

Group Leadership

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the topic of group leadership, through the definition and discussion of:

1. Group Leadership
2. Group Decision-Making Styles

1. GROUP LEADERSHIP

Sociologists have conceptualized two forms of group leadership:

- Instrumental leadership
- Expressive leadership.

Instrumental leadership is a form of group leadership that is focused on completing tasks and accomplishing the goals of a group. It is primarily concerned with accomplishing goals quickly and efficiently.

IN CONTEXT

Think of your boss at work as an example of an instrumental leader, or form of instrumental leadership. The boss delegates tasks and strategizes about how to accomplish goals quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively for the company.

The boss is not going to be overly concerned about making everyone happy, though ideally, everyone will be happy doing their respective job. Your boss's bottom line is completing the task or accomplishing the goal, and when that is the focus, it is called instrumental leadership.

Expressive leadership stands in contrast to instrumental leadership because expressive leaders are focused on solving group conflicts and maintaining harmony, stability, and order within the group. It is more attuned to the emotions and well-being of everyone involved in the group:

- Are they happy?
- Is there a good group dynamic?
- Is everyone satisfied?

Expressive leaders don't want conflicts. When they have a harmonious working group, then goals can be

accomplished.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Your family is an example of expressive leadership. The head of your family is going to be primarily concerned with overall harmony and cohesion in the family.

It's important to note that these forms of group leadership are not either/or leadership styles. Both instrumental and expressive leadership styles can be present at the same time. In fact, any small group needs elements of both instrumental and expressive leadership in order to run effectively.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Your boss, for instance, could be more concerned with having a friendly, peer relationship with employees rather than getting things done instrumentally. Also the family needs members to be both instrumental--getting things done, paying the bills, etc.--as well as expressive, providing emotional support and focusing on a harmonious functioning of the family as a unit.



HINT

These examples showcase ideal types to help make the two different forms conceptually clear, but know that in reality, small groups are characterized by both instrumental and expressive leadership.



TERMS TO KNOW

Instrumental Leadership

A form of group leadership that is focused on completing tasks and accomplishing the goals of the group.

Expressive Leadership

A form of group leadership that is focused on solving group conflicts and maintaining group cohesion and harmony.

2. GROUP DECISION-MAKING STYLES

Leaders can be more goal-oriented (instrumental leadership) or they can be more focused on cohesion, harmony, happiness, and stability within the group (expressive leadership). Yet how do groups make decisions? What kind of decision-making styles do they have? What kind of decision-making processes do they use?

Sociologists have identified three decision-making styles, or leadership types, that groups display:

- Authoritarian
- Democratic
- Laissez-faire.

In **authoritarian leadership**, the leader takes charge of the situation and demands conformity among members of the group.



THINK ABOUT IT

In your job, are you typically allowed to determine what part you will play in the group, in accomplishing the tasks of your company? Probably not, and this is because the workplace group has instrumental goals, and the boss takes an authoritarian position to accomplish those goals. Authoritarian leadership is named after this

idea of authoritarianism, in which there's an authority on top who sends orders down below; everyone must obey the authority.

Clearly, authoritarian leadership isn't favorable for making friends or engendering closeness in the situation, but it can be appreciated and valued in times of stress and confusion, when somebody is needed to take charge and delegate tasks. This is when authoritarian leadership is valuable, and you see it most often with respect to instrumental goals and in the workplace.

As its name suggests, **democratic leadership** involves everyone in the group when making decisions. Everyone's input is valuable, and everyone gets to discuss the strategy for accomplishing the goals within the group, as opposed to one person delegating tasks. Everyone collectively discusses the strategies of the group and arrives at the best way to achieve the goal.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Consider the give and take involved in deciding how your family is going to spend a Saturday afternoon. You have a goal as a family of doing something together on a Saturday, and it's likely that the decision will be made democratically, discussing the strategy within the family--a form of democratic leadership.

Workplaces can also be democratic, and you often see them taking this form in the 21st century. Some of them are progressive workplaces designed to eliminate authoritarian hierarchy, mostly evidenced in creative professions such as advertising, in which everyone is collaborating on strategies for the client.

The third type of leadership is similar to democratic in that there's no strong leader. It is called **laissez-faire leadership**, which is a French phrase meaning, 'let do, leave alone.' It's a hands-off approach in which the group functions more or less on its own. The leader, if present, does not take a dominant role, and the group is left to function on its own.

IN CONTEXT

A good example of a laissez-faire group is your friend group. When you're sitting around with your friends, the dynamic is fairly equal. Ideally, you don't have an authoritarian friend group.

How do you decide what the group will do on a given night? There might be multiple ideas bandied about, or you might not do anything after all, because nobody really takes charge. Stereotypically, laissez-faire leadership is the least effective way to accomplish goals because there's less organization than authoritarian or democratic leadership.



TERMS TO KNOW

Authoritarian Leadership

Leadership that is take-charge and demands conformity; typically effective at accomplishing group goals.

Democratic Leadership

Leadership that includes all group members in the decision making process.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Leadership that lets the group run itself; typically least effective in accomplishing group goals.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about the two forms of **group leadership**, and the three **group decision-making styles**.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



TERMS TO KNOW

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Democratic Leadership

Leadership that includes all group members in the decision making process.

Expressive Leadership

A form of group leadership that is focused on solving group conflicts and maintaining group cohesion and harmony.

Instrumental Leadership

A form of group leadership that is focused on completing tasks and accomplishing the goals of the group.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Leadership that lets the group run itself; typically least effective in accomplishing group goals.