

# Cognitive Style and Leadership: optimizing your role in shared leadership

IAMSE Webcast Audio Seminar  
March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007

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## Session Purpose

1. Introduce the concept of cognitive style in leadership.
2. Situate the contribution of cognitive style to leadership in general, and
3. to shared leadership (academic model) in particular.
4. Differentiate application across stages of academic careers

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## Needed Definitions

1. Cognitive style
2. Leadership
3. Shared leadership
4. Leadership roles and associated skill sets

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## Cognitive Style defined

- Consistencies in an individual's perception, memory, thinking and judgment
- Examples:
  - Reflectivity vs. impulsivity
  - Leveling vs. sharpening
  - Habitual use of multiple differentiated concepts vs. few generalized concepts
  - Myers Briggs types

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## Leadership: general definition

- Hard to define as the concept has evolved over time:
  - *domination*: birthright leaders ruling over followers
  - *transactional*: motivating followers through rational and emotional appeals
  - *transformative*: transforming individual self interests into larger social concerns
- **Consistent elements**: leadership is a response to the human need for a force within the group to help create direction, avoid disorder and respond to changes in the environment

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## (Technically) Leadership is not the same as Management

- Leadership is about 'what' will happen: strategic direction
- Management is about 'how' to make it happen. Regular functions of planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling.

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## Practically, the difference is less important

Three observations:

- Leadership must move to management seamlessly in order to effectively accomplish organizational goals and strategic direction
- Effective leadership and management require a number of similar roles and required skill sets
- Organizational effectiveness requires that all roles be fulfilled adequately, but it is not necessary that all roles be played by the same individual at all times.

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## The concept of Shared Leadership

- Wise 'leaders' and 'managers' share their role responsibilities with others depending on the others' strengths, developmental level and aspirations.
- In the sharing the leader does not lose or divide his/her formal title, authority or responsibility.
- Sharing leadership roles does 'informally' allow learning, growth of others and shores up the weaknesses/ blind spots of the formal leader for the betterment of the organization.

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## Context matters

Leadership will be defined differently in different organizational settings. Therefore, no 'one best' way to lead.

A means to distinguish important organizational context is to discover what criteria are used to define effectiveness or success for the organization:

1. productivity and profit
2. stability and continuity
3. commitment, cohesion, morale
4. adaptability and external support

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## Leadership in productivity oriented organizations

- Will emphasize goal clarification, rational analysis and action taking
- Believes that clear direction leads to productive outcomes
- Will produce a climate focused on "the bottom line"

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## Leadership in stability oriented organizations

- Will emphasize defining responsibility, measurement, documentation
- Believes that routinization will enhance stability, predictability, reliability
- Produces a hierarchical climate

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## Leadership in cohesion oriented organizations

- Emphasizes participation, conflict resolution and consensus building
- Believes that involvement results in commitment
- Produces a team oriented climate

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## Leadership in innovation oriented organizations

- Emphasizes political adaptation, creative problem solving, innovation, change management
- Believes that continual adaptation and innovation lead to acquiring and maintaining external resources
- Produces an innovative and flexible climate

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## Leadership/ Management Roles

- The following six roles must ALL be fulfilled in ALL organizational contexts
- Need not be, and often are not, fulfilled by the same individual all the time. (This is an opportunity for shared leadership)
- The emphasis, and the rewards, for fulfilling each of these roles will vary across the organizational contexts
- Each role has a series of required skills, all learnable

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## Leadership/ Management Roles

1. Mentor
2. Facilitator
3. Monitor
4. Coordinator
5. Director
6. Producer
7. Broker
8. Innovator

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## Mentor role skills

1. Understanding self and others
2. Communicating effectively
3. Developing employees

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## Facilitator role skills

1. Building teams
2. Using participative decision making
3. Managing conflict

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## Monitor role skills

1. Monitoring individual performance
2. Managing collective performance and processes
3. Analyzing information with critical thinking

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## Coordinator role skills

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1. Managing projects
2. Designing work
3. Managing across functions

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## Director role skills

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1. Developing and communicating a vision
2. Setting goals and objectives
3. Designing and organizing decision making

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## Producer role skills

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1. Working productively
2. Fostering a productive work environment
3. Managing time and stress

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## Broker role skills

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1. Building and maintaining a power base
2. Negotiating agreement and commitment
3. Presenting ideas

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## Innovator role skills

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1. Living with change
2. Thinking creatively
3. Managing change

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## So, a lot of variables

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- Four organizational contexts
- Six roles within each context

Lots of opportunity to find the best fit for your cognitive style:

- Either a fit consistent with your strengths
- Or purposely chosen as a misfit with your strengths in order to develop style flexibility

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## Where to start?

1. Analyze the organization in which you work. Get a good sense of how the organization defines success for itself and other comparable organizations.
2. Analyse your leader(s): What roles are they good at? What roles do they avoid?
3. Analyse yourself: What are your leadership/managerial strengths? What roles could you contribute to? What roles does your cognitive style suit you for?

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## When assessing your cognitive style:

- Use multiple measures (at least 6)
- Complete these assessments honestly, formally, preferably under professional administration
- Remember, there is no better or worse style, just different
- Look for commonalities in the descriptions
- Compile a composite picture of your style that you understand

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## Applying style to leadership roles

For many cognitive style formulations there are obvious fits with various of the leadership roles:

- Organizers, intuitives with facilitator, coordinator, broker roles
- Doers, generalizers, intuitives, levelers with producer roles
- Reflectives, introverts, multiple simultaneous concept balancers with mentor and innovator roles
- Extraverts with broker, director roles

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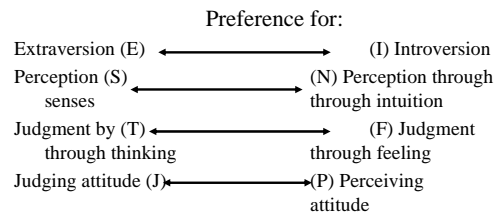


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## Using the MBTI as an example

(Myers Briggs Type Indicator)

MBTI overview:



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## MBTI factors

- Extraversion/ introversion = direction of focus and source of energy
- Type of perception = ways of taking in information
- Judgment types = ways of coming to conclusions
- Attitude to the external world = judgmental or perceptual

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## MBTI types (the introvert set)

- ISTJ: a natural organizer
- ISFJ: committed to getting the job done
- INFJ: inspirational leader or follower
- INTJ: independent thinker
- ISTP: action oriented, 'just do it'
- ISFP: act now, talk later
- INTP: problem solver

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## MBTI types (the extrovert set)

- ESTP: living in the moment
- ESFP: let's make work fun
- ENFP: people are the product
- ENTP: progress is the product
- ESTJ: natural administrator
- ESFJ: everyone's trusted friend
- ENFJ: smooth talking persuaders
- ENTJ: natural leaders

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## Close fits: style to roles

- ISTJ, ENTP with monitor and coordinator roles
- ISTP, ISFP, ISFJ with producer role
- INFJ, ENTJ with director role
- INTJ, INTP with innovator role
- ENFP with mentor role
- ENFJ with facilitator and broker roles
- ESTJ with facilitator and coordinator roles

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## Leadership blind spots predictable from cognitive style

- Any strength maximized becomes a liability
- All P's generate alternatives easily, but have a hard time with decisions among them
- All J's moan, even about things they like. Drop an idea with them and come back to it later after they have moaned elsewhere.
- All NFs can persuade and cooperate but they over personalize organizational problems and carry grudges

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## Blind spots...continued

- NTs think systematically and strategically, but they tend to make things more complex than necessary and they are impatient.
- SJs have a strong sense of responsibility and duty, but they tend to also be narrow and rigid.
- SPs can multitask, but they are disinterested in routine and lack a sense of the big picture

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## Cognitive style, shared leadership roles and academic career paths

- Most faculty come into their organizations as producers and see themselves as only that role. The producer role continues throughout an active career.
- All faculty, at all times, play a mentor role to students (well or badly)
- With some experience you may be asked (or have to) take on some administrative duties: coordinator roles usually at first, then monitoring and facilitating.

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## academic career paths...continued

- To succeed (obtain tenure and promotions) faculty usually have to innovate.
- With experience and success comes the requirement to perform director and broker roles (i.e. establishing, funding and maintaining your own research team)

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## Conclusions

- Through an academic career you may expect the opportunity to play all leadership rolls, either formally or informally.
- Learn the skills required to perform these roles well (that is the subject of a different session!)
- Learn how to use cognitive style to help you perform these rolls effectively.
- Know your own cognitive style, its' strengths and weaknesses.

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## Conclusions...continued

- Work with the strengths and on the weaknesses
- Learn how to see and hear indications of cognitive style in others and test those perceptions (also the subject of another session!)
- Learn how to help those you work with (leaders, peers and subordinates) do better by utilizing the strengths of their styles
- Learn how to form and maintain teams with diverse styles (Teams are stronger with diverse strengths).

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## Thank you for your kind attention

- Questions?

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