

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership, also known as authoritarian leadership, is a leadership style characterized by individual control over all decisions and little input from group members. Autocratic leaders typically make choices based on their own ideas and judgments and rarely accept advice from followers. Autocratic leadership involves absolute, authoritarian control over a group.

Characteristics of Autocratic Leadership

Some of the primary characteristics of autocratic leadership include:

- Little or no input from group members
- Leaders make the decisions
- Group leaders dictate all the work methods and processes
- Group members are rarely trusted with decisions or important tasks

Benefits of Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership can be beneficial in some instances, such as when decisions need to be made quickly without consulting with a large group of people. Some projects require strong leadership in order to get things accomplished quickly and efficiently.

Have you ever worked with a group of students or co-workers on a project that got derailed by poor organization, a lack of leadership and an inability to set deadlines? If so, chances are that your grade or job performance suffered as a result. In such situations, a strong leader who utilizes an autocratic style can take charge of the group, assign tasks to different members and establish solid deadlines for projects to be finished.

In situations that are particularly stressful, such as during military conflicts, group members may actually prefer an autocratic style. It allows members of the group to focus on performing specific tasks without worrying about making complex decisions. This also allows group members to become highly skilled at performing certain duties, which can be beneficial to the group.

Downsides of Autocratic Leadership

While autocratic leadership can be beneficial at times, there are also many instances where this leadership style can be problematic. People who abuse an autocratic leadership style are often viewed as bossy, controlling and dictatorial, which can lead to resentment among group members. Because autocratic leaders make decisions without consulting the group, people in the group may dislike that they are unable to contribute ideas. Researchers have also found that autocratic leadership leads to a lack of creative solutions to problems, which can ultimately hurt the performance of the group.

While autocratic leadership does have some potential pitfalls, leaders can learn to use elements of this style wisely. For example, an autocratic style can be used effectively in situations where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group or has access to information that other members of the group do not.

Bureaucratic Leadership

This style of leadership follows a close set of standards. Everything is done in an exact, specific way to ensure safety and/or accuracy. You will often find this leadership role in a situation where the work environment is dangerous and specific sets of procedures are necessary to ensure safety.

In the working world bureaucratic leadership skills would be best utilized in jobs such as construction work, chemistry-related jobs that involve working with hazardous material, or jobs that involve working with large amounts of money.

Benefits of Bureaucratic Leadership

In school work, you may find that bureaucratic leadership skills are necessary when working on a group project for a science class. Precision is key in a science project, and meticulous notes are essential.

A natural bureaucratic leader will tend to create detailed instructions for other members of a group. This type of leader would also be very successful working in student government roles.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership, is a type of leadership style in which members of the group take a more participative role in the decision-making process. Researchers have found that this learning style is usually one of the most effective and leads to higher productivity, better contributions from group members and increased group morale.

Characteristics of Democratic Leadership

Some of the primary characteristics of democratic leadership include:

- Group members are encouraged to share ideas and opinions, even though the leader retains the final say over decisions.
- Members of the group feel more engaged in the process.
- Creativity is encouraged and rewarded.

Benefits of Democratic Leadership

Because group members are encouraged to share their thoughts, democratic leadership can lead to better ideas and more creative solutions to problems. Group members also feel more involved and committed to projects, making them more likely to care about the end results. Research on leadership styles has also shown that democratic leadership leads to higher productivity among group members.

Downsides of Democratic Leadership

While democratic leadership has been described as the most effective leadership style, it does have some potential downsides. In situations where roles are unclear or time is of the essence, democratic leadership can lead to communication failures and uncompleted projects. In some cases, group members may not have the necessary knowledge or expertise to make quality contributions to the decision-making process.

Democratic leadership works best in situations where group members are skilled and eager to share their knowledge. It is also important to have plenty of time to allow people to contribute, develop a plan and then vote on the best course of action.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership, also known as delegative leadership, is a type of leadership style in which leaders are hands-off and allow group members to make the decisions. Researchers have found that this is generally the leadership style that leads to the lowest productivity among group members.

Characteristics of Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by:

- Very little guidance from leaders
- Complete freedom for followers to make decisions
- Leaders provide the tools and resources needed
- Group members are expected to solve problems on their own

Benefits of Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership can be effective in situations where group members are highly skilled, motivated and capable of working on their own. While the conventional term for this style is 'laissez-faire' and implies a completely hands-off approach, many leaders still remain open and available to group members for consultation and feedback.

Downsides of Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is not ideal in situations where group members lack the knowledge or experience they need to complete tasks and make decisions. Some people are not good at setting their own deadlines, managing their own projects and solving problems on their own. In such situations, projects can go off-track and deadlines can be missed when team members do not get enough guidance or feedback from leaders.

Charismatic Leadership

A charismatic leader is one who provides an environment full of energy and positive reinforcement. If you are naturally charismatic, you are very fortunate! This is a trait that is not so easily learned.

Charismatic leaders inspire others and encourage them to be their best. Employees and group members want to impress a charismatic leader, so they work hard and strive to succeed.

Pitfalls of Charismatic Leadership

Under charismatic leadership, group members may view success in relation to their leaders. A major problem with charismatic leadership is that group success tends to hinge on the leader. The charismatic leader is the glue that holds a group together. So what happens if the leader should have to step down or transfer? Normally, the group dynamic will fizzle and individual members will lose enthusiasm.

When Is Charismatic Leadership Most Useful?

Charismatic leadership is great for short-term projects. As long as you are working on a task that can be completed in a semester, you don't have to worry so much about your group falling apart with the loss of leadership.

Charismatic leaders are great for projects that require energy and talent. Drama assignments, writing assignments, sports-related tasks, art projects—these activities could be very successful when led by a charismatic person.

Can charisma be learned? Charisma is a special quality that people possess that serves as a magnet, of sorts, but it is really made up of many traits. One of the most important elements is self-confidence. People who appear confident instill confidence in those around them. Another element of charisma is great communication ability—and that starts with a strong and effective vocabulary.

Source: Kendra Cherry, <http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/>