

Leadership from a Coffee Cup - Part 2 by Shirley Lee -



In studying leadership styles it becomes apparent that many great leaders will change their style to meet a particular business situation or employee need. For leaders to be truly successful, they must be able to determine when it is best to change their behavior to effectively meet the business environment. To determine if a style change or blending of styles is necessary, the leader needs to evaluate: different levels of employee relationships and skills, the task that must be done, the amount of collaboration necessary, and how much power is personally possessed to influence the employees and the completion of the task. These changes in style could be viewed as drinking from different management coffee cups to increase energy or motivation levels.

The Energy Factor in Leadership (as compared to Caffeine levels)

If leaders were defined according to the level of energy they possess or instill in others, this could be compared to caffeine as a temporary high in productivity. For example, regular leaders might be personally high energy as they would be more task-oriented when it comes to work productivity. These leaders feel they get the best results by keeping their people busy producing results and products rather than creatively contributing to the business. They focus on getting the job done instead of involving their employee teams in planning and organizing work. They feel responsible for supervising employees, controlling work flow, and establishing procedures. This seems like a high caffeine level since so much work appears to get done. However, there may be times when it makes more sense to step back and ask for input to become better in the current situation or improve and grow in the future.

If regular leaders are task-oriented, decaffeinated leaders would appear to be more relaxed in their approach and definitely highly people-oriented. The decaf leaders are more concerned about the needs of employees, building teamwork, and providing the support their teams may need to accomplish their work. These leaders feel they get the best results by organizing and developing employees through training and other activities that lead to collaboration and work improvement. As time permits, they encourage their teams to establish work procedures, and plan their work with deadlines and production goals while developing towards self-management. However, decaf leaders should realize that there may be situations where they must step in and take control in order to lead their employees toward the desired results.

The Motivation Factor in Leadership (as compared to Temperature)

In addition to the energy levels of leaders, which determine if managers are people- or task- oriented, there is the factor of temperature in style which is related to rewards and motivation. If leaders can be considered hot or cold in the way they use their style, then hot leaders may be thought of as more positive in their approach to people management. Hot leaders most likely use intrinsic rewards to motivate their employees. They want to motivate in a way that helps their teams to become more effective or efficient at both their jobs and communication skills in order to accomplish business goals. Hot leaders are charismatic and inspiring because they understand their people can cover the details and will let the leader concentrate on the bigger picture. They understand that if they provide the appropriate challenges, their employees will develop the attitudes necessary to meet those challenges with enthusiasm.

The cold leader may seem to have a negative approach to people, but this type of leader may be needed to meet and push through certain environmental situations that threaten business success. The cold leader will typically motivate using controlling behaviors or by appealing to an employee's self-interest where pay for work is concerned. These leaders may be seen as bossy and unconcerned for employees because they look for short-term results and cost-cutting measures rather than looking any farther than the immediate future. They see their role as making money rather than finding creative ways to stay in business or expand productivity. Although this style of leadership may accomplish higher efficiency and some profits, it is a management method only for difficult economic times. Therefore, use of this style should be re-evaluated on a regular basis so that employee morale and potential creativity is not adversely affected.

As a leader, are you thinking about changing or mixing styles to suit your different business situations? If so, ask yourself whether you are running on regular or on decaf, and whether you are motivationally hot or cold? Do you notice when you have a change in your motivation or energy factors? In which situations should you change from regular to decaf and choose to be hot or cold? What do you need to do to make changes in motivation or energy factors, and how will you do it?

Viewing changes in style or mixing of styles as drinking from different cups, can help you increase energy or motivation levels for a given situation or timeframe to meet organizational needs. When studying leadership styles, it is obvious that there is not only one right way to lead. Instead, a good leader will adapt a particular style for a situation or blend styles in order to effectively meet business needs. Leaders should always consider employee skills and motivation, what type of work needs to be done collaboratively or individually, what resources need to be provided, and whether there is a need to adapt their personal style of leadership. A really great leader will develop an instinct for what styles are necessary when, and then learn to quickly adopt the necessary style.

About the Author: Shirley Fine Lee is the author of "[R.A!R.A! A Meeting Wizard's Approach](#)", a guide to planning and conducting meetings to be productive, effectual, and smoothly run as possible. She has considerable training and expertise in leading effective meetings herself, as well as training others to do the same. Shirley has worked as a training and development specialist since 1986, and an independent consultant since 2000 when she joined Dallas ASTD. She has extensive experience helping organizations with their team building, training development, meeting facilitation, presentation delivery, and other communication needs. You may read many business articles by Shirley (some of the e-articles may be reprinted in company newsletters) from her website or on the multi-contributor productivity tips blog at <http://2bproductive.blogspot.com/>. If you want to find out more about Shirley or how to contact her, see her website at www.ShirleyFineLee.com.