone younger what to do and sometimes how to do it.
- Reluctant leader: Colleagues feel this person can do the job, even if the person is not all that interested.
- Process of elimination leader: No one else is willing.
- Accidental: Dot.com guru who, earning millions, has to manage an onslaught of revenue and employees.
- Sees the need: Someone moving into the vacuum, sometimes for survival.
- Right place at the right time: Self-explanatory – no leader can lead without being in the right place at the right time.

These are categories of leadership, and they are very broad. Our workshop on leadership takes a different and more practical approach, one that encourages identifying leadership styles and the attributes needed for leading. First, one must find persons who are willing to become leaders.

A well-known adage tells us, "The scenery only changes for the lead dog." Not everyone aspires to be a leader, and many remain pleased to let someone else stand in front and view the changing scenery. Some might say that in the library and information sciences profession, there are more who decline to lead than there are those who accept, let alone strive for a leadership role. Always being a follower signals a passive relationship to change, which does not improve our image, nor does it move the information profession forward. This passive stance will not help us improve our organizations nor help in regenerating the information profession.

We will begin with a definition of leadership and an assessment of a personal leadership style. A process is suggested to identify the learning styles of followers as a step toward enlisting them in a vision. Last, a list of leadership traits is provided to guide you in planning and building your leadership skills (Appendix C).

DEFINING LEADERSHIP: WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT ISN'T

Before defining what leadership is, let's define what it is not. Leadership is not management. In a volume of essays on library leadership, Michael Gorman wrote:

The essential differences between management/administration on the one hand and leadership on the other are that the former is concerned with what is and the latter is concerned with what will be. One accepts the *status quo* (and often yearns for the *status quo ante*) and the other dares to imagine and to create the future.^{1(p74)}

He finishes with “the manager/administrator strives to make the returns of the current system as great as possible whereas the leader seeks better alternatives to the current system.”¹⁽⁷⁴⁾ If we follow Gorman’s description, leadership is the imagination to create the future, but what else is it?

Defining leadership is not a simple task because of its many facets. Since we are discussing leadership in professional organizations, we’ll look at the organizational role and the components of that role in helping us understand and develop our leadership skills:

In its essence, leadership in an organizational role involves (1) establishing a clear vision, (2) sharing (communicating) that vision with others so that they will follow willingly, (3) providing the information, knowledge, and methods to realize that vision, and (4) coordinating and balancing the conflicting interests of all members or stakeholders. A leader comes to the forefront in case of crisis, and is able to think and act in creative ways in difficult situations. Unlike management, leadership flows from the core of a personality and cannot be taught, although it may be learnt and may be enhanced through coaching or mentoring.²

Leaders have a variety of styles in their personality core. In order to let you enhance your style, it will be helpful to analyze this style.

ASSESSING YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE (25 MINUTES)

In assessing your leadership style, we will be using a model developed by Blake and Mouton³ whose work tested management of companies. The model can be used to help you determine which of their five styles would be your most likely approach to problem solving. They are:

- Country Club: Thoughtful attention to people so that one has a friendly, comfortable team.
- Impoverished: Minimum effort
- Team: Interdependence though a common stake in the outcome
- Organization Man: Balancing the work with morale of people
- Authority Obedience. Efficiency in operation

Blake and Mouton further describe these leadership styles in terms of how a person in each category would approach motivation, planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and appraisal. For a hint of your style, we will carry out a simple paper and pencil test at this time and discuss the five Blake and Mouton descriptors to help you analyze your responses (see Appendix B)

ASSESSING YOUR FOLLOWERS (5 MINUTES)

For leaders to be successful, they must determine the best way to get their followers on board. If you understand how a person is most comfortable in learning, it will help you understand how they react to challenges in their environment. For this, we will use the learning styles described by Gregorc and Butler⁴. While their learning styles were developed some time ago, as recently as 2006 two researchers reported using Gregorc's Learning Styles Delineator to match these learning styles to student preferences for online instructional methods.⁵ The styles are:

- Concrete sequential: Structured, practical, predictable, thorough (A person who works step-by-step, following specific directions, appreciating order and logical sequence, and preferring a quiet atmosphere.)
- Abstract sequential: Logical, analytical, conceptual, studious (Someone who deals with abstract ideas, theories, hypotheses, logical and rational, excellent decoding abilities with written, verbal, image symbols, views the overall picture or the final product from its inception.)
- Abstract random: Sensitive, sociable, imaginative, expressive (An individual who thinks with emotion, prefers experiencing opportunities within the total environment, likes working in small groups rather than working in isolation, sensitive to human behavior, and pays close attention to the nuances of the atmospheres and the moods of people.)
- Concrete random: Intuitive, original, investigative, able to resolve problems (A person who wants to know how things work, inquisitive and questioning of motives, likes to think out of the box, to experiment, prefers to go from question to answer without explaining the steps in between.)⁵

No person exhibits one of these all of the time, but most people are more comfortable with one rather than the others. If you want to lead concrete sequential persons, give them a checklist of steps to follow. You will want to engage abstract sequential persons in what the task entails and they will help you pick the best solution. Persons who are abstract random should be given the assignment to prepare the room for the meeting because they will make sure the air is neither too hot or cold, the chairs are comfortable, food is provided, and the light level is appropriate. You want to make sure the concrete random members of the audience are given a pencil and paper rather than an electronic device because they probably would take it apart to make sure it works.

Which would you say you are? Which would you say your best friend is? Your boss? Your siblings? This exercise can help you decide the best way to approach those in the group you will be leading. We now need to move to the descriptions and modifiers of leadership styles from the literature.

SOME LEADERSHIP STYLES, DESCRIPTORS, AND MODIFIERS (5 MINUTES)

An often used textbook for teaching management in U.S. library education programs is Stueart and Moran.⁶ In their section on leadership, they present James MacGregor Burns' two types of leadership: *transactional* and *transformational*. Burns describes transactional leaders as persons who exchange service with rewards for subordinates while the transformational leader gets subordinates to “transform their own self-interest into the interest of the larger group.”^{6 (p332)} If you were matching these to Blake/Mouton, you would consider transactional as “country club” and transformation as “team management.”

Fred Fiedler's ^{6(p333), 7} leadership contingency model has three situational variables in place with their possible description in Blake/Mouton:

1. Leader-Member Relations: the degree to which group members like and trust a leader and are willing to follow him or her. (Organization Man)
2. Task Structure: the clarity and structure of the elements of the tasks to be accomplished. (Authority-Obedience)
3. Power Position: the power and authority associated with the leader's position. (Authority-Obedience)

Robert House ^{6 (p333, 335), 8} proposed a path-goal theory of leadership with four types of behaviors which have been matched to the Blake/Mouton categories:

1. Directive leadership occurs when specific advice is given to the group and clear rules and structure are established. (Organization Man) This one is also the most comfortable for Gregoric's concrete sequential learners.
2. Supportive leadership occurs when the needs and well-being of subordinates are considered. (Country Club)
3. Participative leadership occurs when information, power, and influence are shared. Subordinates are allowed to share in the decision making. (Team Management)
4. Achievement-oriented leadership occurs when challenging goals are set and high performance is encouraged. Achievement-oriented leaders show high confidence in subordinates and help them in learning how to achieve high goals. (Team Management)

He felt that any leader could use any of these four types but it depended upon the situation. His two most important were the personal characteristics of the workers

(experience, ability, motivation, needs) and the environmental factors including the nature of the work to be done, the formal authority system, and the work group itself.

LEADERSHIP TRAITS/ATTRIBUTES FROM THE LITERATURE (15 MINUTES)

Does our brief discussion of leadership styles provide an introduction to the traits of leadership? Who has which traits of leadership? Were you born with them or do you need to learn them, and, if you need to learn them, whom will you ask to teach you? If so many are reluctant to step up to a leadership role, it may be that they have little knowledge of what traits they would need to lead or how to go about achieving them. We need to recognize the traits and attributes of leadership and to acknowledge how many and to what degree we have them. Leadership is a complex process. From our earlier definition and from the literature in library and information, we find that “Establishing a clear vision”² is important. Your vision is one that should grab your audience with your picture of what could and what should be. It needs to be sold to your followers so it will transform them and become a unified focus.

Our definition goes on to say “sharing (communicating) that vision with others so that they will follow willingly,”² Communication is the ability to organize meaning for those you are planning to lead. Communication is the articulation by whatever means to share the vision whether it is a picture to take the place or the thousand words. This communication must give them the information they need to accept your vision.

According to our earlier definition, as a leader, one must provide “the information, knowledge, and methods to realize the vision”.² To do this, one needs to recognize what information is needed and what knowledge the followers have or should have to understand the vision. Last they will need to know what must happen to realize that vision. In many cases, the methods have a price tag and where the funding will come from to achieve the vision must have some basis in reality. Lastly in our definition, leaders are responsible for “coordinating and balancing the conflicting interests of all members or stakeholders.”² Finally, “A leader comes to the forefront in case of crisis, and is able to think and act in creative ways in difficult situations. Unlike management, leadership flows from the core of a personality and cannot be taught, although it may be learnt and may be enhanced through coaching or mentoring.”²

Blake and Mouton suggested that their main elements, each of which is an ingredient, a component, a facet of leadership, can be isolated and examined. All six of these elements, *initiative*, *inquiry*, *advocacy*, *conflict resolution*, *decision making*, and *critique*, are vital to effective leadership because no one can compensate for the lack or overabundance of another. They suggest initiative is needed for a

specific activity, to start or to stop it. Inquiry provides the leader with the facts and data needed, as in our earlier definition, to explain the activity or the leader's vision. Advocacy for Blake/Mouton is to take a position usually based on strong convictions. A strong leader resolves conflict with mutual understanding. Leadership applied to decision making relates to performance, and critique is the ability to solve operational problems and may involve giving feedback to one's followers.

Brooke E. Sheldon confirms the attributes of our definition by repeating the Bennis/Nanus qualities of vision and communication. She adds positioning, and self confidence to assess to what degree librarians in leadership positions have these qualities in her book, *Leaders in Libraries: Styles and Strategies for Success*.⁹ In her study she added mentoring as an attribute of leadership. "Increasingly, in all professions, there is a growing awareness that the presence of mentors and role models can be a critical factor in one's career."^{9 (p51)} Mentoring has two sides, the side of getting someone who is a great leader to help you learn to lead and the side of your becoming a mentor to others to help them develop their leadership skills. She suggests that leaders spot and seek out potential leaders to help them succeed.

Another attribute from Fiedler's Leader/Member Relations is trust. The leader must be accountable, predictable, and reliable. Trust is difficult both to earn and to keep, but essential. To build this one is accountable for one's actions. One should follow one leadership style most often or followers will be caught off guard. This gives followers a sense that the leader is reliable.

Self confidence is a very necessary attribute. You need to recognize your strengths and acknowledge and learn to compensate for your weaknesses.^{10 (p58)} A really good way to compensate is to surround yourself with people who do very well what you can't do as well. This is a well known secret to success, but sometimes set aside if someone thinks that surrounding one's self with people who can't do as good a job will somehow make the leader look better. Another key to strong leadership is not worrying about who gets the credit. What is essential is to accomplish the task successfully. Bennis and Nanus also consider the context of leadership as commitment (working at your full potential), complexity (the ability to sort through chaos), and credibility (closely related to trust).^{10 (p6)}

Another facet of leadership is the ability to initiate and sustain change. It is one thing to have agreement that change is necessary and even to implement change. However the real leadership skill is needed to make sure change continues rather than letting the program slide back into past performance.

The leadership traits discussed above are listed in the Appendix. Most of them would be difficult to quantify or evaluate.

HOW DO YOU MAKE IT ALL WORK? (20 MINUTES)

With the results of the self-test to help you identify your dominant leadership style, and a simple way to assess your followers' learning style, you can begin to match your future plans to the attributes you have. This will help you understand what you must gain. To start with a strong mentor to help you is an obvious way to begin, keeping in mind that you must plan to be a mentor to others once you are in your leadership role. Once you have chosen your mentor, reviewed your attributes and the degree to which you have them, you can decide how you will build your skills, remembering that a good way to practice is within your professional association.

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APPENDIX A***Leadership Workshop Objectives***

1. Participants will learn a workshop model for assessing leadership skills and will be able to use the elements to plan similar workshops.
2. Using the parts of the Blake/Mouton Grid, participants will be able to assess their leadership styles.
3. Using Gregorc's Learning Styles, participants will practice assessing the learning styles of others.
4. Participants will analyze the traits which they possess and those they should strive to achieve.
5. Participants will analyze an evaluation instrument for the workshop.

APPENDIX B**Expanded Analysis of Leadership Behavior as Found in Blake/Mouton,
*The Managerial Grid III: The Key to Leadership Excellence***

Country Club Management: The leader considers that the attitudes and feelings of the group are of primary importance and attempts to arrange conditions so that personal and social needs can be satisfied. This person dislikes conflict because it would threaten the warmth and approval of the leader. In sharing sessions, members of the group are encouraged to discuss things they enjoy talking about rather than bringing up controversial issues or differences of opinion. This leader will set a personal opinion aside to avoid negatives, smooth over differences, reduce tension, and alleviate pressures.

Impoverished Management: It is very difficult to consider people with these attributes as leaders because they care little for their co-workers or the task at hand. For all intents and purposes, they are "out of it" remaining withdrawn, only going through leadership motions. They appear to be bored and listless, keeping others at a distance, more bystander than participant. This leader gives broad assignments, avoiding specifics and expecting the group members to know their own tasks and to coordinate with each other.

Team Management: The team leader involves as many as possible in generating strategies for work and achievement allowing interdependence though a common stake in the outcome. Team members are committed to the project and there is a general sense of trust and respect, a "can do" spirit. Any conflict is managed by involving others early so additional information may be gathered and alternatives identified. Pros and cons are weighed. Work requirements are matched with personal capabilities or needs in deciding who is to do what and when.

Organization Management: Adequate performance is possible through balancing both the workload and the morale of the group. This leader wants to look good, be “in” with colleagues while keeping things on superficial levels and taking cues from others. After setting goals and objectives, individual assignments are made and then checked with the group members to make sure they agree with those decisions. Keeping conflict to a minimum by having routines and rules to be followed, this person avoids taking a stand and believes in compromise.

Authority Obedience: These leaders are hardworking, controlling, and domineering. They rely little on other members of the group, setting directions and expecting them to be followed, and making assignments for others to follow. They follow schedules and meet deadlines, and they place a high value on making their own decisions, and are rarely influenced by others.

APPENDIX C

Leadership Traits and Skills for Leaders – Handout

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| 1. Vision (to be developed and shared with others) for visionary leadership. | 12. Advocacy |
| 2. Communication (to share the vision) | 13. Conflict resolution (mutual understanding) |
| 3. Information (knowing what is needed to help followers understand the vision) | 14. Decision Making |
| 4. Knowledge (what do your followers bring, what do they need to learn?) | 15. Positioning (sitting at the head of the table) |
| 5. Methods (How will the vision materialize, what resources, financial, human?) | 16. Self confidence |
| 6. Conflict resolution (coordinating conflicting interests) | 17. Mentoring |
| 7. Conflict resolution (balancing conflicting interests) | 18. Role Model |
| 8. Creative (thinking in creative ways) | 19. Trust (credibility) |
| 9. Creative (acting in creative ways) | 20. Accountable |
| 10. Initiative | 21. Predictable |
| 11. Inquiry | 22. Reliable |
| | 23. Commitment (working to full potential) |
| | 24. Complexity (working in chaos) |
| | 25. Change (understand change as it occurs, affects the immediate environment) |
| | 26. Change (how to create a plan for change) |
| | 27. Change (how to initiate change) |
| | 28. Change (how to sustain change) |

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|---|---|
| 29. Risk taking (ability to make decisions in the absence of full information). | 41. Long-term planning |
| 30. Understand the positive uses of power.. | 42. Engender broad support for issues |
| 31. Policy (communicating) | 43. Involved in leadership as early as possible |
| 32. Policy (negotiating) | 44. Viewed as more influential by their peers |
| 33. Policy (clarifying) | 45. Encourage extra effort from subordinates |
| 34. Policy (recommending options) | 46. Showing others how to do things they don't know how to do |
| 35. Sensitivity | 47. Able to make a speech |
| 36. Perspective of the political environment | 48. Able to lead a group |
| 37. Strong ideological commitment | 49. Able to manage a meeting |
| 38. Sense of professional ethics | 50. The hub of the university, city, school, and organization |
| 39. Social responsibility | |
| 40. Global view | |

APPENDIX D

Sample Discussion Questions

1. Given the opportunity to work with a group of aspiring leaders, how would you go about assessing their leadership styles?
2. What would you do to identify their learning styles?
3. Which of the traits on the list do you feel would be less difficult to acquire?
4. How would you go about acquiring them?
5. Which of the traits on the list do you feel would be more difficult to acquire?
6. Do you have any suggestions for how you would go about acquiring them?
7. How would you go about planning a continuing education session to help future leaders build their leadership traits?

APPENDIX E

Evaluation Form

1. This workshop was designed to provide a model for assessing your leadership skills. How well do you think the workshop did this?
2. Do you think you could carry out a similar workshop?
3. How well do the use of the Blake/Mouton grid help you with analyzing your leadership skills?
4. Will you be able to assess learning styles?

5. How well did the discussion of leadership traits help you understand those which you possess and those which you should strive to achieve?
6. For which trait(s) was your understanding enhanced by the suggestions of others in your group?
7. How effective is this evaluation form in evaluating the workshop?