



HOW FOLLOWERS EXERCISE LEADERSHIP IN EVERYDAY CONTEXTS

Using the influencing behaviours

1. *Communicating* involves taking charge of the information exchange process in a team, with the end goal of influencing team processes and/or team goals.
2. *Listening* is distinct from communicating, and is exercised through actively paying attention to the communication of others.
3. *Coordinating* is about marshalling the team's human- and non-human resources to achieve team goals. It facilitates completion of the team task.
4. *Motivating* aims to raise and sustain individual performance levels, and enhances the sense of belonging.
5. *Anchoring* occurs through demonstrating total commitment to team outcomes and all team members. It's worthy of emulation, and it inspires the efforts of others.
6. *Risking* is the willingness to take actions, on behalf of and agreed by the team, under conditions of uncertainty where failure is a possible outcome. But, it's not risky or reckless.
7. *Mediating* seeks to reduce or eliminate conflict between team members, and to restore relationships.
8. *Channelling* facilitates the contribution of ideas from characteristically quieter members.

Which behaviours do you favour? Which behaviours do your team members frequently contribute? High performance depends on having the right behaviours at the right time!

Taking the lead

Matthew had been listening closely to his team colleagues as the discussion unfolded. The team was deciding on a course of action, and then who would do what. Meagan, as CEO of Green Knight Ltd, was the team's formal leader. Rather than acting unilaterally, she insisted that in many of the decision-making situations all members of her Senior Leadership Team should make a contribution. This didn't involve just content (their ideas / knowledge). She also expected that they contribute to the processes that would make the team more effective.

Sensing that John had been a little quiet, Matthew leaned forward and asked John what he thought. When John had finished speaking, he thanked John for his insightful perspective. Matthew offered a perspective that helped clarify a particular point. Meagan then summarised perspectives and the position that the team seem to have reached.

Changing focus in a changing world

Many commentators focusing on leadership in Green Knight Ltd would talk about the CEO, Meagan. However, this approach ignores the most widely accepted definition of leadership which is "*influencing others towards a common goal*". In our brief case example, Matthew actually demonstrated a number of influencing behaviours, even though he is not the designated leader. Firstly, he listened actively to colleagues, which influenced their willingness to share their ideas. Secondly, he noted that John could probably contribute and encouraged him to speak. Then, Matthew motivated John through positive feedback. Finally, he communicated his own ideas, which had some influence on the direction of the final decision.

UGM's examination of the leadership theory research shows that the overwhelming majority of approaches to leadership are leader-centric. This will probably not surprise. But, this also means that most leadership research is about one person only in teams and groups. It essentially ignores people in non-leader roles in any team.

Influence by non-appointed leaders

Our review of the leadership literature also shows that most studies have focused on formally appointed managers. But, individuals who influence colleagues to a common goal are leading, even if they don't hold positional authority. It is critical to recognise that people don't need to be formally appointed in order to exercise leadership. Matthew, for example, exercised a number of leadership behaviours. For that period of time, Matthew was leading whoever chose to follow (be influenced by) him.

As in other studies, UGM has found that people are usually willing to be influenced by others who have expertise in a particular matter or in a team process relevant at the time. So, one person may influence the team because they have a knowledgeable perspective. At the same time, if the team is in need of, say, motivating or coordinating, others who have those skills are also likely to exert influence.

Distributing leadership

Because many teams operate in complex contexts, effective teams usually have multiple individuals exercising influence (leading) according to the situation. However, although most people would agree that this is how leadership in teams really works, the approach is seldom taught on formal leadership programs. Most echo the leadership research focus on sole-leaders. In a connected and much more educated world, that approach is outdated, and it's doesn't even represent how things actually work! Leading (influencing towards a common goal), in everyday contexts, is most often distributed among team members, regardless of rank. We call this *distributed leadership*.

Eight influencing behaviours

UGM research has identified eight influencing behaviours, and categorised them according to their importance. Some are exercised far more often than others.

Context determines which behaviours are needed, and therefore whose expertise is relevant. Individuals with context-relevant expertise are most likely to step up into a leading role. Other members are also most likely to follow those they feel have appropriate expertise. So, context determines that individuals are unlikely to exercise leadership equally, but most people in a team are likely to intentionally influence other members at some time.

The first two behaviours, Communicating and Listening are *core behaviours*. Without these, any team is doomed to fail.

Coordinating and Motivating are *key influencing behaviours*. All teams need these behaviours to perform. However, teams may survive for a time without them.

Finally, four behaviours fall into the *situational behaviours* category. Anchoring, Risking, Motivating and Mediating are all highly context-dependant. Teams only need these behaviours in particular contexts, but not in others.

What influencing behaviours do you use most often?

Take a look at the detailed description of each of the influencing behaviours in our side-bar. Which do you favour? Is there someone in your team who steps up at the right time with the behaviours needed?