Leadership Theory

There are many leadership theories that are practiced in today's society. In 1939, Kurt Lewin worked with a group of researchers that studied a group of school children who were assigned to one of three leadership groups: authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-fair. The participants were then led in a craft project. The researchers observed behavior in response to these three different leadership styles.

Leadership Styles

AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP (Autocratic): Leaders of this style provide clear expectations what needs to done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. There is a clear division between leader and follower. Decisions are made with little to no participation from the group.

PARTICIPATIVE LEADERSHIP (Democratic): Leaders of this style provide guidance to group members, and the leader participates in the group as well as seeks input from members. In Lewin's study, children were less productive than the authoritarian group, but contributions were of high quality.

DELEGATIVE LEADERSHIP (Laissez-Faire): Leadership offers little guidance to the group and leaves all decisions to group members. In the study, participants were least productive of all the groups. The children made demands on the leader, did not cooperate and were unable to work independently. This style can be effective with highly skilled groups, but often leads to undefined roles.

Something to Consider

Einstein said that, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Is your group doing the same thing again and again   same volunteers, same theme parties, same boring meetings? Add some pizzazz! If you want a different result, change things up. Have someone else moderate the meeting. Play a game or have a fun ice breaker at the beginning of the meeting. Have the people who speak all the time be silent and those who never talk lead the meeting.

Don't do the same old thing again and again. Try something new. It will generate excitement in the group.

If you are leader of your group, pass the baton to someone who you would like to pass the torch to for the future. Rethink the role you normally perform and get others involved. Don't step up immediately to solve a problem. Encourage the group to think for themselves. This will empower your organization.

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