

Trait Approach



DESCRIPTION

Of interest to scholars throughout the 20th century, the trait approach was one of the first systematic attempts to study leadership. In the early 20th century, leadership traits were studied to determine what made certain people great leaders. The theories that were developed were called “great man” theories because they focused on identifying the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great social, political, and military leaders (e.g., Mohandas Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, and Napoleon). It was believed that people were born with these traits, and only the “great” people possessed them. During this time, research concentrated on determining the specific traits that clearly differentiated leaders from followers (Bass, 1990; Jago, 1982).

In the mid-20th century, the trait approach was challenged by research that questioned the universality of leadership traits. In a major review in 1948, Stogdill suggested that no consistent set of traits differentiated leaders from nonleaders across a variety of situations. An individual with leadership traits who was a leader in one situation might not be a leader in another situation. Rather than being a quality that individuals possessed, leadership was reconceptualized as a relationship between people in a social situation (Stogdill, 1948). Personal factors related to leadership continued to be important, but researchers contended that these factors were to be considered as relative to the requirements of the situation.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the trait approach in explaining how traits influence leadership (Bryman, 1992). For example, based on a new analysis of much of the previous trait research, Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986) found that personality traits were strongly associated with individuals' perceptions of leadership. Similarly, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) have gone so far as to claim that effective leaders are actually distinct types of people in several key respects. Further evidence of renewed interest in the trait approach can be seen in the current emphasis given by many researchers to visionary and charismatic leadership (see Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Zaleznik, 1977).

In short, the trait approach is alive and well. It began with an emphasis on identifying the qualities of great persons; next, it shifted to include the impact of situations on leadership; and most currently, it has shifted back to reemphasize the critical role of traits in effective leadership.

Although the research on traits spanned the entire 20th century, a good overview of this approach is found in two surveys completed by Stogdill (1948, 1974). In his first survey, Stogdill analyzed and synthesized more than 124 trait studies conducted between 1904 and 1947. In his second study, he analyzed another 163 studies completed between 1948 and 1970. By taking a closer look at each of these reviews, we can obtain a clearer picture of how individuals' traits contribute to the leadership process.

Stogdill's first survey identified a group of important leadership traits that were related to how individuals in various groups became leaders. His results showed that the average individual in the leadership role is different from an average group member in the following ways: intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability.

The findings of Stogdill's first survey also indicated that an individual does not become a leader solely because he or she possesses certain traits. Rather, the traits that leaders possess must be relevant to situations in which the leader is functioning. As stated earlier, leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in another situation. Findings showed that leadership was not a passive state but resulted from a working relationship between the leader and other group members. This research marked the beginning of a new approach to leadership research that focused on leadership behaviors and leadership situations.

Stogdill's second survey, published in 1974, analyzed 163 new studies and compared the findings of these studies to the findings he had reported in his first survey. The second survey was more balanced in its description of the role of traits and leadership. Whereas the first survey implied that leadership is determined principally by situational factors and not personality factors, the second survey argued more moderately that both personality and situational factors were determinants of leadership. In essence, the second survey validated the original trait idea that the leader's characteristics are indeed a part of leadership.

Similar to the first survey, Stogdill's second survey also identified traits that were positively associated with leadership. The list included the following 10 characteristics: drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, venturesomeness and originality in problem solving, drive to exercise initiative in social situations, self-confidence and sense of personal identity, willingness to accept consequences of decision and action, readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, willingness to tolerate frustration and delay, ability to influence other people's behavior, and capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand.

Mann (1959) conducted a similar study that examined more than 1,400 findings regarding personality and leadership in small groups, but he placed less emphasis on how situational factors influenced leadership. Although tentative in his conclusions, Mann suggested that personality traits could be used to distinguish leaders from nonleaders. His results identified leaders as strong in the following traits: intelligence, masculinity, adjustment, dominance, extraversion, and conservatism.

Lord et al. (1986) reassessed Mann's (1959) findings using a more sophisticated procedure called meta-analysis. Lord and coworkers found that intelligence, masculinity, and dominance were significantly related to how individuals perceived leaders. From their findings, the authors argued strongly that personality traits could be used to make discriminations consistently across situations between leaders and nonleaders.

Yet another review argues for the importance of leadership traits: Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991, p. 59) contended that "it is unequivocally clear that leaders are not like other people." From a qualitative synthesis of earlier research, Kirkpatrick and Locke postulated that leaders differ from nonleaders on six traits: drive, the desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of the business. According to these writers, individuals can be born with these traits, they can learn

them, or both. It is these six traits that make up the “right stuff” for leaders. Kirkpatrick and Locke contended that leadership traits make some people different from others, and this difference should be recognized as an important part of the leadership process.

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the traits and characteristics that were identified by researchers from the trait approach. It illustrates clearly the breadth of traits related to leadership. Table 2.1 also shows how difficult it is to select certain traits as definitive leadership traits; some of the traits appear in several of the survey studies, whereas others appear in only one or two studies. Regardless of the lack of precision in Table 2.1, however, it represents a general convergence of research regarding which traits are leadership traits.

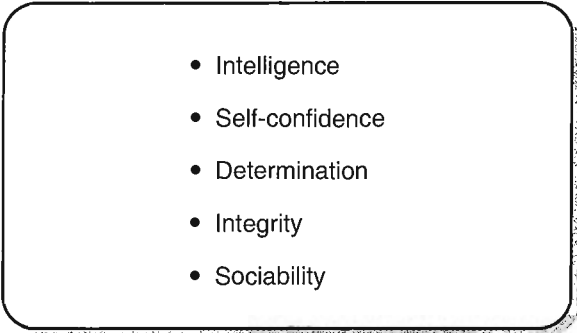
Table 2.1 *Studies of Leadership Traits and Characteristics*

Stogdill (1948)	Mann (1959)	Stogdill (1974)	Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986)	Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)
Intelligence	Intelligence	Achievement	Intelligence	Drive
Alertness	Masculinity	Persistence	Masculinity	Motivation
Insight	Adjustment	Insight	Dominance	Integrity
Responsibility	Dominance	Initiative		Confidence
Initiative	Extroversion	Self-confidence		Cognitive ability
Persistence	Conservatism	Responsibility		Task knowledge
Self-confidence		Cooperativeness		
Sociability		Tolerance		
		Influence		
		Sociability		

SOURCE: Adapted from “The Bases of Social Power,” by J. R. P. French, Jr. and B. Raven, 1962, in D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory* (pp. 259–269), New York: Harper and Row.

What, then, can be said about trait research? What has a century of research on the trait approach given us that is useful? The answer is an extended list of traits that individuals might hope to possess or wish to cultivate if they want to be perceived by others as leaders. Some of the traits that are central to this list include intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 *Major Leadership Traits*

- 
- Intelligence
 - Self-confidence
 - Determination
 - Integrity
 - Sociability

Intelligence

Intelligence or intellectual ability is positively related to leadership. Based on their analysis of a series of recent studies on intelligence and various indices of leadership, Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) found support for the finding that leaders tend to have higher intelligence than nonleaders. Having strong verbal ability, perceptual ability, and reasoning appears to make one a better leader. Although it is good to be bright, the research also indicates that a leader's intellectual ability should not differ too much from that of his or her subordinates. If the leader's IQ is very different from that of the followers, it can have a counterproductive impact on leadership. Leaders with higher abilities may have difficulty communicating with followers because they are preoccupied or because their ideas are too advanced for their followers to accept.

In the next chapter, which addresses leadership from a skills perspective, intelligence is identified as a trait that significantly contributes to a leader's acquisition of complex problem-solving skills and social-judgment skills. Intelligence is described as having a positive impact on an individual's capacity for effective leadership.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is another trait that helps one to be a leader. Self-confidence is the ability to be certain about one's competencies and skills. It includes a sense of self-esteem and self-assurance and the belief

that one can make a difference. Leadership involves influencing others, and self-confidence allows the leader to feel assured that his or her attempts to influence are appropriate and right.

Determination

Many leaders also exhibit determination. Determination is the desire to get the job done and includes characteristics such as initiative, persistence, dominance, and drive. People with determination are willing to assert themselves, they are proactive, and they have the capacity to persevere in the face of obstacles. Being determined includes showing dominance at times and in situations where followers need to be directed.

Integrity

Integrity is another of the important leadership traits. Integrity is the quality of honesty and trustworthiness. People who adhere to a strong set of principles and take responsibility for their actions are exhibiting integrity. Leaders with integrity inspire confidence in others because they can be trusted to do what they say they are going to do. They are loyal, dependable, and not deceptive. Basically, integrity makes a leader believable and worthy of our trust.

In our society, integrity has received a great deal of attention in recent years. For example, as a result of the impeachment proceedings during the Clinton presidency, people are demanding more honesty of their public officials. Similarly, as a result of the scandals in the corporate world (e.g., Enron and WorldCom), people have become skeptical of leaders who are not highly ethical. In the educational arena, new K–12 curricula are being developed throughout the country to teach character, values, and ethical leadership (see the Character Counts! program developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics in California at <http://www.charactercounts.org>; and the Pillars of Leadership program taught at the J. W. Fanning Institute for Leadership in Georgia at <http://www.fanning.uga.edu>). In short, society is demanding greater integrity of character in its leaders.

Sociability

A final trait that is important for leaders is sociability. Sociability is a leader's inclination to seek out pleasant social relationships. Leaders who show sociability are friendly, outgoing, courteous, tactful, and diplomatic.

They are sensitive to others' needs and show concern for their well-being. Social leaders have good interpersonal skills and create cooperative relationships with their followers.

Although our discussion of leadership traits has focused on five major traits (i.e., intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability), this list is not all-inclusive. Other traits indicated in Table 2.1 are associated with effective leadership. Yet the five traits we have identified contribute substantially to one's capacity to be a leader.

Until recently, most reviews of leadership traits have been qualitative. In addition, they have lacked a common organizing framework. However, the research described in the following section provides a quantitative assessment of leadership traits that is conceptually framed around the five-factor model of personality. It describes how five major personality traits are related to leadership.

Five-Factor Personality Model and Leadership

Over the last 25 years a consensus has emerged among researchers regarding the basic factors that make up what we call personality (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1987). These factors, commonly called the *Big Five*, are neuroticism, extraversion (surgency), openness (intellect), agreeableness, and conscientiousness (dependability) (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Big Five Personality Factors

Neuroticism	The tendency to be depressed, anxious, insecure vulnerable, and hostile
Extraversion	The tendency to be sociable and assertive and to have positive energy
Openness	The tendency to be informed, creative, insightful, and curious
Agreeableness	The tendency to be accepting, conforming, trusting, and nurturing
Conscientiousness	The tendency to be thorough, organized, controlled, dependable, and decisive

To assess the links between the Big Five and leadership, Judge, Bono, Ilies, and Gerhardt (2002) conducted a major meta-analysis of 78 leadership and personality studies published between 1967 and 1998. In general, Judge et al. found a strong relationship between the Big Five traits and leadership. It appears that having certain personality traits is associated with being an effective leader.

Specifically, in their study, *extraversion* was the factor most strongly associated with leadership. It is the most important trait of effective leaders. *Conscientiousness* was the second factor most related to leadership. *Neuroticism* and *Openness* were the next most related factors, with neuroticism negatively related to leadership. The last factor, *agreeableness*, was found to be only weakly associated with leadership.

Emotional Intelligence

Another way of assessing the impact of traits on leadership is through the concept of emotional intelligence, which emerged in the early 1990s. It has been widely studied by researchers, and it has also captured the attention of many practitioners (Caruso & Wolfe, 2004; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1995, 1997; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000).

As the two words suggest, emotional intelligence has to do with our emotions (affective domain) and thinking (cognitive domain) and the interplay between the two. Whereas *intelligence* is concerned with our ability to learn *information* and apply it to life tasks, *emotional intelligence* is concerned with our ability to understand *emotions* and apply this understanding to life's tasks. Specifically, *emotional intelligence* can be defined as the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions, and to effectively manage emotions within oneself and in relationships with others (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000).

There are different ways to measure emotional intelligence. One new scale is the Mayer–Salovey–Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000). The MSCEIT measures emotional intelligence as a set of mental abilities, including perceiving, facilitating, understanding, and managing emotion.

Goleman (1995, 1998) takes a broader approach to emotional intelligence, suggesting that it consists of a set of personal and social competencies. Personal competence consists of self-awareness, confidence, self-regulation,

conscientiousness, and motivation. Social competence consists of empathy and social skills such as communication and conflict management.

There is a debate in the field regarding how big a role emotional intelligence plays in helping people be successful in life. Some researchers, such as Goleman (1995), suggest that emotional intelligence plays a major role in whether people are successful at school, home, and work. Others, such as Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000), make softer claims for the significance of emotional intelligence in meeting life's challenges.

As a leadership ability or trait, emotional intelligence appears to be an important construct. The underlying premise suggested by this framework is that people who are more sensitive to their emotions and the impact of their emotions on others will be more effective leaders. As more research is conducted on emotional intelligence, the intricacies of how emotional intelligence relates to leadership will be better understood.

HOW DOES THE TRAIT APPROACH WORK?

The trait approach is very different from the other approaches discussed in subsequent chapters because it focuses exclusively on the leader, not on the followers or the situation. This makes the trait approach theoretically more straightforward than other approaches. In essence, the trait approach is concerned with what traits leaders exhibit and who has these traits.

The trait approach does not lay out a set of hypotheses or principles about what kind of leader is needed in a certain situation or what a leader should do, given a particular set of circumstances. Rather, this approach emphasizes that having a leader with a certain set of traits is crucial to having effective leadership. It is the leader and his or her personality that are central to the leadership process.

The trait approach suggests that organizations will work better if the people in managerial positions have designated leadership profiles. To find the right people, it is common for organizations to use personality assessment instruments. The assumption behind these procedures is that selecting the right people will increase organizational effectiveness. Organizations can specify the characteristics or traits that are important to them for particular positions and then use personality assessment measures to determine whether an individual fits their needs.

The trait approach is also used for personal awareness and development. By analyzing their own traits, managers can gain an idea of their strengths and weaknesses, and they can get a feel for how others in the organization see them. A trait assessment can help managers determine whether they have the qualities to move up or to move to other positions in the company.

It gives individuals a clearer picture of who they are as leaders and how they fit into the organizational hierarchy. In areas where their traits are lacking, leaders can try to make changes in what they do or where they work to increase the potential impact of their traits.

At the end of the chapter, a leadership instrument is provided that you can use to assess your leadership traits. This instrument is typical of the kind of personality tests that companies use to assess individuals' leadership potential. As you will find out by completing this instrument, trait measures are a good way to assess your own abilities.

STRENGTHS

The trait approach has several identifiable strengths. First, the trait approach is intuitively appealing. It fits clearly with our notion that leaders are the individuals who are out front and leading the way in our society. The image in the popular press and community at large is that leaders are a special kind of people—people with gifts who can do extraordinary things. The trait approach is consistent with this perception because it is built on the premise that leaders are different, and their difference resides in the special traits they possess. People have a need to see their leaders as gifted people, and the trait approach fulfills this need.

A second strength of the trait approach is that it has a century of research to back it up. No other theory can boast of the breadth and depth of studies conducted on the trait approach. The strength and longevity of this line of research give the trait approach a measure of credibility that other approaches lack. Out of this abundance of research has emerged a body of data that points to the important role of various personality traits in the leadership process.

Another strength, more conceptual in nature, results from the way the trait approach highlights the leader component in the leadership process. Leadership is composed of leaders, followers, and situations, but the trait approach is devoted only to the first of these, leaders. Although this is also

a potential weakness, by focusing exclusively on the role of the leader in leadership the trait approach has been able to provide us with a deeper and more intricate understanding of how the leader and his or her personality are related to the leadership process.

Last, the trait approach has given us some benchmarks for what we need to look for if we want to be leaders. It identifies what traits we should have and whether the traits we do have are the best traits. Based on the findings of this approach, personality and assessment procedures can be used to offer invaluable information to supervisors and managers about their strengths and weaknesses and ways to improve their overall leadership effectiveness.

CRITICISMS

In addition to its strengths, the trait approach has several weaknesses. First and foremost is the failure of the trait approach to delimit a definitive list of leadership traits. Although an enormous number of studies have been conducted over the past 100 years, the findings from these studies have been ambiguous and uncertain at times. Furthermore, the list of traits that has emerged appears endless. This is obvious from Table 2.1, which lists a multitude of traits, and these are only a sample of the many leadership traits that were studied.

Another criticism is that the trait approach has failed to take situations into account. As Stogdill (1948) pointed out more than 50 years ago, it is difficult to isolate a set of traits that are characteristic of leaders without factoring situational effects into the equation as well. People who possess certain traits that make them leaders in one situation may not be leaders in another situation. Some people may have the traits that help them emerge as leaders but may not have the traits that allow them to maintain their leadership over time. In other words, the situation influences leadership, and it is therefore difficult to identify a universal set of leadership traits in isolation from the context in which the leadership occurs.

A third criticism, derived from the prior two criticisms, is that this approach has resulted in highly subjective determinations of the most important leadership traits. Because the findings on traits have been so extensive and broad, there has been much subjective interpretation of the meaning of the data. This subjectivity is readily apparent in the many self-help, practice-oriented management books. For example, one author might identify ambition and creativity as crucial leadership traits; another might identify power and achievement.

In both cases, it is the author's subjective experience and observations that are the basis for the identified leadership traits. These books may be helpful to readers because they identify and describe important leadership traits, but the methods used to generate these lists of traits are weak. In our culture, people want to know a set of definitive traits of leaders. To respond to this need, authors have set forth lists of traits, even if the origins of these lists are not grounded in strong, reliable research.

Research on traits can also be criticized for failing to look at traits in relationship to leadership outcomes. This research has emphasized the identification of traits, but it has not addressed how leadership traits affect group members and their work. In trying to ascertain universal leadership traits, researchers have focused on the link between specific traits and leader emergence, but they have not tried to link leader traits with other outcomes such as productivity or employee satisfaction. For example, trait research does not provide data on whether leaders who might have high intelligence and strong integrity have better results than leaders without these traits. The trait approach is weak in describing how leaders' traits affect the outcomes of groups and teams in organizational settings.

A final criticism of the trait approach is that it is not a useful approach for training and development for leadership. Even if definitive traits could be identified, teaching new traits is not an easy process because traits are not easily changed. For example, it is not reasonable to send managers to a training program to raise their IQ or to train them to become introverted or extroverted people. The point is that traits are largely fixed psychological structures, and this limits the value of teaching and leadership training.

APPLICATION

Despite its shortcomings, the trait approach provides valuable information about leadership. It can be applied by individuals at all levels and in all types of organizations. Although the trait approach does not provide a definitive set of traits, it does provide direction regarding which traits are good to have if one aspires to a leadership position. By taking personality tests and other similar questionnaires, people can gain insight into whether they have certain traits deemed important for leadership, and they can pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses.

As we discussed previously, managers can use information from the trait approach to assess where they stand in their organization and what they need

to do to strengthen their position. Trait information can suggest areas in which their personal characteristics are very beneficial to the company and areas in which they may want to get more training to enhance their overall approach. Using trait information, managers can develop a deeper understanding of who they are and how they will affect others in the organization.

CASE STUDIES

In this section, three case studies (Cases 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) are provided to illustrate the trait approach and to help you understand how the trait approach can be used in making decisions in organizational settings. The settings of the cases are diverse—directing a research department, running an office supply business, and being head of recruitment for a large bank—but all of the cases deal with trait leadership. At the end of each case, you will find questions that will help in analyzing the cases.

CASE 2.1

Choosing a New Director of Research

Sandra Coke is vice president for research and development at Great Lakes Foods (GLF), a large snack food company that has approximately 1,000 employees. As a result of a recent reorganization, Sandra must choose the new director of research. The director will report directly to Sandra and will be responsible for developing and testing new products. The research division of GLF employs about 200 people. The choice of directors is important because Ms. Coke is receiving pressure from the president and board of GLF to improve the company's overall growth and productivity.

Sandra has identified three candidates for the position. Each candidate is at the same managerial level. She is having difficulty choosing one of them because each of them has very strong credentials. Alexa Smith is a longtime employee of GLF who started part-time in the mailroom while in high school and after finishing school worked in as many as 10 different positions throughout the company to become manager of new product marketing. Performance reviews of Alexa's work have repeatedly described her as being very creative and insightful. In her tenure at GLF, Alexa has developed and brought to market four new product lines. Alexa is also known throughout GLF as being very persistent about her work;

when she starts a project she stays with it until it is finished. It is this quality that probably accounts for the success of each of the four new products with which she has been involved.

A second candidate for the new position is Kelsey Metts, who has been with GLF for 5 years and is manager of quality control for established products. Kelsey has a reputation of being very bright. Before joining GLF, she received her M.B.A. at Harvard, graduating at the top of her class. People talk about Kelsey as the kind of person who will be president of her own company someday. Kelsey is also very personable. On all her performance reviews, she received extra-high scores on sociability and human relations. There isn't a supervisor in the company who doesn't have positive things to say about how comfortable it is to work with Kelsey Metts. Since joining GLF, Kelsey has been instrumental in bringing two new product lines to market.

Thomas Santiago, the third candidate, has been with GLF for 10 years and is often consulted by upper management regarding strategic planning and corporate direction setting. Thomas has been very involved in establishing the vision for GLF and is a company person all the way. He believes in the values of GLF, and he actively promotes its mission. The two qualities that stand out above the rest in Thomas's performance reviews are his honesty and integrity. Employees who have worked under his supervision consistently report that they feel they can trust Thomas to be fair and consistent with them. Thomas is highly respected at GLF. In his tenure at the company, Thomas has been involved in some capacity with the development of three new product lines.

The challenge confronting Sandra Coke is to choose the best person for the newly established director's position. Because of the pressures she feels from upper management, Sandra knows she must select the best leader for the new position.

Questions

Based on the information provided about the trait approach in Tables 2.1 and 2.2,

1. Which candidate should Ms. Coke select?
2. In what ways is the trait approach helpful in this type of selection?
3. In what ways are the weaknesses of the trait approach highlighted in this case?



CASE 2.2

A Remarkable Turnaround

Carol Baines was married for 20 years to the owner of the Baines Company until he died in a tragic car accident. After his death, Carol decided not to sell the business but to try to run it herself. Before the accident, her only involvement in the business was in informal discussions with her husband over dinner, although she has a college degree in business, with a major in management.

Baines Co. was one of three office supply stores in a city with a population of 200,000 people. The other two stores were owned by national chains. Baines Co. was not a large company; it employed only five people. Baines Co. had stable sales of about \$200,000 a year, serving mostly the smaller companies in the city. The firm had not grown in a number of years and was beginning to feel the pressure of the advertising and lower prices of the national chains.

For the first 6 months, Carol spent her time familiarizing herself with the employees and the operations of the company. Next, she did a citywide analysis of companies that had reason to purchase office supplies. Based on her understanding of Baines Co.'s capabilities and her assessment of the potential market for their products and services, Carol developed a specific set of short-term and long-range goals for the company. Behind all of her planning, Carol had a vision that Baines could be a viable, healthy, and competitive company. She wanted to carry on the business that her husband had started, but more than that, she wanted it to grow.

Over the first 5 years, Carol invested significant amounts of money in advertising, sales, and services. These efforts were well spent because the company began to show rapid growth immediately. Because of the growth, the company hired another 20 people.

The expansion at Baines was particularly remarkable because of another major hardship Carol had to confront. Carol was diagnosed with breast cancer a year after her husband died. The treatment for her cancer included 2 months of radiation therapy and 6 months of strong chemotherapy. Although the side effects included hair loss and fatigue, Carol continued to manage the company throughout the ordeal. Despite her difficulties, Carol was successful. Under the strength of her leadership, the growth at Baines continued for 10 consecutive years.

Interviews with new and old employees at Baines revealed much about Carol's leadership. Employees said that Carol was a very solid person.

She cared deeply about others and was fair and considerate. They said she created a family-like atmosphere at Baines. Few employees had quit Baines since Carol took over. Carol was devoted to all the employees, and she supported their interests. For example, the company sponsors a softball team in the summer and a basketball team in the winter. Others described Carol as a strong person. Even though she had cancer, she continued to be positive and interested in them. She did not get depressed with the cancer and its side effects, even though it was difficult. Employees said she was a model of strength, goodness, and quality.

At age 55, Carol turned the business over to her two sons. She continues to act as the president but does not supervise the day-to-day operations. The company is doing more than \$3.1 million in sales, and it outpaces the other two chain stores in the city.

Questions

1. How would you describe Carol Baines's leadership traits?
2. How big a part did Carol's traits play in the expansion of the company?
3. Would Carol be a leader in other business contexts?



CASE 2.3

Recruiting for the Bank

Pat Nelson is the assistant director of human resources in charge of recruitment for Central Bank, a large, full-service banking institution. One of Pat's major responsibilities each spring is to visit as many college campuses as he can to interview graduating seniors for credit analyst positions in the commercial lending area at Central Bank. Although the number varies, he usually ends up hiring about 20 new people, most of whom come from the same schools year after year.

Pat has been doing recruitment for the bank for more than 10 years, and he enjoys it very much. However, for the upcoming spring he is feeling

increased pressure from management to be particularly discriminating about whom he recommends hiring. Management is concerned about the retention rate at the bank because in recent years as many as 25% of the new hires have left. Departures after the first year have meant lost training dollars and strain on the staff who remain. Although management understands that some new hires always leave, the executives are not comfortable with the present rate, and they have begun to question the recruitment and hiring procedures.

The bank wants to hire people who can be groomed for higher-level leadership positions. Although certain competencies are required of entry-level credit analysts, the bank is equally interested in skills that will allow individuals to advance to upper management positions as their careers progress.

In the recruitment process, Pat Nelson always looks for several characteristics. First, applicants need to have strong interpersonal skills, they need to be confident, and they need to show poise and initiative. Next, because banking involves fiduciary responsibilities, applicants need to have proper ethics, including a strong sense of the importance of confidentiality. In addition, to do the work in the bank, they need to have strong analytical and technical skills and experience in working with computers. Last, applicants need to exhibit a good work ethic, and they need to show commitment and a willingness to do their job even in difficult circumstances.

Pat is fairly certain that he has been selecting the right people to be leaders at Central Bank, yet upper management is telling him to reassess his hiring criteria. Although he feels he that has been doing the right thing, he is starting to question himself and his recruitment practices.

Questions

Based on ideas described in the trait approach,

1. Do you think Pat Nelson is looking for the right characteristics in the people he hires?
2. Could it be that the retention problem raised by upper management is unrelated to Pat's recruitment criteria?
3. If you were Pat, would you change your approach to recruiting?



LEADERSHIP INSTRUMENT

Organizations use a wide variety of questionnaires to measure individuals' personality characteristics. In many organizations, it is common practice to use standard personality measures such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory or the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®. These measures provide valuable information to the individual and the organization about the individual's unique attributes for leadership and where the individual could best serve the organization.

In this section, the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) is provided as an example of a measure that can be used to assess your personal leadership characteristics. The LTQ quantifies the perceptions of the individual leader and selected observers, such as subordinates or peers. It measures an individual's traits and points the individual to the areas in which he or she may have special strengths or weaknesses.

By taking the LTQ, you can gain an understanding of how trait measures are used for leadership assessment. You can also assess your own leadership traits.

LEADERSHIP TRAIT QUESTIONNAIRE (LTQ)

Instructions: The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure personal characteristics of leadership. The questionnaire should be completed by the leader and five people who are familiar with the leader.

For each adjective listed below, indicate the degree to which you think the adjective describes the leader. Please select one of the following responses to indicate the strength of your opinion.

Key: 5 = Strongly agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Articulate: Communicates effectively with others | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Perceptive: Discerning and insightful | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Self-confident: Believes in oneself and one's ability | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Self-assured: Secure with self, free of doubts | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Persistent: Stays fixed on the goals despite interference | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Determined: Takes a firm stand, acts with certainty | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Trustworthy: Acts believably, inspires confidence | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Dependable: Is consistent and reliable | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. Friendly: Shows kindness and warmth | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Outgoing: Talks freely, gets along well with others | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Scoring Interpretation

The scores you received on the LTQ provide information about how you see yourself and how others see you as a leader. The chart allows you to see where your perceptions are the same as those of others and where they differ.

The example below provides hypothetical ratings for the first three characteristics, which help explain how the questionnaire can be used. For example, on the characteristic Articulate, the leader rated himself or herself significantly higher than the observers did. On the second characteristic, Perceptive, the leader rated himself or herself substantially lower than others. On the Self-confident characteristic, the leader was quite close to others' ratings of his or her leadership.

EXAMPLE RATINGS

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	AVE	SELF	DIF
1. Articulate	4	3	5	2	5	3.8	5	-1.2
2. Perceptive	3	5	5	5	4	4.4	3	+1.4
3. Self-confident	4	4	5	4	4	4.2	4	+0.2
4. Self-assured								
5. Persistent								
6. Determined								
7. Trustworthy								
8. Dependable								
9. Friendly								
10. Outgoing								
Total								

There are no best ratings on this questionnaire. The purpose of the instrument is to give you a way to assess your strengths and weaknesses and to evaluate areas where your perceptions are congruent with those of others and where there are discrepancies.



SUMMARY

The trait approach has its roots in leadership theory that suggested that certain people were born with special traits that made them great leaders. Because it was believed that leaders and nonleaders could be differentiated by a universal set of traits, throughout the 20th century researchers were challenged to identify the definitive traits of leaders.

Around the mid-20th century, several major studies questioned the basic premise that a unique set of traits defined leadership. As a result, attention shifted to incorporating the impact of situations and of followers

on leadership. Researchers began to study the interactions between leaders and their context instead of focusing only on leaders' traits. More recently, there are signs that trait research has come full circle, with a renewed interest in focusing directly on the critical traits of leaders.

From the multitude of studies conducted through the years on personal characteristics, it is clear that many traits contribute to leadership. Some of the important traits that are consistently identified in many of these studies are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. In addition, researchers have found a strong relationship between leadership and the traits described by the *five-factor personality model*. *Extraversion* was the trait most strongly associated with leadership, followed by *conscientiousness*, *openness*, *low neuroticism*, and *agreeableness*. Another recent line of research has focused on *emotional intelligence* and its relationship to leadership. This research suggests that leaders who are sensitive to their emotions and to the impact of their emotions on others may be more effective leaders.

On a practical level, the trait approach is concerned with which traits leaders exhibit and who has these traits. Organizations use personality assessment instruments to identify how individuals will fit within their organizations. The trait approach is also used for personal awareness and development because it allows managers to analyze their strengths and weaknesses and to gain a clearer understanding of how they should try to change to enhance their leadership.

There are several advantages to viewing leadership from the trait approach. First, it is intuitively appealing because it fits clearly into the popular idea that leaders are special people who are out front, leading the way in society. Second, a great deal of research validates the basis of this perspective. Third, by focusing exclusively on the leader, the trait approach provides an in-depth understanding of the leader component in the leadership process. Last, it has provided some benchmarks against which individuals can evaluate their own personal leadership attributes.

On the negative side, the trait approach has failed to provide a definitive list of leadership traits. In analyzing the traits of leaders, the approach has failed to take into account the impact of situations. In addition, the approach has resulted in subjective lists of the most important leadership traits, which are not necessarily grounded in strong, reliable research.

Furthermore, the trait approach has not adequately linked the traits of leaders with other outcomes such as group and team performance. Last, this approach is not particularly useful for training and development for

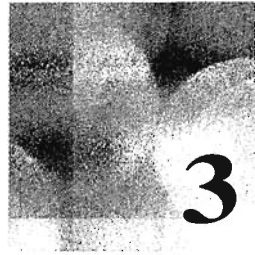
leadership because individuals' personal attributes are largely stable and fixed, and therefore their traits are not amenable to change.

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Skills Approach



DESCRIPTION

Like the trait approach, which we discussed in Chapter 2, the skills approach takes a leader-centered perspective on leadership. However, in the skills approach we shift our thinking from a focus on personality characteristics, which usually are viewed as innate and largely fixed, to an emphasis on skills and abilities that can be learned and developed. Although personality certainly plays an integral role in leadership, the skills approach suggests that knowledge and abilities are needed for effective leadership.

Researchers have studied leadership skills directly or indirectly for a number of years (see Bass, 1990, pp. 97–109). However, the impetus for research on skills was a classic article published by Robert Katz in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1955, titled “Skills of an Effective Administrator.” Katz’s article appeared at a time when researchers were trying to identify a definitive set of leadership traits. Katz’s approach was an attempt to transcend the trait problem by addressing leadership as a set of developable *skills*. More recently, a renewed interest in the skills approach has emerged. Beginning in the early 1990s, a multitude of studies have been published that contend that a leader’s effectiveness depends on the leader’s ability to solve complex organizational problems. This research has resulted in a comprehensive skill-based model of leadership that was advanced by Mumford and his colleagues (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000; Yammarino, 2000).

In this chapter, our discussion of the skills approach is divided into two parts. First, we discuss the general ideas set forth by Katz regarding three basic administrative skills: technical, human, and conceptual. Second, we discuss the recent work of Mumford and colleagues that has resulted in a new skills-based model of organizational leadership.

THREE-SKILL APPROACH

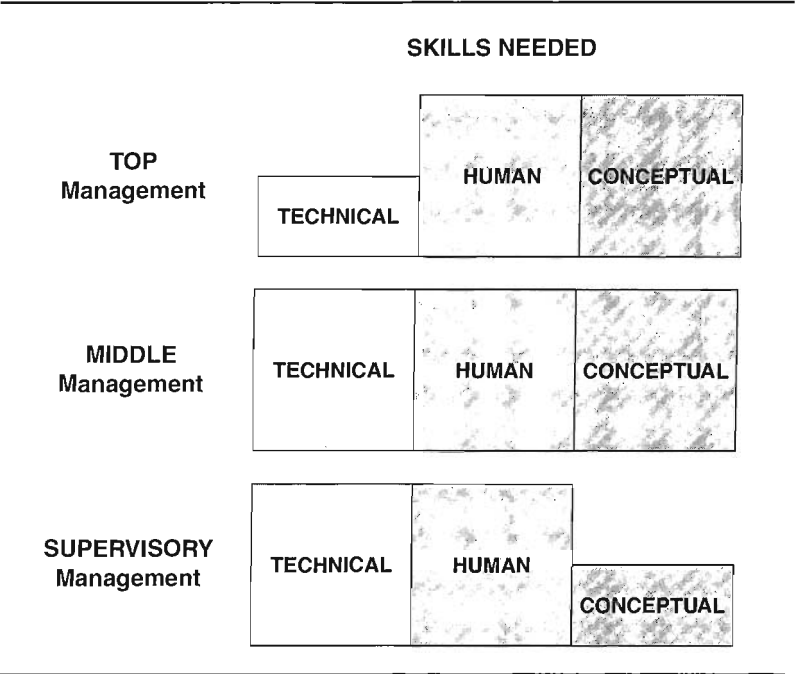
Based on field research in administration and his own firsthand observations of executives in the workplace, Katz (1955, p. 34) suggested that effective administration (i.e., leadership) depends on three basic personal skills: technical, human, and conceptual. Katz argued that these skills are quite different from traits or qualities of leaders. *Skills* are what leaders *can accomplish*, whereas traits are who leaders *are* (i.e., their innate characteristics). Leadership skills are defined in this chapter as the ability to use one's knowledge and competencies to accomplish a set of goals or objectives. This chapter shows that these leadership skills can be acquired and leaders can be trained to develop them.

Technical Skill

Technical skill is knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity. It includes competencies in a specialized area, analytical ability, and the ability to use appropriate tools and techniques (Katz, 1955). For example, in a computer software company, technical skill might include knowing software language and programming, the company's software products, and how to make these products function for clients. Similarly, in an accounting firm, technical skill might include understanding and having the ability to apply generally accepted accounting principles to a client's audit. In both of these examples, technical skills involve a hands-on activity with a basic product or process within an organization. Technical skills play an essential role in producing the actual products a company is designed to produce.

As illustrated in Figure 3.1, technical skill is most important at lower and middle levels of management and less important in upper management. For leaders at the highest level, such as chief executive officers (CEOs), presidents, and senior officers, technical competencies are not as essential. Individuals at the top level depend on skilled subordinates to handle technical issues of the physical operation.

Figure 3.1 *Management Skills Necessary at Various Levels of an Organization*



SOURCE: Adapted from “Skills of an Effective Administrator,” by R. L. Katz, 1955, *Harvard Business Review*, 33(1), pp. 33–42.

Human Skill

Human skill is knowledge about and ability to work with *people*. It is quite different from technical skill, which has to do with working with *things* (Katz, 1955). Human skills are “people skills.” They are the abilities that help a leader to work effectively with subordinates, peers, and superiors to accomplish the organization’s goals. Human skills allow a leader to assist group members in working cooperatively as a group to achieve common goals. For Katz, it means being aware of one’s own perspective on issues and, at the same time, being aware of the perspective of others. Leaders with human skills adapt their own ideas to those of others. Furthermore, they create an atmosphere of trust where employees can feel comfortable and secure and where they can feel encouraged to become involved in the planning of things that will affect them. Being a leader with human skills means being sensitive

to the needs and motivations of others and taking into account others' needs in one's decision making. In short, human skill is the capacity to get along with others as you go about your work.

In Figure 3.1, human skills are important in all three levels of management. Although managers at lower levels may communicate with a far greater number of employees, human skills are equally important at middle and upper levels.

Conceptual Skill

Broadly speaking, conceptual skills are abilities to work with ideas and concepts. Whereas technical skills deal with *things* and human skills deal with *people*, conceptual skills involve the ability to work with *ideas*. A leader with conceptual skills is comfortable talking about the ideas that shape an organization and the intricacies involved. He or she is good at putting the company's goals into words and can understand and express the economic principles that affect the company. A leader with conceptual skills works easily with abstractions and hypothetical notions.

Conceptual skills are central to creating a vision and strategic plan for an organization. For example, it would take conceptual skills for a CEO in a struggling manufacturing company to articulate a vision for a line of new products that would steer the company into profitability. Similarly, it would take conceptual skill for the director of a nonprofit health organization to create a strategic plan that could compete successfully with for-profit health organizations in a market with scarce resources. The point of these examples is that conceptual skill has to do with the mental work of shaping the meaning of organizational or policy issues—understanding what a company stands for and where it is or should be going.

In Figure 3.1, conceptual skill is most important at the top management levels. In fact, when upper-level managers do not have strong conceptual skills, they can jeopardize the whole organization. Conceptual skills are also important in middle management, but as you move down to lower management levels, conceptual skills become less important.

Summary of the Three-Skill Approach

To summarize, the three-skill approach includes technical, human, and conceptual skills. It is important for leaders to have all three skills, but

depending on where they are in the management structure, some skills are more important than others.

Katz's work in the mid-1950s set the stage for conceptualizing leadership in terms of skills, but it was not until the mid-1990s that an empirically based skills approach received recognition in leadership research. In the next section, the comprehensive skill-based model of leadership is presented.

SKILLS MODEL

Beginning in the early 1990s, a group of researchers, with funding from the U.S. Army and Department of Defense, set out to test and develop a comprehensive theory of leadership based on problem-solving skills in organizations. The studies were conducted over a number of years using a sample of more than 1,800 Army officers, representing six grade levels, from second lieutenant to colonel. The project used a variety of new measures and tools to assess the skills of these officers, their experiences, and the situations in which they worked.

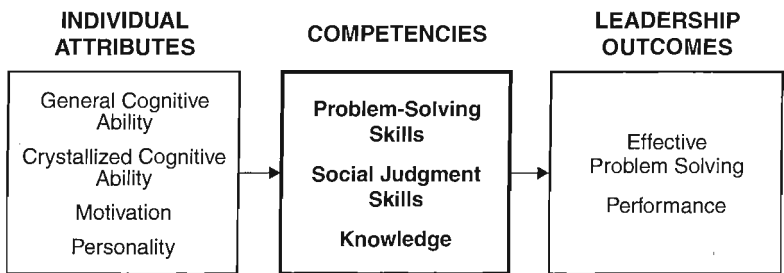
The researchers' main goal was to explain the underlying elements of effective performance. They addressed questions such as these: What accounts for why some leaders are good problem solvers and others are not? What specific skills do high-performing leaders exhibit? How do leaders' individual characteristics, career experiences, and environmental influences affect their job performance? As a whole, researchers wanted to identify the leadership factors that create exemplary job performance in an actual organization.

Based on the extensive findings from the project, Mumford and colleagues formulated a skill-based model of leadership (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000). The model is characterized as a *capability* model because it examines the relationship between a leader's knowledge and skills (i.e., capabilities) and the leader's performance (p. 12). Leadership capabilities can be developed over time through education and experience. Unlike the "great person" approach (discussed in Chapter 2), which implies that leadership is reserved only for the gifted few, the skills approach suggests that many people have the potential for leadership. If people are capable of learning from their experiences, they can acquire leadership. The skills approach can also be distinguished from the leadership approaches we will discuss in subsequent chapters, which focus on behavioral patterns of leaders (e.g., the style approach, transformational leadership, or leader-member exchange theory). Rather than emphasizing *what leaders*

do, the skills approach frames leadership as *the capabilities (knowledge and skills) that make effective leadership possible* (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000, p. 12).

Mumford's group's skill-based model has five components: competencies, individual attributes, leadership outcomes, career experiences, and environmental influences. A portion of the model, illustrating three of these components, appears in Figure 3.2. This portion of the model is essential to understanding the overall skill-based leadership model.

Figure 3.2 *Three Components of the Skills Model*



SOURCE: Adapted from "Leadership Skills for a Changing World: Solving Complex Social Problems," by M. D. Mumford, S. J. Zaccaro, F. D. Harding, T. O. Jacobs, and E. A. Fleishman, 2000, *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 23.

Competencies

As can be observed in the middle box in Figure 3.2, problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge are at the heart of the skills model. These three competencies are the key factors that account for effective performance.

Problem-Solving Skills

What are problem-solving skills? According to Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (2000), problem-solving skills are a leader's creative ability to solve new and unusual, ill-defined organizational problems. The skills include being able to define significant problems, gather problem

information, formulate new understandings about the problem, and generate prototype plans for problem solutions. These skills do not function in a vacuum but are carried out in an organizational context. Problem-solving skills demand that leaders understand their own leadership capacities as they apply possible solutions to the unique problems in their organization (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, & Marks, 2000).

Being able to construct solutions plays a special role in problem solving. In considering solutions to organizational problems, skilled leaders need to attend to the time frame for constructing and implementing a solution, short-term and long-term goals, career goals and organizational goals, and external issues, all of which could influence the solution (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000, p. 15).

To clarify what is meant by problem-solving skills, consider the following hypothetical situation. Imagine that you are the director of human resources for a medium-sized company and you have been informed by the president that you have to develop a plan to reduce the company's health care costs. In deciding what you will do, you could demonstrate problem-solving skills in the following ways. First, you identify the full ramifications for employees of changing their health insurance coverage. What is the impact going to be? Second, you need to gather information about how benefits can be scaled back. What other companies have attempted a similar change, and what were their results? Third, you need to find a way to teach and inform the employees about the needed change. How can you frame the change in such a way that it is clearly understood? Fourth, you need to create possible scenarios for how the changes will be instituted. How will the plan be described? Fifth, you will need to look closely at the solution itself. How will implementing this change affect the company's mission and your own career? Last, are there issues in the organization (e.g., union rules) that may affect the implementation of these changes?

As illustrated by this example, the process of dealing with novel, ill-defined organizational problems is complex and demanding for leaders. In many ways, it is like a puzzle to be solved. For leaders to solve such puzzles, the skill-based model suggests that problem-solving skills are essential.

Social Judgment Skills

In addition to problem-solving skills, effective leadership performance also requires social judgment skills (see Figure 3.2). In general, social judgment skills are the capacity to understand people and social systems

(Zaccaro, Mumford, Connelly, Marks, & Gilbert, 2000, p. 46). They enable leaders to *work with others* to solve problems and to marshal support to implement change within an organization. Social judgment skills are the people skills that are necessary to solve unique organizational problems.

Conceptually, social judgment skills are similar to Katz's (1955) early work on the role of human skills in management. In contrast to Katz's work, Mumford and colleagues have delineated social judgment skills into the following: perspective taking, social perceptiveness, behavioral flexibility, and social performance.

Perspective taking means understanding the attitudes that *others* have toward a particular problem or solution. It is empathy applied to problem solving. Perspective taking means being sensitive to other people's perspectives and goals—being able to understand their point of view on different issues. Included in perspective taking is knowing how other constituencies in an organization view a problem and its possible solutions. According to Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, and Mumford (1991), perspective-taking skills can be likened to *social intelligence*. They are concerned with knowledge about people, the social fabric of organizations, and the interrelatedness of each of them.

Social perceptiveness is insight and awareness into how others in the organization function. What is important to others? What motivates them? What problems do they face, and how do they react to change? Social perceptiveness means understanding the unique needs, goals, and demands of different organizational constituencies (Zaccaro et al., 1991). A leader with social perceptiveness has a keen sense of how employees will respond to any proposed change in the organization. In a sense, you could say it allows the leader to take the pulse of employees on any issue at any time.

In addition to understanding others accurately, social judgment skills also involve reacting to others with flexibility. *Behavioral flexibility* is the capacity to change and adapt one's behavior in light of an understanding of others' perspectives in the organization. Being flexible means one is not locked into a singular approach to a problem. One is not dogmatic but rather maintains an openness and willingness to change. As the circumstances of a situation change, a flexible leader changes to meet the new demands.

Social performance includes a wide range of leadership competencies. Based on an understanding of employees' perspectives, leaders need to be

able to communicate their own vision to others. Skill in persuasion and communicating change is essential to do this. When there is resistance to change or interpersonal conflict about change, leaders need to function as mediators. To this end, skill in conflict resolution is an important aspect of social performance competency. In addition, social performance sometimes requires that leaders coach subordinates, giving them direction and support as they move toward selected organizational goals. In all, social performance includes many related skills that may come under the umbrella of communication.

To review, social judgment skills are about being sensitive to how your ideas fit in with others. Can you understand others and their unique needs and motivations? Are you flexible, and can you adapt your own ideas to others? Can you work with others even when there are resistance and conflict? Social judgment skills are the people skills needed to advance change in an organization.

Knowledge

As shown in the model (see Figure 3.2), the third aspect of competencies is knowledge. Knowledge is inextricably related to the application and implementation of problem-solving skills in organizations. It directly influences a leader's capacity to define complex organizational problems and to attempt to solve them (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000). *Knowledge* is the accumulation of information and the mental structures used to organize that information. Such a mental structure is called a *schema* (a summary, a diagrammatic representation, or an outline). Knowledge results from having developed an assortment of complex schemata for learning and organizing data.

For example, all of us take various kinds of facts and information into our minds. As we organize that information into categories or schemata, the information becomes more meaningful. Knowledge emerges from the facts *and* the organizational structures we apply to them. People with a lot of knowledge have more complex organizing structures than those with less knowledge. These knowledgeable people are called experts.

Consider the following baseball example. A baseball expert knows a lot of facts about the game; he or she knows the rules, strategies, equipment, players, and much, much more. The expert's knowledge about baseball

includes the facts, but it also includes the complex mental structures used in organizing and structuring those facts. That person knows not only the season and lifetime statistics for each player but also his quirks, his injuries, the personality of the manager, the strengths and weaknesses of available substitutes, and so on. The expert knows baseball because she or he comprehends the complexities and nuances of the game. The same is true for leadership in organizations. Leaders with knowledge know much about the products, the tasks, people, organization, and all the different ways these elements are related to each other. A knowledgeable leader has many mental structures with which to organize the facts of organizational life.

Knowledge has a positive impact on how leaders engage in problem solving. It is knowledge and expertise that make it possible for people to think about complex system issues and identify possible strategies for appropriate change. Furthermore, this capacity allows people to use prior cases and incidents in order to plan for needed change. It is knowledge that allows people to use the past to constructively confront the future.

To summarize, the skills model consists of three competencies: problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge. Collectively, these three components are positively related to effective leadership performance (see Figure 3.2).

Individual Attributes

Returning to Figure 3.2, the box on the left identifies four individual attributes that have an impact on leadership skills and knowledge: general cognitive ability, crystallized cognitive ability, motivation, and personality.

These attributes play an important role in the skills model. Complex problem solving is a very difficult process and becomes more difficult as people move up in the organization. The following attributes support people as they apply their leadership competencies.

General Cognitive Ability

General cognitive ability can be thought of as a person's intelligence. It includes perceptual processing, information processing, general reasoning skills, creative and divergent thinking capacities, and memory skills. General cognitive ability is linked to biology, not to experience.

Sometimes described as fluid intelligence, it is a type of intelligence that usually grows and expands up through early adulthood and then begins to decline with age. In the skills model, intelligence is described as having a positive impact on the leader's acquisition of complex problem-solving skills and the leader's knowledge.

Crystallized Cognitive Ability

Crystallized cognitive ability is intellectual ability that is learned or acquired over time. It is the store of knowledge we get through experience. We learn more and increase our capacities over a lifetime, increasing our leadership potential (e.g., problem-solving skills, conceptual ability, and social judgment skills). In normally functioning adults, this type of cognitive ability grows continuously and typically does not fall off in adulthood. It includes being able to comprehend complex information and learn new skills and information, as well as being able to communicate to others in oral and written forms (Connelly et al., 2000, p. 71). Stated another way, crystallized cognitive ability is acquired intelligence: the ideas and mental abilities people learn through experience. Because it stays fairly stable over time, this type of intelligence is not diminished as people get older.

Motivation

Motivation is listed as the third attribute in the model. Although the model does not purport to explain the many ways in which motivation may affect leadership, it does suggest three aspects of motivation that are essential to developing leadership skills (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000, p. 22). First, leaders must be willing and motivated to tackle complex organizational problems. It is the critical first step. For leadership to occur, a person wants to lead. Second, leaders must be willing to express dominance—to exert their influence, as we discussed in Chapter 2. In influencing others, the leader must take on the responsibility of dominance because the influence component of leadership is inextricably bound to dominance. Third, leaders must be committed to the social good of the organization. *The social good* is a broad term that can refer to a host of outcomes. However, in the skills model it refers to the leader's willingness to take on the responsibility of trying to advance the overall human good and value of the organization. Taken together, these three aspects of motivation (willingness, dominance, and social good) prepare people to become leaders.

Personality

Personality is the fourth individual attribute in the skills model. Placed where it is in the model, this attribute reminds us that our personality has an impact on the development of our leadership skills. For example, openness, tolerance for ambiguity, and curiosity may affect a leader's motivation to try to solve some organizational problem. Or, in conflict situations, traits such as confidence and adaptability may be beneficial to a leader's performance. The skills model hypothesizes that any personality characteristic that helps people to cope with complex organizational situations probably is related to leader performance (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000).

Leadership Outcomes

In the box on the right in Figure 3.2, effective problem solving and performance are the outcomes of leadership. These outcomes are strongly influenced by the leader's competencies (i.e., problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge). When leaders exhibit these competencies, they increase their chances of problem solving and overall performance.

Effective Problem Solving

As we discussed earlier, the skills model is a *capability model*, designed to explain why some leaders are good problem solvers and others are not. Problem solving is the keystone in the skills approach. In the model (see Figure 3.2), problem-solving skills, as competencies, lead to effective problem solving as a leadership outcome. The criteria for good problem solving are determined by the originality and the quality of expressed solutions to problems. Good problem solving involves creating solutions that are logical, effective, and unique and that go beyond given information (Zaccaro et al., 2000).

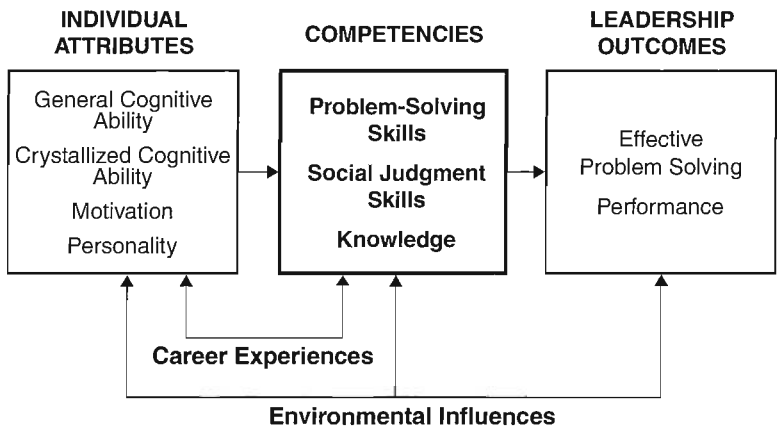
Performance

In the model, performance outcomes reflect how well the leader has done her or his job. To measure performance, standard external criteria are used. If the leader has done well and been successful, the leader's evaluations will be positive. Leaders who are effective receive good annual performance reviews, get merit raises, and are recognized by superiors and

subordinates as competent leaders. In the end, performance is the degree to which a leader has successfully performed the duties to which he or she has been assigned.

Taken together, effective problem solving and performance are the two ways to assess leadership effectiveness using the skills model. Furthermore, good problem solving and good performance go hand in hand. A full depiction of the comprehensive skills model appears in Figure 3.3. It contains two other components, not depicted in Figure 3.2, that contribute to overall leadership performance: career experiences and environmental influences.

Figure 3.3 Skills Model of Leadership



SOURCE: Adapted from “Leadership Skills for a Changing World: Solving Complex Social Problems,” by M. D. Mumford, S. J. Zaccaro, F. D. Harding, T. O. Jacobs, and E. A. Fleishman, 2000, *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(1), 23.

Career Experiences

As you can see in Figure 3.3, career experiences have an impact on the characteristics and competencies of leaders. The skills model suggests that the experiences acquired in the course of leaders’ careers influence their knowledge and skills to solve complex problems. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (2000, p. 24) point out that leaders can be helped by



challenging job assignments, mentoring, appropriate training, and hands-on experience in solving new and unusual problems. In addition, the authors think that career experiences can positively affect the individual characteristics of leaders. For example, certain on-the-job assignments could enhance a leader's motivation or intellectual ability.

In the first section of this chapter, we discussed Katz's (1955) work, which notes that conceptual skills are essential for upper-level administrators. This is consistent with Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al.'s (2000) skills model, which contends that leaders develop competencies over time. Career experience helps leaders to improve their skills and knowledge over time. Leaders learn and develop higher levels of conceptual capacity if the kinds of problems they confront are progressively more complex and long term as they ascend the organizational hierarchy (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, & Marks, 2000). Similarly, upper-level leaders, as opposed to first-line supervisors, develop new competencies because they are required to address problems that are more novel and more poorly defined and that demand more human interaction. As these people move through their careers, higher levels of problem-solving and social judgment skills become increasingly important (Mumford & Connelly, 1991).

So the skills and knowledge of leaders are shaped by their career experiences as they address increasingly complex problems in the organization. This notion of developing leadership skills is unique and quite different from other leadership perspectives. If we say, "Leaders are shaped by their experiences," then it means leaders are not born to be leaders (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000). Leaders can develop their abilities through experience, according to the skills model.

Environmental Influences

The final component of the skills model is environmental influences, which is illustrated at the bottom of Figure 3.3. Environmental influences represent factors that lie outside the leader's competencies, characteristics, and experiences. For example, an aging factory or one lacking in high-speed technology could have a major impact on the nature of problem-solving activities. Another example might be the skill levels of subordinates. If a leader's subordinates are highly competent, they will definitely improve the group's problem solving and performance. Similarly, if a task is particularly complex or a group's communication is poor, the leader's performance will be affected.

The skills model does not provide an inventory of specific environmental influences. Instead, it acknowledges the existence of these factors and recognizes that they are indeed influences that can affect a leader's performance. In other words, environmental influences are a part of the skills model but not usually under the control of the leader.

Summary of the Skills Model

In summary, the skills model frames leadership by describing five components of leader performance. At the heart of the model are three competencies: *problem-solving skills*, *social judgment skills*, and *knowledge*. These three competencies are the central determinants of effective problem solving and performance, although individual attributes, career experiences, and environmental influences all have an impact on leader competencies. Through job experience and training, leaders can become better problem solvers and more effective leaders.

HOW DOES THE SKILLS APPROACH WORK?

The skills approach is primarily descriptive: It *describes* leadership from a skills perspective. Rather than providing prescriptions for success in leadership, the skills approach provides a structure for understanding the nature of effective leadership. In the previous section, we discussed the skills perspective based on the work of Katz (1955) and Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (2000). What does each of these bodies of work suggest about the structure and functions of leadership?

The three-skill approach of Katz suggests that the importance of certain leadership skills varies depending on where leaders are in a management hierarchy. For leaders operating at lower levels of management, technical and human skills are most important. When leaders move into middle management, it becomes important that they have all three skills: technical, human, and conceptual. At the upper management levels, it is paramount for leaders to exhibit conceptual and human skills. Although the various skill requirements change across management levels, the one skill that is needed at each level is effective human or interpersonal skills.

Mumford and colleagues provide a similar but far more complex picture of how skills relate to the manifestation of effective leadership. Their skills

model contends that leadership outcomes are the direct result of a leader's competencies in problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge. Each of these competencies includes a large repertoire of abilities, and each can be learned and developed. In addition, the model illustrates how individual attributes such as general cognitive ability, crystallized cognitive ability, motivation, and personality influence the leader's competencies. And finally, the model describes how career experiences and environmental influences play a direct or indirect role in leadership performance.

The skills approach works by providing a *map* for how to reach effective leadership in an organization: Leaders need to have problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge. Workers can improve their capabilities in these areas through training and experience. Although each leader's personal attributes affect his or her skills, it is the leader's *skills* themselves that are most important in addressing organizational problems.

STRENGTHS

The skills approach contributes positively to our understanding about leadership in several ways. First, it is a leader-centered model that stresses the importance of developing particular leadership skills. It is the first approach to conceptualize and create a structure of the process of leadership around *skills*. Whereas the early research on skills highlighted the importance of skills and the value of skills across different management levels, the later work placed learned skills at the center of effective leadership performance at *all* management levels.

Second, the skills approach is intuitively appealing. To describe leadership in terms of skills makes leadership available to everyone. Unlike personality traits, skills are competencies that people can learn or develop. It is like playing a sport such as tennis or golf. Even without natural ability in these sports, people can improve their games with practice and instruction. The same is true with leadership. When leadership is framed as a set of skills, it becomes a process that people can study and practice to become better at performing their jobs.

Third, the skills approach provides an expansive view of leadership that incorporates a wide variety of components, including problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, knowledge, individual attributes, career experiences, and environmental influences. Each of these components can further be subdivided into several subcomponents. The result is a

picture of leadership that encompasses a multitude of factors. Because it includes so many variables, the skills approach can capture many of the intricacies and complexities of leadership not found in other models.

Last, the skills approach provides a structure that is very consistent with the curricula of most leadership education programs. Leadership education programs throughout the country have traditionally taught classes in creative problem solving, conflict resolution, listening, and teamwork, to name a few. The content of these classes closely mirrors many of the components in the skills model. Clearly, the skills approach provides a structure that helps to frame the curricula of leadership education and development programs.

CRITICISMS

Like all other approaches to leadership, the skills approach also has certain weaknesses. First, the breadth of the skills approach seems to extend beyond the boundaries of leadership. For example, by including motivation, critical thinking, personality, and conflict resolution, the skills approach addresses more than just leadership. Another example of the model's breadth is its inclusion of two types of intelligence (i.e., general cognitive ability and crystallized cognitive ability). Although both areas are studied widely in the field of cognitive psychology, they are seldom addressed in leadership research. By including so many components, the skills model of Mumford and others becomes more general and less precise in explaining leadership performance.

Second, related to the first criticism, the skills model is weak in predictive value. It does not explain specifically how variations in social judgment skills and problem-solving skills affect performance. The model suggests that these components are related, but it does not describe just how that works, with any precision. In short, the model can be faulted because it does not explain *how* skills lead to effective leadership performance.

In addition, the skills approach can be criticized for claiming *not* to be a trait model when in fact a major component in the model includes individual attributes, which are traitlike. Although Mumford and colleagues describe cognitive abilities, motivation, and personality variables as factors contributing to competencies, these are also factors that are typically considered to be trait variables. The point is that the individual attributes component of the skills model is trait driven, and that shifts the model away from being strictly a skills approach to leadership.

The final criticism of the skills approach is that it may not be suitably or appropriately applied to other contexts of leadership. The skills model was constructed by using a large sample of military personnel and observing their performance in the armed services. This raises an obvious question: Can the results be generalized to other populations or organizational settings? Although some research suggests that these Army findings can be generalized to other groups (Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, & Marks, 2000), more research is needed to address this criticism.

APPLICATION

Because the skills approach is a new theoretical formulation, it has not been widely used in applied leadership settings. For example, there are no training packages designed specifically to teach people leadership skills from this approach. Although many programs have been designed to teach leadership skills from a general self-help orientation, few of these programs are based on the conceptual frameworks set forth in this chapter.

Despite the lack of formal training programs, the skills approach offers valuable information about leadership. The approach provides a way to delineate the skills of the leader, and leaders at all levels in an organization can use it. In addition, this approach helps us to identify our strengths and weaknesses in regard to these technical, human, and conceptual skills. By taking a skills inventory such as the one provided at the end of this chapter, people can gain further insight into their own leadership competencies. Their scores allow them to learn about areas in which they may want to seek further training to enhance their overall contributions to their organization.

From a wider perspective, the skills approach may be used in the future as a template for the design of extensive leadership development programs. This approach provides the evidence for teaching leaders the important aspects of listening, creative problem solving, conflict resolution skills, and much more.

CASE STUDIES

The following three case studies (Cases 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3) describe leadership situations that can be analyzed and evaluated from the skills perspective.

The first case involves the principal investigator of a federally funded research grant. The second case takes place in a military setting and describes how a lieutenant colonel handles the downsizing of a military base. In the third case, we learn about how the owner of an Italian restaurant has created his own recipe for success.

As you read each case, try to apply the principles of the skills approach to the leaders and their situations. At the end of each case are questions that will assist you in analyzing the case.

CASE 3.1

A Strained Research Team

Dr. Adam Wood is the principal investigator on a 3-year, \$1-million federally funded research grant to study health education programs for older populations, called the Elder Care Project. Unlike previous projects, in which Dr. Wood worked alone or with one or two other investigators, on this project Dr. Wood has 11 colleagues. His project team is made up of two coinvestigators (with Ph.D.s), four intervention staff (with M.A.s), and five general staff members (with B.A.s).

One year into the project, it became apparent to Dr. Wood and the team that the project is underbudgeted and has too few resources. Team members are spending 20–30% more time on the project than has been budgeted to pay them. Regardless of the resource strain, all team members are committed to the project; they believe in its goals and the importance of its outcomes.

Dr. Wood is known throughout the country as the foremost scholar in this area of health education research. He is often asked to serve on national review and advisory boards. His publication record is second to none. In addition, his colleagues in the university know Dr. Wood as a very competent researcher. People come to Dr. Wood for advice on research design and methodology questions. They also come to him for questions about theoretical formulations. He has a reputation as someone who can see the big picture on research projects.

Despite his research competence, there are problems on Dr. Wood's research team. Dr. Wood worries there is a great deal of work to be done but that the members of the team are not devoting sufficient time to the

Elder Care Project. He is frustrated because many of the day-to-day research tasks of the project are falling in his lap. He entered a recent research meeting, threw his notebook down on the table, and said, "I wish I'd never taken this project on. It's taking way too much of my time. The rest of you aren't pulling your fair share." Team members felt exasperated at Dr. Wood's comments. Although they respect his competence, they find his leadership style frustrating. His negative comments at staff meetings are having a demoralizing effect on the research team. Despite their hard work and devotion to the project, Dr. Wood seldom compliments or praises their efforts. Team members believe that they have spent more time than anticipated on the project and have received less pay or credit than expected. The project is sucking away a lot of staff energy, yet Dr. Wood does not seem to understand it or acknowledge it. The research staff is starting to feel burned out, but members realize that they need to keep trying because they are under time constraints from the federal government to do the work promised.

Recently, the team needed to develop a pamphlet for the participants in the Elder Care Project, but the pamphlet costs were significantly more than was budgeted in the grant. Dr. Wood was very adept at finding out where they might find small pockets of money to help cover those costs. Although team members were pleased that he was able to obtain the money, they were sure he would use this as just another example of how he was the one doing most of the work on the project.

Questions

1. Based on the skills approach, how would you assess Dr. Wood's leadership and his relationship to the members of the Elder Care Project team? Will the project be successful?
2. Does Dr. Wood have the skills necessary to be an effective leader of this research team?
3. The skills model describes three important competencies for leaders: problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge. If you were to coach Dr. Wood using this model, what type of things would you address with him?



CASE 3.2

A Shift for Lieutenant Colonel Adams

Lieutenant Colonel Adams was an aeronautical engineer in the Air Force who was recognized as an accomplished officer and rose quickly through the ranks of lieutenant, captain, and major. In addition, he successfully completed a number of professional development courses in the Air Force and received a master's degree in engineering. In the earlier part of his service, his career assignments required overseeing 15- to 20-person shifts that were responsible for routine maintenance schedules for squadron and base aircraft. As he progressed in rank, he moved to engineering projects, which were supported by small technical staffs.

Based on his strong performance, Major Adams was promoted to lieutenant colonel earlier than his peers. Instead of moving him into another engineering position, the personnel bureau and his assignment officer decided that Lt. Col. Adams would benefit from a tour in which he could expand his professional background and experience. Consequently, he was assigned to Base X as the commanding officer of the administration branch. Base X was an airbase with approximately 5,000 military and civilian personnel.

As the administration officer, Lt. Col. Adams was the senior human resource officer and the principal adviser to the base commander on all human resource issues. Lt. Col. Adams and his staff of 135 civilian and military personnel were responsible for personnel issues, food services, recreation, family support, and medical services. In addition, Lt. Col. Adams was assigned to chair the Labor-Management Relations Committee for the base.

At the end of the Cold War, as part of the declared peace dividend, the government decided to reduce the defense budget. In February, barely 6 months after taking over command of the administration branch, the federal government announced a significant reduction in the size of the military and the closure of many bases. Base X was to be closed as an air base and reassigned to the Army. The closure was to take place within 1 year, and the base was to be prepared for the arrival of the first Army troops in 2 years. As part of the reduction program, the federal government initiated voluntary retirement programs for civilian and military personnel. Those wanting to retire had until April 1 to decide.

Orders for the conversion of the airbase included the following:

- The base will continue normal operations for 6 months.
- The squadrons—complete with aircrews, equipment, and families (1,000)—must be relocated to their new bases and operational by August 1.
- The remaining base personnel strength, both civilian and military, must be reduced by 30%.
- The base must continue to provide personnel for operational missions.
- The reduction of personnel must be consistent with federal voluntary early-retirement programs.
- The base must be prepared with a support structure to accept 2,000 new soldiers expected to arrive in 2 years.

Lt. Col. Adams was assigned to develop a human resource plan that would meet the imposed staff levels for the entire base while ensuring that the base was still able to perform the operational tasks it had been given. Faced with this daunting task, Adams conducted an extensive review of all of the relevant orders concerning the base transformation, and he familiarized himself with all of the rules concerning the early-retirement program. After a series of initial meetings with the other base branch chiefs, he laid out a plan that could be accomplished by the established deadlines. At the same time, he chaired a number of meetings with his own staff about how to meet the mandated reductions within his own branch.

After considering the target figures for the early-retirement program, it was clear that the mandated numbers could not be reached. Simply allowing everyone who had applied for early retirement to leave was not considered an option because doing so would devastate entire sections of the base. More job cuts were required, and choices had to be made as to who would stay, why, and in what areas. Lt. Col. Adams met stiff resistance in the meetings to determine what sections would bear the brunt of the additional cutbacks.

Lt. Col. Adams conducted his own independent analysis of his own branch before consulting with his staff. Based on his thorough examination of the data, he mandated further reductions in his sections. Specifically targeted were personnel in the base housing, single-person accommodation, family services, and recreational sections. He also mandated a further 10% cut of military positions in his sections.

After meeting the mandated reduction targets, Lt. Col. Adams was informed that the federal government would accept all personnel who applied for early retirement, which was an unexpected decision. When

superimposed on the already mandated reductions, this move caused critical shortages in key areas. Within weeks of implementation of the plan, the base commander was receiving mounting complaints from both civilian and military members over the implementation of the plan.

Incidents of stress, frustration, and discontent rose dramatically. Families trying to move found support services cut back or nonexistent. The transition staff was forced to work evenings and weekends. Family support services were swamped and were asking for additional help.

Despite spending a large amount of overtime trying to address the diverse issues both basewide and in his branch, Lt. Col. Adams found himself struggling to keep his head above water. To make matters worse, the base was having difficulty meeting its operational mission, and vital sections were critically understaffed. The base commander wanted answers. When pressed, Lt. Col. Adams stated that his plan met all of the required deadlines and targets, and the plan conformed to all of the guidelines of the early retirement programs. “Maybe so,” replied the base commander, “but you forgot about the bigger picture.”

Questions

- 1. Based on the skills model, how would you assess Lt. Col. Adams’s ability to meet the challenges of the base administration position?
- 2. How would you assess his ability to meet the additional tasks he faced regarding the conversion of the base?
- 3. If you were to coach Lt. Col. Adams on how he could improve his leadership, what would you tell him?



CASE 3.3

Andy’s Recipe

Andy Garafallo owns an Italian restaurant that sits in the middle of a cornfield near a large midwestern city. On the restaurant’s far wall is an elaborate mural of the canals of Venice. A gondola hangs on the opposite

wall, up by the ceiling. Along another wall is a row of real potted lemon trees. "My ancestors are from Sicily," says Andy. "In fact, I can remember seeing my grandfather take a bite out of a lemon, just like the ones hanging on those trees."

Andy is very confident about his approach to this restaurant, and he should be, because the restaurant is celebrating its 25th anniversary. "I'm darned sure of what I want to do. I'm not trying different fads to get people to come here. People come here because they know they will get great food. They also want to support someone with whom they can connect. This is my approach. Nothing more, nothing less." While other restaurants have folded, Andy seems to have found a recipe for success.

Since opening his restaurant, Andy has had a number of managers. Currently, he has three: Kelly, Danielle, and Patrick. Kelly is a kitchen (food prep) manager who is known as very honest and dependable. She loves her work, and she is efficient, good with ordering, and good with preparation. Andy really likes Kelly but is frustrated with her because she has such difficulty getting along with the salespeople, delivery people, and wait staff.

Danielle, who works out front in the restaurant, has been with Andy the longest, 6 years. Danielle likes working at Garafallo's—she lives and breathes the place. She fully buys into Andy's approach of putting customers first. In fact, Andy says she has a knack for knowing what customers need before they even ask. Although she is very hospitable, Andy says she is lousy with numbers. She just doesn't seem to catch on to that side of the business.

Patrick, who has been with Andy for 4 years, usually works out front but can work in the kitchen as well. Although Patrick has a strong work ethic and is great with numbers, he is weak on the people side. For some reason, Patrick treats customers as if they are faceless, coming across as very unemotional. In addition, Patrick tends to approach problems with an either-or perspective. This has gotten him into trouble on more than one occasion. Andy wishes that Patrick would learn to lighten up. "He's a good manager, but he needs to recognize that some things just aren't that important," says Andy.

Andy's approach to his managers is that of a teacher and coach. He is always trying to help them improve. He sees part of his responsibility as teaching them every aspect of the restaurant business. Andy's stated goal is that he wants his managers to be "A" players when they leave his business to take on new jobs elsewhere. Helping people to become the best they can be is Andy's goal for his restaurant employees.

Although Andy works 12 hours a day, he spends little time analyzing the numbers. He does not think about ways to improve his profit margin by cutting corners, raising an item price here, or cutting quality there. Andy says, "It's like this: The other night I got a call from someone who said they wanted to come in with a group and wondered if they could bring along a cake. I said 'yes' with one stipulation . . . I get a piece! Well the people came and spent a lot of money. Then they told me that they had actually wanted to go to another restaurant but the other place would not allow them to bring in their own cake." Andy believes very strongly in his approach. "You get business by being what you should be." Compared with other restaurants, his restaurant is doing quite well. Although many places are happy to net 5–7% profit, Andy's Italian restaurant nets 30% profit, year in and year out.

Questions

- 1. What accounts for Andy Garafallo's success in the restaurant business?
- 2. From a skills perspective, how would you describe the three managers: Kelly, Danielle, and Patrick? What does each of them need to do to improve his or her skills?
- 3. How would you describe Andy's competencies? Does Andy's leadership suggest that one does not need all three skills in order to be effective?



LEADERSHIP INSTRUMENT

There are many questionnaires that assess an individual's skills for leadership. A quick search of the Internet provides a host of these questionnaires. Almost all of them are designed to be used in training and development to give people a feel for their leadership abilities. Surveys have been used for years to help people understand and improve their leadership style, but most questionnaires are not used in research because they have not been tested for reliability and validity. Nevertheless, they are useful as self-help instruments because they provide specific information to people about their leadership skills.

In this chapter, we present a comprehensive skills model that is based on many empirical studies of leaders' skills. Although the questionnaires used

in these studies are highly reliable and valid instruments, they are not suitable for our more pragmatic discussion of leadership in this text. In essence, they are too complex and involved. For example, Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (2000) used measures that included open-ended responses and very sophisticated scoring procedures. Though critically important for validating the model, these complicated measures are less valuable as self-instruction questionnaires.

A skills inventory is provided in the next section to assist you in understanding how leadership skills are measured and what your own skills might be. Your scores on the inventory will give you a sense of your own leadership competencies. You may be strong in all three skills or stronger in some skills than in others. The questionnaire will give you a sense of your own skills profile. If you are stronger in one skill and weaker in another, this may help you determine where you want to improve in the future.

SKILLS INVENTORY

Instructions: Read each item carefully and decide whether the item describes you as a person. Indicate your response to each item by circling one of the five numbers to the right of each item.

Key: 1 = Not true 2 = Seldom true 3 = Occasionally true 4 = Somewhat true 5 = Very true

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. I enjoy getting into the details of how things work. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. As a rule, adapting ideas to people's needs is easy for me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I enjoy working with abstract ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Technical things fascinate me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Being able to understand others is the most important part of my work. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Seeing the big picture comes easy for me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. One of my skills is being good at making things work. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. My main concern is to have a supportive communication climate. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. I am intrigued by complex organizational problems. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Following directions and filling out forms comes easily for me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. Understanding the social fabric of the organization is important to me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. I would enjoy working out strategies for my organization's growth. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. I am good at completing the things I've been assigned to do. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. Getting all parties to work together is a challenge I enjoy. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. Creating a mission statement is rewarding work. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. I understand how to do the basic things required of me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. I am concerned with how my decisions affect the lives of others. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. Thinking about organizational values and philosophy appeals to me. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Scoring

The skills inventory is designed to measure three broad types of leadership skills: technical, human, and conceptual. Score the questionnaire by doing the following. First, sum the responses on items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16. This is your technical skill score. Second, sum the responses on items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, and 17. This is your human skill score. Third, sum the responses on items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18. This is your conceptual skill score.

Total scores: Technical skill ____ Human skill ____ Conceptual skill ____

Scoring Interpretation

The scores you received on the skills inventory provide information about your leadership skills in three areas. By comparing the differences between your scores, you can determine where you have leadership strengths and where you have leadership weaknesses. Your scores also point toward the level of management for which you might be most suited.



SUMMARY

The skills approach is a leader-centered perspective that emphasizes the competencies of leaders. It is best represented in the early work of Katz (1955) on the *three-skill approach* and the more recent work of Mumford and his colleagues (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., 2000), who initiated the development of a comprehensive *skills model of leadership*.

In the three-skill approach, effective leadership depends on three basic personal skills: technical, human, and conceptual. Although all three skills are important for leaders, the importance of each skill varies between management levels. At lower management levels, technical and human skills are most important. For middle managers, the three different skills are equally important. At upper management levels, conceptual and human skills are most important, and technical skills become less important. Leaders are more effective when their skills match their management level.

In the 1990s, the skills model was developed to explain the capabilities (knowledge and skills) that make effective leadership possible. Far more complex than Katz's paradigm, this model delineated five components of effective leader performance: competencies, individual attributes, leadership outcomes, career experiences, and environmental influences. The leader competencies at the heart of the model are problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge. These competencies are directly affected by the leader's individual attributes, which include the leader's general cognitive ability, crystallized cognitive ability, motivation, and personality. The leader's competencies are also affected by his or her career experiences and the environment. The model postulates that effective problem solving and performance can be explained by the leader's basic competencies and that these competencies are in turn affected by the leader's attributes, experience, and the environment.

There are several strengths in conceptualizing leadership from a skills perspective. First, it is a leader-centered model that stresses the importance of the leader's abilities, and it places learned skills at the center of effective leadership performance. Second, the skills approach describes leadership in such a way that it makes it available to everyone. Skills are competencies that we all can learn to develop and improve. Third, the skills approach provides a sophisticated map that explains how effective leadership performance can be achieved. Based on the model, researchers can develop complex plans for studying the leadership process. Last, this approach provides a structure for leadership education and development programs that include creative problem solving, conflict resolution, listening, and teamwork.

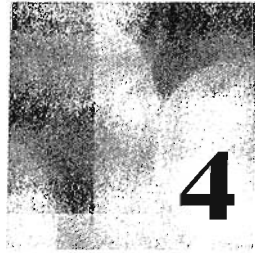
In addition to the positive features, there are also some negative aspects to the skills approach. First, the breadth of the model seems to extend beyond the boundaries of leadership, including, for example, conflict management, critical thinking, motivation theory, and personality theory. Second, the skills model is weak in predictive value. It does not explain how a person's competencies lead to effective leadership performance.

Third, the skills model claims not to be a trait approach, but individual traits such as cognitive abilities, motivation, and personality play a large role in the model. Finally, the skills model is weak in general application because it was constructed using only data from military personnel. Until the model has been tested with other populations, such as small and large organizations and businesses, its basic tenets must still be questioned.

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Style Approach



DESCRIPTION

The style approach emphasizes the behavior of the leader. This distinguishes it from the trait approach (Chapter 2), which emphasizes the personality characteristics of the leader, and the skills approach (Chapter 3), which emphasizes the leader's capabilities. The style approach focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act. In shifting the study of leadership to leader style or behaviors, the style approach expanded the study of leadership to include the actions of leaders toward subordinates in various contexts.

Researchers studying the style approach determined that leadership is composed of two general kinds of behaviors: *task behaviors* and *relationship behaviors*. Task behaviors facilitate goal accomplishment: They help group members to achieve their objectives. Relationship behaviors help subordinates feel comfortable with themselves, with each other, and with the situation in which they find themselves. The central purpose of the style approach is to explain how leaders combine these two kinds of behaviors to influence subordinates in their efforts to reach a goal.

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the style approach. Some of the first studies to be done were conducted at Ohio State University in the late 1940s, based on the findings of Stogdill's (1948) work, which pointed to the importance of considering more than leaders' traits in

leadership research. At about the same time, another group of researchers at the University of Michigan was conducting a series of studies that explored how leadership functioned in small groups. A third line of research was begun by Blake and Mouton in the early 1960s; it explored how managers used task and relationship behaviors in the organizational setting.

Although many research studies could be categorized under the heading of the style approach, the Ohio State studies, the Michigan studies, and the studies by Blake and Mouton (1964, 1978, and 1985) are strongly representative of the ideas in this approach. By looking closely at each of these groups of studies, we can draw a clearer picture of the underpinnings and implications of the style approach.

The Ohio State Studies

Because the results of studying leadership as a personality trait appeared fruitless, a group of researchers at Ohio State began to analyze how individuals acted when they were leading a group or organization. This analysis was conducted by having subordinates complete questionnaires about their leaders. On the questionnaires, subordinates had to identify the number of times their leaders engaged in certain types of behaviors.

The original questionnaire used in these studies was constructed from a list of more than 1,800 items describing different aspects of leader behavior. From this long list of items, a questionnaire composed of 150 questions was formulated, and it was called the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), (Hemphill & Coons, 1957). The LBDQ was given to hundreds of people in educational, military, and industrial settings, and the results showed that certain clusters of behaviors were typical of leaders. Six years later, Stogdill (1963) published a shortened version of the LBDQ. The new form, which was called the LBDQ-XII, became the most widely used in research. A style questionnaire similar to the LBDQ appears later in this chapter. You can use this questionnaire to assess your own leadership behavior.

Researchers found that subordinates' responses on the questionnaire clustered around two general types of leader behaviors: *initiating structure* and *consideration* (Stogdill, 1974). Initiating structure behaviors were essentially task behaviors, including such acts as organizing work, giving structure to the work context, defining role responsibilities, and scheduling

work activities. Consideration behaviors were essentially relationship behaviors and included building camaraderie, respect, trust, and liking between leaders and followers.

The two types of behaviors identified by the LBDQ-XII represent the core of the style approach and are central to what leaders do: Leaders provide structure for subordinates, and they nurture them. The Ohio State studies viewed these two behaviors as distinct and independent. They were thought of not as two points along a single continuum but as two different continua. For example, a leader could be high in initiating structure and high or low in task behavior. Similarly, a leader could be low in setting structure and low or high in consideration behavior. The degree to which a leader exhibited one behavior was not related to the degree to which she or he exhibited the other behavior.

Many studies have been done to determine which style of leadership is most effective in a particular situation. In some contexts high consideration has been found to be most effective, but in other situations high initiating structure has been found most effective. Some research has shown that being high on both behaviors is the best form of leadership. Determining how a leader optimally mixes task and relationship behaviors has been the central task for researchers from the style approach. The path-goal approach, which is discussed in Chapter 7, exemplifies a leadership theory that attempts to explain how leaders should integrate consideration and structure into the leader's style.

The University of Michigan Studies

While researchers at Ohio State were developing the LBDQ, researchers at the University of Michigan were also exploring leadership behavior, giving special attention to the impact of leaders' behaviors on the performance of small groups (Cartwright & Zander, 1960; Katz & Kahn, 1951; Likert, 1961, 1967).

The program of research at Michigan identified two types of leadership behaviors: *employee orientation* and *production orientation*. Employee orientation is the behavior of leaders who approach subordinates with a strong human relations emphasis. They take an interest in workers as human beings, value their individuality, and give special attention to their personal needs (Bowers & Seashore, 1966). Employee orientation is very similar to the cluster of behaviors identified in the Ohio State studies as consideration.

Production orientation consists of leadership behaviors that stress the technical and production aspects of a job. From this orientation, workers are viewed as a means for getting work accomplished (Bowers & Seashore, 1966). Production orientation parallels the initiating structure cluster found in the Ohio State studies.

Unlike the Ohio State researchers, the Michigan researchers, in their initial studies, conceptualized employee and production orientations as opposite ends of a single continuum. This suggested that leaders who were oriented toward production were less oriented toward employees, and those who were employee oriented were less production oriented. As more studies were completed, however, the researchers reconceptualized the two constructs, as in the Ohio State studies, as two independent leadership orientations (Kahn, 1956). When the two behaviors were treated as independent orientations, leaders were seen as being able to be oriented toward both production and employees at the same time.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a multitude of studies were conducted by researchers from both Ohio State and the University of Michigan to determine how leaders could best combine their task and relationship behaviors so as to maximize the impact of these behaviors on the satisfaction and performance of followers. In essence, the researchers were looking for a universal theory of leadership that would explain leadership effectiveness in every situation. The results that emerged from this large body of literature were contradictory and unclear (Yukl, 1994). Although some of the findings pointed to the value of a leader being both highly task oriented and highly relationship oriented in all situations (Misumi, 1985), the preponderance of research in this area was inconclusive.

Blake and Mouton's Managerial (Leadership) Grid

Perhaps the best-known model of managerial behavior is the Managerial Grid®, which first appeared in the early 1960s and has been refined and revised several times (Blake & McCanse, 1991; Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1978, 1985). It is a model that has been used extensively in organizational training and development. The Managerial Grid, which has been renamed the Leadership Grid®, was designed to explain how leaders help organizations to reach their purposes through two factors: *concern for production* and *concern for people*. Although these factors are described as leadership orientations in the model, they closely parallel the task and relationship leadership behaviors we have been discussing throughout this chapter.

Concern for production refers to how a leader is concerned with achieving organizational tasks. It involves a wide range of activities, including attention to policy decisions, new product development, process issues, workload, and sales volume, to name a few. Not limited to things, concern for production can refer to whatever the organization is seeking to accomplish (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Concern for people refers to how a leader attends to the people in the organization who are trying to achieve its goals. This concern includes building organizational commitment and trust, promoting the personal worth of employees, providing good working conditions, maintaining a fair salary structure, and promoting good social relations (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

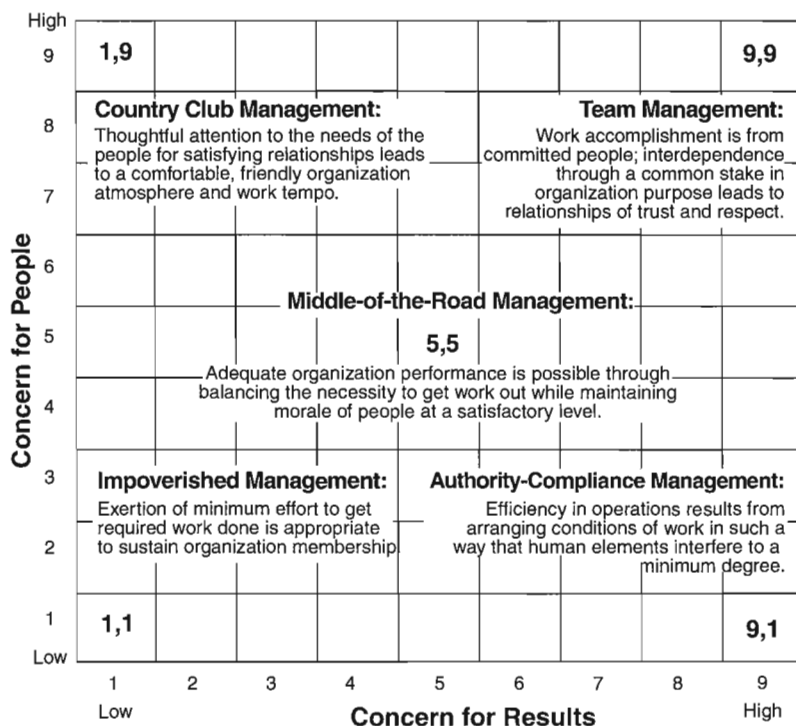
The Leadership (Managerial) Grid joins concern for production and concern for people in a model that has two intersecting axes (Figure 4.1). The horizontal axis represents the leader's concern for results, and the vertical axis represents the leader's concern for people. Each of the axes is drawn as a 9-point scale on which a score of 1 represents *minimum concern* and 9 represents *maximum concern*. By plotting scores from each of the axes, various leadership styles can be illustrated. The Leadership Grid portrays five major leadership styles: authority-compliance (9,1), country club management (1,9), impoverished management (1,1), middle-of-the-road management (5,5), and team management (9,9).

Authority-Compliance (9,1)

The 9,1 style of leadership places heavy emphasis on task and job requirements and less emphasis on people, except to the extent that people are tools for getting the job done. Communicating with subordinates is not emphasized except for the purpose of giving instructions about the task. This style is result driven, and people are regarded as tools to that end. The 9,1 leader is often seen as controlling, demanding, hard driving, and overpowering.

Country Club Management (1,9)

The 1,9 style represents a low concern for task accomplishment coupled with a high concern for interpersonal relationships. De-emphasizing production, 1,9 leaders stress the attitudes and feelings of people, making sure the personal and social needs of followers are met. They try to create

Figure 4.1 The Leadership Grid®

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a positive climate by being agreeable, eager to help, comforting, and uncontroversial.

Impoverished Management (1,1)

The 1,1 style is representative of a leader who is unconcerned with both the task and interpersonal relationships. This type of leader goes through the motions of being a leader but acts uninvolved and withdrawn. The 1,1 leader often has little contact with followers and could be described as indifferent, noncommittal, resigned, and apathetic.

Middle-of-the-Road Management (5,5)

The 5,5 style describes leaders who are compromisers, who have an intermediate concern for the task and an intermediate concern for the people who do the task. They find a balance between taking people into account and still emphasizing the work requirements. Their compromising style gives up some of the push for production and some of the attention to employee needs. To arrive at an equilibrium, the 5,5 leader avoids conflict and emphasizes moderate levels of production and interpersonal relationships. This type of leader often is described as one who is expedient, prefers the middle ground, soft-pedals disagreement, and swallows convictions in the interest of “progress.”

Team Management (9,9)

The 9,9 style places a strong emphasis on both tasks and interpersonal relationships. It promotes a high degree of participation and teamwork in the organization and satisfies a basic need in employees to be involved and committed to their work. The following are some of the phrases that could be used to describe the 9,9 leader: stimulates participation, acts determined, gets issues into the open, makes priorities clear, follows through, behaves open-mindedly, and enjoys working.

In addition to the five major styles described in the Leadership Grid, Blake and his colleagues have identified two other styles that incorporate multiple aspects of the grid.

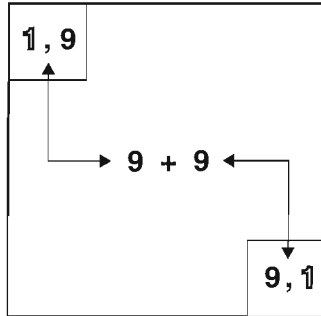
Paternalism/Maternalism

Paternalism/maternalism refers to a leader who uses both 1,9 and 9,1 styles but does not integrate the two (Figure 4.2). This is the “benevolent dictator” who acts graciously but does so for the purpose of goal accomplishment. In essence the paternalistic/maternalistic style treats people as if they were dissociated from the task.

Opportunism

Opportunism refers to a leader who uses any combination of the basic five styles for the purpose of personal advancement (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.2 *Paternalism/Maternalism: Reward and approval are bestowed on people in return for loyalty and obedience; failure to comply leads to punishment.*



SOURCE: From *Grid Solutions* by Robert R. Blake and Anne Adams McCaule. (Formerly *The Managerial Grid* by Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton.) Copyright © 1991. Reprinted with permission of Grid International, Inc.

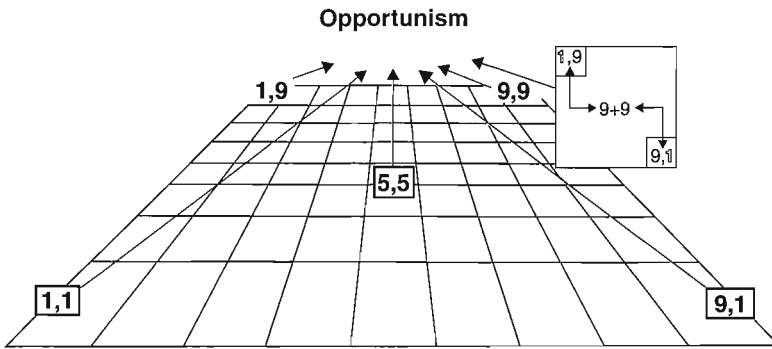
Blake and Mouton (1985) indicate that a person usually has a dominant grid style, which he or she uses in most situations, and a backup style. The backup style is what the leader reverts to when under pressure, when the usual way of accomplishing things does not work.

In summary, the Leadership Grid is an example of a practical model of leadership that is based on the two major leadership behaviors: task and relationship. It closely parallels the ideas and findings that emerged in the Ohio State and University of Michigan studies. It is used in consulting for organizational development throughout the world.

HOW DOES THE STYLE APPROACH WORK?

Unlike many of the other approaches discussed in the book, the style approach is not a refined theory that provides a neatly organized set of prescriptions for effective leadership behavior. Rather, the style approach provides a framework for assessing leadership in a broad way, as behavior with a task and relationship dimension. The style approach works not by telling

Figure 4.3 *Opportunism: In opportunistic management, people adapt and shift to any grid to gain the maximum advantage. Performance occurs according to a system of selfish gain. Effort is made only for an advantage for personal gain.*



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leaders how to behave but by describing the major components of their behavior.

The style approach reminds leaders that their actions toward others occur on a task level and a relationship level. In some situations, leaders need to be more task oriented, whereas in others, they need to be more relationship oriented. Similarly, some subordinates need leaders who provide a lot of direction, whereas others need leaders who can show them a great deal of nurturance and support. The style approach gives the leader a way to look at his or her own behavior by subdividing it into two dimensions.

An example may help explain how the style approach works. Imagine two college classrooms on the first day of class and two professors with entirely different styles. Professor Smith comes to class, introduces herself, takes attendance, goes over the syllabus, explains the first assignment, and dismisses the class. Professor Jones comes to class and, after introducing herself and handing out the syllabus, tries to help the students to get to know one another by having each of the students describe a little about

themselves, their majors, and their favorite nonacademic activities. The leadership styles of professors Smith and Jones are quite different. The preponderance of what Professor Smith does could be labeled task behavior, and the majority of what Professor Jones does is relationship behavior. The style approach provides a way to inform the professors about the differences in their behaviors. Depending on the response of the students to their style, the professors may want to change their behavior to improve their teaching on the first day of class.

Overall, the style approach offers a means of assessing in a general way the behaviors of leaders. It reminds leaders that their impact on others occurs through the tasks they perform as well as in the relationships they create.

STRENGTHS

The *style* approach makes several positive contributions to our understanding of the leadership process. First, the style approach marked a major shift in the general focus of leadership research. Before the inception of the style approach, researchers treated leadership exclusively as a personality trait (see Chapter 2). The style approach broadened the scope of leadership research to include the behaviors of leaders and what they do in various situations. No longer was the focus of leadership on the personal characteristics of leaders; it was expanded to include what leaders did and how they acted.

Second, a wide range of studies on leadership style validates and gives credibility to the basic tenets of the approach. First formulated and reported by researchers from Ohio State University and the University of Michigan and subsequently in the work of Blake and Mouton (1964, 1978, 1985) and Blake and McCanse (1991), the style approach is substantiated by a multitude of research studies that offer a viable approach to understanding the leadership process.

Third, on a conceptual level, researchers from the style approach have ascertained that a leader's style consists primarily of two major types of behaviors: task and relationship. The significance of this idea is not to be understated. Whenever leadership occurs, the leader is acting out both task and relationship behaviors; the key to being an effective leader often rests on how the leader balances these two behaviors. Together they form the core of the leadership process.

Fourth, the style approach is heuristic. It provides us with a broad conceptual map that is worthwhile to use in our attempts to understand the complexities of leadership. Leaders can learn a lot about themselves and how they come across to others by trying to see their behaviors in light of the task and relationship dimensions. Based on the style approach, leaders can assess their actions and determine how they may want to change to improve their leadership style.

CRITICISMS

Along with its strengths, the style approach also has several weaknesses. First, the research on styles has not adequately shown how leaders' styles are associated with performance outcomes (Bryman, 1992; Yukl, 1994). Researchers have not been able to establish a consistent link between task and relationship behaviors and outcomes such as morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. According to Yukl (1994, p. 75), the "results from this massive research effort have been mostly contradictory and inconclusive." He further points out that the only strong finding about leadership styles is that leaders who are considerate have followers who are more satisfied.

Another criticism is that this approach has failed to find a universal style of leadership that could be effective in almost every situation. The overarching goal for researchers studying the style approach appeared to be the identification of a universal set of leadership behaviors that would consistently result in effective outcomes. Because of inconsistencies in the research findings, this goal was never reached. Similar to the trait approach, which was unable to identify the definitive personal characteristics of leaders, the style approach has been unable to identify the universal behaviors that are associated with effective leadership.

A final criticism of the style approach is that it implies that the most effective leadership style is the high-high style (i.e., high task and high relationship). Although some researchers (e.g., Blake & McCauley, 1991; Misumi, 1985) suggest that high-high managers are most effective, that may not be the case in all situations. In fact, the full range of research findings provides only limited support for a universal high-high style (Yukl, 1994). Certain situations may require different leadership styles; some may be complex and require high-task behavior, and others may be simple and require supportive behavior. At this point in the development of research on the style approach, it remains unclear whether the high-high style is the best style of leadership.

APPLICATION

The style approach can be applied easily in ongoing leadership settings. At all levels in all types of organizations, managers are continually engaged in task and relationship behaviors. By assessing their own style, managers can determine how they are coming across to others and how they could change their behaviors to be more effective. In essence, the style approach provides a mirror for managers that is helpful in answering the frequently asked question, “How am I doing as a leader?”

In training and development for leadership, many programs throughout the country are structured along the lines of the style approach. Almost all of them are designed similarly and include giving managers questionnaires that assess in some way their task and relationship behaviors toward subordinates. Participants use these assessments to improve their overall leadership styles.

An example of a training and development program that deals exclusively with leader styles is Blake and Mouton’s Leadership Grid (formerly Managerial Grid) seminar. Grid seminars are about increasing productivity, improving morale, and gaining employee commitment. They are offered by Scientific Methods, an international organization development company (<http://www.gridinternational.com>). At grid seminars, through self-assessments, small-group experiences, and candid critiques, managers learn how to define effective leadership, how to manage for optimal results, and how to identify and change ineffective leadership behaviors. The conceptual framework around which the grid seminars are structured is the style approach to leadership.

In short, the style approach applies to nearly everything a leader does. It is an approach that is used as a model by many training and development companies to teach managers how to improve their effectiveness and organizational productivity.

CASE STUDIES

In this section, you will find case studies (Cases 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3) that describe the leadership styles of three different managers, each of whom is working in a different organizational setting. The first case is about a

maintenance director in a large hospital, the second deals with a supervisor in a small sporting goods store, and the third is concerned with the director of a design department in a large manufacturing company. At the end of each case are questions that will help you to analyze the case from the perspective of the style approach.

CASE 4.1

A Drill Sergeant at First

Mark Young is the head of the painting department in a large hospital, and 20 union employees report to him. Before coming onboard at the hospital, he had worked as an independent contractor. At the hospital, he took a position that was newly created because the hospital believed change was needed in how painting services were provided.

Upon beginning his job, Mark did a 4-month analysis of the direct and indirect costs of painting services. His findings supported the perceptions of his administrators that painting services were inefficient and costly. As a result, Mark completely reorganized the department, designed a new scheduling procedure, and redefined the expected standards of performance.

Mark says that when he started out in his new job he was “all task,” like a drill sergeant who didn’t seek any input from his subordinates. From Mark’s point of view, the hospital environment did not leave much room for errors, so he needed to be strict about getting painters to do a good job within the constraints of the hospital environment.

As time went along, Mark relaxed his style and was less demanding. He delegated some responsibilities to two crew leaders who reported to him, but he always stayed in close touch with each of the employees. On a weekly basis, Mark was known to take small groups of workers to the local sports bar for burgers on the house. He loved to banter with the employees and could dish it out as well as take it.

Mark is very proud of his department. He says he always wanted to be a coach, and that’s how he feels about running his department. He enjoys working with people, and in particular he says he likes to see the glint in their eyes when they realize that they’ve done a good job and they have done it on their own.

Because of Mark's leadership, the painting department improved substantially and is now seen by workers in other departments as the most productive department in hospital maintenance. Painting services received a customer rating of 92%, which was the highest of any service in the hospital.

Questions

1. From the style perspective, how would you describe Mark Young's leadership?
2. How did his style change over time?
3. In general, do you think he is more task oriented or more relationship oriented?
4. What score do you think he would get on Blake and Mouton's grid?



CASE 4.2

Eating Lunch Standing Up

Susan Parks is the part-owner and manager of Marathon Sports, an athletic store that specializes in running shoes and accessories. The store employs about 10 people, most of whom are college students who work part-time during the week and full-time on weekends. Marathon Sports is the only store of its kind in a college town with a population of 125,000. The annual sales figures for the store have shown 15% growth for each of the past 7 years.

Ms. Parks has a lot invested in the store, and she works very hard to make sure the store continues to maintain its reputation and pattern of growth. She works 50 hours a week at the store, where she wears many hats, including those of buyer, scheduler, trainer, planner, and salesperson. There is never a moment when Susan is not doing something. Rumor has it that she eats her lunch standing up.

Employees' reactions to Ms. Parks are strong and quite varied. Some people like her style and others do not. Those who like her style talk

about how organized and efficient the store is when she is in charge. Susan makes the tasks and goals for everyone very clear. She keeps everyone busy, and when they go home at night they feel as if they have accomplished something. They like to work for Susan because she knows what she is doing. Those who do not like her style complain that she is too driven. It seems that her sole purpose for being at the store is to get the job done. She seldom, if ever, takes a break or just hangs out with the staff. These people say Susan is pretty hard to relate to, and as a result it is not much fun working at Marathon Sports.

Susan is beginning to sense that employees have a mixed reaction to her leadership style. This bothers her, but she does not know what to do about it. In addition to her work at the store, Susan struggles hard to be a good spouse and mother of three children.

Questions

1. According to the style approach, how would you describe Susan Parks's leadership?
2. Why does it create such a pronounced reaction from her subordinates?
3. Do you think she should change her style?
4. Would she be effective if she changed?



CASE 4.3

Enhancing the Department's Culture

Douglas Ludwig is the director of design services at a large office furniture manufacturing company that employs about 1,200 people. The design department is made up of 80 people who are divided into eight working teams, all of which report to Mr. Ludwig. Douglas is new to the company, having been hired away from a smaller competitor where he was vice president for research and development. His reputation as a leader at the previous company was generally favorable.

During his first year, Douglas has spent a lot of time trying to enhance the culture in his department. Unlike the previous director, who had spent a good portion of his time monitoring projects and emphasizing company goals, Douglas has involved himself with the mood, climate, and tenor of the department. To that end, Douglas has instituted a new department meeting schedule for the purpose of allowing everyone to share his or her ideas and concerns. While continuing to do the “nuts-and-bolts” things, Douglas has tried to promote greater esprit de corps in the department by having brown-bag lunches on Fridays. Each week, Douglas meets informally with the team leaders to get a feel for what they need and how they are doing.

Douglas is also a strong supporter of social events outside of work. In the summer, the design department held an outdoor family barbecue—the first ever for some of the older employees in the company. Over the holidays, Douglas held an open house at his home that was catered by the company. Employees thought it was “first class” and talked about it for many months. Douglas was also instrumental in getting the company to sponsor a coed indoor soccer team, made up completely of employees from the design department.

Most people in the department give Douglas Ludwig positive reviews for his first year as director. Designers and staffers alike are impressed by what a nice guy Mr. Ludwig seems to be. For years, the mood in the design department had been somewhat stale, but with Douglas’s arrival some life came back into the place. People began to enjoy the new vitality in the department, and they found themselves chatting more and complaining less.

Questions

Douglas Ludwig’s leadership clearly is one of the major types in the style approach.

1. What style is it?
2. Does it sound as if it is effective in the context of a design department at a furniture company?
3. Would you or would you not like to work for Douglas Ludwig?
4. Is there a downside to this style of leadership? If so, describe it.



LEADERSHIP INSTRUMENT

Researchers and practitioners alike have used many different instruments to assess the styles of leaders. The two most commonly used measures have been the LBDQ (Stogdill, 1963) and the Leadership Grid (Blake & McCanse, 1991). Both of these measures provide information about the degree to which a leader acts task directed and people directed. The LBDQ was designed primarily for research and has been used extensively since the 1960s. The Leadership Grid was designed primarily for training and development, and it continues to be used today for training managers and supervisors in the leadership process.

To assist you in developing a better understanding of how leadership style is measured and what your own style might be, a leadership style questionnaire is included in this section. This questionnaire is made up of 20 items that assess two orientations: *task* and *relationship*. By scoring the style questionnaire, you can obtain a general profile of your leadership behavior.

The score you receive for task refers to the degree to which you help others by defining their roles and letting them know what is expected of them. This factor describes your tendencies to be task directed toward others when you are in a leadership position. The score you receive for relationship is a measure of the degree to which you try to make subordinates feel comfortable with themselves, each other, and the group itself. It represents a measure of how people oriented you are.

Your results on the style questionnaire give you data about your task orientation and people orientation. What do your scores suggest about your leadership style? Are you more likely to lead with an emphasis on task or with an emphasis on relationship? As you interpret your responses to the style questionnaire, are there ways you could change your style to shift the emphasis you give to tasks and relationships? To gain more information about your style, you may want to have four or five of your coworkers fill out the questionnaire based on their perceptions of you as a leader. This will give you additional data to compare and contrast to your own scores about yourself.

STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Read each item carefully and think about how often you (or the person you are evaluating) engage in the described behavior. Indicate your response to each item by circling one of the five numbers to the right of each item.

Key: 1 = Never 2 = Seldom 3 = Occasionally 4 = Often 5 = Always

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Tells group members what they are supposed to do. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Acts friendly with members of the group. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Sets standards of performance for group members. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Helps others feel comfortable in the group. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Makes suggestions about how to solve problems. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Responds favorably to suggestions made by others. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Makes his or her perspective clear to others. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Treats others fairly. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. Develops a plan of action for the group. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. Behaves in a predictable manner toward group members. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. Defines role responsibilities for each group member. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. Communicates actively with group members. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. Clarifies his or her own role within the group. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. Shows concern for the well-being of others. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. Provides a plan for how the work is to be done. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. Shows flexibility in making decisions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. Provides criteria for what is expected of the group. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. Discloses thoughts and feelings to group members. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. Encourages group members to do high-quality work. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. Helps group members get along. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Scoring

The style questionnaire is designed to measure two major types of leadership behaviors: task and relationship. Score the questionnaire by doing the following. First, sum the responses on the odd-numbered items. This is your task score. Second, sum the responses on the even-numbered items. This is your relationship score.

Total scores: Task _____ Relationship _____

Scoring Interpretation

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 45–50 Very high range | 30–34 Moderately low range |
| 40–44 High range | 25–29 Low range |
| 35–39 Moderately high range | 10–24 Very low range |



SUMMARY

The style approach is strikingly different from the trait approach and skills approach to leadership because the style approach focuses on what leaders do rather than who leaders are. It suggests that leaders engage in two primary types of behaviors: task behaviors and relationship behaviors. How leaders combine these two types of behaviors to influence others is the central focus of the style approach.

The style approach originated from three different lines of research: the Ohio State University studies, the University of Michigan studies, and the work of Blake and Mouton on the Managerial Grid.

Researchers at Ohio State developed a leadership questionnaire called the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), which identified *initiation of structure* and *consideration* as the core leadership behaviors. The Michigan studies provided similar findings but called the leader behaviors *production orientation* and *employee orientation*.

Using the Ohio State and Michigan studies as a basis, much research has been carried out to find the best way for leaders to combine task and

relationship behaviors. The goal has been to find a universal set of leadership behaviors capable of explaining leadership effectiveness in every situation; however, the results from these efforts have not been conclusive. Researchers have had difficulty identifying one best style of leadership.

Blake and Mouton developed a practical model for training managers that described leadership behaviors along a grid with two axes: concern for results and concern for people. How leaders combine these orientations results in five major leadership styles: authority-compliance (9,1), country club management (1,9), impoverished management (1,1), middle-of-the-road management (5,5), and team management (9,9).

The style approach has several strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, it has broadened the scope of leadership research to include the study of the behaviors of leaders rather than only their personal traits or characteristics. Second, it is a reliable approach because it is supported by a wide range of studies. Third, the style approach is valuable because it underscores the importance of the two core dimensions of leadership behavior: task and relationship. Fourth, it has heuristic value in that it provides us with a broad conceptual map that is useful in gaining an understanding of our own leadership behaviors. On the negative side, researchers have not been able to associate the behaviors of leaders (task and relationship) with outcomes such as morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. In addition, researchers from the style approach have not been able to identify a universal set of leadership behaviors that would consistently result in effective leadership. Last, the style approach implies but fails to support fully the idea that the most effective leadership style is a high-high style (i.e., high task and high relationship).

Overall, the style approach is not a refined theory that provides a neatly organized set of prescriptions for effective leadership behavior. Rather, the style approach provides a valuable framework for assessing leadership in a broad way as assessing behavior with task and relationship dimensions. Finally, the style approach reminds leaders that their impact on others occurs along both dimensions.

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