Leaders and followers

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Core ideas

Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory measures how often leaders show five practical leadership behaviours.

The five practices are Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encourage the Heart.

The LPI is a self-report or observer-report measure, so it is useful for feedback but can be affected by social desirability and rating bias.

Followership means the active role followers play in supporting, questioning or shaping what leaders and groups do.

Kelley describes followership using two dimensions: independent critical thinking and active engagement.

Kelley's five follower styles are effective followers, yes people, sheep, alienated followers and survivors.

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Key terms

Leadership Practices Inventory: Kouzes and Posner's questionnaire for measuring five leadership practices.

Model the Way: Showing the values and standards that followers are expected to follow.

Inspire a Shared Vision: Communicating a clear future that others can believe in and work toward.

Challenge the Process: Looking for better ways to work and being willing to test change.

Enable Others to Act: Building trust, cooperation and confidence so others can contribute.

Encourage the Heart: Recognising effort and celebrating progress.

Followership: The way followers think, act and take responsibility in relation to leaders and group goals.

Active engagement: The extent to which followers participate, take initiative and put effort into group goals.

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Further detail and evidence

LPI practices: Model the Way clarifies values and sets an example; Inspire a Shared Vision communicates an attractive future; Challenge the Process searches for improvements and learns from risks; Enable Others to Act builds trust/capability; Encourage the Heart recognises contributions and celebrates progress.

Followership is an active contribution to collective work, including appropriate support and challenge. Kelley's dimensions are independent critical thinking versus dependence, and active engagement versus passivity.

Five styles: effective followers are high on both dimensions; alienated followers think independently but engage little; yes people engage actively but depend on leaders' thinking; sheep are low on both; survivors/pragmatists occupy a cautious middle position. These describe patterns that can change with context.

Applying the ideas

An employee who identifies a problem, proposes evidence and helps implement a better solution shows both critical thinking and active engagement. Agreeing enthusiastically without evaluating a weak plan is closer to a yes-person pattern. Constructive challenge can support a leader rather than signify disloyalty.

Evaluation and connections

Self and observer LPI ratings enable structured feedback but can be shaped by social desirability, liking and unequal opportunities to observe. Check reliability and cultural meaning. Typologies simplify variation and can become stereotypes; use evidence across situations rather than permanently labelling a worker from one act.