A team has many ways of selecting a leader and assigning leadership roles. The leader may be assigned by the organization, the team may be self-managing, or leadership roles may be distributed among team members. What is the best style of leadership? There is no definitive answer to this question, but a number of approaches have been suggested. Situational leadership theory is one approach to helping the leader decide the best way to act, depending on the characteristics of the team members.

Organizations are experimenting with new forms of team leadership. In self-managing teams, many leadership functions are turned over to the teams. Self-managing teams provide a variety of benefits, but they require the development of group process skills to operate effectively. It is apparent that team leadership requires skills and responsibilities that are different from traditional leadership approaches. Team leaders do not manage the team: they help the team solve problems in order to be more effective.

### Learning Objectives

1. How do leaders vary by the roles they perform and the amount of power they possess?
2. What factors influence who becomes a team’s leader?
3. What are the main approaches to studying leadership, and what are their implications?

(Continued)
4. What are some of the substitutes that reduce the importance of leadership?

5. What are the key elements of situational leadership theory? How does a leader’s behavior relate to the readiness level of the group?

6. What are the benefits of and problems with self-managing teams?

7. What are the functional roles and responsibilities of team leaders?

8. How does coaching improve the operation of teams?

10.1 Alternative Designs of Leadership for Teams

Leadership is a process in which an individual influences the progress of group members toward attainment of a goal. Types of leaders vary by method of selection and the roles they are expected to perform. The person who emerges as the leader of a team may not be the one best suited for the role.

Characteristics of Team Leadership

Although we normally think of a single individual in the position of leader, this is not always the case. Rather than talking about leadership as pertaining to any one person, we need to recognize that leadership is a process or set of functions that may be performed by many of a team’s members (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004). Teams vary in their types of leaders, the distribution of leadership roles, and the power their leaders have.

There are leaderless groups, teams with leaders assigned by their organizations, teams that select their own leaders, and self-managing teams. Most teams have one person assigned to the role of leader. The leader may be selected by the organization and assigned to the team, the leader may be elected by the team, or the position of leader may be rotated among the team members. A team may start out sharing and rotating the leadership functions until a leader emerges from the team’s interactions.

Rather than centralizing the roles of leadership, a team’s leadership roles may be divided on the basis of different tasks performed by the team. Teams may use the STAR (situation or task, action, result) structure for distributing leadership functions (Wellins, Byham, & Wilson, 1991). The team’s task is divided into specific functions, and the responsibilities for each function are assigned to a team member to perform. Team members may be rotated through the different roles to develop the skills within the team. For example, a factory team may divide its task into quality, safety, maintenance, supplies,
Leaders vary in the power or authority they possess. When a leader is assigned by an organization, the leader may have the authority to make the team’s decisions. It is then up to the leader to decide how team decisions should be made. When the leader is elected or rotated, he or she typically has limited power and serves primarily as facilitator of the group process. A designated leader with organizational power is useful when the task is very complex and structure is needed, when there is significant conflict among team members, or when someone is needed to manage the relationship between the team and other parts of the organization (Lumsden & Lumsden, 1997).

A team leader is not the same as a manager. A manager is given power and authority by the organization over subordinates, whereas a team leader typically does not have this type of power. A manager is responsible for the actions of his or her subordinates, whereas it is the team (and not the leader) that is responsible for the actions of its members. A manager has the authority to make decisions, whereas a team leader facilitates decision making. Finally, a manager is responsible for handling personnel issues (e.g., employee hiring, evaluation, reward), whereas team leaders usually do not have the authority to perform these personnel functions.

Leader Emergence

When no leader is assigned to a group, a leader usually emerges from the group to coordinate its actions (Hempfihill, 1961). The person who becomes the leader may not be an effective leader. Leaders tend to be taller and older than their followers, but these characteristics are unrelated to effectiveness (Stogdill, 1974). Men are five times more likely than women to be group leaders (Walker, Ilardi, McMahon, & Fennell, 1996), but gender is unrelated to leader effectiveness (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). Studies of military teams show that leaders have more physical ability and better task performance skills (Rice, Instone, & Adams, 1984). Although task skills relate somewhat to leader effectiveness, physical ability has little relationship to effectiveness.

The most important predictor of group selection of a leader is the participation rate (sometimes called the “babble effect”). Group members are more likely to select the most frequent communicator as the leader (Mullen, Salas, & Driskell, 1989). Unfortunately, the quantity of communication is more important than quality for leadership selection. It appears that people who communicate frequently demonstrate active involvement and interest in the group, and this implies a willingness to work with the group members.
Leader prototype theory provides another way to explain the emergence of leaders with characteristics unrelated to effectiveness (Lord, 1985). This theory examines the relationship between the leader and the perceptions of group members. Members have certain implicit notions about what a good leader is like. To the extent that the leader meets these expectations, the leader is more influential. Although the specific traits of good leadership vary in the minds of followers, effective leaders are usually assumed to be intelligent, dedicated, and to have good communication skills.

Leadership prototype theory explains some of the problems with the way team members select leaders. Members rely on their prototypes to decide who should be their leaders, but these prototypes of good leaders are not necessarily accurate. For example, gender differences in leadership may be due to the way gender stereotypes relate to prototypes about leaders. The typical female stereotype emphasizes expressive qualities such as emotion and warmth, whereas the typical male stereotype emphasizes instrumental qualities such as productivity and power (Williams & Best, 1990). Although both expressive and instrumental qualities are needed in leaders, members tend to emphasize the importance of instrumental qualities (Nye & Forsyth, 1991). This causes team members to view males as more likely candidates for leadership and to see male behaviors as more important in leaders.

10.2 Approaches to Leadership

Leadership is a topic most people believe to be very important; it has been the subject of an immense amount of research. However, we do not understand leadership very well. Problems in studying leadership cause this dilemma. The fact that people believe leadership is important does not make it true (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987). Rather than an optimal leadership style, different types of leaders are useful in different situations, and leaders are more important in some situations than in others.

The four historical approaches to research on leadership have different implications for organizations and teams (Table 10.1). The trait or personality approach is based on the belief that good leaders have certain characteristics. If this is true, then psychological tests could be used to identify and select good leaders. An alternative is the behavioral approach, which defines leadership by the ways leaders act. This approach attempts to determine what good leaders do in order to train people to be good leaders. The situational approach questions the necessity of leadership. It attempts to determine when leaders are needed and what factors can substitute for leadership. The final approach is the contingency approach, which attempts to combine personality or behavioral characteristics of leaders with situational characteristics. For
example, it may be impossible to say what a good leader does, but possible
to define good leadership in an emergency situation.

Trait or Personality Approach

The trait approach is the oldest model of leadership, with hundreds of stud-
ies conducted during the 1930s and 1940s (Yukl, 1989). It assumes that good
leaders have a certain set of characteristics. If these characteristics are identified
and measured, it should be possible to know how to select good leaders.

Many traits have been examined, but research has failed to confirm a strong
relationship between traits and leadership (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). More
recent research suggests that sets of traits are associated with good leadership.
For example, effective leaders have more drive, honesty, leadership motivation,
self-confidence, intelligence, knowledge of business, creativity, and flexibility.
No one trait can predict good leadership, but effective leaders do differ from
typical followers in exhibiting higher levels of these characteristics overall. The
basic problem is that people who are successful leaders in one situation (e.g.,
business) are not necessarily successful in others (e.g., politics, religion).

A good example of the problem with the trait approach is the value of
intelligence. “Good leaders should be intelligent.” This seems like an obvi-
ous statement, but is it true? Are the most intelligent people the best leaders?
Are the smartest U.S. presidents the most effective? Would most college pro-
fessors make great business leaders? It is true that good leaders tend to be
more intelligent than average, but leaders are not necessarily the most intel-
ligent people in their organizations. In addition, the importance of intelli-
gence varies. In a dictatorship (e.g., the military), intelligence is an important
characteristic of good leaders. In a democracy (e.g., local politics), good
leaders must be able to easily relate to others and have good communication
skills. These communication skills are more important than intelligence.

Motivation is another example of the problem with the trait approach.
Successful leaders are motivated, but what type of motivation is important?

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### TABLE 10.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Implication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trait or Personality</td>
<td>Use tests to select good leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Train people to be good leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational</td>
<td>Understand substitutes for leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency</td>
<td>Link traits or behaviors to situations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Chapter 10 \* Leadership \* 169

TABLE 10.1
Models of Leadership

![Table 10.1](image-url)
The difference between successful entrepreneurs of small businesses and managers of large companies is not a difference in the level of motivation: it is a difference in the type of motivation. Successful managers in large organizations have a strong need for power and a moderately strong need for achievement (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982). The power motivation of such managers is focused on building their organizations and empowering their subordinates, rather than on gaining personal power and control. By contrast, successful entrepreneurs have a strong need for achievement and independence and a less strong need for power.

Flexibility, or the ability to adapt to a situation, is considered an important characteristic of good leaders. Obviously, not all situations require the same approach, given that we also like consistency and leaders who stand for things. We malign politicians who are too influenced by public opinion polls, but that is a flexible approach to leadership. Clearly, we do not want too much flexibility in our leaders.

Behavioral Approach

The behavioral approach defines leadership as a set of appropriate behaviors. The goal of this approach is to define how good leaders act in order to train people to be good leaders. Rather than focusing on issues such as intelligence and creativity, most of the research on leader behavior focuses on two issues: decision-making style and task versus social focus.

The decision-making approach has primarily examined the benefits of authoritarian leadership in comparison with democratic leadership. As was noted in Chapter 9, there is no one best way to make a decision. The best type of decision-making approach depends on the situation or problem (Vroom & Jago, 1988).

Research in this area has demonstrated some of the problems and benefits of different decision-making approaches. Democratic leaders tend to encourage higher morale, job satisfaction, and commitment in their followers. However, democratic decision making can be slow, and leaders may be viewed as weak. Autocratic leaders tend to be more efficient decision makers, but this style can create dissatisfaction and implementation problems among followers.

Behavioral research also examines whether leaders should focus on the tasks or on the social relations among the group members (Likert, 1961). Is a leader’s primary role to organize and manage the task, or is it to ensure that social relations are good, group members feel satisfied and motivated, and the group can maintain itself? Research in this area has been contradictory and inconclusive, except for the finding that group members like leaders who show social consideration (Yukl, 1989).
As with the decision-making style issue, the correct answer here depends on the situation. If a team is performing a routine task, the leader should focus on social relations, because the team does not need help with the task. If a project team is working on a difficult problem, a good leader will help the team better understand and work on the task. If a team is capable of self-management, the leader should ignore both task and social issues, and focus instead on concerns outside the team.

One new example of the behavioral approach to leadership is the leader-member exchange model. This approach looks inside a work group to see how leader and subordinates interact (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Leaders form different types of relationships with subordinates, which creates in-groups and out-groups. In-group members get more attention from leaders and more resources for performing their jobs. Consequently, they are more productive and more satisfied than out-group members. The distinction is made by leaders early in the relationship and is based on little information about the subordinates. Sometimes it is influenced by irrelevant factors such as similarity, personality, and attraction, rather than by actual performance. The importance of this perspective is the recognition that a team comprises a variety of individuals. A leader does not treat everyone alike, and a leader may be performing effectively with some team members but ineffectively with others.

Situational Approach

Are leaders really important to the success of teams? When are leaders important? These questions are the basis of the situational approach to leadership. The value of this approach is in understanding the situational factors that affect leadership and its alternatives.

When historians study great leaders, they note the relationship between leaders and situations. Charismatic leaders require situations in which people have important needs and are searching for others to help resolve them (Bass, 1985). The same is true for other historically important leaders: they led during dramatic times.

People often overrate the importance of leaders (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987). Although leaders may have a strong impact on the success of organizations, in most day-to-day operations their impact is much less. However, leaders are cognitively important for followers. It is difficult to explain the success or failure of organizations, so leadership becomes a simplified explanation for what has happened and why.

One of the chief values of the situational approach is in examining alternatives to leadership or factors that can substitute for leadership. These factors relate to the characteristics of employees, jobs, and organizations
Competent, well-trained, and responsible employees need leaders to a lesser degree. Routine jobs that are highly structured do not require leader supervision. Organizing into teams and developing a cohesive team spirit reduce the need for leaders.

Contingency Approach

The contingency approach is the researcher’s answer to the problems with leadership research. If one cannot define the traits or behaviors of good leaders separate from the situation, then leadership theories should combine these factors. However, a good research theory may be difficult to use in practice. Contingency theories are complex and more difficult to understand and apply than are other theories.

Contingency theories start by focusing on some characteristic of a situation. Various theories examine the type of task, level of structure, or favorableness of the situation for the leader. The theories then examine some aspect of the leader’s personality or behavior, such as interpersonal skills or task orientation. These two sets of factors are linked to show either how the leader should behave depending on the situation or what type of leader would be best given the situation. For example, because of preference or training, some people tend to be autocratic leaders. Autocratic leaders work well in situations where they have considerable power and followers are motivated to comply. This is why the military trains leaders to handle emergency situations forcefully, and selects leaders who can act in this way.

Yukl’s (1989) multiple linkage model is a contingency theory that relates to leading teams. The theory states that successful performance of a team depends on the following six intervening variables: member effort, member ability, organization of the task, teamwork and cooperativeness, availability of resources, and external coordination. Situational factors both directly influence these variables and determine which variables are most important. The role of the leader is to manage and improve these intervening variables. In the short run, most leader actions are intended to correct problems in these six variables. In the long run, the leader tries to make the situation more favorable by implementing improvement programs, developing new goals and directions, improving relations with the organization, and improving the team’s climate.

10.3 Situational Leadership Theory

From a teamwork perspective, one of the most important leadership theories is situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). This theory
links the leader’s behavior to characteristics of the group. The value of this theory goes beyond simply telling the leader how to behave. Situational leadership theory is a developmental theory that assumes that one of the goals of leadership is to develop the group. As such, it is one of the most team-oriented of the leadership theories.

Situational leadership theory starts with the assumption that there are four basic styles of leadership, based on a combination of task and relationship orientation. Leaders can be directing (high task and low relationship), coaching (high task and high relationship), supporting (low task and high relationship), or delegating (low task and low relationship). The appropriate style depends on the readiness level of the group. Group readiness is based on the skills of group members, their experience with the task, their capacity to set goals, and their ability to assume responsibility. The connection between the leader’s behavior and the group’s readiness level is shown in Figure 10.1.

To see how this theory works, imagine being the leader of a group of adolescents in a summer work program. On your first day as leader, your group has little experience with the task and little experience working together. As the leader, you need to take control of the situation and get the group to start working together. A task-oriented (directing) approach is needed. As the group gains some experience over time, your leadership style should soften (coaching) to reward the group’s accomplishments. Once the group learns how to perform the job and act responsibly, you need to further reward members by allowing them to participate in the decision-making process (supporting). This both helps increase their commitment to the group and develops their leadership skills. When the group can take full responsibility for performing its task, your job shifts to addressing issues outside the team, since you are no longer needed to guide the team. As the leader, you delegate most of the internal leadership functions and let the group manage itself (delegating).

**Figure 10.1** Situational Leadership Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECTING</th>
<th>COACHING</th>
<th>SUPPORTING</th>
<th>DELEGATING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High task and low relationship</td>
<td>High task and high relationship</td>
<td>Low task and high relationship</td>
<td>Low task and low relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low Group Readiness Level High

SOURCE: Adapted from Hersey and Blanchard (1993).
As may be seen from this example, situational leadership theory makes two important points. First, the leader needs to adjust his style of acting relative to the readiness of the group. Second, leadership is a developmental process, and the leader’s behavior should promote group readiness.

10.4 Self-Managing Teams

As organizations become more team oriented, they sometimes shift to the use of self-managing teams (Wellins & George, 1991). Self-managing teams provide a number of benefits beyond the use of standard work teams. However, developing self-managing teams can be a difficult process, and this type of team is not suited for all situations.

Self-managing teams shift responsibility for performance to team members (Hackman, 1986). This reduces the need for managers and allows the remaining managers to focus on tasks outside the team. When they are successful, self-managing teams encourage the empowerment of employees and development of team member skills.

Although the idea of self-managing teams has been around since the 1960s (as part of sociotechnical systems theory, or STS), the use of self-managing teams was not common until the 1980s, when they were used primarily with factory and service teams (Manz, 1992). By the 1990s, more than 40% of large companies in the United States were using self-managing teams with at least some employees (Cohen, Ledford, & Spreitzer, 1996). The most important reasons for companies to introduce self-managing teams in manufacturing were to improve performance and quality (de Leede & Stoker, 1999).

The main impact of self-managing teams is to shift responsibilities from management to team members. This is not an all-or-nothing process. Rather, there are many levels of self-management, depending on how willing the organization is to give the team new responsibilities. Table 10.2 shows four different levels of responsibility that a factory team could possess. As the team is given more responsibility, it takes on more tasks that were formerly handled by managers. When the team reaches the fourth level, it is performing 80% of the tasks formerly performed by managers.

Leading Self-Managing Teams

Leading self-managing teams requires new approaches to leadership (Druskat & Wheeler, 2003). Even though self-managing teams control their internal operations, external leaders do have important roles: they provide valuable coaching, support, and motivation for teams. However,
TABLE 10.2

Team Empowerment Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Responsibility</th>
<th>Team Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Level 1: 20% of job responsibility | • Maintenance  
• Quality control  
• Continuous improvement of process |
| Level 2: 40% of job responsibility | • Managing supplies  
• Customer contact  
• Hiring new team members |
| Level 3: 60% of job responsibility | • Choosing the team leader  
• Equipment purchase  
• Facility and work area design |
| Level 4: 80% of job responsibility | • Budgeting  
• Personnel (performance appraisal, compensation, etc.)  
• Product modification and development |


many self-managing service and production teams perform relatively routine tasks. Under normal conditions, they do not require assistance from external leaders. It is when the teams encounter problems that external leaders may be needed.

For self-managing teams, the external leader may either provide support or directly intervene in the team’s operations (Morgeson, 2005). When leaders intervene by preparing teams for change or providing supportive coaching, they are viewed as effective leaders and increase satisfaction with leadership. When they directly intervene into the team’s operations, they decrease satisfaction with leadership. Active involvement by the leader is viewed as negative by the team, since it takes away the team’s autonomy. Active interventions are only related to team effectiveness and satisfaction when the team cannot manage on its own.

Success of Self-Managing Teams

The benefits of self-management for production and service teams do not necessarily apply to professional teams. Cohen and Bailey’s (1997) review of
the factors that relate to team success in different types of work teams found that self-management did not improve the performance of project teams. The highest-performing project teams had leaders who were highly involved in managing the task. Because members of project teams already have substantial autonomy, they may not view self-management as a personal benefit. In addition, their projects are nonroutine and difficult, so leaders who help provide structure are viewed as a benefit.

There are a number of reasons why production or service teams are better suited than professional teams for self-management. In production teams, team members can be cross-trained, which allows them to understand the issues involved in each other’s work. In professional teams, team members have different types of expertise, thereby limiting members’ understanding of each other’s perspectives (Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1992). Production teams have clear performance measurements and can use quantitative feedback to evaluate and improve performance. In most cases, it is difficult to analyze and measure the performance of professional teams (Orsburn et al., 1990). Finally, production workers place more importance on their social relations and are less competitive when compared to professionals and managers (Lea & Brostrom, 1988).

In their study of professional teams, Levi and Slem (1996) found little evidence that self-managing teams performed better, or that employees preferred to work on them. The idea of self-management is attractive to many employees in theory, but so is having a good leader to manage, teach, and reward efforts. The lack of a single best approach to leadership should not be too surprising. When the task is complex and the team’s goals are unclear, a strong leader is needed to provide clear direction. When the task is relatively routine, the need for a leader is greatly diminished. The more experience people have in performing the task and working as a team, the better able they are to become self-managing.

### 10.5 Application: The Functional Approach to Leading Teams

Although there is a substantial amount of research on both leadership and team development, there is limited research on the most effective types of leadership for teams (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002). Traditional leadership theories do not adequately explain team leadership. Team leaders can adopt various roles, ranging from being an active participant in the team to being an external leader who sets the team’s overall direction and allows the team to manage its internal processes.

From a functional leadership perspective, the goal of the team leader is to help the team operate more effectively (Zaccaro & Marks, 1999). Team
leadership is a form of social problem solving that helps the team attain its goals. This includes helping the team to interpret and diagnose problems, generate and evaluate solutions, and implement those solutions. Functional leadership is not defined by a specific set of leader behaviors, because the appropriate behavior depends on the characteristics of the team, its task, the environmental context, and the problems it is facing. It is not a specific style of leadership behavior, but rather a problem-solving approach to dealing with the problems that teams face.

There are three core leadership functions: setting the direction for the team, managing the team’s operations, and developing the team’s leadership abilities (Zaccaro, Heinen, & Shuffler, 2009). The focus of the team leader depends on the situation the team faces and the maturity of the team. Leaders help the team solve problems in order to meet its goals, while developing the skills and abilities of the team members so they have the collective capacity for leadership. They promote team learning by giving performance feedback to the team and using this information to help the team develop performance strategies that are more effective.

There are several approaches that team leaders can take to support the team. Leaders can focus on the structure and context of the team to ensure it has the capabilities to succeed. Alternatively, team leaders can be actively involved in the internal operations of the team to facilitate performance. Finally, leaders can assume the role of coach to provide guidance to the team when they encounter challenges to performance.

Providing a Context for Teams

Team leaders provide a supportive context for teams by focusing on the team’s direction, structure, and external relations (Hackman & Walton, 1986; Wageman, Hackman, & Lehman, 2005). One of the primary roles of the team leader is to set the direction for the team. Establishing a clear and engaging direction for the team is a crucial part of motivating team performance.

The leader has to create a situation that enables successful performance. This includes a facilitative group structure and a supportive organizational context. A facilitative group structure includes tasks that are engaging, a group whose members have the skills to complete the task, and group norms that encourage effective performance. A supportive context provides the team with necessary information and resources, and rewards team excellence.

The third leader role is oriented toward the team’s external relations. The leader links the team to the organization and buffers the team from interference from the organization. The leader has a public relations job to perform, making sure the team has the resources and support it needs from the organization.
Facilitating Internal Operations

Team leaders who are actively involved impact the team’s cognitive, motivational, affective, and coordination processes (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). From a cognitive perspective, team leaders help to make sense out of the environment, facilitate information processing by the team, and help to form the team’s mental models of how to operate. They do not solve the team’s problems, but facilitate the team’s ability to engage in effective problem solving.

Another major role of the leader is to motivate team members to work hard for the team. Leaders do this by facilitating team cohesion and a sense of collective efficacy. They develop task assignments to increase interdependence, autonomy, and challenge in order to encourage commitment. Leaders acknowledge good performance and celebrate team successes to reward team performance.

From an affective perspective, the leader helps to manage the team’s stress and promote a positive mood among team members. The leader impacts the team’s mood by modeling positive states, providing counseling and support to team members, and managing conflict in a constructive manner. This means creating a safe environment where team members feel free to participate without fear of punishment.

Finally, the leader improves coordination in the team by identifying the individual roles of team members, matching team members’ capabilities to their roles, developing performance strategies, and monitoring and providing feedback about performance. The leader either coordinates these team processes or facilitates the team’s development of roles and performance strategies. The leader is also responsible for creating times for the team to reflect on its performance and reevaluate its goals and processes.

Team Coaching

Team coaching is a team leader intervention designed to improve coordination and performance by providing guidance to the team (Hackman & Wageman, 2005). There are three types of team coaching: motivational, consultative, and educational. Motivational coaching is designed to minimize social loafing and increase team commitment. Consultative coaching focuses on strategies to improve team performance and increase coordination among team roles and tasks. Educational coaching helps to build the knowledge, skills, and abilities of team members and the team as a whole.

How the leader coaches a team depends on its stage of development. These stages affect the readiness of the team to accept and use different types
of coaching. At the beginning of a project, team members need to become oriented toward each other and prepare to work on the task. A coaching intervention that motivates the team by enhancing commitment to both the team and task is appropriate. During the midpoint transition period, strategy-oriented coaching that helps the team analyze and improve operations is valuable. When most of the team’s work has been completed, educational coaching helps the team learn from the experience and enables members to use these lessons in future team activities.

Coaching is about building the team, not about directing the team how to do its work. Unfortunately, too often team leaders focus on managing the team’s activities, rather than on building the capabilities of the team. Research shows that leaders who actively listen to team members and incorporate their ideas into the team’s decisions help improve both members’ evaluations of their teams and the quality of team decisions (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Problem leaders tend to micromanage their teams, engage in autocratic decision making, and to be overconfident of their own skills (McIntyre & Salas, 1995). This pattern of leadership reduces respect for such leaders, and prevents constructive feedback from improving their behavior.

Summary

Leadership can be centralized in one person or distributed among various roles. Teams vary in types of leadership, selection of leaders, and delegation of leader powers. Teams rarely exist without leaders, since leaders emerge through a team’s interactions. Leaders may be designated by their organizations, or teams may select their own leaders and be self-managing.

There are four main approaches to studying leadership.

1. The trait or personality approach defines the personality characteristics of successful leaders.

2. The behavioral approach examines the value of different behavioral styles such as task orientation and social orientation.

3. The situational approach identifies the factors that make leaders important (change) or less important (mature teams).

4. The contingency approach links traits and behaviors to the situations to which they best apply.

Each of these approaches has different implications for the way leaders should be selected and trained.
One of the most important leadership theories for teams is situational leadership theory, which defines four styles of leadership: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. The leader should select the style to use based on the readiness level of the group. In addition, the leader should use an appropriate style to promote team development.

Self-managing teams shift responsibility for teams from management to the team members. The chief examples of self-managing teams at work are factory and service workers, where employees are cross-trained and taught teamwork skills. Developing self-managing teams among professionals can be difficult because of the nature of their tasks and the relationships among team members. The use of self-managing teams requires new roles for team leaders.

The functional approach to team leadership provides advice about what factors a leader should focus on to improve the team’s functioning. Team leadership is viewed as a form of problem solving designed to help the team succeed. Leaders can focus on providing a supportive context, facilitating internal operations, or coaching to provide guidance. These actions are designed to help the team operate more effectively and develop the team’s leadership abilities.

Team Leader’s Challenge 10

You are an attorney in a law office with several other attorneys, paralegal assistants, clerical staff, and an office technician. Leadership is shared among the attorneys, and you are the leader for the staff meetings and for office management issues. Decisions about how the office operates are made in weekly meetings with the entire staff. The office technician has informed you that problems are increasing with the office computer system and it is time to make a major change. This technological decision will affect the work of everyone in the office.

The office functions well and people have good working relationships. Although they do not welcome learning a new computer system, many people in the office recognize that a change in technology is needed. For most office decisions, the staff discusses issues and makes a group decision. However, there are many technical aspects to the computer system decision, and you are uncertain whether everyone should be involved in this decision.

How should you (the leader for office management issues) make the decision about the new computer system?

Are the team members capable of making this decision, or is this a time when more authoritative leadership is important?

What leadership style is best here? Why?
**Survey: Leadership Styles**

**Purpose:** To help you understand your preferred leadership styles. Situational Leadership Theory says that the best style of leadership depends on the characteristics of the situation. However, people often have preferred leadership styles that they use frequently, regardless of the situation.

**Directions:** Imagine that you are the leader of a team facing the eight situations that are listed below. How should you as the team leader make the decisions to resolve the situations? Review these four decision options and select which approach is best for each situation:

- **Option A:** Make the decision yourself and tell the team what to do.
- **Option B:** Ask the team members for advice, but make the decision yourself.
- **Option C:** Facilitate the team’s decision-making process.
- **Option D:** Let the members of the team decide by themselves what to do.

1. The team’s performance has been dropping, and personality clashes are increasing. You have tried to be friendly and sympathetic to their problems, but this does not seem to be working. What should you do to improve the team’s performance?

2. Because of financial problems in the organization, you have been ordered to make budget cuts for the team. There are a variety of options, including reducing the number of team members or work hours. How should you make the budget cuts?

3. You are considering a major change—replacing the office computer system. The team works well together and has been consistently successful. They respect the need for change, but they are not computer experts. How should you make the decision and manage the change program?

4. It is the beginning of the sports season and your team needs to reduce the number of players on the roster from 27 to 25. How should you decide who will be removed from the team?

5. You have received information that indicates some recent quality problems in the team’s work. The team has a good record of accomplishment. You are not sure what is causing the performance problems. What should you do to improve the situation?

6. The team has just completed a major project deadline and it is time to celebrate. You think a party or social activity is an appropriate reward. What kind of celebration should you have?

*(Continued)*
(Continued)

7. The team has been performing fairly well. The previous team leader was very controlling. You want the team to continue to be successful, but you would also like to improve the social relations among team members. How should you try to improve the situation?

8. The team’s office is being redecorated and there are many decisions to be made. These decisions relate to furniture, carpeting, wall colors, and so on. The budget for the project has already been established. How should these decisions be made?

**Scoring:**

The number of situations you marked A is your Directing score.

The number of situations you marked B is your Coaching score.

The number of situations you marked C is your Supporting score.

The number of situations you marked D is your Delegating score.

**Discussion:** Did you have a preferred leadership style? In which situations is this leadership style most appropriate? How flexible are you with your leadership style?


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**Activity: Observing the Leader’s Behavior**

**Objective:** Situational leadership theory defines four types of leader behavior: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. The most useful behavior depends on the readiness level of the group. Group readiness relates to the skills, experience, and responsibility level of the group.

**Activity:** Select a variety of situations to observe and analyze the behavior of leaders. These situations can come from teams or organizations you belong to, videos of leaders interacting with groups, business case studies, or the Team Leader’s Challenges in this book. Use Activity Worksheet 10.1 to classify the leader’s behavior using the types from situational leadership theory, rate the readiness level of the group, and analyze the match between these factors.

**Analysis:** According to situational leadership theory, does the style of behavior used by the leader match the readiness level of the group? Was the style of leadership used effective? How should the leader behave to be more effective?
**Discussion:** What are the implications of using a leadership style that is too controlling or task oriented? What are the implications of using a leadership style to give subordinates too much freedom and responsibility? How will group members respond to these styles of leadership?

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**ACTIVITY WORKSHEET 10.1**
**Rating the Leader’s Behavior**

Which of the following styles best describes the leader’s behavior?

- _____Directing (high task and low relationship)
- _____Coaching (high task and high relationship)
- _____Supporting (low task and high relationship)
- _____Delegating (low task and low relationship)

Overall, how would you rate the readiness level of the team?

- _____Low
- _____Medium
- _____High

How well did the leader’s behavior match with the group’s readiness level?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
<th>Directing</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Supporting</th>
<th>Delegating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group Readiness**