



Guide

Versatile Leadership in Practice

Tools for the Development and Recruitment of Versatile Leaders

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VALUE PEOPLE

GUIDE: VERSATILE LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Successful organisations have skilled leaders.

What makes a good leader? Some might argue that good leadership is subjective. However, research indicates that there are traits that make a person better at leading others. It is also proven that organisations with versatile leaders are more successful. But how does one become a versatile leader?

What does versatile leadership mean? Can one improve their own leadership skills? And how can you find the right leaders when recruiting for your organisation?

In this guide, we will explore these questions in depth, helping both leaders and those responsible for recruiting them to better understand the concept of versatile leadership and how it can add value to your organisation.

When we talk about versatile leadership, we mean leadership from a holistic perspective: Versatile leadership is not just about results - it is about the whole person behind the leader. In versatile leadership, a focus on results is just as important as a focus on people, with a balance between productivity and well-being.

Who is this guide intended for?

This guide is intended for leaders who are eager to explore and reflect on their own leadership approach. Which leadership styles do you apply and when? How versatile are you? Where do your strengths lie, and how can you address your development areas?

The guide is also for those involved in recruiting and developing leaders and senior executives. You work within an organisation that seeks to understand leadership from a new perspective and is interested in exploring how versatile leadership can be applied at a strategic level.

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WHAT ARE GOLEMAN'S SIX LEADERSHIP STYLES?

Adapt Your Leadership Style for Better Results

Not all leadership responsibilities call for the same approach. Effective leaders understand when to adjust their style. In this guide, you will be introduced to Goleman's six leadership styles – including their strengths, limitations, and areas for development.

For leaders: Learn how to adapt your style to the situation and become more versatile in your leadership. The OPTO assessment can help you identify your natural leadership style.

For HR: Use this guide in workshops and recruitment processes. Leverage insights from the OPTO assessment to identify which leadership styles align with your organisation, and evaluate candidates' ability to adapt. A versatile approach to leadership enhances communication, relationships, and overall team performance.



GOLEMAN'S SIX LEADERSHIP STYLES

Affiliative



This style focuses on building strong personal bonds and prioritises the well-being of the team. The emphasis is on harmony rather than results.

Strengths

Promotes harmony and emotional support

Builds strong relationships and loyalty

Effective in trust-based environments

Challenges

Avoids critical feedback and confrontation

When to Use It

When there is conflict within the team

When trust has been broken

During high-pressure periods where motivation is needed

How to Develop It

Learn conflict management and cultivate optimism

Focus on addressing emotions within the team to foster inclusion and resolve conflicts

GOLEMAN'S SIX LEADERSHIP STYLES

Democratic



This style is also known as the participative style, characterised by a focus on collaboration through dialogue and the pursuit of consensus

Strengths

Values team input and transparency

Promotes a sense of community and knowledge sharing

Creates a safe space for feedback

Challenges

Time-consuming decision-making process

May prioritise consensus over expertise

When to Use It

To gain team buy-in or build consensus around an idea

When seeking input from motivated, knowledgeable, and skilled team members

How to Develop It

Involve the team in problem-solving and decision-making

Strengthen your skills in active listening and facilitation

GOLEMAN'S SIX LEADERSHIP STYLES

Commanding



This style is also known as the commanding style, characterised by telling people what to do and when to do it.

Strengths

Provides clear direction and decisiveness

Effective in complex decision-making

Suitable for bold or unpopular decisions

Challenges

Negative impact on team morale

Can create a work environment driven by fear and stress

Focuses on tasks rather than individuals

When to Use It

In crisis situations requiring rapid action

With problematic team members who require immediate intervention

How to Develop It

Use this style with caution and intention

Develop skills in crisis management and rapid decision-making

GOLEMAN'S SIX LEADERSHIP STYLES

Pacesetting



This style focuses on performance and results. The leader acts as a role model. Exceptional outcomes are expected.

Strengths

Emphasises performance and high standards

Driven by the pursuit of ambitious goals

Well-suited to talented and self-managing teams

Challenges

May negatively impact team morale

Prioritises results over people

Risk of overlooking innovation and long-term development

When to Use It

When high-quality results are needed quickly from an already motivated team

How to Develop It

Focus on enhancing team performance

Use high-performance coaching to maximise effectiveness

GOLEMAN'S SIX LEADERSHIP STYLES

Visionary



This style is based on inspiring and motivating people to pursue a long-term vision.

Strengths

Inspires and motivates towards a shared vision

Builds hope and a positive working environment

Focuses on the bigger picture

Challenges

Ineffective if there is no belief in the vision

When to Use It

When the organisation needs a new vision or direction

During periods of change

How to Develop It

Focus on strengthening expertise, vision, self-confidence, and empathy

Train communication and presentation skills

GOLEMAN'S SIX LEADERSHIP STYLES

Coaching



This style is about coaching team members to grow and improve.

Strengths

Develops people's potential

Enhances strengths and softens weaknesses

Builds engaged, loyal employees

Challenges

May come across as self-serving

When to Use It

When team members need help developing long-term skills

For team members who need coaching or supervision

How to Develop It

Engage in informal coaching sessions

Get to know team members better to understand when guidance is needed

WHAT IS OPTIMISED LEADERSHIP?

Optimised leadership maps OPTO dimensions to four areas of emotional intelligence: leadership well-being, sociability, constructive support, and self-regulation.

Each area is linked to a specific OPTO personality dimension, enabling a nuanced understanding of a leader's preferred leadership styles. These qualities are key to driving team performance while cultivating a psychologically safe and collaborative culture.

Optimised leadership is about enriching each tool in a leader's toolkit and enabling access to a broader range of leadership styles through emotional intelligence.

Leaders who master emotional intelligence are better equipped to shift between different leadership styles and adapt more effectively to each situation.

This versatility enables leaders to apply any of Goleman's six leadership styles in a way that resonates with their team. This adaptability transforms each style into a powerful tool for driving engagement and achieving success.

For Leaders: Use OPTO to explore the extent to which your personality profile supports various aspects of emotional intelligence — and to understand how naturally you adopt a versatile approach to applying different leadership styles.

For HR: Use OPTO to assess how versatile candidates are and how well they demonstrate emotional intelligence. OPTO provides a clear and immediate indication of whether each candidate is an ideal, strong, or less suitable match.

Executive Well-being



Executive Well-being measures the extent to which a leader serves as a pillar of strength, emotionally resilient and socially self-assured.

Key Competencies for Executive Well-being:

- Remaining calm under pressure
- Managing high-stress work
- Taking the lead
- Building relationships

Description of a Perfect Match:

A leader with a perfect match is likely to be perceived as:

- A calm yet outgoing leader
- An emotionally strong individual who excels at fostering relationships and building professional networks

Sociability



Sociability measures the extent to which a leader possesses the social competencies required to build positive relationships.

Key Competencies for Sociability:

- Being supportive
- Building relationships
- Expressiveness
- Self-confidence
- Managing high-stress work

Description of a Perfect Match:

A leader with a perfect match is likely to be perceived as:

- A positive leader with strong social skills
- Someone who excels at cultivating relationships to drive outstanding team performance

Grounded Support



Grounded Support measures the extent to which a leader is composed, empathetic, and appreciative towards others.

Key Competencies for Grounded Support:

- Remaining calm under pressure
- Managing high-stress work
- Being supportive
- Openness to new knowledge
- Trust in others' honesty

Description of a Perfect Match:

A leader with a perfect match is likely to be perceived as:

- An open and appreciative leader who offers genuine support and shows sincere curiosity towards others
- Someone who excels at cultivating close relationships with team members

Self-Regulation



Self-regulation measures the extent to which a leader is consistent, conscientious, and in control of their own emotions, reactions, and stress.

Key Competencies for Self-Regulation

- Conscientiousness and self-discipline
- Remaining calm under pressure
- Managing high-stress work
- Fulfilling expectations and responsibilities

Description of a Perfect Match:

A leader with a perfect match is likely to be perceived as:

- An emotionally resilient and calm leader who remains composed under pressure
- A leader with a high degree of selfdiscipline and self-control

WHAT IS VERSATILE LEADERSHIP?

Based on the OPTO personality profile, research shows that managers tend to score higher on certain dimensions compared to employees. OPTO is founded on the well-established Big Five personality theory.

The greatest difference between managers and employees is found in four key managerial aspects: assertiveness, drive, confidence, and ingenuity.

Each managerial aspect has a complementary aspect, which—when developed in balance— helps shape more well-rounded behaviour and expression in leaders. This balance ultimately supports versatile leadership by enabling leaders to adapt their style to different situations and individuals.

On each page, you can read about how the leader behaves when the aspects are in balance – and the challenges that arise when the managerial aspect becomes dominant.

For Leaders: Use this guide to gain insight into how balance can be created between the different managerial aspects and their complementary counterparts. By completing the OPTO personality assessment, you will gain a clear understanding of where you are positioned in relation to each aspect.

For HR: If you are responsible for developing leaders and senior executives, this guide can help you understand what may go wrong across the organisation when leadership is out of balance. By having your leaders complete the OPTO personality assessment, you will gain precise insight into where each leader is positioned in relation to the key aspects.

Compassionate Assertiveness



Leaders with a high degree of **compassionate assertiveness** score highly on both the managerial aspect *Assertiveness* and its complementary aspect, *Altruism*. These **versatile leaders** demonstrate a strong balance between being persuasive and taking charge, while also knowing when to take a step back.

OPTO Aspects

Assertiveness: Measures the extent to which a person takes charge.

Altruism: Measures the extent to which a person is supportive.

Strengths: When the Aspects are in Balance

Fosters an inclusive working environment

Builds respect and motivation

Inspires others to follow the leader

Challenges: When the Managerial Aspect Dominates

Maintain balance: Be neither too forceful nor overly accommodating.

- Remind yourself to listen actively in meetings before sharing your own views.
- Stay mindful of keeping a results-oriented focus while also appearing supportive

VERSATILE LEADERSHIP

Serene Drive



Leaders with a high degree of **serene drive** score highly on both the managerial aspect *Drive* and the complementary aspect *Stability*. These **versatile leaders** demonstrate a strong balance between thriving in high-paced environments and remaining composed under pressure.

OPTO Aspects

Drive: Measures how determined a person is to ensure progress.

Stability: Measures the extent to which a person remains composed.

Strengths: When the Aspects are in Balance

Maintains team morale in high-pressure situations

Provides the team with a stable working environment

Fosters perseverance and resilience

Challenges: When the Managerial Aspect Dominates

Maintain balance: Avoid being too complacent or overly forceful.

- Establish routines that include regular check-ins with the team to assess stress levels and adjust the pace accordingly.
- Stay mindful of how you manage stress and remain calm under pressure, while still maintaining a focus on results.

Humble Confidence



Leaders with a high degree of **humble confidence** score highly on both the managerial aspect *Confidence* and the complementary aspect *Sincerity*. These **versatile leaders** demonstrate a strong balance between showing confidence in social situations and remaining genuine in their interactions.

OPTO Aspects

Confidence: Measures the extent to which a person is self-assured.

Sincerity: Measures the degree to which a person is genuine and honest.

Strengths: When the Aspects are in Balance

Promotes a realistic and positive self-image

Builds trust and credibility

Encourages ongoing honest self-reflection

Challenges: When the Managerial Aspect Dominates

Keep the balance: Not too blunt, not too arrogant.

- Seek regular feedback from others to avoid your self-confidence being perceived as arrogance.
- Be open about your own mistakes and shortcomings without undermining yourself.

VERSATILE LEADERSHIP

Co-Ingenuity



Leaders with strong **co-ingenuity** score high on both the leadership aspect *Ingenuity* and the complementary aspect *Trust*. These **versatile leaders** demonstrate a strong ability to challenge existing approaches while maintaining trust in what others say.

OPTO Aspects

Ingenuity: The degree to which one has original ideas.

Trust: Belief in the honesty of others.

Strengths: When the Aspects are in Balance

Enhances innovation and creative problem-solving

Fosters a culture of collaboration

Utilises team strengths effectively

Challenges: When the Managerial Aspect Dominates

Keep the balance: not too naïve nor not too challenging.

- Exercise team planning when implementing new ideas.
- Delegate key tasks and follow up with support rather than micromanagement
- Know how to push your own ideas while still believing in the ideas of others

GET STARTED WITH OPTO+ LEADERSHIP

OPTO+ Leadership is an advanced tool designed to empower leaders by providing in-depth insights into their personality and leadership style.

Based on the renowned Big Five personality theory, OPTO measures eight essential personality dimensions that influence behavior and performance in the workplace. By understanding these dimensions, leaders can achieve a better balance between productivity and well-being, which is crucial for driving positive change and growth within the organization.

OPTO+ Leadership equips leaders for success

A central component of OPTO+ Leadership is its focus on versatile and optimized leadership. By analyzing a leader's scores in relation to emotional intelligence and core qualities, the tool identifies areas for development to help the leader achieve a more effective and flexible leadership style. This enables leaders to adapt their approach based on the situation and the needs of their team, thereby promoting both engagement and performance.

Recruit the right leaders

For HR professionals, OPTO+ Leadership is an invaluable tool for recruiting and developing leaders. By integrating data-driven and measurable insights into the recruitment process, it ensures that candidates not only have the necessary professional qualifications but also the personal traits that align with the organization's culture and values.

Leadership development that works

During the development process, HR can use OPTO+ Leadership to identify the strengths and development areas of current leaders, enabling tailored training programs and coaching sessions. This contributes to the continuous improvement of leadership quality and ensures that the organization is prepared for future challenges.

The implementation of OPTO+ Leadership in both recruitment and development strategies supports a holistic approach to leadership—one that considers both results and human factors. This fosters a sustainable leadership culture that promotes innovation, employee satisfaction, and organizational success.

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