

UNIT 1

“What is Leadership?” – A Lecture at the Management Faculty of Hadford University

Welcome to the Management School. A key issue, central to all management thinking, is the concept of leadership. And today I want to start you off by exploring this idea of what a leader is. Does anyone here believe that leadership and management are the same thing? I'm afraid this isn't true: a manager is not always necessarily a leader and being a good leader may not necessarily be part of a manager's role. Another thing that is often discussed is the long-running debate over whether leaders are naturally charismatic people or whether people can be trained to become good leaders. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to this 'nature versus nurture' controversy, though it might be that both arguments are true. So what makes a good leader? Good leaders are able to keep their eye on overall goals at all times. Rather than get caught up in the detail, they can see the bigger picture. They are also usually experts in a field and generally quite knowledgeable. Look at Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft. He began with incredible skills in software and computing. Good leaders can also see change and respond to it. They have natural creativity and a passion for ideas and solutions. Leaders also have good self-image. Their confidence helps give them charisma.

So let me talk a little bit about leadership styles. There are a number of well-known styles. The first is *autocratic* leadership. Have you ever come across a manager who sets his or her own goals, tells people what to do to achieve them, and demands that people obey? In this case, those he or she leads may become either dissatisfied or perhaps too dependent on him or her. In some cases, like the military, this kind of leadership is useful, but generally in business it is not.

Similar to autocratic leadership is *paternalistic* leadership. Paternalistic leaders still make all the decisions and expect workers to obey them. But while autocratic leaders don't care much about what their workers think and feel, paternalistic leaders are more interested in their welfare.

The third is *democratic* leadership, which can either be *consultative* – where, for example, a communications campaign leader may consult with her staff on ways forward before making strategy decisions – or it may be *persuasive*, where the leader decides first and then persuades her staff to follow the decision. While democratic leadership requires communication skills and takes more time than autocratic leadership, most people think it is more effective. It lets more people participate, letting everyone feel they belong and can take ownership of what they do, thereby motivating them and making them more committed. Besides, when staff have high levels of education, it is a good idea to respect people's ideas and draw on their knowledge and experience.

The fourth style of leadership is called *laissez faire*. It's French and it means, roughly, 'leave to do or happen'. Laissez-faire leaders let their employees work freely and without much control at all. Do you think this is an effective style? I can see some of you think not. Well, there are certain industries, like new media and other creative industries, which are quite informal and enjoy the freedom and relaxed atmosphere of this style. The danger is low productivity, but it can make for a very innovative workplace.

Next, I'm going to answer the question: What is the basic or intrinsic meaning of leadership? There are many great thinkers who have attempted to describe what leadership intrinsically is. Hersey and Blanchard, for example, have an excellent model that illustrates the difference between task behaviour and relationship behaviour. Task behaviour is about organizing what people need to do. Relationship behaviour is about the personal support they need. With the right balance, they say, a good leader can choose between some of the styles I mentioned earlier in the lecture, as well as some others like *delegating* (or giving power to

others), for example or *participation*, as we talked about before or what they call ‘*selling*’ leadership (where they persuade others about a concept) or what they call ‘*telling*’ leadership (where workers are less mature and need to be clearly instructed).

As you know, the first decade of the 21st century has seen great changes. And so leadership styles need to adapt. One clear trend is a move away from the old hierarchy and ideas of status in a company. Companies are flatter, with fewer layers of management. Most companies now embrace a more team-based or project approach. A good team-based project leader these days can bring together the right mix of individuals to get things done. They can motivate staff and inspire them to see the same corporate objectives as they do and get their tasks done. Such a leader is good at standing back and evaluating the team and the actions it implements. With this new level of flexibility and empowerment of people, leaders can tackle the challenges of the future: new technologies, international recruitment in a globalized world and cross-border mergers and acquisitions and the effects of these.