

**Flexible Leadership
Opportunity for Guidance
July 2017**

This is the time of year when new boards and new leadership teams are being formed. With the new influx in engagers, some of these teams may include many new members and new leaders. It is with that in mind that we offer this article about Flexible Leadership. It offers practical suggestions about how to embrace and draw upon different leadership styles for maximum impact.

Today's most successful leaders are exceptional managers of people. Are you?

Take a step back and think about each of the individuals you lead. Consider the value they bring to your organization and the manner in which they contribute. Reflect upon their individual styles of getting the job done: Do you have highly motivated, experienced, self-driven types who need little more than a clear mandate and plenty of room to make things happen? Do you manage individuals who are newer to their roles, less familiar with the terrain and perhaps in need of greater direction from you? Which of your folks thrive with a steady stream of feedback? Who might perceive that as micromanagement?

On any given team, you will have people with a variety of strengths, backgrounds, personalities and work styles. To lead most effectively, you need to modify your management style to accommodate the needs of each team member. The flexible leader recognizes that there is nothing inauthentic about modifying his or her approach as needed.

Here's a recommended approach --

Assess your team. In order to apply a flexible leadership style, you must first understand the way each of your team members works best. Start by asking the right questions:

- *How can I best help you succeed?*
- *How much direction do you need from me?*
- *Do you prefer to make decisions autonomously or would you rather obtain my guidance and approval before moving forward?*
- *Do you prefer frequent discussions around progress toward goals or would you rather come to me only when there are key issues to be addressed?*
- *How much feedback do you require in order to know whether you are on the right track?*

Create a game plan. Be deliberate here. How will you coach, mentor and guide your team members? How often will you communicate with them? In which contexts will you provide various members with concrete direction and where will you let them take the ball and run with it? How will you provide positive feedback and how will you hold each individual accountable, in a way that maximizes your impact?



Work your plan. Once you've got your plan in place, stick to it while being mindful that flexibility is sometimes necessary. You may find that different circumstances require a change in approach. Similarly, as individuals develop and mature in their roles, they are likely to require less handholding and more degrees of freedom.

Reflect. Allow some time to pass — perhaps 3 to 6 months — and then reassess. Is the overall effect one of enhanced team performance? How satisfied, engaged, supported and empowered are your team members feeling? Don't forget to check in with them periodically, to get their perspective and determine whether you need to modify your approach.

Being a fantastic leader requires the flexibility to manage people in accordance with their needs — based upon their unique strengths, levels of experience and individual styles and preferences. Adapt as needed and you'll find yourself at the helm of a fantastically motivated, engaged and remarkably effective team.

Source:

The Flexible Leader: An Adaptable Approach to Managing Your Team

Liz Bywater, Ph.D.

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(Slightly modified to remove business terms.)

Additional resources:

- [Engaging Members to Lead the League](#)
- [Recognizing Leadership Traits Activity](#)
- [Leadership Compass Activity](#)