



**MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**



LEADERSHIP STYLE ASSESSMENT

- References: (a) MCDP 6-1 *Command and Control* (1996)
(b) MCWP 6-11 *Leading Marines* (2014)
(c) MCRP 6-11B *Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders* (1998)

SUMMARY & PURPOSE: There are four distinct leadership styles set forth in Marine Corps doctrinal materials. Upon completion of this assessment, Marines should understand the difference between these four styles, when it is appropriate to use them, and what considerations influence style selection. These leadership styles are interchangeable and should be used divergent situations in accordance with the leader's judgment; it is possible for a Marine to use all four styles in the course of a day. Hence, the purpose of this assessment is to give all Marines at least four leadership styles to include in their own leadership toolbox.

BACKGROUND: Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 6-1 *Command and Control*, (reference (a)) and Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 6-11B *Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders*, (reference (c)), together describe two alternative leadership theories, the "Authoritarian" and "Persuasive or Delegating" Theories, as well as four distinct styles: "Telling," "Selling," "Participating," and the "Persuasive / Delegating" Styles. It is imperative to stress that no two leaders are exactly alike. We all bring with us our experiences outside and in the Marine Corps and a style of interaction that comes natural to us. For this reason, these four styles are not meant to be an exclusive list. There are other styles that fall somewhere on the spectrum between the authoritarian "Telling" style and the "Persuasive / Delegating" style.¹

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the scenario that starts on the next page and choose a course of action that best describes how you would lead your subordinates in this situation. If you cannot find an answer that adequately describes what you would do, then select the answer that is most similar. After selecting an answer, read the explanations that follow, which will inform you why you chose your answer. Knowing why you chose your answer is as important as making the selection, so please read the explanations that follow the assessment in full.



¹ MCRP 6-11B, *Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders*, Chap. 17, "Leadership Roles," App. A, Leader Styles, p. 18-2 (1998).



MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY



SCENARIO

You are Corporal Adams, a Fire Team Leader in 2^d Squad, Motor Transport Platoon. On a Monday morning you receive a list of tasks from your Squad Leader in preparation for an inspection that is occurring three days from today. The tasks include performing Preventative Maintenance on a few vehicles, inventorying the shop's gear, and ensuring that some of the shop's records are in order. You have three Marines in your fire team, and you have a solid idea of which Marines you want to assign to which task, based on their individual capabilities and limitations. You call a meeting, and you (choose one of the following):

A. Task your Marines based on their capabilities, assigned each Marine specific tasks and further direction on how to complete the tasks. You entertain questions only after you're done speaking. Give them guidance on how to complete the task and a timeline associated with the completion of the task and when you will inspect their work.

B. Tell your Marines a plan for completing the tasks and ask for their input, assigning specific Marines to specific tasks based on their capabilities and limitations. You entertain questions throughout the process. In case someone disagrees with your plan, you defend it, ensuring that your Marines understand why you made the decision that you did and trying to persuade them. You explain your plan to them because you want them to feel like a part of a team and a part of the process, though there isn't a very good chance that you'll change your plan because you know it's the best one.

C. Explain to your Marines what needs to be accomplished and solicit their feedback on how to do it. Though you have an idea about which Marines you want to take specific tasks, you don't bring it up. Instead you ask the group who wants to do what. You offer your thoughts on capabilities and limitations, if at all, after your Marines have contributed to the conversation. The plan is developed from the group discussion, with all having equal opportunity for input.

D. Inform your Marines of the objective, and when the objective must be completed for the purposes of the inspection. You are clear on the purpose for the tasks and your intent, but you allow them to figure out the rest. You trust them, and you think giving them more responsibility will bring out their best.



**MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**



ANSWER ANALYSIS

If you answered “A” –

You believe an authoritarian style is the most appropriate in this situation. An authoritarian style, often referred to as the “telling style” is a characterized by “[o]ne-way communication” from the leader to the led.² The leader makes a decision and announces it without first getting input from subordinates. Often times the word “authoritarian” conjures a negative image, but it should not necessarily. The references inform us that “[i]n a crisis, the leader is expected to be authoritarian.”³ Marines instinctively know, because of their training, that it is not the time to call a committee meeting when he or she is caught in the middle of an ambush. Indeed, Marines are “expected to always be ready to step to the forefront and take control of any given situation”⁴ without taking any input from subordinates, most especially during tense or dangerous situations.⁵

If you answered “B” –

You believe that a “selling” style is the most appropriate for this situation. The selling style is characterized by the leader presenting a plan or decision and inviting questions or comments.⁶ The invitation of questions and comments does not mean, however, that the leader is open to changing his or her plan, necessarily. Inviting questions and comments is a means to rather explain the purpose behind the plan and foster a sense of participation among subordinates. From the subordinate’s perspective, the ability to voice an opinion can be just as meaningful as executing a plan of his or her own with respect to fostering a sense of participation and teamwork, motivating subordinates.⁷ The selling style impliedly communicates to subordinates that “*even though I am in charge, I care what you think.*”

If you answered “C” –

You believe that a “participating” style is the most appropriate for this situation. The participating style is characterized by the leader explaining a problem, asking for input, and making a decision after hearing his or her subordinate’s thoughts.⁸ The participating style can also be described as a democratic style decisionmaking process. It is the style of leadership that is generally employed during meetings of all types in government and in the civilian world. Making decisions in the participating style involves the leader merely guiding the decisionmaking process, offering thoughts and ideas as equals to his or her subordinates. It is important to note that in order for this the participating style to be truly *participatory*, the leader must foster an atmosphere in which subordinates are comfortable in offering answers. If subordinates believe that their ideas will be defensively rejected by the leader or another senior leader in the group, then it is rather a “selling” or even a “telling” style.

² *Idem.*

³ *Idem.*

⁴ *Idem.*

⁵ *Idem.*

⁶ *Idem.*

⁷ *Idem.*

⁸ *Idem.*



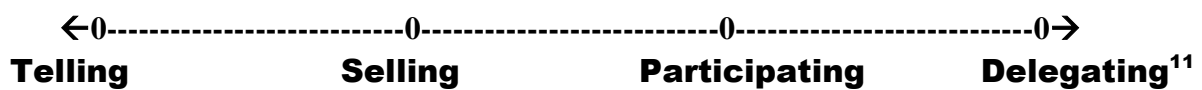
**MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**



If you answered “D” –

You believe that a “delegating” style is the most appropriate for this situation. The delegating style is characterized by the leader stating an objective, the purpose behind the objective, stating left and right lateral limits, and letting subordinates⁹ “figure the rest out” as is often said in the Marine Corps. This style of leadership is used in mission-type orders and guidelines, and is explicit in explaining the leader’s intent rather than telling subordinates exactly how to do something. This style involves a great deal of trust and confidence between the leader and led, as it generally involves minimal supervision.¹⁰

UNDERSTANDING WHY YOU CHOSE YOUR ANSWER



Understanding why you chose your answer is as important as the decision itself. All Marines are charged with knowing themselves and seeking self-improvement.¹² There are five points that you should considering in determining why you chose your answer:

1. Leadership Style is Situational

The first sentence of each paragraph in the Answer Analysis section is written as “You believe that X style is the most appropriate for this situation” for a reason. Your answers reflect your judgment that a certain style was most appropriate for *that* situation, but that does not necessarily mean that you think the same style of leadership is appropriate for *all* situations. Marines should not come away from this assessment believing that “*I am a telling/selling, etc. style leader.*” As it states in reference (c), “[i]t is unrealistic to think that one style of leadership can be used effectively to obtain the desired results in every situation.”¹³ Moreover, “[a] leader’s style must be flexible enough to meet any situation while provide for the needs of subordinates.”¹⁴ There are many things a leader should consider in what kind of style to use in specific situations.

It is also worth to consider at this point what assumptions you made about the scenario. You were not told how long it would take to complete these tasks, nor were you told the rank and relative experience of the three Marines under your charge. You made your choice based on your instincts, drawing from past experiences which may have been very similar to the scenario. While a leader’s instincts are invaluable, the references provide a list of considerations leaders can use to determine what style is best-suited to a particular situation:

⁹ *Idem.*

¹⁰ *Idem.*

¹¹ Adapted from MCRP 6-11B, Chap. 17, “Leadership Roles,” App. A, Leader Styles, p. 18-2.

¹² “Know yourself and seek self-improvement,” one of the 11 Marine Corps Leadership Principles. MCWP 6-11 *Leading Marines*, Chap. 2 “Foundations of Leadership,” p. 2-6 (2014).

¹³ MCRP 6-11B, Chap. 17, App. A, Leader Styles, p. 18-4

¹⁴ *Idem.*



**MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**



a. Time Available. In crisis situations, Marines are expected to be authoritarian leaders and to take charge.¹⁵

b. The Ability, Experience/Training, Maturity of Subordinates. “The greater the ability of a Marine or a group of Marines to accomplish the mission/task, the less direct supervision and guidance needed.”¹⁶ It must also be stressed that maturity is not necessarily linked to age or seniority.¹⁷ “The more mature the subordinate, the more we can delegate; the less mature, the more we will have to direct.”¹⁸

c. Motivation/Willingness. “The level of motivation and willingness is directly proportional to the amount of ‘push’ the leader will need to exert to accomplish the mission/task. Motivated Marines are a by-product of effective leadership.”¹⁹

d. Mission or Task. “The more complex the mission or task, the greater the need for specific direction from the leader as to the who, what, when, where, why, and how, unless the subordinate has relatively equal knowledge and experience of the mission/task at hand.”²⁰

e. The Size and Organization of the Unit Being Led. “Larger groups tend to be more diversified in composition and require greater organization. A well-organized and well-led unit will produce outstanding results.”²¹

f. Subordinates’ Expectations. “The expectations of subordinates are especially important during transition periods between leaders. During these transition periods, subordinates ‘size-up’ their new leaders. Therefore, the leader needs to be aware that some confusion and difficulty may occur in the communication process between the leader and subordinates because of the difference in leadership styles to which they may be accustomed.”²²

g. Trust. “The higher the degree of trust a leader has in subordinates, the greater the degree of flexibility the leader will have when choosing the proper leadership style for a given situation. A low degree of trust in subordinates severely limits the leader’s options when choosing a style of leadership.”²³

¹⁵ *Idem.* at 18-2.

¹⁶ *Idem.*

¹⁷ MCDP 6-1 *Command and Control*, Chap. 2 “Command and Control Theory,” Sec. Leadership Theory, p. 83.

¹⁸ *Idem.*

¹⁹ MCRP 6-11B, Chap. 17, App. A., Leader Styles, p. 18-3.

²⁰ *Idem.*

²¹ *Idem.*

²² *Idem.*

²³ *Idem.*



**MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**



2. Leadership Style is Influenced by Who You Are

Our style as a Marine leader is influenced by your personality, confidence, your leadership experiences while serving in the Marine Corps, and your own personal moral compass.²⁴ As a leader, you should take as much effort to understand yourself as you do those whom you lead, and strive to be genuine. The following is a list of things that also affect leadership style that concern the leader his or herself:

a. The Leader's Personality. Marines bring with them to table different life experiences and backgrounds. Hence, “[a]ll Marines have a natural leadership style with which they are comfortable. *It is important to be oneself and not to make a style of leadership work when it does not conform to one's own personality.*”²⁵ (emphasis added) It is important to be genuine as a leader because:

Marines can see through these types of leaders, a fact that inhibits trust and respect between subordinate and leader. Genuine care and concern will pay the type of dividends that all leaders want to achieve....Command is the projection of the leader's personality. Leadership is closely related to one's personality. A leadership style that works well for one may not work well for another. Leadership styles are most effective when they become an implementation of the leader's own philosophy and temperament and when they fit the situation, task and the Marines to be led. Marines should strive to promote all that is positive in their style of leading.²⁶

b. The Leader's Confidence. “A confident leader creates confidence in his/her subordinates. As a normal rule, Marines react very well under cool and calm leadership, especially when the leader displays this confidence under stressful and/or dangerous situations.”²⁷

c. The Leader's Past Success/Failure. “Leaders have a tendency to lean toward a particular style when it has been successfully proven to work in the past under similar situations. A proven leadership style is of value. However, just because it worked once before does not mean that it will work every time.”²⁸

d. The Leader's Exposure to Leadership Styles in the Marine Corps.

If a leader has been exposed to a certain leadership style, especially early on in the leader's career, this style has a tendency to influence the leader regardless of whether the style was good or bad. Leaders should continue to learn what works effectively for them, thereby enhancing their own style of leadership. One must also make note of what causes confusion and take measures to preclude this from happening.²⁹

²⁴ *Idem.* at 18-3 to 18-4.

²⁵ *Idem.* at 18-4.

²⁶ *Idem.*

²⁷ *Idem.*

²⁸ *Idem.*

²⁹ *Idem.*



**MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**



e. The Leader's Moral Compass. The references make clear the importance of personal moral standards:

The importance of high moral standards cannot be over-emphasized. The title Marine is synonymous with trust and responsibility. Marines must understand that, along with the title, comes a burden of responsibility to uphold our profession honorably. High standards are expected of Marines, who must always act and carry themselves accordingly. A leader positively reinforces these standards by demonstrating high moral values in his/her own leadership style. Leaders today must be at the forefront in standing for what is right and just. Marines find comfort in knowing that their leader is morally and ethically sound and can always be counted upon to do the right thing. The right morals and values must be the cornerstone of every leader's philosophy and leadership style.³⁰

3. Leadership Style is a Reflection of What You Think is the Best Way to Motivate Your Subordinates – What You Think About Human Nature

Whether you often favor one leadership style is most likely a reflection of your beliefs about human nature – about leadership theory. For instance, if you assume the authoritarian theory of leadership that “people naturally dislike work” and therefore must be “forced”³¹ you may lean more toward the authoritarian, or “telling” leadership style. On the other hand, if believe in the delegating or persuasive theory of leadership and that “work is as natural as rest or play”³² and that subordinates will be drawn to complete tasks because of “satisfaction,”³³ then you may predisposed to using more of the “persuasive or delegating” leadership style.

Understanding your personal beliefs on this subject is perhaps the most important guide in understanding why you chose your answer in the above scenario. Like the styles, the authoritarian theory and the persuasive or delegating theory should be seen as two distinct theories on opposite sides of a spectrum.³⁴ To avoid confusion, it must be reiterated that here we are discussing *theories* rather than *styles*. The relationship between these two is that the theory informs the style; however, a leader's firm belief in authoritarian *theory*, for example, does not necessarily mean that he or she will use an authoritarian *style* exclusively. Reference (a) elaborates on these theories:

a. Authoritarian Theory.

The authoritarian theory of leadership is based on the assumption that people naturally dislike work and will try to avoid it where possible, and that they must therefore be forced by coercion and threat of punishment to work toward the common goal. This theory further argues that people actually prefer to be directed and try to avoid responsibility. The result is an autocratic style of leadership aimed at achieving immediate and unquestioning obedience. Leaders announce their decisions and expect subordinates to execute them. The authoritarian leader is sometimes also known as a telling or directing leader.³⁵

³⁰ *Idem.* at 18-3.

³¹ MCDP 6-1, Chap. 2, Sec. Leadership Theory, p. 82.

³² *Idem.* at 83.

³³ *Idem.*

³⁴ MCRP 6-11B, Chap. 17, App. A., Leader Styles, p. 18-2.

³⁵ MCDP 6-1, Chap. 2, Sec. Leadership Theory, p. 82



**MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**



b. Persuasive or Delegating Theory.

The opposite theory of leadership, known as persuasive or delegating leadership, assumes that work is as natural as rest or play, that people do not inherently dislike work, and that work can be either a source of satisfaction (in which case people will perform it willingly) or a source of punishment (in which case they will avoid it). This theory rejects the idea that external supervision and the threat of punishment are the most effective ways to get people to work toward the common objective. The persuasive theory argues that people will exercise initiative and self-control to the degree they are committed to the organizational objective.³⁶

4. Leadership Styles Influence Subordinate Behavior, Especially Over Time

A leader must also be aware of the *consequences* of leaning more towards one of these leadership theories and styles. Reference (a) discusses the likely outcome of the authoritarian theory and style contrasted with the delegating or persuasive theory and style:

a. Authoritarian Theory & Style

While authoritarian leadership may result in rapid obedience, it also can often result in subordinates who are highly dependent on the leader, require continuous supervision, and lack initiative. Military discipline is widely seen as an example of this model since quick and unquestioning response to orders may be required in the heat of an emergency. This is, however, only one version of leadership that military leaders have used successfully.³⁷

b. Persuasive / Delegating Theory & Style

Under proper conditions, people learn not only to accept responsibility but to actively seek it. According to this theory, the potential for exercising imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of unit problems is widespread throughout any unit. Leadership thus becomes a question of inspiring, guiding, and supporting committed subordinates and encouraging them to perform freely within set limits. Over time, delegating or persuasive leadership tends to produce subordinates who exhibit a high degree of independence, self-discipline, and initiative.³⁸

³⁶ *Idem.* at 83.

³⁷ *Idem.* at 82.

³⁸ *Idem.* at 83



**MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
LEJEUNE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY**



5. The Marine Corps Prefers the Persuasive / Delegating Approach

Relatively unknown to many Marines is the fact that the Marine Corps prefers its leaders to possess the persuasive or delegating leadership style over the autocratic leadership style.³⁹ Marines may be surprised by this because their experiences at the Recruit Depots or Officer Candidates School were characterized by *especially exacting* authoritarian-style leadership from Drill Instructors and Sergeant Instructors, respectively. The explanation for these two seemingly contradictory realities is that the Marine Corps believes in a transformational model, taking rough-cut individuals from society, stripping them of individuality and the distractions of normal life, and shaping them in to Marines in a relatively short period of time. Recruits and Officer Candidates in their initial training are not “mature”⁴⁰ in the Marine Corps sense, which is why, among other reasons, the situation dictates that an authoritarian style of leadership is used so that these individuals can become well-acquainted with Marine Corps institutional values and standards of conduct. The references elaborate on this preference:

All other things being equal, we prefer the persuasive approach because it seeks to gain the committed performance of subordinates and encourages subordinate initiative. Moreover, persuasive leadership reduces the need for continuous supervision, an important consideration on a dispersed and fluid battlefield on which continuous, detailed supervision is problematic.⁴¹

CONCLUSION: The four leadership styles described in the references should become a part of each Marine’s leadership toolbox, and that the situation will dictate what style is most appropriate. A Marine should not come away from this assessment believing that he or she is an “authoritative” or “delegating” style leader, but after reading this assessment, Marines may become aware that they are predisposed to believing in a certain leadership theory and style *i.e.*, (authoritative v. delegating/persuasive). In that vein, understanding why a Marine chose a particular answer is as important as choosing the answer itself. Finally, it is also important for Marines to seek to be genuine at all times, and to be aware that leadership style will influence subordinate behavior over time, *i.e.*, (authoritarian style is predisposed to developing “highly dependent subordinates” v. delegating/persuasive style is predisposed to developing subordinates who “not only...accept responsibility but...actively seek it.”⁴² Good luck in your next leadership challenge!

³⁹ *Idem.*

⁴⁰ Use of the term “mature” here is a reference to the “Ability, experience, and training of subordinates” discussed in MCRP 6-11B, Chap. 17, App. A., Leader Styles, p. 18-2 to 18-3 as well as “maturity” as is discussed in MCDP 6-1, Chap. 2, Sec. Leadership Theory, p. 83.

⁴¹ MCDP 6-1, Chap. 2, Sec. Leadership Theory, p. 83-84.

⁴² *Idem.* at 83.