

Instructions:

- A. Match each **leadership style (A–J)** with the correct explanation (1–10).
All definitions are completely mixed — think critically!
- B. Now, decide which of the leadership styles are attributed to men and which to women. Read the text to find out.

Leadership Style	Scrambled Explanations
A. Transformational Leadership	1. Communicates needs and evaluations clearly, minimizing ambiguity.
B. Transactional Leadership	2. Strengthens teamwork and encourages mutual support across the group.
C. Flat Organizational Structure	3. Pushes departments or individuals to outperform each other as a motivational tool.
D. Hierarchical Structure	4. Develops team members' abilities and builds future organizational strength.
E. Direct Communication	5. Provides flexible guidelines and allows individual interpretation when giving feedback.
F. Indirect Communication	6. Drives followers toward innovation by acting as a role model and inspiring personal growth.
G. Promote Cooperation and Collaboration	7. Maintains structured authority levels for efficient decision-making and control.
H. Like to Create Competition	8. Creates an environment of minimal hierarchy and shared decision-making.
I. Focus on Performance	9. Emphasizes individual achievement and surpassing expectations, sometimes at the expense of teamwork.
J. Mentoring and Training Others	10. Achieves goals through performance-based rewards and consequences.

A Review of Workplace Leadership Styles: Men Vs. Women

Business Management & Strategy

While there are noticeable differences among the leaders I support as a retained HR consultant, none may be as significant as the leadership styles of the men and women leading their respective organizations. As a disclaimer, I do not believe one leadership gender is better or worse than the other at leading an organization. Instead, a successful leader must understand and tailor their strengths to the organization in which he or she leads.

A Review of Male Vs. Female Leadership Styles

This article will provide an overview of the well-known leadership characteristics associated with men versus women leaders. Each gender should read the other's characteristics to gain a more rounded approach to their own leadership strengths and areas for improvement. Doing so can help you lead a better team, department, and organization.

The Characteristics of a Female Leader

While the list below is not exhaustive, it is a good starting point for a description of leadership tendencies generally associated with women in the workplace:

- Task oriented – Female leaders tend to be extremely focused on completing a task assigned. Completing day-to-day tasks are necessary to ensure a company is running smoothly from an operational perspective. While a task-focused leadership style helps an organization run properly, employees working for a leader employing this type of leadership style may not understand the context of why the task is important to the organization from a strategic perspective.
- Transformational – A number of studies have noted that women have a transformational style of leadership. “Transformational leaders establish themselves as role models by gaining followers’ trust and confidence....Such leaders mentor and empower followers, encourage them to develop their full potential and....contribute more effectively to their organizations” ([Eagly & Carli, 2007](#)).

Transformational leadership is a powerful characteristic to possess because it allows a leader to make necessary changes to a current business model. Without transformational leaders, organizations would not have the capability of re-inventing themselves at necessary junctures. For example, [Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo](#), is a transformational leader because of her efforts to change Yahoo from a search and app afterthought to a leader in search, apps, and other products.

- Prefer Flat Organizational Structures – Women tend to prefer leading and creating flat organizational structures that allow for a more collegial atmosphere. This type of leadership style is necessary for creating a new product or service that requires tight integration

amongst team members. At the same time, a flat organizational structure does not take into consideration the experience and knowledge associated with a more seasoned manager. There is a chance a key component is overlooked because a lower-level employee does not have the experience or knowledge necessary to identify a key step in the process.

- Promote Cooperation and Collaboration – Female leaders typically promote cooperation and collaboration amongst team members. Cooperation and collaboration is important for managing a large or a geographically dispersed team. On the other hand, if members of the team are unclear of roles and responsibilities, there is a chance for redundant work.
- Indirect Communication – Often times women indirectly communicate their expectations of a given task and allow more latitude in accomplishing a goal. On the one hand, this can allow a team member to use his/her knowledge and experience to complete a given task. Conversely, this can be a drawback if a team or department requires a leader who needs to have frank conversations with team members
- Mentoring and Training Others – Everyone could use a good mentor and training to upgrade their current knowledge, skills, and abilities. Beyond upgrading a skill set, mentoring and training a direct report is important for ensuring coverage amongst team members, especially if an associate is out sick or is busy with another assignment. One drawback to this style is a lack of urgency surrounding the training. Instead of seeing your leader as an authority figure, it's possible leaders may not be able to separate business decisions from personal relationships.

The Characteristics of Male Leaders

Men, on the other hand, tend to have the following, generalized, characteristics associated with their leadership styles.

- Transactional– A number of studies have shown that men exhibit a transactional leadership style in comparison to women. A transactional leadership style is one in which “job performance as a series of transactions to be rewarded or disciplined. [A leader] establish[es] give-and-take relationships that appeal to subordinates’ self-interests. Such leaders manage in the conventional manner of clarifying subordinates responsibilities, rewarding them for meeting objectives, and correcting them for failing to meet objectives” ([Eagly & Carli, 2007](#)).
- Prefer Hierarchical Structure – Men tend to prefer a hierarchical leadership structure because it allows for easier role clarity, the decision making process, and delegation of authority. A disadvantage of a hierarchical structure is employees not taking enough initiative to solve a problem. Instead, the employee defers to a higher level of senior management to make a decision. This delay in making a decision can prove costly to an organization needing to make rapid decisions.
- Focus on Performance – Focusing on doing one’s best is what all organizations strive for. This constant drive to outperform other team members could have a negative impact on your firm because resources and knowledge aren’t being shared across the organization. Instead, fiefdoms become established and entrenched, which could be to the detriment of the firm.
- Direct Communication – As was mentioned in a transactional leadership definition, a direct communication style is where a leader

clarifies subordinate responsibilities and provides precise instruction for what they are looking for. Further, this can also mean having frank discussions about performance – whether it has been good or needs improvement. One downside of a direct communication style can be a team member's unwillingness to listen to the frank assessment of their performance.

- Like to Create Competition – A little competition amongst team members or departments is a good thing for an organization. Various well-known leaders, like [Steve Jobs](#), have been known to set up competitions amongst divisions or departments with good results ensuing. One drawback is creating an overly competitive company culture where sources or ideas are not shared across your organization. An organization faces enough pressure from outside competitors it makes little sense to create another strain on staff by creating an overly competitive company culture.

As we have just discussed, there are unique differences between the leadership styles of men and women in the workplace. Each gender tendency has its own advantages and disadvantages. Understanding each tendency will allow your leaders, and their direct reports, more insight into the people who currently run the organization. Adapting a personal leadership style that incorporates nuances of both tendencies would be ideal. While this may be easier said than done, it is something each of your managers should strive toward.

Use the words from the text to fill in the blanks

**exhaustive, transformational, collegial, redundant, latitude, transactional, hierarchical
entrenched, fiefdoms, nuances**

1. The list of female leadership traits is not _____, but it offers a useful starting point for discussion.
(*comprehensive, thorough*)
2. A _____ leader encourages growth and innovation rather than maintaining the status quo.
(*revolutionary, change-oriented*)
3. Many women prefer a _____ work environment that values mutual respect and shared responsibility.
(*cooperative, friendly*)
4. If roles aren't clearly defined, some tasks may become _____, wasting time and resources.
(*unnecessary, repetitive*)
5. This leadership style offers team members greater _____ in how they complete their tasks.
(*freedom, flexibility*)
6. A _____ style of leadership is based on rewards and penalties, often emphasizing short-term goals.
(*business-like, deal-making*)
7. Male leaders often favor a _____ structure to make authority and reporting lines clear.
(*ranked, tiered*)
8. In some companies, power structures become so _____ that innovation is stifled.
(*deep-rooted, firmly established*)
9. When departments operate like independent _____, collaboration becomes nearly impossible.
(*kingdoms, territories*)
10. Understanding the _____ of each leadership style helps managers become more flexible and effective.
(*subtleties, fine details*)

