

Approaches to Small Group Leadership



Chapter 9



Being a Leader vs. Sharing Leadership



Definition

“A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”
(Northouse, 2007, p. 3)

Leadership also is considered to be a unique form of communicative behavior

Being a Leader vs. Sharing Leadership



Appointed leader assumes the role responsibility of controlling and directing the group

Elected leader is a negotiated position

Being a Leader vs. Sharing Leadership



Views of Shared Leadership

1. The member who has competence in the task or relational area assumes the leader role
2. Leadership can emerge from any interested and talented group member
3. Shared leadership behaviors are the communicative behaviors any group member can enact to demonstrate leadership

Classic Approaches to Leadership: Trait, Style, & Situational



Trait Approach to Leadership



Definition

Centers on the idea that people inherently possess characteristics that distinguish them as either a leader or a follower

Trait Approach to Leadership



Four initial leadership traits

1. Physical traits
2. Personality traits
3. Communicative behaviors
4. Social skills

Trait Approach to Leadership



Note about leadership and traits

Numerous studies have concluded traits alone might not fully explain the makeup of a good leader

Style Approach to Leadership



Definition

Stems from the idea that leaders display different styles, which then differently impact group outcomes

Style Approach to Leadership



Three leadership styles

1. Democratic style believes group members should be involved in the decision-making or problem-solving process

Style Approach to Leadership



Three leadership styles

2. Autocratic style believes group members need controlling



Style Approach to Leadership



Three leadership styles

3. Laissez faire style believes group members should function independently, with little direction or personal involvement by the leader

Style Approach to Leadership



The style used by a leader affects the communication that occurs in a group

Situational Approach to Leadership



Definition

Rests on the idea that leadership behavior depends on three situational variations

1. Power
2. Task structure
3. Member relations

Classic Approaches to Leadership



These three approaches do not represent approaches whose foundations center on communication and were not designed with the small group in mind

Popular Communication Approaches to Leadership: Emergent Leader, Charismatic, & Counteractive Influence



Emergent Leader Approach to Leadership



Definition

Proposes that a group member emerges as a leader based on communicative behaviors, persuasive influence, and perceived intellectual competence

Emergent Leader Approach to Leadership



To emerge as a leader, member should:

1. Participate from the moment the group is formed
2. Engage frequently in quality communication
3. Demonstrate good character by being respectful to group members
4. Utilize effective listening strategies

Emergent Leader Approach to Leadership



To NOT emerge as a leader, group members should:

1. Fail to attend group meetings
2. Speak little or not at all
3. Speak in a dominant and contentious manner
4. Indicate the desire to be a follower rather than a leader
5. Volunteer to play the formal recorder role
6. Play the clown or egghead deviant roles

Charismatic Approach to Leadership



Definition

A leader possesses the ability to accomplish extraordinary things while simultaneously exerting a powerful influence on members

Charismatic Approach to Leadership



Two factors of charismatic leadership

1. Charismatic leaders are perceived by group members as visionaries, motivators, and risk takers who possess competent communication, persuasion, and relationship building skills
2. Charismatic leaders are placed at risk if visions fail or task goals are not met

Counteractive Influence Approach to Leadership



Definition

Centers on the notion that when the group encounters an obstacle, the leader needs to draw upon a repertoire of communicative skills that:

- (1) counters what other group members have said or done and
- (2) influences members to resolve or remove whatever is causing the obstacle

Guidelines to Enhance Leadership Competence



Guidelines to Enhance Leadership Competence



- 1. Strive toward engaging in competent group member communicative behaviors
- 2. Set realistic and manageable goals for the group
- 3. Foster a supportive communication climate

Guidelines to Enhance Leadership Competence



- 4. Watch the use of humor
- 5. Encourage group members to engage in orientation behaviors, which include the use of verbal behaviors that direct members to handle conflict, make helpful suggestions, lessen tension, and facilitate agreement

Guidelines to Enhance Leadership Competence



- 6. Set high standards for group members' behaviors, such as developing a code of conduct and a charter

A code of conduct refers to behaviors by which group members agree to abide

A charter lists the goals the group hopes to achieve

Guidelines to Enhance Leadership Competence



- 7. Foster creativity
- 8. Celebrate successes

A Final Note



Through leadership, group members make sense of their group. To enhance this sense making process, it is essential that a group retain a group-centered focus

Retaining a group-centered focus allows all group members to engage in shared leadership
