

4-4b Autocratic Leadership

In contrast to participative leaders are [autocratic leaders \(A person in charge who retains most of the authority for himself or herself.\)](#), who retain most of the authority. They make decisions confidently, assume that group members will comply, and are not overly concerned with group members' attitudes toward a decision. Autocratic leaders are considered task oriented because they place heavy emphasis on getting tasks accomplished. Typical autocratic behaviors include telling people what to do, asserting authority, and serving as a model for team members.

In some situations, and in some organizational cultures, autocratic leadership is called for. Jeff Bezos, the founder and CEO of Amazon, makes many product and technology decisions by himself. Bezos is also the owner of the *Washington Post* and Blue Ocean, a rocket-ship company. His extraordinary cognitive intelligence and business acumen are so well recognized that his decisions are accepted without resistance. As with other effective autocratic leaders, Bezos moves quickly in making many decisions but does seek some input from trusted advisors. In recent years, he has become more empowering to supplement his autocratic style. An Amazon board member said, "He was at the center of everything at the beginning. The leadership was Jeff and Bezos. Today, it's not a hub-and-spoke connecting to him. He has become a great leader of leaders." 🌟 To be described as *autocratic* does not necessarily mean the leader is impulsive or stubborn.

Employee attitudes toward acceptance of power and authority can also influence how well employees adapt to authoritarian leadership. A study of employees in a Chinese technology company suggested such an influence. It was found that in units where workers strongly accepted leaders having power, authoritarian leadership did not have negative effects such as lowered performance, commitment to the organization, and intention to leave. Acceptance of authority (or power distance) was measured by questionnaire items, such as "Managers should be able to make the right decision without consulting others." 🌟

Part of your skill development as a leader involves gaining insight into your own leadership style or potential style. To this end, do [Leadership Self-Assessment Quiz 4-2](#).

Leadership Self-Assessment Quiz 4-2

What Style of Leader Are You or Would You Be?

Instructions: Answer the following statement, keeping in mind what you have done, or think you would do, in the scenarios and attitudes described.

	MOSTLY TRUE	MOSTLY FALSE
1. I am more likely to take care of a high-impact assignment myself than turn it over to a group member.	☐	☐
2. I would prefer the analytical aspects of a manager's job to working directly with group members.	☐	☐
3. An important part of my approach to managing a group is to keep the members informed almost daily of any information that could affect their work.	☐	☐
4. It is a good idea to give two people in the group the same problem and then choose what appears to be the best solution.	☐	☐
5. I like to have updates a few times a day on the work progress of subordinates, even if the update is simply a text message or instant message.	☐	☐
6. I look for opportunities to obtain group input before making a decision, even on straightforward issues.	☐	☐
7. I would reverse a decision if several of the group members presented evidence that I was wrong.	☐	☐
8. Differences of opinion in the work group are healthy.	☐	☐
9. I think that activities to build team spirit, like fixing up a poor family's house on a Saturday, are an excellent investment of time.	☐	☐
10. If my group were hiring a new member, I would like the person to be interviewed by the entire group.	☐	☐
11. An effective team leader today uses e-mail or other digital media for about 98 percent of communication with team members.	☐	☐
12. Some of the best ideas are likely to come from the group members rather than from the manager.	☐	☐
13. If our group were going to have a banquet, I would get input from each member on what type of food should be served.	☐	☐
14. I have never seen a statue of a committee in a museum or park, so why bother making decisions by committee if you want to be recognized?	☐	☐

	MOSTLY TRUE	MOSTLY FALSE
15. I dislike it intensely when a group member challenges my position on an issue.	☐	☐
16. I typically explain to group members how (what method) they should use to accomplish an assigned task.	☐	☐
17. If I were out of the office for a week, most of the important work in the department would get accomplished anyway.	☐	☐
18. Delegation of important tasks is something that would be (or is) very difficult for me.	☐	☐
19. When a group member comes to me with a problem, I tend to jump right in with a proposed solution.	☐	☐
20. When a group member comes to me with a problem, I typically ask that person something like, "What alternative solutions have you thought of so far?"	☐	☐

Scoring and Interpretation: The answers for a participative leader are as follows:

1. Mostly false
2. Mostly false
3. Mostly true
4. Mostly false
5. Mostly false
6. Mostly true
7. Mostly true
8. Mostly true
9. Mostly true
10. Mostly true
11. Mostly false
12. Mostly true

13. Mostly true

14. Mostly false

15. Mostly false

16. Mostly false

17. Mostly true

18. Mostly false

19. Mostly false

20. Mostly true

Give yourself a score of 1 for each answer that matches the answer key.

If your score is 15 or higher, you are most likely (or would be) a participative leader.
If your score is 5 or lower, you are most likely (or would be) an authoritarian leader.

Skill Development: The quiz you just completed is also an opportunity for skill development. Review the twenty statements and look for implied suggestions for engaging in participative leadership. For example, statement 20 suggests that you encourage group members to work through their own solutions to problems. If your goal is to become an authoritarian leader, the statements can also serve as useful guidelines. For example, statement 19 suggests that an authoritarian leader first looks to solve problems for group members.

Chapter 4: Leadership Behaviors, Attitudes, and Styles: 4-4b Autocratic Leadership

Book Title: Research Findings, Practice, and Skills

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