

Session 2: Conceptualizing Leadership

Leadership is a combination of strengths (who you are) and abilities (skills you've learned) applied to specific circumstances and contexts (actual behaviors and interactions). Conceptualizing leadership as behavior also implies that leadership can be learned and taught. Your conceptualization of leadership is likely to affect the way you lead, so we're going to spend some time developing that understanding.

Discuss

Think of someone you know and have interacted with personally who exemplifies excellent leadership. Describe this person for your mentor/mentee. What specific strengths, abilities, or behaviors does this person exemplify? How has this person impacted you and/or your understanding of leadership? How do others respond to this person?

Discover

So the next question, then, is this: how do you conceptualize leadership?

Individually, please take the "Conceptualizing Leadership Questionnaire" and follow the instructions for scoring your own understanding of various aspects of leadership. This self-analysis may help you understand your own attitudes and beliefs regarding various facets of leadership as well as what elements you value. Share your results with your mentor/mentee. Do these results confirm or contradict your understanding of your personal values and proclivities? Do you see this influence your interactions with other people?

Develop

You've spent some time conceptualizing your understanding of leadership as well as the qualities of leaders that you admire. The next mentoring session will focus on leadership strengths and more specific behaviors and tendencies that demonstrate leadership activity. Between now and then, consider the following:

- In what areas or contexts do I influence other people's attitudes or behaviors?
- What would other people say that I value as a leader?
- What leadership strengths and qualities do I demonstrate?
- What words would others use to describe my leadership style?

1.2 CONCEPTUALIZING LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

Purpose

1. To identify how you view leadership
2. To explore your perceptions of different aspects of leadership

Directions

1. Consider for a moment your own impressions of the word *leadership*. Based on your experiences with leaders in your lifetime, what is leadership?
2. Using the scale below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about leadership.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. When I think of leadership, I think of a person with special personality traits.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Much like playing the piano or tennis, leadership is a learned ability.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Leadership requires knowledge and know-how.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Leadership is about what people do rather than who they are.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Followers can influence the leadership process as much as leaders.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Leadership is about the process of influencing others.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Some people are born to be leaders.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Some people have the natural ability to be leaders.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The key to successful leadership is having the right skills.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Leadership is best described by what leaders do.	1	2	3	4	5

1.2 CONCEPTUALIZING LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

(continued)

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
11. Leaders and followers share in the leadership process.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Leadership is a series of actions directed toward positive ends.	1	2	3	4	5
13. A person needs to have certain traits to be an effective leader.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Everyone has the capacity to be a leader.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Effective leaders are competent in their roles.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The essence of leadership is performing tasks and dealing with people.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Leadership is about the common purposes of leaders and followers.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Leadership does not rely on the leader alone but is a process involving the leader, followers, and the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
19. People become great leaders because of their traits.	1	2	3	4	5
20. People can develop the ability to lead.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Effective leaders have competence and knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Leadership is about how leaders work with people to accomplish goals.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Effective leadership is best explained by the leader-follower relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Leaders influence and are influenced by followers.	1	2	3	4	5

1.2 CONCEPTUALIZING LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

(continued)

Scoring

1. Sum scores on items 1, 7, 13, and 19 (trait emphasis)
2. Sum scores on items 2, 8, 14, and 20 (ability emphasis)
3. Sum scores on items 3, 9, 15, and 21 (skill emphasis)
4. Sum scores on items 4, 10, 16, and 22 (behavior emphasis)
5. Sum scores on items 5, 11, 17, and 23 (relationship emphasis)
6. Sum scores on items 6, 12, 18, and 24 (process emphasis)

Total Scores

1. Trait emphasis: _____
2. Ability emphasis: _____
3. Skill emphasis: _____
4. Behavior emphasis: _____
5. Relationship emphasis: _____
6. Process emphasis: _____

Scoring Interpretation

The scores you received on this questionnaire provide information about how you define and view leadership. The emphasis you give to the various dimensions of leadership has implications for how you approach the leadership process. For example, if your highest score is for *trait emphasis*, it suggests that you emphasize the role of the leader and the leader's special gifts in the leadership process. However, if your highest score is for *relationship emphasis*, it indicates that you think leadership is centered on the communication between leaders and followers, rather than on the unique qualities of the leader. By comparing your scores, you can gain an understanding of the aspects of leadership that you find most important and least important. The way you think about leadership will influence how you practice leadership.

Building Your Leadership Profile

If you have the interactive eBook version of this text, log in to access the Leadership Profile Tool. After completing this chapter's questionnaire, you will receive individualized feedback and practical suggestions for further strengthening your leadership based on your responses in this questionnaire.