

Leadership Brief

2019

This *Leadership Brief* will include findings from a meta-analysis of leadership practices studies (Dunst et al., 2018) and descriptions of the implications of the results for leadership development (Brittain & Bernotavicz, 2014). The meta-analysis included 112 studies of more than 39,000 followers (the term used in the leadership literature to describe employees, staff, workers, etc.). The studies were conducted in 31 countries in diverse programs, organizations, and businesses.

Types of Leadership

The types of leadership that were the focus of review were ones that actively involve followers at all levels of a program or organization; what leaders do to promote followers' understanding of and commitment to an organization's mission and goals; and what leaders do to engage, encourage, and support followers' use of behavior and practices that leads to high quality outcomes. This street-level, vertical approach to leadership is considered an alternative to a hierarchical, top-down approach to leadership.

Leadership Practices

As part of coding the leadership practices, we discovered that many of the same terms were used to describe different leadership practices and different terms were often used to describe the same practices. The studies included 64 different measures of different kinds of leadership practices. The measures were content analyzed and resulted in 11 types of leadership practices that were grouped into four sets of practices. These are listed in the table below with brief descriptions of each type of practice.

The leader-centered practices include things leaders do to inspire followers, create follower commitment, and model desired follower behavior. The shared responsibility practices include things leaders do to

encourage follower active participation in decisions and actions that contribute to desired organization outcomes. The employee capacity-building practices include things leaders do to promote follower acquisition and use of the knowledge and skills that lead to high quality program or organization outcomes. The employee behavior practices include things leaders do to establish performance expectations and the follower rewards for engaging in those behavior and practices. Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2001) noted that these practices include the types of "leadership that has a powerful effect on the motivation, self-confidence, self-efficacy, [and] performance of staff" (p. 8).

Table: Brief Descriptions of the Eleven Types of Leadership Practices

Leadership Clusters/Practices	Brief Description of the Practice
Leader-Centered Practices	
<i>Organizational Visioning</i>	Establishing an organization's mission and employee understanding and commitment to the mission
<i>Motivational Communication</i>	Conveying a positive image of the organization and employees contributions to the organization
<i>Modeling Desired Behavior</i>	Leads by example where a leader's behavior serves as a model for employees to follow
Shared Responsibility Practices	
<i>Encouraging Input and Feedback</i>	Soliciting employee input and feedback to strengthen employee-organizational engagement
<i>Soliciting Creative Solutions</i>	Seeks new and innovative employee contributions for better ways to do things
<i>Shared Decision-Making</i>	Leader and employees share responsibility for decisions and actions to achieve organizational goals
Capacity-Building Practices	
<i>Relationship-Building Practices</i>	Establishing collaborative relationships with employees based on respect, trust, and mutual contributions
<i>Confidence-Building Practices</i>	Leader-provided experiences that strengthen employee beliefs and practices
<i>Coaching Practices</i>	Supportive guidance and feedback to improve employee performance
Staff Performance Practices	
<i>Performance Expectations</i>	Clearly describes and articulates expectant employee behavior and actions
<i>Performance Rewards</i>	Provides positive feedback and other reinforcement for a job well done

Leader-Centered Practices

The leader-centered practices include behavior leaders use to articulate an organization's vision, the values that underpin the vision, inspire followers to commit to the vision, and what leaders do to model desired behavior. The three checklist indicators, taken together, are what leaders do to inspire employee understanding, buy-in, and commitment to an organization's mission and goals.

Shared Responsibility Practices

The shared responsibility practices include leader behavior that actively engage employees in actions that contribute to individual and collective decision-making about courses-of-action to achieve organizational goals. The three checklist indicators emphasize how leaders and staff work together in concert to improve individual, collective, and organizational performance.

Capacity-Building Practices

The capacity-building practices include behavior leaders use to strengthen leader-staff relationships and cooperation, and what leaders do to provide staff confidence-building experiences using coaching, feedback, and other supportive guidance. These leader practices build upon and strengthen employee capacity to make authentic, meaningful contributions to achieving organizational goals.

Staff Performance Practices

These leader practices include behavior that leadership use to clearly define employee performance expectations and practices and which reward staff for individual and collective accomplishments. Effective staff performance practices include clear communications about how staff performance contribute to individual and collective activity for achieving desired goals.

Do These Practices Make a Difference?

The study outcomes were organized into seven types of outcome categories: Organizational engagement, team/work group effectiveness, leader entrustment, employee psychological health, employee self-efficacy belief appraisals, employee

job satisfaction, and employee job performance. The average correlations between each leadership practice and each outcome were used as the measures of the association between the 11 leadership practices and the outcome measures. The results showed that all but one of the 77 leadership practices-outcome measure relationships were significantly related. The leadership measures were, however, differentially related to the study outcomes. The strongest associations were between the leadership practices and trust in leaders, and the weakest relationships were between the leadership practices and follower job performance.



Figure. Relationship between the leadership practices and study outcomes.

Implications for Leadership Development

Leadership development emphasizes the use of evidence-based professional development (EBPD) practices to strengthen the capacity of leaders to use evidence-informed roles, behavior, and practices to engage followers in behavior and actions aligned with an organization's mission and goals (Klimoski & Amos, 2012). Because the particular leadership practices used to affect outcomes of interest are likely to be context and situation specific, the targets of EBPD would differ depending on which leadership practice is best suited for affecting desired change.

References

- Alimo-Metcalfe, B., & Alban-Metcalfe, J. (2001). The development of a new transformational leadership questionnaire. *J Occup Organ Psych, 74*(1), 1-27.
- Brittain, C., & Bernotavicz, F. (2014). Competency-based leadership development. *Training and Development in Human Services, 8*(1), 9-19.
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