

Five Grand Challenges have been identified through a series of meetings with K-State Research and Extension stakeholders -- Global Food Systems, Water, Health, Tomorrow's Leaders, and Community Vitality. As a 4-H and Youth Development Extension educator, we have been charged with the task of developing leaders of all ages to meet the challenges of the future in order to contribute to a vibrant Kansas economy and quality of life.

In a former youth conference at Rock Springs 4-H Center, our 4-H teen leaders were given the task of discovering their leadership style. Patterns of leadership developed by Hersey and Blanchard describe four leadership styles: Telling, Selling, Participating and Delegating.

In a "Telling" style of leadership, the leader identifies a problem, considers alternatives, chooses one of them, and then "tells" the followers what they are to do. The leaders may or may not consider what the group members think or feel about the decision, but they clearly do not participate directly in the final decision-making process. Coercion (force) may or may not be used or implied. This method is appropriate to use with new groups, new situations, and crisis occasions or any time the group is not familiar with the particular problem and strong leadership is needed to get the group moving.

In a "Selling" style of leadership, the leaders make the decision without consulting the group. However, instead of simply announcing the decision, the leaders try to persuade the group members to accept it. The leaders point out that the goals and interests of the group members have been considered in the decision and try to "sell" the decision by emphasizing the benefits to the members from carrying it out. This method of leadership is appropriate to use when groups have little familiarity with the situation but still need direction and support from the leaders.

In a "Participating" style of leadership, the leaders give the group members a chance to influence the decision from the very beginning. Leaders present a problem and relevant background information, and then ask the members for their ideas on how to solve it. In effect the group is invited to increase the number of alternative actions to be considered. Leaders and members both "participate" and share in the decision making process and select the solution that seems to be the most promising. This method is effective with on-going groups that have the experience and background to suggest solutions to problems. Usually these groups have been together for a while and are familiar with each other.

In a "Delegating" style of leadership, the leaders participate in the discussion of alternative solutions to the problem. The leader then identifies individuals and committees who are capable and knowledgeable and "delegates" or gives them the authority to make decisions and the responsibility to carry out activities. This method is appropriate with established groups in which leaders trust the members and consider them capable. This style of leadership encourages the participation and involvement of members and trains future leaders for the group.

What is your leadership style? Can you identify any of these leadership styles in clubs or organizations that you are a member? Youth who participated in the recent conference realized that their leadership style could be determined by the make-up of the group that they were working with at a given time. A good leader has the ability to adjust their leadership style to achieve the most effective outcomes.

Get involved in your community by volunteering to serve on committees and practice your leadership style in "Developing Tomorrow's Leaders" to meet the challenges of our future.

"Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence." Sheryl Sandberg

Article Header

“Developing Tomorrow’s Leaders”

“Chasing Clovers”

By Patsy L. Maddy

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