

LEADERSHIP TRAITS & STYLES

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE SUBJECT

At the end of the course, Individuals will examine the principles of Creativity & Innovation apply them within the company's needs. You will critically reflect Leadership Traits, Management, and Leadership Styles an their behavior within the company *and* their impact in the development of this course.

5. LEADERSHIP TRAITS & STYLES

- 5.1 History of Leadership Traits
- 5.2 Five-Factor Personality Model and Leadership
- 5.3 Nature of Leadership
- 5.4 Distinction between Management and Leadership
- 5.5 Leadership Styles
- 5.6 Conflict Management

5.1 HISTORY OF TRAIT LEADERSHIP

The story of leadership begins not all that long ago in the late 1800s. Common thoughts back then suggested that *leaders were born and not made*. These perceptions originated out of an observation that many great leaders possessed something out of the ordinary—natural, inborn characteristics that allowed them to excel above the rest (what was ultimately called the “*Great Man*” leadership theory). This perception translated into limited opportunities for leadership among the common people, as they were not endowed with these “special” leadership characteristics. Some of these traits included being especially courageous, having the ability to show initiative, and having integrity or extraordinarily high intelligence or perception. However, research did not end up supporting this hypothesis and came back disappointingly negative.

Traits Alone Do Not Define Leaders - Researchers compared leaders and followers and looked for obvious differences. Even after comparing aspects such as IQ, personality qualities and personal characteristics, no consistent trends were found. There was little evidence to justify the “Great Man” theory. Certain traits were found to be important, but the bottom line was that effective leadership truly depended upon the situation. Today,

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modern theorists consider leadership to be a complex interaction between traits, behaviors and situational characteristics.

Still, leadership traits do comprise an important piece of the leadership equation. The trait approach within leadership began with an emphasis on identifying the qualities of great people, but it has now shifted back to putting emphasis on the critical role of traits in effective leadership.

Significant Leadership Traits - As mentioned above, effective leadership often relies upon certain traits held by the leader. Overall, individuals within leadership roles tend to differ from group members in several important ways. Effective leaders tend to be:

- More sociable
- Aggressive
- Original (creative)
- Popular
- Humorous
- Intelligent
- Alert
- Insightful
- Responsible
- Able to take initiative
- Persistent
- Self-confident

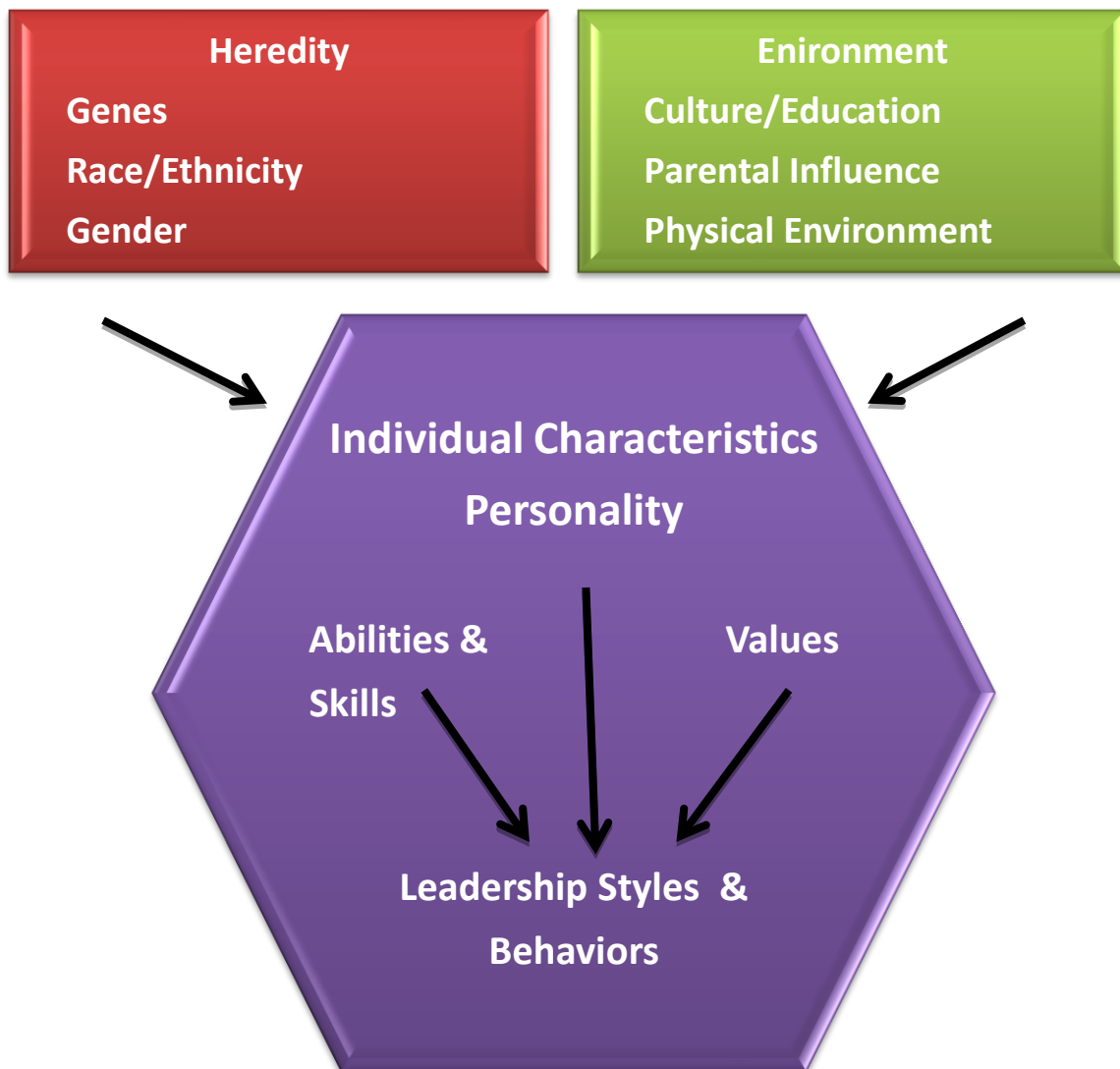
These leadership traits are important, but it should be noted that individuals do not become leaders solely because they possess certain traits. More accurately, the traits a leader possesses need to be relevant to the situation in which the leader is performing. So leadership effectiveness is based upon the working relationship between the leader and other group members—or the appropriateness of the fit between the leader and followers.

Individual Differences Framework (IDF) - Leadership can be defined relatively straightforwardly as *influencing people towards a shared goal*; in this definition, every

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leader is still unique. What makes every leader special is a combination of factors, including demographic, physical, psychological and behavioral differences. Determining that effective leadership was about much more than just certain characteristics, researchers designed a framework to illustrate how different aspects contribute to the leadership equation.



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Figure 1. Individual Differences Framework (IDF). Source: Nahavandi, 2006.

The Individual Differences Framework was developed to illustrate individual differences and their complex components. Two important factors that determine individual leadership characteristics are heredity and the environment. Heredity can be considered characteristics handed down genetically—these factors include genetic patterns, race or ethnicity and gender. Environment is the setting in which individuals are raised or exposed to throughout their life. Aspects such as cultural factors, the educational system, and parental upbringing are all part of the environment. Both of these factors (heredity and environment) interact to influence the development of individual differences we see exhibited in different leaders. Environmental and social conditions can reinforce patterns that influence a leader’s personality; a good example of this is the cultural expectation within the United States for males to be more competitive and aggressive, which often influences their behavior as leaders. Ultimately, our genetic makeup and what we are exposed to helps to make us the leader that we are.

Individual characteristics can be broken down into four categories:

Personality• is considered a stable set of physical characteristics; these specific features are stable, although they may evolve gradually over time. It is important to note that this is a set of characteristics, not just one or two. (More on Personality later.)

Values• are stable, long-lasting beliefs or preferences that are shaped early in life by parents, upbringing and culture. These characteristics illustrate what we consider worthwhile and desirable, right and wrong, and play a key role in decision-making and problem-solving.

Abilities and skills• can be defined as a natural or acquired talent for doing something. Ability is natural and somewhat stable; skills are acquired and change with training and experience. You cannot train leaders to develop

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ability, but you can train for leadership skills; therefore, recruit and hire leaders with specific abilities and then train them to exhibit the desired skills.

Leadership style and behavior • is the final component of the IDF framework. These are personal choices made by the leader as to the type of leadership style and behavior they will exhibit according to the situation. To be an effective leader, the most important element is knowing the appropriate leadership style/behavior for the situation and understanding the results of one's actions.

Behavioral range refers to a leader's normal range of personality and values (outside of his/her IDF) exhibited in leadership roles. Individual characteristics are relatively stable; however leaders can behave in ways inconsistent with their personality and values—working outside of their behavioral range.

A good example of this is a leader who prefers to delegate but encounters a situation in which he needs to provide extensive direction to new volunteers. Or a leader who is generally very introverted being put into a situation where she needs to be overly extroverted. Although being adaptable as a leader is often necessary, it also can be challenging and ultimately push us to our limits. Thus, it is important to be familiar with the different components making up your own IDF and understand when, as a leader, you are extending yourself beyond your Individual Differences Framework. Preferably, acting beyond your behavioral range should be saved for extreme or unusual circumstances, or necessary short bursts.

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5.2 FIVE-FACTOR PERSONALITY MODEL AND LEADERSHIP

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Personality is a main component of a leader's personal characteristics and plays a significant role within the Individual Differences Framework. Within the last few years, there has been a consensus on the basic factors of what we consider *personality*. These factors are outlined below:

- **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

All leaders exhibit each of these personality factors to some degree, and it appears that having certain personality traits is associated with being a more effective leader. For example, extraversion has been shown to be the factor most strongly associated with leadership; agreeableness has been illustrated to have only a weak association.

Strengths of Trait Leadership - Recognizing that specific traits are important to effective leadership is important for several reasons. First of all, this notion fits clearly with the one that suggests that leaders are inherently different; they are individuals who are “out front” and “leading the way,” which allows us to focus on other characteristics that make them unique. Some of these traits are ingrained upon a leader early in life, but just as many of them can be enhanced and improved throughout life. In addition, sometimes effective leadership is more of a mark of successfully matching a leader (and their unique skills and characteristics) with the appropriate situation, rather than changing or developing specific leadership characteristics.

This viewpoint allows us to focus solely on the leaders themselves. As a result, we end up with a more complete understanding of how the leader and his/her personality relates to the process of leadership. Finally, clearly understanding what traits and characteristics are exhibited by effective leaders allows us not only to match the right leader with the right

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situation but also to discover benchmarks for what we need to look for if we want to be (or train) the best leaders we can.

5.3 NATURE OF LEADERSHIP

An essential part of management is co-ordinating the activities of people and guiding their efforts towards the goals and objectives of the organization. This involves the process of leadership and the choice of an appropriate form of action and behavior. Leadership is a central feature of organizational performance. The manager must understand the nature of leadership influence and factors which determine relationships with other people, and the effectiveness of the leadership relationship.

There are many ways of looking at **leadership** and many interpretations of its meaning. Leadership might be interpreted in simple terms, such as ‘getting others to follow’ or ‘getting people to do things willingly’, or interpreted more specifically, for example as ‘the use of authority in decision-making’. It may be exercised as an attribute of position, or because of personal knowledge or wisdom. Leadership might be based on a function of personality, or it can be seen as a behavioral category. It may also be viewed in terms of the role of the leaders and their ability to achieve effective performance from others.

- *Taffinder* suggests that everyone has a theory but, although we know quite a lot about management, we do not know as much about leadership.
- Handy believes that: *like motivation, the search for the definitive solution to the leadership problem has proved to be another endless quest for the Holy Grail in organization theory.*
- According to Crainer there are over 400 definitions of leadership and: *it is a veritable minefield of misunderstanding and difference through which theorists and practitioners must tread warily.*

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- According to *Useem*, leadership is a matter of making a difference. It entails changing an organization and making active choices among plausible alternatives, and depends on the development of others and mobilizing them to get the job done.
 - *Leadership is at its best when the vision is strategic, the voice persuasive and the results tangible. In the study of leadership, an exact definition is not essential but guiding concepts are needed. The concepts should be general enough to apply to many situations, but specific enough to have tangible implications for what we do.*

However, in addition to vision and strategy, Useem suggests that they have been joined by new critical capabilities:

- 1) Leading out
- 2) Leading up

With the increasing use of outsourcing, managers need the skill to lead out: not just to send work downwards to subordinates but also to have a talent for lateral leadership in arranging work with colleagues. And as organizations decentralize authority managers must be able to lead their own bosses, to have the capacity to lead up and muster support from above as well as below.

Leadership is related to motivation, interpersonal behavior and the process of communication. For example, according to *Sir Paul Judge*: ‘Thirty years ago it was very much about what you knew the technicalities of things. Managers now are leaders of their groups, their departments. Although they may well need some specialist knowledge, the human relations part of the management job is more important than ever.

People have more flexibility and more choice in their careers, which are themselves more fluid, so keeping people motivated is very important.’ Leadership is also important in attempting to reduce employee dissatisfaction. Good leadership involves the effective process of delegation and empowerment. The leadership relationship is not limited to leader behavior resulting in subordinate behavior. Leadership is a dynamic process. The leader–follower relationship is reciprocal and effective leadership is a two-way process which influences both individual and organizational performance.

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Lord Sieff, for example, maintains that:

Leadership is vitally important at all levels within the company, from main board to the shop floor. Leadership is the moral and intellectual ability to visualize and work for what is best for the company and its employees ... The most vital thing the leader does is to create team spirit around him and near him, not in a schoolboy sense, but in realistic terms of mature adults ... To be effective leadership has to be seen, and it is best seen in action.

Good management leadership helps to develop teamwork and the integration of individual and group goals. It aids intrinsic motivation by emphasizing the importance of the work that people do. The changing nature of work organizations, including flatter structures and recognition of the efficient use of human resources, coupled with advances in social democracy, have combined to place growing importance on leadership. The nature of management is moving away from an emphasis on getting results by the close control of the workforce and towards an environment of coaching, support and empowerment. ‘The maxim that: “there is nothing you cannot achieve if you don’t mind you gets the credit” should be the watchword for all team

leaders ... The view that is beginning to emerge, is that if teams are to come up with the goods, the leaders need to step out of the limelight and let others take a bow.’

Hooper and Potter discuss the importance of leadership in times of change and uncertainty, and that good leaders are sensitive to the impact of the change process on people. ‘Never is leadership more sought after than in times of change and uncertainty. Effective change leadership is the key to shifting people’s perceptions from seeing change as a threat to seeing it as an exciting challenge.

Fullan also discusses leadership in a culture of change and points out that leadership is key to large-scale improvement. It is essential for leaders to understand the change process, and moral purpose without change will lead to moral martyrdom. Leaders must be able to operate under complex, uncertain circumstances.

Vecchio raises the question of whether leadership does make a difference and suggests one interesting way to learn whether leaders can have an impact is by studying the results

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of a change in leader. As work-unit achievements result more from the efforts of the unit's members than of one individual, and organizations have rules and policies that govern behavior, a good argument can be made that leadership has only a modest impact on group performance. However, Vecchio also contends that: 'one has a sense that a leader under the right circumstances, can have a powerful impact on group performance.'

What is the relationship between leadership and management?

- ❖ Management is more usually viewed as getting things done through other people in order to achieve stated organizational objectives. The manager may react to specific situations and be more concerned with solving short-term problems. Management is regarded as relating to people working within a structured organization and with prescribed roles. To people outside of the organization the manager might not necessarily be seen in a leadership role.

Management may arguably be viewed more in terms of planning, organizing, directing and controlling the activities of subordinate staff.

- ❖ Leadership, however, is concerned more with attention to communicating with, motivating, encouraging and involving people. *Management is complex, fragmented, its activities brief, opportunistic, predominantly verbal; leadership is more so. Management reacts. Leadership transforms. It makes a difference.*

The emphasis of leadership is on interpersonal behavior in a broader context. It is often associated with the willing and enthusiastic behavior of followers. **Leadership does not necessarily take place within the hierarchical structure of the organization.**

Many people operate as leaders without their role ever being clearly established or defined. For example, *Belbin* suggests that: *there is a clear implication that leadership is not part of the job but a quality that can be brought to a job ... The work that leadership encompasses in the context clearly is not assigned but comes about spontaneously.*

Differences in Attitudes and Relations with Others

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There are other differences between leadership and management. For example, *Zaleznik* explores difference in attitudes towards goals, conceptions of work, relations with others, self-perception and development.

- Managers tend to adopt impersonal or passive attitudes towards goals. Leaders adopt a more personal and active attitude towards goals.
- In order to get people to accept solutions, the manager needs continually to coordinate and balance in order to compromise conflicting values. The leader creates excitement in work and develops choices that give substance to images that excite people.
- In their relationships with other people, managers maintain a low level of emotional involvement. Leaders have empathy with other people and give attention to what events and actions mean.
- Managers see themselves more as conservators and regulators of the existing order of affairs with which they identify, and from which they gain rewards. Leaders work in, but do not belong to, the organization. Their sense of identity does not depend upon membership or work roles and they search out opportunities for change.

The differences between leadership and management have been applied by *Watson* to the 7-S organizational framework of: strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills and superordinate (or shared) goals. Watson suggests that whereas managers tend towards reliance on:

- ✓ Strategy
- ✓ Structure
- ✓ Systems

Leaders have an inherent inclination for utilization of the 'soft' Ss of :

- ✓ Style

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- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Skills
- ✓ Shared Goals

Watson also suggests, although cautiously, that 7-S management could be seen as the province of leaders. Managers will not ordinarily be capable of achieving sufficient mastery of all seven factors to attain a consistently high level of organizational performance.

5.4 DISTINCTION BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Based on experience of management approaches in both commerce and the military, *Hollingsworth* questions how many managers consider themselves first and foremost as leaders, relegating ‘manager’ to their job title. He argues that commercial managers need to learn from the armed forces if they wish to be viewed as leaders. Having accepted that there are some links between management and leadership, Hollingsworth lists six ‘fundamental differences’:

- A Manager Administers – A Leader Innovates
- A Manager Maintains – A Leader Develops
- A Manager Focuses on Systems And Structure – A Leader Focuses On People
- A Manager Relies on Control – A Leader Inspires Trust
- A Manager keeps an Eye on the Bottom Line – A Leader Has An Eye On The Horizon
- A Manager Does things right – a leader does the right thing

Not everyone would agree with this list. *Robinson*, for example, suggests that if the word ‘manager’ is replaced by ‘administrator’ then the lists works. However, whatever your view the list makes for a helpful basis for critical discussion on the nature of management and leadership.

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To be an effective manager it is necessary to exercise the role of leadership. A common view is that the job of the manager requires the ability of leadership and that leadership is in effect a sub-set of management, although leadership is a special attribute which can be distinguished from other elements of management. According to *Miller et al.*, by definition there are important distinctions between the two concepts of management and leadership.

- Management involves using human, equipment and information resources to achieve various objectives.
- Leadership focuses on getting things done through others. Thus you manage things such as (budgets, procedures, and so on), but you lead people.’

5.5 LEADERSHIP STYLES

- 1) Autocratic/Authoritarian Leadership
- 2) Democratic/Participative Leadership
- 3) Laissez-Faire/ Free-rein Leadership
- 4) Paternalistic

- 1) **Autocratic or Authoritarian leadership** may be divided into three classes:
 - a. The hard-boiled autocrat who relies mainly on negative influences uses the force of fear and punishment in directing his subordinates towards the organizational goals. This is likely to result in employees becoming resentful.
 - b. The benevolent autocrat who relies mainly on positive influences uses the reward and incentives in directing his subordinates towards the organizational goals. By using praise and pats on the back he secures the loyalty of subordinates who accept his decisions.

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The manipulative autocrat who makes the employees feel that they are participating in decision-making though the manager himself has taken the decision.

- 2) **Democratic or Participative Leadership:** Participative or democratic leaders decentralize authority. It is characterized by consultation with the subordinates and their participation in the formulation of plans and policies. He/She encourages participation in decision-making. The advantages for democratic leadership are as follows:
 - a. Higher motivation and Improved morale;
 - b. Increased co-operation with the Management
 - c. Improved Job Performance
 - d. Reduction of grievances & reduction of absenteeism and employee turnover.

- 3) **The Laissez-faire or Free-rein Leadership:** Free-rein leaders avoid power and responsibility. The Laissez-Faire or non-interfering type of leader passes on the responsibility for decision-making to his subordinates and takes a minimum of initiative in administration. He/She gives no direction and allows the group to establish its own goals and work out its own problems.
 - a. Democratic Leadership is more likely to win the loyalty of the group. The Laissez-Faire groups also developed friendly approaches to the leader as in the democratic group. But suggestions from the groups were very low and they were also less productive.

- 4) **Paternalistic Leadership:** Under this management style the leader assumes that his/her function is fatherly or paternal. Paternalism means papa knows best. The relationship between the leader and his group is the same as the relationship between the head of the family and the members of the family. The leader guides and protects his/her subordinates as members of his/her family.

A general theory on the functional approach is associated with the work of *John Adair* and his ideas on **action-centered leadership** which focuses on what leaders actually *do*.

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The effectiveness of the leader is dependent upon meeting three areas of need within the work group: the need to achieve the common **task**, the need for **team maintenance**, and the **individual needs** of group members. Adair symbolizes these needs by three overlapping circles.

Task functions involve:

- a) Achieving the objectives of the work group
- b) Defining group tasks
- c) Planning the work
- d) Allocation of resources
- e) Organization of duties and responsibilities
- f) Controlling quality and checking performance
- g) Reviewing progress.

Team functions involve:

- a) Maintaining morale and building team spirit
- b) The cohesiveness of the group as a working unit
- c) Setting standards and maintaining discipline
- d) Systems of communication within the group
- e) Training the group
- f) Appointment of sub-leaders

Individual functions involve:

- a) Meeting the needs of the individual members of the group
- b) Attending to personal problems
- c) Giving praise and status
- d) Reconciling conflicts between group needs and needs of the individual
- e) Training the individual

Leadership is less about your needs, and more about the needs of the people and the organization you are leading. Leadership styles are not something to be tried on like so many suits, to see which fits. Rather, they should be adapted to the particular demands of the situation, the particular requirements of the people involved and the particular challenges facing the organization.

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The action by the leader in any one area of need will affect one or both of the other areas of need. The ideal position is where complete integration of the three areas of need is achieved. In any work group the most effective leader is the person who sees that the task needs, the needs of the group and those of the individual are all adequately met. The effective leader elicits the contribution of members of the group and draws out other leadership from the group to satisfy the three interrelated areas of need. The three-circle approach used by Adair also serves to illustrate the close relationship between leadership and management. Building the team and satisfying individual needs would include leadership. Achieving the common task clearly involves the process of management.

5.6 CONFLICT MANAGING

Conflict is a normal, and even healthy, part of relationships. After all, two people can't be expected to agree on everything at all times. Since relationship conflicts are inevitable, learning to deal with them in a healthy way is crucial. When conflict is mismanaged, it can harm the relationship. But when handled in a respectful and positive way, conflict provides an opportunity for growth, ultimately strengthening the bond between two people. By learning the skills you need for successful conflict resolution, you can keep your personal and professional relationships strong and growing.

The fundamental of conflict resolution arises from differences. It occurs whenever people disagree over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires. Sometimes these differences look trivial, but when a conflict triggers strong feelings, a deep personal and relational need is at the core of the problem—a need to feel safe and secure, a need to feel respected and valued, or a need for greater closeness and intimacy.

Recognizing and Resolving conflicting needs - If you are out of touch with your feelings or so stressed that you can only pay attention to a limited number of emotions, you won't be able to understand your own needs. If you don't understand your deep-seated needs, you will have a hard time communicating with others and staying in touch with what is really troubling you. For example, couples often argue about petty differences—the way she hangs the towels, the way he parts his hair—rather than what is really bothering them.

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In personal relationships, a lack of understanding about differing needs can result in distance, arguments, and breakups. In workplace conflicts, differing needs are often at the heart of bitter disputes. When you can recognize the legitimacy of conflicting needs and become willing to examine them in an environment of compassionate understanding, it opens pathways to creative problem solving, team building, and improved relationships. When you resolve conflict and disagreement quickly and painlessly, mutual trust will flourish.

Successful conflict resolution depends on your ability to:

- a) Manage stress while remaining alert and calm. By staying calm, you can accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication.
- b) Control your emotions and behavior. When you're in control of your emotions, you can communicate your needs without threatening, frightening, or punishing others.
- c) Pay attention to the feelings being expressed as well as the spoken words of others.
- d) Be aware of and respectful of differences. By avoiding disrespectful words and actions, you can resolve the problem faster.

Healthy and unhealthy ways of managing and resolving conflicts - Conflict triggers strong emotions and can lead to hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort. When handled in an unhealthy manner, it can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and breakups. But when conflict is resolved in a healthy way, it increases our understanding of one another, builds trust, and strengthens our relationship bonds.

Unhealthy responses to conflict are characterized by:

- a) An inability to recognize and respond to matters of great importance to the other person
- b) Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions
- c) The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment
- d) The expectation of bad outcomes
- e) The fear and avoidance of conflict

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Healthy responses to conflict are characterized by:

- a) The capacity to recognize and respond to important matters
- b) A readiness to forgive and forget
- c) The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing
- d) A belief that resolution can support the interests and needs of both parties

Four key conflict resolution skills

The ability to successfully manage and resolve conflict depends on four key skills. Together, these four skills form a fifth skill that is greater than the sum of its parts: the ability to take conflict in stride and resolve differences in ways that build trust and confidence.

Conflict resolution skill 1: Quickly relieve stress

The capacity to remain relaxed and focused in tense situations is a vital aspect of conflict resolution. If you don't know how to stay centered and in control of yourself, you may become emotionally overwhelmed in challenging situations. The best way to rapidly and reliably relieve

stress is through the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. But each person responds differently to sensory input, so you need to find things that are soothing to you.

Conflict resolution skill 2: Recognize and manage your emotions.

Emotional awareness is the key to understanding yourself and others. If you don't know how you feel or why you feel that way, you won't be able to communicate effectively or smooth over

disagreements. Although knowing your own feelings may seem simple, many people ignore or

try to sedate strong emotions like anger, sadness, and fear. But your ability to handle conflict depends on being connected to these feelings. If you're afraid of strong emotions or if you insist on finding solutions that are strictly rational, your ability to face and resolve differences will be impaired.

Conflict resolution skill 4: Improve your nonverbal communication skills

The most important information exchanged during conflicts and arguments is often communicated nonverbally. Nonverbal communication includes eye contact, facial

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expression, tone of voice, posture, touch, and gestures. When you're in the middle of a conflict, paying close attention to the other person's nonverbal signals may help you figure out what the other

person is really saying, respond in a way that builds trust, and get to the root of the problem. Simply nonverbal signals such as a calm tone of voice, a reassuring touch, or a concerned facial expression can go a long way toward defusing a heated exchange.

Conflict resolution skill 4: Use humor and play to deal with challenges

You can avoid many confrontations and resolve arguments and disagreements by communicating in a playful or humorous way. Humor can help you say things that might otherwise be difficult to express without creating a flap. However, it's important that you laugh *with* the other person, not *at* them. When humor and play are used to reduce tension and anger, reframe problems, and put the situation into perspective, the conflict can actually become an opportunity for greater connection and intimacy.

Tips for managing and resolving conflict

Managing and resolving conflict requires emotional maturity, self-control, and empathy.

It can

be tricky, frustrating, and even frightening. You can ensure that the process is as positive as

possible by sticking to the following conflict resolution guidelines:

- a) **Make the relationship your priority.** Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than "winning" the argument, should always be your first priority. Be respectful of the other person and his or her viewpoint.
- b) **Focus on the present.** If you're holding on to old hurts and resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here and now to solve the problem.
- c) **Pick your battles.** Conflicts can be draining, so it's important to consider whether the issue is really worthy of your time and energy. Maybe you don't want to surrender a parking space if you've been circling for 15 minutes. But if there are dozens of spots, arguing over a single space isn't worth it.

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- d) **Be willing to forgive.** Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive. Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can never compensate for our losses and only adds to our injury by further depleting and draining our lives.
- e) **Know when to let something go.** If you can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree. It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.

Fair fighting: Ground rules

- a) **Remain calm.** Try not to overreact to difficult situations. By remaining calm it will be more likely that others will consider your viewpoint.
- b) **Express feelings in words, not actions.** Telling someone directly and honestly how you feel can be a very powerful form of communication. If you start to feel so angry or upset that you feel you may lose control, take a "time out" and do something to help yourself feel steadier.
- c) **Be specific about what is bothering you.** Vague complaints are hard to work on.
- d) **Deal with only one issue at a time.** Don't introduce other topics until each is fully discussed. This avoids the "kitchen sink" effect where people throw in all their complaints while not allowing anything to be resolved.
- e) **No "hitting below the belt."** Attacking areas of personal sensitivity creates an atmosphere of distrust, anger, and vulnerability.
- f) **Avoid accusations.** Accusations will cause others to defend themselves. Instead, talk about how someone's actions made you feel
- g) **Don't generalize.** Avoid words like "never" or "always." Such generalizations are usually inaccurate and will heighten tensions.
- h) **Avoid "make believe."** Exaggerating or inventing a complaint or your feelings about it will prevent the real issues from surfacing. Stick with the facts and your honest feelings.
- i) **Don't stockpile.** Storing up lots of grievances and hurt feelings over time is counterproductive. It's almost impossible to deal with numerous old problems for which interpretations may differ. Try to deal with problems as they arise.
- j) **Avoid clamming up.** When one person becomes silent and stops responding to the other, frustration and anger can result. Positive results can only be attained with two way communication.

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Tips for being a better listener:

- Listen to the reasons the other person gives for being upset.
- Make sure you understand what the other person is telling you—from his/her point of view.
- Repeat the other person's words, and ask if you have understood correctly.
- Ask if anything remains unspoken, giving the person time to think before answering.
- Resist the temptation to interject your own point of view until the other person has said everything he or she wants to say and feels that you have listened to and understood his or her message.

When listening to the other person's point of view, the following responses are often helpful:

- **Encourage** the other person to share his or her issues as fully as possible.
 - "I want to understand what has upset you."
 - "I want to know what you are really hoping for."
- **Clarify** the real issues, rather than making assumptions. Ask questions that allow you to gain this information, and which let the other person know you are trying to understand.
 - "Can you say more about that?"
 - "Is that the way it usually happens?"
- **Restate** what you have heard, so you are both able to see what has been understood so far it may be that the other person will then realize that additional information is needed.
 - "It sounds like you weren't expecting that to happen."
- **Reflect feelings** be as clear as possible.
 - "I can imagine how upsetting that must have been."
- **Validate** the concerns of the other person, even if a solution is elusive at this time. Expressing appreciation can be a very powerful message if it is conveyed with integrity and respect.
 - "I really appreciate that we are talking about this issue."
 - "I am glad we are trying to figure this out."

Conflict resolution is one of the five key skills of emotional intelligence The Five Skills of Emotional Intelligence:

LEADERSHIP TRAITS & STYLES

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Skill 1: Quick Stress Relief

Skill 2: Emotional Awareness

Skill 3: Nonverbal Communication

Skill 4: Playful Communication

Skill 5: Conflict Resolution

The ability to resolve conflicts positively and with confidence is the fifth of five essential emotional intelligence skills. Together, the five skills of emotional intelligence help you build:

- a) Strong Relationships
- b) Overcome Challenges
- c) Succeed at work and in life.