



# Volunteer Administration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

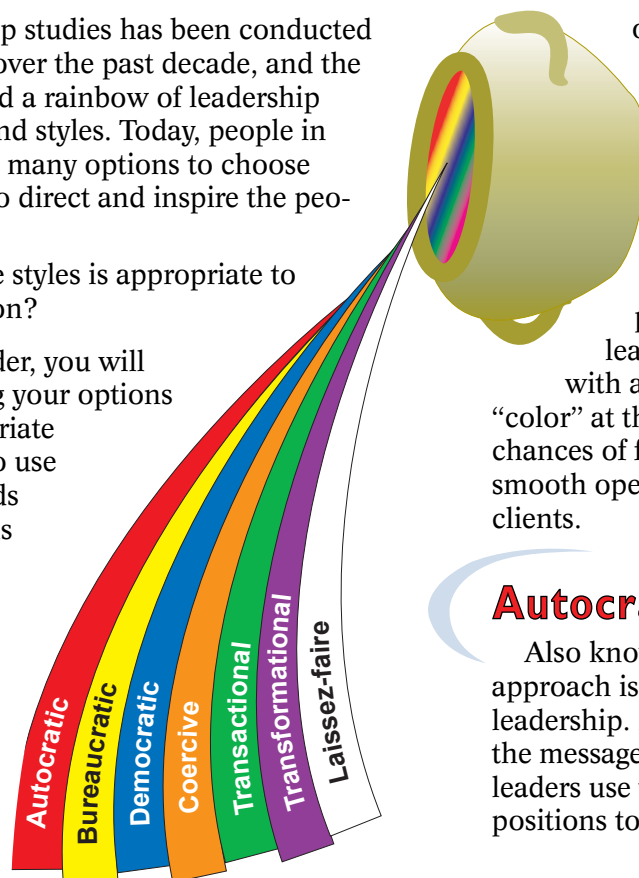
## Find Your Pot of Gold: Leadership Styles for Any Situation

Christopher T. Boleman, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, and  
Lindsey K. Pavelka, Graduate Student and Lecturer, Department of Agricultural Leadership,  
Education and Communications  
Angela Burkham, Extension Program Specialist – Volunteerism,  
The Texas A&M University System

A flood of leadership studies has been conducted in the United States over the past decade, and the findings have revealed a rainbow of leadership theories, behaviors and styles. Today, people in leadership roles have many options to choose among when trying to direct and inspire the people in their charge.

But which of those styles is appropriate to use in a given situation?

To be effective leader, you will benefit from knowing your options as well as the appropriate situations in which to use them. Of the hundreds of leadership methods studied, researchers have identified seven styles as the most common in the United States. There are three primary styles—autocratic, bureaucratic and democratic;



one hands-off style—laissez-faire; and three secondary styles—coercive, transactional and transformational leadership. Each style has advantages and disadvantages and is appropriate for some situations.

To help you remember the various styles available when trying to lead people in different circumstances, each leadership style described below is coupled with a color. By choosing the appropriate “color” at the right time, you will increase your chances of finding your “pot of gold” as a leader—smooth operations, productive workers and satisfied clients.

### Autocratic style

Also known as authoritative style, the autocratic approach is considered the classical form of leadership. People using this style generally send the message that “the leader is the boss.” Autocratic leaders use the power of their organizational positions to make decisions and accomplish goals.

Autocratic leaders are often one-way communicators, rarely consulting with subordinates and acting as a managerial authority over all others. Because they do not trust their employees, most autocratic leaders resort to using punishment and threats to influence employees into action.

**Advantages:** This style is useful when the followers have few skills and little knowledge about the task they are to accomplish.

**Disadvantages:** The followers are not involved in decisions, which will lead to a low level of motivation because they do not have a feeling of ownership about the organization.

**Color:** Vibrant red. Autocratic leaders say, “Here I am ... and I mean business.”

## Bureaucratic

Leaders who are bureaucratic work diligently to fulfill tasks according to set policies or procedures. Generally, a bureaucratic leader has high concern and respect for his or her position and the organization.

**Advantages:** Bureaucratic leadership can be used to keep organizations out of trouble. For example, it works well in situations in which people manage money or administer safety and security measures.

**Disadvantages:** Leading by the book can foster a distant relationship between the leader and the follower. When making decisions, sometimes a leader should take into account personal differences and the followers’ feelings.

**Color:** Crisp, recognizable yellow. Bureaucratic leaders are persistent and always visible.

## Democratic

Democratic leadership is often referred to as a participative style, in which the leaders include themselves as members of their groups. The difference between this and the other two primary styles is that the focus shifts from the leader to the constituents.

Democratic leaders try to keep others informed about matters that might affect them or the organizations. They also consistently discuss their visions and goals with others of the organization and offer multiple options for the group to consider.

The democratic leader still makes final decisions, but always after encouraging followers to take an active role in influencing and guiding their decision-making process. The leader encourages the followers to grow and establish personal and organizational goals. This type of leader works to break barriers so that the work environment is conducive to collaboration and teamwork.

**Advantages:** The leader is a part of the team. The followers can easily get behind a leader when they are working together to reach the same goals. Also, the followers feel as if “they matter.”

**Disadvantages:** For leaders to be truly democratic, they must hear from all followers. This sometimes requires a great deal of time before a decision can be made.

**Color:** Blue, which can connote stability and patience. Democratic leaders believe in others and share successes.

## Laissez-faire

This style is often referred to as “hands-off” leadership because laissez-faire leaders give little to no direction for their followers. Unlike those using other leadership styles, laissez-faire leaders forfeit their decision-making opportunities to the followers and cede their positional power.

**Advantage:** Laissez-faire leaders are often popular among their constituents.

**Disadvantage:** This style must be reserved for when followers are skilled and highly experienced. If used with people who are unready to go it alone, the organization may slide into chaos and confusion.

**Color:** White, or lack of color. Laissez-faire leaders cede their power and authority, allowing the followers to take the lead.

## Coercive

Coercive leadership is a blend of the autocratic and bureaucratic leadership styles. Coercive leaders use—and often abuse—their power. They use the authoritative nature of autocratic leadership and the strictly monitored actions of bureaucratic leadership as a way to coerce followers through intimidation.

**Advantage:** Coercive power can produce results in times of crisis or when time and resources are limited.

**Disadvantage:** This style can backfire if it is used as the sole basis for motivating others into action because the subordinates as a group will eventually turn on the leader.

**Color:** Orange. Coercive leaders use their power to “light a fire” under subordinates.

## Transactional

Transactional leadership is a combination of the bureaucratic and democratic leadership styles. These leaders use the democratic leader’s concern for relationships and the bureaucratic leader’s active management to produce an “exchange” relationship.

Transactional leaders motivate their followers by appealing to the followers’ self-interests. They motivate their followers by an exchange process in which they focus on the accomplishment of tasks and good worker relationships in exchange for desirable rewards.

**Advantage:** Followers immediately see their rewards. Thus, there is immediate satisfaction.

**Disadvantage:** Because of their “if I do this for you ... what will you do for me?” attitude, the leaders’ relationships with followers are often short-lived and less meaningful.

**Color:** Green, as in money. Transactional leaders focus on inspiring followers through incentives.

## Transformational

The transformational leadership style combines the concern for others that democratic leaders exhibit with the ability to challenge subordinates to reach their full potential by being true partners in an organization.

Transformational leaders inspire their followers and appeal to their ideals and values. Rather than using an exchange approach of rewarding followers for performance, transformational leaders focus on building a sense of ownership in the organization by allowing members to be involved in the planning and decision making processes.

**Advantages:** Studies have shown that this style is closely connected to lower turnover rates, higher productivity and higher employee satisfaction.

**Disadvantage:** Sometimes transformational leadership requires a great deal of time to build trust among the leaders and followers. If the job at

hand must be completed quickly, a different style may be dictated.

**Color:** Purple. Transformational leaders encourage followers to invest themselves in their organization.

## Situational leadership

If placed in a spectrum, six of the leadership styles—autocratic, bureaucratic, democratic, coercive, transactional and transformational leadership—blend from those oriented toward the leader or manager to those focusing on followers and subordinates. The white of laissez-faire leaders symbolizes the effect that the style would have when blended with others: The combination would “tone down” another style.

To help leaders decide which leadership style to use on a given occasion, management consultant Ken Blanchard has developed a model called situational leadership. According to this model, a leader should choose a style according to the followers’ development level as it relates to the task to be accomplished. As the followers become more able to perform the task independently, the leaders begin to reduce their involvement with them.

For example, followers who have limited skills and knowledge might need the leadership of an autocratic or bureaucratic leadership style, which offers more support and monitoring. After the followers learn and demonstrate that they can do the task, the leader’s style should move toward a democratic and transformational style. Eventually, leaders might be able to enact a laissez-faire leadership style, in which the followers can complete a task without guidance.

These styles all have a place when leading others. The key is to know your options in leadership styles, evaluate the situation closely and determine the most effective way to lead. Then execute the proper leadership style to achieve the intended results.

## Acknowledgments

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## Can You Hit Gold? Test Your Leadership Skills

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. You are a vice president of a large bank where funds have been misappropriated. The bank president has told you to devise a plan to make sure this does not happen again. To ensure greater accountability, what style should you use?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Your organization is undergoing drastic changes that will force the current volunteers to accept new responsibilities. The volunteer administrator wants to get feedback on these changes to help determine the new roles of volunteers. What leadership style is the administrator using?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Your child has been playing on the computer and watching TV. You receive a note from school saying that your child has not turned in any homework in weeks. That evening, you ground the child and set a 2-week moratorium on watching TV. You are using which leadership style?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. As a leader of your volunteer group, you have been asked to oversee a \$10,000 grant on homeowner education. You ask the volunteers to develop a proposal on how the money should be spent. One group “wins” the proposal battle and is awarded the \$10,000 to develop a program on homeowner education. To receive all \$10,000, the recipient must show the outcomes (educational impact) of the program. The leader of the volunteer group is exercising which leadership style?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Based on stakeholder input, the manager of a group of volunteers decides that the group needs to review its vision, mission and objectives. The manager does not want to do this alone, but instead wants to challenge the group members to help shape their future. What leadership style is the volunteer manager implementing?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. A volunteer manager is supervising a group of outstanding volunteers. They are self-driven and create their own work. As a result, the volunteer manager sits back and lets them do their work. What style is being used?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Up against a tight deadline, a volunteer administrator has called in all volunteers to stuff envelopes and phone the program participants to gather results on a specific issue. The volunteer administrator gives the volunteers a checklist to follow to complete the task. What style is being used?

- A. Autocratic
- B. Bureaucratic
- C. Democratic
- D. Laissez-faire
- E. Coercive
- F. Transactional
- G. Transformational

Don't look until you're done!

1. B 2. C 3. E 4. F 5. G 6. D 7. A

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