

Is Your Leadership Style Helping Your Team Or Hurting It?



There are five elements to being a leader:

1. Decision-making
2. Communication
3. Planning
4. Problem solving
5. Risk-taking

How managers handle those five things determines what kind of leaders they are. Glenn Parker, in his book *Team Players and Teamwork* (Jossey-Bass), divides leaders into four groups, based on how they approach the five leadership categories.

1. The Communicator

- a. **Decision-making:** This person wants to hear from everyone and makes decisions based on consensus.
- b. **Communication:** Communicators run relaxed departments, and place emphasis on a positive work environment.
- c. **Planning:** When setting forth any plan, this type of leader always asks employees for input.
- d. **Problem solving:** Communicators want employees who are closest to the problem to work at solving it on their own.
- e. **Risk-taking:** All risks are measured against their impact on the group.

2. The Challenger

- a. **Decision-making:** This person makes a lot of ‘gut’ decisions, but never plays fast and loose with ethics.
- b. **Communication:** Open and direct.
- c. **Planning:** The challenger wants teams to grow, to experiment, to try out new methods and set different goals.
- d. **Problem solving:** The process is free flowing. The challenger pushes employees to find many different solutions and then examine each of them to determine the best one.
- e. **Risk-taking:** The emphasis is on innovation, and employees are typically not afraid to try something new and fail.

3. The Contributor.

- a. **Decision-making:** The contributor makes practical, logical, and cost-effective decisions.
- b. **Communication:** Formal, with little joking around; much communication is done through written memos.
- c. **Planning:** Emphasis is on practical, short-term projects that can be measured.
- d. **Problem solving:** The contributor never shoots from the hip; data is analyzed, and a formal plan for solving the problem is created.
- e. **Risk-taking:** There is very little risk-taking.

4. The Collaborator.

- a. **Decision-making:** The team’s long-term strategy is always considered whenever a decision comes up.
- b. **Communication:** Heavy use of the telephone, and a strong focus on the big picture.
- c. **Planning:** Again, the long term is what’s important, and long-term goals are reached via detailed strategic plans.
- d. **Problem-solving:** The collaborator examines how the problem is affecting the whole organization.
- e. **Risk-taking:** More of an emphasis placed on what can be gained, rather than what could be lost.

