Traditional Leadership Theories

Leadership theory can be studied from at least five perspectives: the trait approach, the behavioral approach, contingency (situational) approaches, the role approach, and emerging theories.[1] The first four represent traditional theories that we discuss in this section.

Trait Approach The **trait approach** involves discovering how to be a leader by examining the characteristics and methods of recognized leaders. Pioneering studies were performed several years ago;[2] however, these have been discredited to some extent by academicians. A more recent empirical study of 200 European CEOs and over 1000 key subordinates identified five key leadership styles that support TQ.[3] These styles and their key traits, in decreasing order of impact on success factors, are

1. *Team builder*. Tolerant, motivational, inspirational, supportive.
2. *Captain*. Respectful, trusting, reliable, fair.
3. *Strategist*. Trustworthy.
4. *Creative*. Innovative, visionary, courageous, inspirational, confident.
5. *Impulsive*. Obsessed with new ideas, curious, energetic, participative.

The leadership profile of any individual is a composite of multiple styles; however, the predominance of some styles over others will influence the success of that individual.

Behavioral Approach The **behavioral approach** attempts to determine the types of leadership behaviors that lead to successful task performance and employee satisfaction. Researchers at Ohio State University performed an extensive series of leadership studies in developing this theory.[4] Work done Independently at the University of Michigan on leader behavior came to similar conclusions. Both groups of researchers showed that effective leadership depends on a proper blending of an employee relationship-centered approach to employees' needs with a production-centered approach to getting work done. A more recent study by Zenger-Miller, an international consulting and training firm, analyzed 1,871 examples of good and bad leadership, and used them to develop a list of 17 competencies that people most often associate with leadership:[5]

1. setting or sharing a vision
2. managing a change
3. focusing on the customer
4. dealing with individuals
5. supporting teams and groups
6. sharing information
7. solving problems, making decisions
8. managing business processes
9. managing projects
10. displaying technical skills
11. managing time and resources
12. taking responsibility
13. taking initiative beyond job requirements
14. handling emotions
15. displaying professional ethics
16. showing compassion
17. making credible presentations

The 17 leadership competencies identified in the Zenger-Miller study suggest that today's leaders are embodying many TQ principles in their routine leadership activities. Table 5.2 compares traditional management practice with true quality leadership. Traditional management all too often relies on mechanistic planning and organizing, reacting to events, pushing products, and controlling people.

Other well-known behavioral leadership models include Douglas McGregor's *Theory X-Theory Y model*[6] and the Blake-Mouton *Managerial Grid model*.[7] McGregor explicitly defined contrasting assumptions that managers hold about workers and how those assumptions tend to influence the manager's behavior. Blake and Mouton defined five managerial styles that combined varying degrees of production-oriented and people-oriented concerns. Their contribution was to suggest that a high concern for both production and people was needed and that effective managers could be trained to develop a balanced concern for both.

McGregor's Theory X-Y model, suggests that the Theory X manager assumes that subordinates must be coerced and controlled in order to prevent quality problems and to obtain high productivity. McGregor's Theory Y manager assumes that work is a natural activity, and people who are led well can be expected to be self-motivated to perform their best work if given the opportunity. Much of Deming's philosophy follows the principles in Theory Y and agrees with Blake and Mouton that balanced concern for people and production is essential for organizational effectiveness. From the standpoint of the Baldrige criteria (discussed later in this chapter), it is important for senior leaders who adopt a TQ philosophy to set, communicate, and deploy organizational values, performance expectations, and to balance value for customers and stakeholders. Attention to the Theory X-Y and Managerial Grid values can help accomplish this.

Contingency (Situational) Approach The **contingency** or **situational approach** holds that there is no universal approach to leadership; rather, effective leadership behavior depends on situational factors that may change over time. Current leadership theory is based heavily on this approach, which states that effective leadership depends on three variables: the leader, the led, and the situation. One of the pioneering contingency theories of leadership was developed by Frederick E. Fiedler, a participant in the Ohio State research.[8] Fiedler's model, which is included in most principles of management texts, shows the effect of leadership styles on leader performance according to situational contingencies.

Victor H. Vroom and Phillip W. Yetton developed a supervisory contingency model that was based in part on leadership propositions that follow from Vroom's VIE motivation theory[9] (see Chapter 6 for more discussion of motivation). The model, later updated and modified by Vroom and Jago,[10] prescribes an appropriate leadership style based on various contingencies in a decision-making situation. The model centers on the problem-solving function of leadership, and is based on the theory that the three major concerns of a leader in solving problems are (1) the quality of the decision, (2) the degree of acceptance of the decision by the subordinate(s), and (3) the time frame within which the decision must be made.

Two other contingency models of leadership--House's *Path-Goal model* and Hershey and Blanchard's *Situational Leadership model*--deserve special mention. Robert House developed his Path-Goal Leadership model based on expectancy theory.[11] Thus, the model bears some resemblance to the Vroom-Jago model. House's model states that the appropriate path to high performance and high job satisfaction is dependent on employee needs and abilities, the degree of structure of tasks to be performed, and the leadership style that is selected by the leader. Effective leaders choose one of four styles (achievement-oriented, directive, participative, or supportive) that matches the situational contingencies and helps team members along the path to their highest-value goals. The Hershey and Blanchard model relates the requirement for directive or supportive behavior of the leader to team members' readiness (relative maturity) to take responsibility and participate in decision making. Situational leadership is based on a relationship among the amount of guidance and direction (task behavior) a leader gives; the amount of socioemotional support (relationship behavior) a leader provides, and the readiness level that followers exhibit in performing a specific task, function, or objective.[12] When a leader is flexible and aware of critical situational factors, such as the ability and willingness of members to change, he or she will adopt a leadership style to accommodate this ability and willingness. This style can be described as situational in that the leader demonstrates flexibility in determining and using a leadership style that complements the situation to achieve desired outcomes.[13]

According to the various contingency leadership theories, quality can be enhanced enhanced by a TQ-oriented leader with the correct mix of the leader's style of management, the characteristics of those who are led, and the situation. Emery Air Freight, for example, found that when the leader (supervisor) emphasized daily performance measures and used positive reinforcement, quality benefits resulted within that organization.[14] However, for a leader in an R&D laboratory--an entirely different situation--such an approach probably would not work. In fact, current leadership research suggests that the same outcome is unlikely. The R&D leader would probably be more effective by using a participative approach, taking into consideration the situation of the high technical skills and professional expertise of the employees. This approach is in agreement with the contingency model developed by Fiedler and others.

Role Approach The **role approach** suggests that leaders perform certain roles in order to be effective. The role approach is similar to the trait and behavioral approaches, but also takes into account situational factors. Thus, according to the theory, leaders at upper levels of the organization, or in large firms, may frequently be called upon to play the role of figurehead or liaison person between the firm and its outside environment. At a lower level, where spans of control extend widely, motivational, coordinative, or disturbance handling roles may be needed for effective leadership. Henry Mintzberg's various texts and articles provide the basis for this approach.[15]

Mintzberg's role theory also suggests that appropriate roles for managers also depend on situational factors. For example, a line manager in an insurance firm, who is abandoning a command and control management style in order to take a TQ approach to reorganizing, would want to change some of the roles previously used successfully in management. Some of the changes might involve a move away from the highly structuring roles of decision maker, disturbance handler, and entrepreneur, toward the more facilitating roles that assist subordinates, such as motivator, liaison, and spokesperson. The subordinates, in turn, would be expected to perform some of the former managerial roles of making decisions, taking care of conflicts, and finding opportunities for improvement (an entrepreneurial activity) as part of self-managed teams.

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[1] Judith R. Gordon, A Diagnostic Approach to Organizational Behavior, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), 341-370.

[2] R. M. Stogdill, Handbook of Leadership (New York: The Free Press, 1974).

[3] J.J. Dahlgaard, A. Norgaard, and S. Jakobsen, "Styles of Success," European Quality, November-December 1997, 36-39; and J.J. Dahlgaard, A. Norgaard, and S. Jakobsen, "Profile of Success," European Quality, January-February 1998, 30-33. Cited in Edgeman et al. (see note 2).

[4] R. M. Stogdill, see note 15; R. House and M. Baetz, "Leadership: Some Generalizations and New Research Directions," in B. M. Staw (ed.) Research in Organizational Behavior (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1979), 359.

[5] "Customer Focus: One of Seventeen Core Leadership Competencies" excerpted from "An Essay from Zenger-Miller" "Updating the Meaning of Leadership: A Grass-Roots Model for the Workplace," (no other citation given), The Quality Observer, January 1997, 28-29.

6 Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

7 R. R. Blake and J. S. Mouton, The Managerial Grid (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1965).

8 Op cit. Note 20

9 Victor H. Vroom and Phillip W. Yetton, Leadership and Decision Making (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

10 V. H. Vroom and A. G. Jago, The New Leadership, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988).

11 Robert J. House, "A Path-Goal Theory of Leadership Effectiveness," Administrative Science Quarterly 16 (1971), 321-328; R. J. House and T. R. Mitchell, "Path-Goal Theory of Leadership," Journal of Contemporary Business (Autumn 1974), 81-98.

12 Hersey, P., K. Blanchard, and D. Johnson, Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources, 7th Edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996.
13 Lisa Walters, "Leading for Quaity: The Implications of Situational Leadership," Quality Management Journal, 8, 4, 2001, pp. 48-63.
14 Edward J. Feeney, "At Emery Air Freight: Positive Reinforcement Boosts Performance," Organizational Dynamics 1, no. 3 (1973), 41-50.

15 Op cit. Note 22.