

Event Leadership

Theory and methods for event management and tourism

Instructor's Manual

2: Classic approaches to leadership

This is the instructor's manual produced to accompany the book *Event Leadership – theory and practice for event management and tourism*, by Emma Abson (with contributions by Miriam Firth and Jane Tattersall), 2021, published by Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.

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How to use the book for teaching & learning

The content of the book can easily be adapted to facilitate learning from the content. Instructors using the book will have access to the following:

- ◆ *Learning objectives* - each of these suggests one or more study or discussion questions, as the reader should be able to demonstrate the applicable knowledge drawn from the chapter.
- ◆ *Short explanations of leadership theory* – these can be used to stimulate discussions or debates, as the basis of case study evaluations or to ask students to reflect on their own experiences of leadership.
- ◆ *Scenarios* – these can be used to prompt conversations, for analysis and for problem solving.
- ◆ *Further questions* that could be integrated into study are at the end of each chapter.
- ◆ *Further reading suggestions* are typically 3-5 additional texts which the authors believe will help to develop understanding of key topics further.
- ◆ *'Voice from the event industry'* – these industry insights enable the reader to gain useful insights into how leadership works in the event industry.

It is recommended that instructors use a blend of class discussions, debates, case study evaluation, real life scenario setting and student-led presentations in order to fully utilise the content of the book.

How to introduce the subject of event leadership to your students

A lack of research into human resource development, managerial skillsets and leadership practices of event managers has meant that there is very little understanding of the contribution that leadership makes to the management of experiences. The purpose of this book is to shine a light on leadership theory and explore how it relates to the unique context of planned events and event tourism.

An understanding of leadership is essential for the development of successful event managers and for the delivery of successful event experiences - whilst some sectors of the leisure industry are run by large corporations, with well-established leadership structures in place, the event industry tends to be more transient, and often has temporary management structures which exist only for the duration of the event. In addition, the difference in leadership required for a small-scale local community event and that of a large-scale international event such as Glastonbury Festival is vast. This then is the tension at the heart of leadership within events – event projects are intangible and temporary in nature and they provide only one opportunity to get it right. However, in order to be successful leaders, they also need to work in teams, motivating, empowering and developing team members. This then is the challenge in planned events and makes them a unique context within which to study leadership.

This book explores the key questions of how those who work in events resolve the tension between the intangibility of event experiences, the planned nature of the events, and how event managers become successful leaders and lead successful event experiences. The purpose of this book is therefore to provide a concise introduction to leadership theory and methods for use in event management and event tourism.

Lecture 2

Chapter aims

- Introduce and critically discuss the classic theories of leadership
- Understand the meaning of 'entity' leadership
- Critically examine leadership behavioural theory
- Explore the concept of leading through contingencies
- Compare the strengths and weaknesses of the classic theories of leadership
- Focus on leadership in action: being an event entrepreneur by Jason Scott Allan

2.1: Introduction

This lecture summarises the classic theories of leadership. The reader will note the similarities that exist within this area of leadership studies – these theories all focus on the individual leader, and view leadership as a specialised role. In these classic approaches to leadership, leadership is something someone 'does', and the focus is solely on the formal leader and their personality characteristics or their attributes. These classic approaches are now sometimes referred to as entity leadership – leadership is the sole preserve of the individual, and that individual is highly influential. These theories of leadership began to emerge in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and whilst they are now between 50 and 100 years old, it is important to explore them briefly, as they form the basis from which leadership studies first emerged.

2.2: The classic approaches to leadership

Use the following very brief summary of each school of thought on leadership to introduce them to your students. You can supplement each description with relevant suggestions of people who display this type of leadership (if you can think of any!)

- ◆ People are born to be leaders. They are genetically disposed to lead and are born with the traits required (Trait theories)
- ◆ It isn't who people are that make them Great Men, it's the way their personality makes them behave that makes them a leader (Behavioural theory)
- ◆ People are born with leadership traits, and the way they behave is important. But – and crucially – good leadership requires naturally born leaders to adapt their leadership style depending on the situation (Contingency theories)
- ◆ People hold assumptions about other people. These assumptions shape their leadership style – if they believe people are lazy and need direction, they will become authoritarian, but if they think that people are capable and self-motivated, they will be more democratic in their leadership approach (Theory X and Y and leadership styles)

2.3: Is there a place for trait and behavioural theory in the contemporary study of events?

Use the following extract as the basis for a discussion with the students.

The questions for those of us studying planned events is whether these approaches to understanding leadership via the lens of personality traits or behaviours still hold any value. For instance, does understanding the specific personality traits of an event manager help us to shed light on how to deliver effective experiences? As we saw in chapter 1, lots of contemporary discussions around leadership in events do still focus on the type of person you need to be to run events. We hear, often, that event managers need to be visionary, creative, influential and decisive for example. And event managers continue to be assessed on their psychological personality traits through psychometric testing. This then indicates that some of the foundations of trait theory are still useful in trying to understand what makes a good event leader – as Northouse (2004) suggests, personality does have some part to play in influencing who becomes a leader and who does not. But can knowing which personality traits and behaviours exist in our leaders give us the full picture? Consider this scenario:

The event manager of a local council is in charge of a local community festival, and needs to manage a range of stakeholders, leading them all to the successful delivery of the event. The list of stakeholders might look something like this:

Internal stakeholders

- ◆ Your event team at the council
- ◆ Sponsors of the event
- ◆ The council leadership team
- ◆ The council marketing team
- ◆ The stall holders at the event
- ◆ Supplier networks
- ◆ Council staff responsible for licensing / road closures etc.

External stakeholders

- ◆ The attendees from the local community (who can be further divided, depending on their specific wants, needs and motivations)
- ◆ Police & transport networks
- ◆ The local community (who can be divided multiple times, depending on their interest in your event)
- ◆ Local news agencies (including papers, social media etc)
- ◆ Local businesses
- ◆ Local transport hubs

Each of these stakeholders will demand a different level of input from the event leader. Some – such as the staff in your team and your suppliers – will need direction and management. Others – such as the local media agencies, or local transport hubs – will just need you to keep them informed. All of them will have different interests and require different outcomes from the event. Will being the right weight or height help the event manager

to lead on this project? Well of course not. But having a high level of enthusiasm might, and so might be empathetic of the various viewpoints and tactful in communicating with the various groups. But just being enthusiastic or tactful is surely not enough to explain whether someone is a good leader or not?

Ultimately, this is the issue with both the behavioural approach and the trait approach - they insist that the individual is the only thing that matters in effective leadership. However, as leadership studies advanced to the mid-twentieth century, scholars realised that viewing a set of traits or behaviours was still not enough to explain effective leadership - and so they began to consider whether the situation within which the leader found themselves was also important.

Lecture summary

So now the student should have a better understanding of some of the classic approaches to understanding leadership. Use the following to summarise key points.

The reliance on psychometric testing in recruiting event managers suggests that the event industry still continues to believe in the existence of personality traits in order to determine leadership potential. Readers are asked to question this emphasis on personality traits though – if we accept that people are born leaders, then we reject the idea that people’s personalities change and evolve over time. This means that there is little chance for leadership development.

The second classic approach merges the principles of leadership traits with the actions and behaviours of leaders; it considers what is it that leaders do. But it still views leadership behaviour through the lens of the individual – it is only the behaviour of the leader that matters. That said, leadership behaviours still form a large part of the conversations around leadership that happen today – these are explored further in Chapter 3.

This contingency approach to leadership does recognise that leadership is not solely related to the individual and that other influences should be considered. The issue here, however, is that these theories relate those external influences back to the individual leader, and focus on how he or she reacts to situational variables. They fail to acknowledge any other relationships that many researchers now feel are vital to effective leadership; interest in these approaches are on the decline, perhaps because they reached maturity and scholars’ interests have gone in a new direction. For many scholars, the new direction involves the consideration of leadership as a dyadic process – it involves both the leader and the follower. As Stodgill concluded:

‘A person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits, but the pattern of personal characteristics of the leader must bear some relevant relationship to the characteristics, activities and goals of the followers’ (1948:64)

This move from considering leadership as the preserve of the individual to incorporate those that follow as well is explored in the next lecture.

Further activities for seminars / independent learning and / or assignments

Discussion prompts

Use the leadership in action section in this chapter to discuss what leadership means in the event industry.

- ◆ Ask the students to consider if event entrepreneurs, who often work mostly on their own, and carry the large burden of risk on their own too, have a different view of leadership to other event managers. If so, why might that be? Do the students agree with Jason's description of the qualities of the perfect event manager?

Chapter study questions

Each of the learning objectives suggests one or more study or discussion questions, as the reader should be able to demonstrate the applicable knowledge drawn from this and subsequent chapters. Further questions that could be integrated into study might be:

1. Do you believe there is such a thing as a natural born leader? If so, what makes them special?
2. What are the main criticisms of the trait approaches to leadership?
3. What personality traits does the contemporary leadership literature suggest an event leader might need? What do you think the list should include?
4. Do you think personalities stay the same throughout people's lives? If not, how does this impact on leadership traits?
5. How useful do you think psychometric testing is in identifying potential leaders? What are the strengths and weaknesses of such tests?
6. Are contingency theories of leadership more suited to crisis situations in event management? Why / why not?
7. Think about McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y. Which set of assumptions most aligns with your own personal beliefs? And what does that mean for your leadership style?
8. In the Leadership in Action section, Jason discusses a number of traits and skills that he believes are important for leaders. Do you agree with his list?
9. In the Leadership in Action section, Jason discusses entrepreneurial leadership. What are the key differences between what he describes and the theories discussed in this chapter?

Assignment suggestions

In addition to the study questions listed above, instructors could use the questions listed as essay questions, or as presentation assignments.

- ◆ Describe and discuss the different leadership styles – authoritarian, autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire
- ◆ Identify leaders in the public eye who could fit within each of the key leadership schools of thought (trait or great man theory / behavioural theories / contingency leadership). Create a presentation that summarises each school of thought, the famous leader you have identified for that school and a justification of why.

Further reading

Use the following texts as guidance for further, independent, study.

Cawthorn, D. L. (1996). Leadership: the great man theory revisited. *Business Horizons*, 39, 1.

Cullen, J. (2019). Leading through contingencies. In Carroll, B., Ford, J & Taylor, S. *Leadership 2*, pg 68-92, London, Sage.

Jago, A. (1982) Leadership: perspectives in theory and research, *Management Science*, 28(3) 315-36.

Northouse, P. (2015) *Introduction to Leadership*. London: Sage.

Taylor, S. (2019). Trait theories of leaders and leadership. In Carroll, B., Ford, J & Taylor, S. (eds) *Leadership 2*, pg 49-67, London, Sage.