

How To Adopt a New Management Style

Adopting or incorporating new management styles requires not only changing your behaviors and protocols but also evaluating your values, beliefs, attitude and personality type.

If you identify your predominant management style and realize some of its characteristics aren't the right fit for your role within your organization or for the people on your team, follow these steps to adapt and incorporate characteristics of a more fitting management style:

Name the problem

No management style is inherently always good or always bad. You don't have to change your style just because it's perceived as the wrong way to manage—your management style might be a great fit for the environment you're in and the people you manage.

If you're feeling friction or having trouble achieving your team's goals, start by identifying the problems. Do you have an unmotivated team? Are you missing deadlines? Is communication inconsistent? Do team members feel left out of conversations or in the dark about expectations?

Once you identify the real problems, consider how your management style might contribute to them. If you're missing deadlines, for example, is it because you're being too democratic with decision-making and extending the time it takes to make progress on a project? Or is it because you're too hands-off and team members don't have enough milestones to hit before a final project deadline?

Understand other management styles

Once you identify the characteristics of your management style that aren't working, discover the characteristics of others that might address your problems.

If you're being too democratic, for example, how might you introduce some autocracy or bureaucracy to streamline decision-making? If you're too hands-off, how might you be more of a coach to guide your team toward milestones?

Know your strengths

Not everyone is suited to every management style. Understand your professional and personal strengths and weaknesses and how those intersect with the characteristics of various management styles.

For example, you might be suited for autocratic leadership if you're highly analytical and introspective, but democratic, coaching and charismatic management might not come easily to you.

Manage big changes with your team

Some changes in your management style might only happen within you—adjusting how you respond to feedback or letting go of beliefs about your relationship with coworkers, for example. But often, a change in management style means changes to protocols and procedures for your team. Even if this change is for the better, you'll need buy-in from your team to implement it effectively.

Employ the basic principles of change management to involve your team in decisions about new processes, motivate them to want to make changes, appeal to their individual needs and guide them through changes.

Communicate clearly

Don't assume team members will naturally adapt to changes in protocols or procedures. Clearly communicate any changes you'll make, when they'll take effect, any new expectations you have for employees and what they can expect from you going forward.

Communicating about changes is also an opportunity to get feedback and suggestions from team members to ensure your new management style is in line with their needs.