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Who Are 'You' as a Leader?

By Ann Golden Eglé, MCC

Is your leadership style innovative, charismatic, servant, commanding, laissez-faire or transformative? If your answer is "depends on the situation," you are ahead of the game. Next question: how important is your style to the success of your team?

I enjoy surprising new clients through drawing out 'who' they are as a leader, not merely what they 'do.' We are all multifaceted creatures. Sometimes you are charismatic; other times, commanding. Sometimes you're bottom line; other times, curious.

A key to creating a winning team is to realize that each member is also multifaceted, thus each has varying needs.

Holding tightly onto one leadership style may feel safe, yet it is rarely the most effective way in which to inspire success.

Let's look at a few of the many diverse styles. Think of the individuals whom you influence. Which style will work best with specific individuals and in varying circumstances?

- **Innovative.** Example: Richard Branson who at age sixteen founded Virgin Group/Virgin Airlines. Traits: creating and inspiring new approaches; craving and respecting others ideas; maintaining a sense of humor and excitement, creativity and optimism. Team members who thrive are risk takers, unafraid of failing, highly innovative, creative and intelligent.
- **Charismatic.** Example: Oprah Winfrey who influences millions through her personality. People follow her recommendations like a cult. Charismatic leaders need substance, not merely enthusiasm. Team members who thrive cannot have big egos. They know it's all about the leader looking good. They may have to pick up pieces from poorly-thought-out projects yet their motivation comes through association with this charismatic superstar leader.
- **Servant.** Example: Herb Kelleher, former CEO of Southwest Airlines, who created a culture where 'the business of business is people.' The servant leader demonstrates high moral ground, staying out of the limelight. Their decisions and

accomplishments are all about the team and creating the greater good. Team members who thrive are of like 'servant' mind, feel rewarded and valued.

- **Commanding.** No example needed here. We all know commanding/controlling leaders, many of whom get the job done leaving casualties in their wake. Traits are directive, strong-willed, high expectations, impatience and low emotional intelligence. Obedient team members thrive when under extreme deadlines, when no time exists for discussion, or when safety is a factor.
- **Laissez-faire.** These leaders select a team 'smarter than they are', are trusting, excellent communicators, and provide constant feedback. While aware of the progress that's being made, they step back and let the team create and take credit for accomplishments. Team members must be highly competent, confident, proven, decisive and self-directed.
- **Transformational.** Example: Tony Hsieh, who at age 24 sold LinkExchange to Microsoft for \$265 million and then helped Zappos grow from almost no sales to selling to Amazon in 2009 for \$1.2 billion. Transformational leaders serve as the role model; expect team members to be transformative in thinking and acting even when uncomfortable. Their team thrives with detail-oriented members who are eager to bring visions to reality.

Leadership mastery is much larger than merely executing on a collection of goals. It is earned by fully understanding the intricacies of each individual on your team and 'who you need to be' as well as 'who they need to be' to accomplish these goals.

I challenge you to stretch into different leadership styles depending on your varying situations. This awareness will create deeper relationships, greater successes and win/win scenarios for all involved.

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