



## **Resolving Issues with Your Boss (Part 20A):**

### Management Styles Theories

By

Mark Lefcowitz  
Senior Process Engineer

### **Summary of Part 19**

Part 19 examined Leadership Mistakes and Conflict.

Organizations often struggle with poor conflict management due to leadership skill gaps, flawed leadership models, and time constraints, resulting in decreased productivity and higher turnover rates. Investing in conflict resolution training and promoting relational leadership are essential for cultivating a positive workplace and achieving sustained success, transforming challenges into growth opportunities.

### **Introduction**

Humanity has been obsessed with the problem of how to order and organize our lives. Ancient philosophers like Heraclitus, Xenophanes, Socrates, and Plato explored ethical and political ideas. Much later, the Italian Renaissance diplomat and philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli explored the nature of political power and how it can be acquired, maintained, and consolidated. However, the modern exploration of management theory is often credited to Max Weber (1922) and his concept of bureaucracy and authority structures.

As someone who has always been interested in leadership and management styles, I have encountered a variety of lists on the internet, each claiming to identify the definitive set of different management styles. However, there is no consensus on their number or descriptive titles.

The field of leadership and management styles is diverse and constantly evolving. There is no universally agreed-upon list or taxonomy of leadership styles. Scholars and researchers often categorize leadership styles differently based on the context in which they are applied, the theoretical framework they adopt, or

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the specific organizational needs being addressed. These identified styles have been grouped in some instances because they share specific psychological characteristics and resulting behaviors.

There are eight leading style models.

This article aims to illuminate this subject as a prelude to subsequent discussions on the best approach to resolving issues with your boss.

### **Kurt Lewin's Leadership Styles**

During the 1930s, Lewin and his colleagues identified three core leadership styles, which are often referenced as the foundation for much of the later work in this area: "Autocratic," "Democratic or Participative," and "Laissez-Faire or Delegative." In the Autocratic style, the leader makes decisions unilaterally and expects subordinates to comply. In the Democratic or Participative style, the leader involves team members in decision-making and values collaboration. In the Laissez-Faire or Delegative style, the leader provides minimal direction and allows subordinates to make decisions with minimal oversight.

### **The Ohio State Leadership Studies**

This long-duration effort, conducted during the 1940s and 50s, was highly influential. It identified two key dimensions of leadership: "Initiating Structure or Task-oriented Leadership" and "Consideration or People-oriented Leadership." Initiating Structure leaders define roles, clarify expectations, and prioritize achieving goals. Consideration leaders show concern for the welfare and development of their team members. These two dimensions often form the basis of more nuanced leadership styles.

The Studies' findings were significant because they shifted leadership research away from the traditional trait-based approach, which assumed that effective leaders possessed inherent characteristics, toward a behavioral perspective that emphasized how leaders act. By identifying Consideration and Initiating Structure as independent dimensions, the studies demonstrated that effective leadership is not one-size-fits-all but varies based on the situation. These insights influenced later leadership theories, including contingency models, which stress adaptability, and transformational leadership, which balances task execution with employee engagement.

### **Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid**

Developed during the 1960s, this model is also known as the Leadership Grid model. It identifies leadership styles based on two key factors: concern for people and concern for production. The grid includes: "Impoverished Management," "Country Club Management," "Task Management," "Middle-of-the-Road Management," and "Team Management." Impoverished Management is characterized by low concern for people and a low concern for production. A high concern for people characterizes Country Club Management, but a low concern for production. A high concern for production characterizes task

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management, but it is also a low concern for people. A moderate concern for both characterizes Middle-of-the-Road Management. Finally, team management is highly concerned with both people and production.

Unlike earlier models that categorized leaders into fixed types, the grid emphasized that leadership effectiveness results from balancing these concerns. It introduced five distinct leadership styles, with “Team Leadership” as the ideal. The model influenced leadership training, organizational development, and managerial decision-making, reinforcing that leadership effectiveness is not universal but depends on context and balance.

### **Bass and Avolio Transformational and Transactional Leadership Model**

This 1985 model focuses on leadership behaviors influencing organizational and employee development. Initially, Bass and Avolio identified two leadership styles: “Transformational” and “Transactional” leadership. The model was further expanded by adding the “Laissez-Faire” style.

Transformational leadership is defined by a leader’s ability to inspire and elevate followers by creating a compelling vision, fostering innovation, and attending to individual growth. In this style, leaders act as role models, stimulate new ways of thinking, and motivate their teams to exceed expectations. In contrast, Transactional leadership is based on structured exchanges between leader and follower, where clear goals, rewards, and corrective actions guide performance. It emphasizes efficiency, accountability, and order through monitoring and contingent reinforcement. The third style, laissez-faire leadership, is characterized by a lack of engagement and direction. Leaders who adopt this approach avoid decision-making, fail to provide constructive feedback, and abdicate responsibility, often leading to confusion and reduced team effectiveness.

### **The Situational Leadership Theory**

This 1968 theory suggests that no single leadership style is best. The model asserts that the most effective leaders adjust their styles based on the readiness and development level of their followers. The model identifies four primary styles: “Telling or Directive,” “Selling or Coaching,” “Participating or Supporting,” and “Delegating.” Each style is applied depending on the team’s competence and motivation level.

The Telling or Directive style is used when followers have low competence and high commitment. The leader gives clear instructions and closely supervises tasks. It is highly directive with minimal support and is suitable for those new to a task. The Selling or Coaching style is appropriate when followers have some competence but low commitment or are insecure. The leader provides direction while explaining decisions and encouraging two-way communication, combining high direction with high support. Participating or supporting is for competent followers who may lack confidence or motivation. The leader offers less direction and more encouragement, involving followers in decision-making and problem-solving. Support is high, but direction is low. A Delegating style is used when followers are both competent and committed. The leader provides minimal guidance and support, entrusting tasks and

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decision-making to the follower. It reflects low direction and support, showing confidence in the follower's ability.

The model's significance is its emphasis on flexibility and adaptability in leadership. It proposes that no single leadership style is best; instead, effective leadership depends on the followers' maturity or readiness level, specifically their competence and commitment to a given task. Leaders are encouraged to adapt their style to meet the needs of their team members. This model shifted focus from leader traits to the leader-follower dynamic, making it especially useful for training, development, and performance management in fast-changing or diverse environments.

### **The Inspirational Leadership Model**

Business scholars James Kouzes and Barry Posner first introduced it in 1987 at a professional conference. It later developed into a suite of books that used case studies to clarify competent leadership skills, collectively entitled "The Leadership Challenge."

This approach presents leadership not as an innate quality but as a set of behaviors that can be learned, practiced, and refined. Their work, grounded in empirical research and real-world examples, identifies five core practices defining exemplary leadership. According to their model, effective leaders clarify their values and set a personal example for others. They look ahead with a compelling vision and inspire others to commit to that shared purpose. Rather than maintaining the status quo, they actively seek opportunities to innovate, experiment, and improve. At the same time, they create an environment of trust and collaboration, enabling others to grow stronger and more capable. Finally, they recognize individual contributions and take time to celebrate achievements, reinforcing a sense of shared success.

Kouzes and Posner's model emphasizes that values, credibility, and trust lie at the heart of effective leadership. It reframes leadership as a collaborative, ongoing process of building relationships and strengthening teams, rooted in mutual respect. While not explicitly labeled as "Inspirational Leadership," the model exemplifies how leaders can inspire others to reach beyond self-interest, connect with a broader vision, and act with purpose.

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### **Goleman's Leadership Styles**

Known for his work on emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman's 2000 book, entitled, "*Working with emotional intelligence* ", identified six leadership styles grounded in emotional intelligence and situational needs: "Coaching," "Democratic," "Affiliative," "Pacesetting," "Authoritative or Visionary," and "Coercive or Commanding." The Coaching leadership style focuses on developing team members through guidance and support. The Democratic style seeks input from team members and builds consensus. The Affiliative style prioritizes harmony and emotional bonds within the team. The Pacesetting style establishes high standards and leads by example. The Authoritative or Visionary style provides a clear vision and motivates people to align with it. The Coercive or Commanding style demands immediate compliance and uses authority to drive results.

Goleman's framework is particularly relevant because it ties leadership styles to emotional intelligence competencies and how leaders' behaviors impact team dynamics. Unlike rigid leadership models, Goleman's approach emphasizes adaptability, demonstrating that the best leaders fluidly adjust their styles based on team needs and organizational goals. His model reinforced the importance of self-awareness, empathy, and social skills in leadership, influencing modern leadership training and development.

### **The Northouse Leadership Theory**

In his 2018 book, "Leadership: Theory and Practice," Peter Northouse attempts to construct a more comprehensive and integrative approach to understanding leadership. Rather than promoting a single model, he synthesizes significant leadership theories, including trait, skills, behavioral, situational, transformational, path-goal, servant, and adaptive leadership, into a cohesive and accessible framework.

Northouse's work emphasizes that leadership is both a process and a relationship, shaped by the interaction between leaders, followers, and context. By presenting strengths, criticisms, and practical applications of each theory, Northouse equips students, practitioners, and scholars with the tools to critically evaluate and apply leadership concepts across real-world settings, making his theory incredibly influential in education, organizational development, and leadership training.

### **Conclusion**

The diverse landscape of leadership and management models underscores the complexity of effective leadership. While no definitive list exists, understanding these foundational theories provides a valuable framework. Recognizing the nuances and context-dependent nature of different styles empowers individuals to analyze leadership approaches in themselves and those they encounter, ultimately fostering more informed and effective interactions in the workplace.

\* Note: A PDF copy of this article can be found at:

[https://www.mcl-associates.com/downloads/resolving\\_issues\\_with\\_your\\_boss\\_part20A.pdf](https://www.mcl-associates.com/downloads/resolving_issues_with_your_boss_part20A.pdf)

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