

Management and Leadership Styles

The current PMP® exam and PMBOK® Guide, 8th edition emphasizes adapting your leadership style to the situation, with servant leadership as one expression of it. We cover servant leadership in Rita Mulcahy's™ PMP® Exam Prep book, 12th edition (Prep Book) on page 328 and throughout the book. But there are many ways to describe management and leadership, and there is no one right way to lead or manage that fits all situations or all project managers.

Project managers need to know the science of project management and make educated decisions about leading and managing people. Therefore, you may see exam questions that address the many management and leadership styles listed below.

The term “situational leadership” refers to a manager using different leadership styles based on the people and project work they are dealing with. For example, there is a general consensus that a project manager needs to provide more direction (directing leadership style) at the beginning of the project because the project manager knows the project management work that must be done to plan the project. During project executing, the project manager needs to do more coaching, facilitating, supporting, influencing, and delegating.

Note: Also see page 336 of your Prep Book, for the Situational Leadership II® model developed by Ken Blanchard.

Primary Management and Leadership Styles

Some of the primary management and leadership styles that you may see described in situational questions include the following:

- ☐ **Directing** The project manager uses their expertise to guide team members in what to do.
- ☐ **Facilitating** The project manager enables communication and helps remove roadblocks.
- ☐ **Coaching** The project manager advises and makes recommendations, helping the team and other stakeholders achieve their goals.
- ☐ **Supporting** The project manager encourages and provides assistance to team members and stakeholders in working through the situations they encounter.
- ☐ **Influencing** The project manager emphasizes teamwork, team building, and team decision-making, and works with their team to influence collaborative, successful project implementation.

- ☐ **Delegating** The project manager establishes goals and then gives the project team sufficient authority to complete the work. For basic project management, the manager involves the team in the planning process and assigns or delegates planning and executing work to team members. Delegating can be hard for some people because they feel they can do the work better themselves. Using proper project management practices should help a project manager feel comfortable that others know what needs to be done and that the project can be successful.
- ☐ **Servant** The project manager shares power, puts the needs of the team first, and helps people develop and perform to their best potential.

Management and Leadership Styles: Conflict, Negotiating and Decision Making

The following management and leadership styles may be particularly effective when the team is dealing with issues such as resolving conflicts, negotiating, prioritizing, or other decision-making activities:

- ☐ **Consultative** This bottom-up approach uses influence to achieve results. The project manager considers others' opinions and acts as the servant leader for the team.
- ☐ **Consensus** The project manager encourages problem-solving in a group and makes decisions based on group agreement.
- ☐ **Democratic or participative** This style involves encouraging team participation in the decision-making process. Team members "own" the decisions made by the group, resulting in improved teamwork and cooperation.
- ☐ **Bureaucratic** This style focuses on following procedures exactly. The bureaucratic style may be appropriate for work in which details are critical or when specific safety or other regulations must be strictly adhered to.
- ☐ **Analytical** This style depends on the manager's own technical knowledge and ability. Analytical managers often make the technical decisions for the project and then communicate those decisions to their teams. Interview-style communication, in which the project manager asks questions to get the facts, is common with this management style.

Some management and leadership styles that may be described in situational questions or answer choices are not inherently bad but may create challenges for the project manager, team, and other stakeholders.

Example: The success of a project team is based on direction and charisma of its project manager, rather than on a strong management plan. If that project manager leaves the project, the team may falter.

Example: If a project manager takes a laissez-faire approach, and the team is not sufficiently skilled or motivated, there will be challenges to getting the work completed as planned.

Management and Leadership Styles: These May Have Challenges

The following management and leadership styles are ones that have the potential to create challenges:

- ☐ **Charismatic** Charismatic managers energize and encourage their teams in performing project work. With this style, project success may become dependent on the presence of the charismatic leader, with the team relying on the leader for motivation.
- ☐ **Autocratic** This is a top-down approach. The manager may coach or delegate, but everyone does what the manager tells them to do.
- ☐ **Consultative-autocratic** In this style, the project manager solicits input from team members, but retains decision-making authority.
- ☐ **Laissez-faire** The French term “laissez-faire” has been translated as meaning “allow to act,” or “leave alone.” A laissez-faire manager is not directly involved in the work of the team but manages and consults as necessary. This style can be appropriate with a highly skilled team.
- ☐ **Driver** A manager with a driver style is constantly giving directions. Their competitive attitude drives the team to win.

How This Shows Up on the Exam

Leadership questions are situational by design, and they rarely reward a favourite style. The Prep Book is direct about it: there is no one right way to lead, and a project manager needs to use different leadership skills and styles based on the situation throughout the life cycle. The Eighth Edition says the same thing — the ability to adapt one’s leadership style is what matters, shifting from directive during critical phases to supportive when team autonomy helps.

So when a question offers four styles, do not look for the best one in the abstract. Look at what the scenario says about the team’s experience, the urgency, and how much the team already owns the work. A new team facing a hard deadline and a seasoned team running its own iterations call for different answers.

Servant leadership is the common expectation in adaptive environments, so it is often correct — but it is not automatically correct. Several styles in this resource appear on the exam mainly as distractors: they sound plausible, they are not what the situation calls for, and recognizing them is half the work.