



# THE 3 STAGES OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT









Sources: Jérôme Curnier, Vincent Lenhardt, Christophe Mikolajczak, Douglas McGregor







## Definitions

**Stages of leadership development:** the way in which a manager simultaneously approaches and endorses the three stages of development, i.e. Order Giver, Servant Leader and Bearer of Meaning.

An effective leader is one who is able to navigate between being an Order Giver and a Bearer of Meaning, while at the same time fulfilling the role of Servant Leader.









The 3 stages are described in the table below in relation to a series of logical levels ranging from management style to regulation dynamics taking in values, causality principles and so on. This provides an extremely rich model which nevertheless cannot be dissociated from an individual person's ontological development.

	Order Giver	Servant Leader	Bearer of Meaning
Type of manager	Hands-on professional. Knows the business	Manager. Instils confidence while also ensuring that everyone works well together.	Leader. Empowers team members and endeavours to maintain coherence at all levels by working closely with those involved in integrating the company's stakes.
Management style	Coercive, directive; seeking compromise	Focus on how people complement one another	Focus on corporate ecology, purpose and aims
Company organization & culture	<b>Pyramid</b> 	<b>Matrix</b> 	<b>Network</b> 
Team development stage	<b>Collection of individuals</b> 	<b>Interdependent group</b> 	<b>Purposeful team</b> 
Performance level and other general considerations	Low collective performance. Performance range: 0 to 33%, Performance focus on individual excellence. Low autonomy.	Everyone works well together. Circularity comes to the fore. Performance range: 34 to 66% Conducive to autonomy.	High collective performance. Good coherence within the team and with outside "partners", taking full ownership of the corporate stakes Performance range: 67 to 100%, Widespread sense of belonging, even with constant team reconfiguration. High autonomy.

Causality principle	Linear (cause & effect)	Circular (A produces B which has a retroactive effect on A)	Recursive (The part is within the whole and the whole within the part)
Logic system	Monological <i>it's either this OR that</i> <b>OR</b>	Dialogical <i>it can be both this AND that</i> <b>AND</b>	Teleological <i>shared aims</i> <b>BECAUSE</b>
Value	Technical issues 	Relations 	Coherence 
Personal identification	With oneself 	With the group 	With the organization, its ecology and aims 
Development focus	Expertise & Content What to do and how to do it. Personal development focused on competency acquisition	Process How to get others to do things. Personal development focused on empathic listening	Purpose & Strategy. Whys & wherefores of taking action and getting others to act. Personal development focused on coherence and purpose/meaning
Means of regulation	Directly with "the boss". Tends to lead to closure rather than openness. Compartmentalization, "scapegoating", Regulation is seen as being a waste of time.	Is conducted on a 1-to-1 basis and also involves metacommunication. The shift is towards otherness, with the focus on relations. The onus is no longer on finding "guilty parties" but thinking positively together about how the team can find solutions	Regulation is constant (10% of time) and fluid. Is conducted on a 1-to-1 basis and also with the whole team. The team's strength comes from what it is capable of taking on board with regards to its own fragility.

**"A team will go no further than the point to which its leader is willing to go"**

It is important to understand that the management style adopted at each of these stages is by no means identical and in fact reflects a number of different elements, including:

-  company culture and structure,
-  the team's stage of development
-  the team's level of autonomy,
-  the level of urgency for dealing with the problem (if the level is high, an Order Giver stance will best be adopted),
-  the manager's key focus (expertise, relations or coherence),
-  the values of the manager, the team and the organization,
-  the way of thinking about causality (linear, circular, recursive),
-  etc.

In many cases the appointment of a manager is based on the best technical proficiency. As a consequence, the newly appointed manager positions themselves in the role of Order Giver. Traditionally, two mistakes are committed here:

- underestimating the need to provide the manager with training, even at this initial stage,
- failure to grasp that this is a totally new and different job in itself, requiring the acquisition of new skills but moreover an identity development journey.

Moving from one stage to another entails a **grieving** process that encounters a number of pitfalls:

- reaching one's incompetence threshold,
- lack of training provided when moving from one stage to another,
- need for coaching & support for identity-related work,
- lack of recognition,
- emergence of new relations (grieving for former workmates, creation of links between peers, management loneliness,...).

A **Servant Leader** will experience a seven-stage cycle:

1. Presenting the stakes (telling the truth).
2. Outlining the ground rules (protection and permission).
3. Generating a call to action ("I can't do this without you").
4. Providing support: listening, protecting, reassuring... (nurturing parent).
5. Listening to ideas and proposals (without necessarily implementing them).
6. Optimizing decisions (cursor).
7. Starting over again.

A **Bearer of Meaning** will accomplish actions by supporting the team across 4 key stages:

1. Bearing and embodying the vision
2. Explaining the meaning and purpose
3. Revealing the potential of other protagonists
4. Enable the emergence of meaning and purpose for the protagonists

### Link with the X and Y theory: managing the cursor

McGregor's study focuses on the link between performance, autonomy and motivation at work. He proposes a distinction between two contradictory conceptions of human nature at work which in turn induce two opposing approaches to management, which he summarizes as Theory X and Theory Y.

Each of these two theories produces a distinct picture of an employee type:

- Theory X** assumes that employees consider their work to be a constraint, a sufferance, an annoying task requiring a management approach based on control.
- Theory Y** assumes that employees are willing and able to get fully involved in their work, a fulfilling experience in which management approach is based on trust.

Dimension	Theory X	Theory Y
Attitude	People don't like work, it's boring. They will find a way of avoiding work if they can	People need to work and always hope to find an interest in what they do. In the right conditions they will find their work fulfilling and pleasurable
Direction	Constant direction is required. People have to be placed under constraint or incentivized in order to make an effort	Little or no direction is required. People take responsibility to work towards a common objective
Responsibility	People prefer to be managed rather than taking on responsibilities (which they seek to avoid at all cost)	People actively seek and accept responsibilities, under the right conditions
Motivation	People are motivated by money and the fear of losing their job	If the conditions are good, people are motivated by the desire to fulfil their potential
Creativity	Most people are not very creative, except when it comes to circumventing the rules	Every individual possesses great creativity and ingenuity potential, but this potential is largely under-used

This gives rise to the following question: between theory X and theory Y, which is the one that best applies to the workplace and to management?

McGregor's conclusion is as follows: each of the two theories will work once one has chosen to adopt it and will tend to do so along the lines of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

However, these two visions produce results that differ widely. Theory X underpins the many control mechanisms that are to be found in "traditional" companies. Once again, it is not unreasonable to attribute a large part of employee disengagement to this approach to management, still widely used in many companies today.

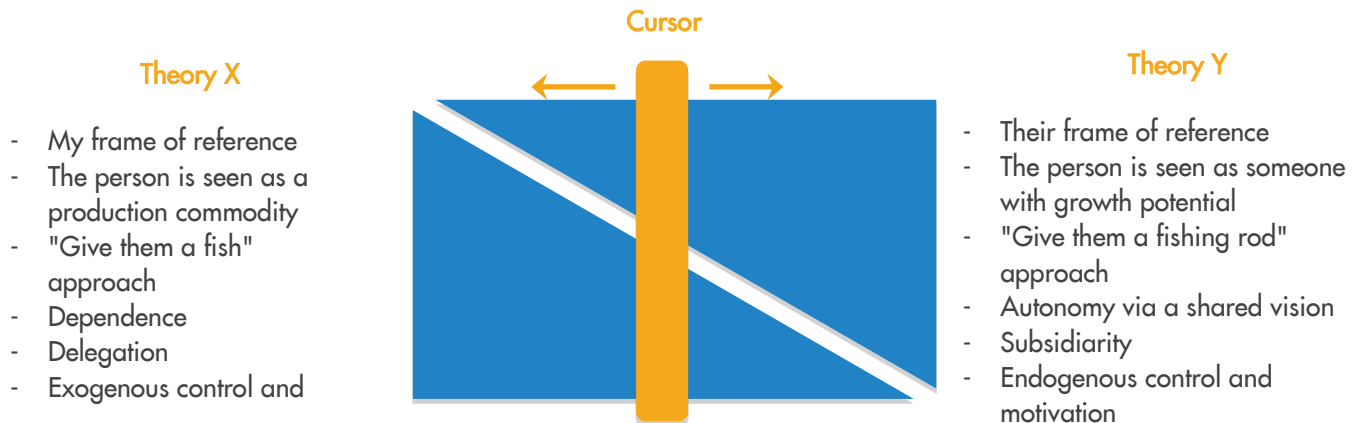
Indeed, innovative companies, those that have implemented new models of self-management, collective intelligence and participation have also taken inspiration from McGregor's Theory Y, in the sense of trust-based management. These companies achieve excellent results, especially in terms of employee empowerment, initiative and engagement.

This does not however imply falling into the opposite trap by which all notions of hierarchy, competition and control are discredited and self-management, participation and cooperation are idealized and trust is taken to the extreme. Innovative companies go beyond this simple opposition of styles; they do not do away with hierarchy, competition and control but moreover they reposition and reinvent them in a brand-new context and framework.

The key for the manager is to know how to intelligently control the position of the cursor between X and Y. The difficulties inherent in positioning the cursor are the price that must be paid in order to

successfully navigate one's way through the complexities of management.

## Managing the cursor



## Integrating the "content – process – purpose" trilogy

One of the lines of thought that we use to distinguish between the different stages of development is a trilogy of states of mind and approaches to a situation, a task, a project etc. By means of explanation, we take the example of a manager who is drafting a project report:

1. **Content:** If the manager focuses solely on the notion of "content", i.e. seeking to answer questions such as "What?", "Where?" and "Who?", the report will be written from the point of view of an expert, making good use of all his know-how to make the report as clear and understandable as possible for all intended readers. There is however a danger, even if he has taken care to obtain as much information as possible about the specific context, and even with the very best intentions, that his recommendations for the "best" technical solution will not be adopted and implemented by the readers owing to the fact that they do not consider it be "their" solution.
2. **Process:** if this same manager decides to enhance his approach by including the notion of process, given that it is of primordial importance, he will then seek to answer the question "How?". Thus, while retaining all the richness of the previous approach, he will now be using a "process-content" model, in which the process takes the lead role but not at the expense of his expert knowledge and the need for essential content. He is well aware that to achieve his intended final result, i.e. to ensure that his solutions are implemented by the stakeholders, it is infinitely preferable to create a climate of confidence, devoid of doubt and circumspection, with an onus on collaboration and even co-creation. To this effect, he must challenge them and encourage them to find solutions to the problem that he has been tasked to solve. To perform this action to the best of his ability, according to circumstances, the characters involved, the possible areas of cooperation and levels of urgency, the manager should seek to position himself as a "Servant Leader" rather than as an "Order Giver" (i.e. expert or direct line). He will be aware that a solution stands a greater chance of successful implementation if the stakeholder has played an active role in designing it and clearly feels that this level of involvement will continue throughout the execution process.

3. **Purpose:** if the manager wishes to go even further, he will wish to complete the "purpose-process-content" trilogy, seeking wherever possible to deal with each element in this order, thus addressing the issue of "purpose" first of all – i.e the "whys & wherefores" (aims, stakes, vision, strategy, priorities, importance or urgency). If the manager has had the opportunity to exchange with the stakeholders on their vision of the company and, according to their personality, their stage of development and the overall context, to create conditions in which they feel co-responsible for their company, they will be able to provide an opportunity for creation, identity and co-responsibility that will radically change the very nature of relations within the team. He will thus become a "Bearer of Meaning", i.e. a person who will create the conditions in which each of the different stakeholders can accede directly to the purpose that they themselves attribute to their action, even if they may at some point have required momentary support from the manager.

This trilogy can be linked to another trio, ways of thinking combined with causality models. An Order Giver will more often than not comply with a linear causality logic whereas a Bearer of Meaning will be more drawn towards a recursive logic.

### Identity construction in complex situations

Another way of talking about identity construction or identity growth in complex situations comes down to a combination of two models, i.e. stages of leadership development and level of "OKness" in the field of chaos management.

Managers can take belief in their own identity development each time that they find themselves able to switch between the different stages of Order Giver, Servant Leader and Bearer of Meaning. Their ability to switch between these different roles provides a fundamental insight into their state of ontological security.

Movement between these different leadership stages occur as and when the manager takes ownership of the component elements of chaos management. At the very least, he must be able to identify his own intrapsychic areas of ambiguity, ambivalence and paradox, but also of identifying the ambiguities, ambivalences and paradoxes of the situations that he is going through and also all of the same for the different stakeholders with whom he works.

A team leader has attained optimal status for the company when he is able to accompany the growth of his team by enabling his team members themselves to accept and assume the realities of "chaos management".