

The copyright of this transcript is licensed by Coventry University under the Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial 4.0 International licence (CC BY NC 4.0), which is [available on their website](#).

10 leadership theories

1. The Great Man Theory is a 19th-century theory that believes history is made by the impact of great heroes. The Great Man Theory would say that some people are born with the natural attributes of a leader: you either have it or you don't. They possess intellect and bravery, making them highly influential to their followers. It is now clear that leadership skills are now in fact learnable. However, there is truth in the idea that some people do inherently possess leadership skills.
2. This theory paved the way for the Trait Theory – this identified different personality traits and characteristics that are linked to successful leadership. Once equipped with all the essential qualities, a leader can assume positions of power and authority.
3. Just like the Trait Theory, the Skills Theory focused on identifying key attributes of a leader. However, Skills Theory acknowledges practical attributes, rather than characteristics. Essentially, Skills Theory is made up of three pillars: human skills, technical skills and conceptual skills.
4. Style Theory of leadership places the emphasis on what leaders actually do. Style Leadership looks at two main types of behaviour: task behaviour and relationship behaviour. Varying degrees of these behaviours can contribute to the leader's individual style. If you are too focused on task behaviour, you may become too forceful with your followers. It would become equally disruptive if you put full emphasis on relationship behaviour and this could lead to lack of productivity.
5. Situational Leadership allows the leader to adapt their style to fit the followers they are trying to motivate. The leader should change continuously to meet the needs of their current organisation and modify themselves to a situation.
6. A closely connected theory is Contingency Theory. Where Situational Theory would say a situation can't change and the leader must adapt to it, the Contingency Theory believes that it's the leadership style that is pretty much fixed. Effective leadership is contingent on matching the right leader to the right setting.

7. Transactional Leadership believes that people will follow based on the incentives in place. It's the leader's job to find the right mix of reward and punishment and oversee what's going on.
8. Similarly, Leader-Member Exchange Theory is built on the fair exchange between the leader and their followers. However, a side effect of this can create a divide: an 'in' and 'out' group. This can potentially lead to lower performance and low retention.
9. Transformational Leadership Theory, in contrast, focuses on leadership that nurtures and encourages followers, inspiring them towards a set vision. These leaders actively transform the environment, build relationships and form an organisational culture.
10. Servant Leadership Theory takes Transactional Leadership and Transformational Leadership Theory one step further. The leader prioritises the needs of their followers. This produces a relationship of trust, collaboration and mutual service. This could ultimately lead to higher performance.