

## Connective Leadership

The connective leadership model asserts that a new era is emerging. This model, conceptualized by Jean Lipman-Blumen, describes an emerging environment in which traditional approaches to leadership limit a leader's effectiveness. The connective leadership model outlines a repertoire of nine behavioral strategies called "achieving styles" that can dramatically increase leaders' effectiveness in this new environment. The major components of this model are the nine "achieving styles" or behavioral strategies leaders use to accomplish their tasks. A thorough discussion of the basis for the model and stories of connective leaders, both past and present, can be found in paperback in *Connective Leadership: Managing in a Changing World* or hardcover in the *Connective Edge: Leading in an Interdependent World*.

SIDEBARS:  
Assessing Achievement Styles

### **A NEW ERA OF LEADERSHIP**

This connective era is governed by two contradictory forces: interdependence and diversity. These two forces demand conflicting behavioral responses and pull leaders in opposite directions. In this connective era, the tension between these two forces renders traditional leadership behaviors, such as authoritarianism, competitiveness, and rugged individualism, far less relevant. Because organizations, groups, and communities work and live interdependently, leadership decisions affect everything and everyone everywhere. At the same time, groups and individuals worldwide are affirming their distinctive identity and embracing diversity. To act effectively, leaders must be able to integrate these contradictory trends. The clash of these two forces creates unprecedented problems to which leaders who rely solely on traditional approaches are unable to respond effectively.

The connective era is further marked by constant shifts in the connections among people, organizations, and ideas, and, in this era, leaders must alter the way they have traditionally made decisions. Leaders whose skills are limited to the more traditional leadership approaches of dominating, competing, or collaborating will not be effective. The connective leadership model offers a more complex range of behavioral strategies by which leaders can integrate these oppositional forces.

### **ACHIEVING STYLES**

As children, we develop a set of strategies for getting what we want—"personal technologies" for accomplishing our tasks and achieving our goals. The connective leadership model terms these personal technologies "achieving styles." Through trial and error, success and defeat, we develop preferences for particular strategies and then tend to use them predominantly.

Eventually, we learn to call upon those achieving styles that have brought us the most success. Consequently, most individuals develop a relatively limited range of approaches for accomplishing tasks, consistently relying on only two or three strategies, rather than using the entire range of achieving styles. There are, however, nine achieving styles and many combinations of strategies upon which an individual can rely. "Connective leaders" use a broad spectrum of these behavioral strategies to accomplish their goals. They tend to read the situational cues and select the appropriate achieving styles for the task at hand.

The connective leadership model outlines three sets of behavior styles: direct, relational, and instrumental. People who prefer the direct set like to confront their own tasks individually and directly, emphasizing mastery, competition, and power. People who prefer to work on group tasks or help others attain their goals emphasize the relational set. Individuals who use themselves and others as instruments for accomplishing mutual goals prefer the instrumental set.

Within each of these three sets lie three more specific achieving styles behaviors, for a total of nine achieving styles. Figure 1 depicts the nine achieving styles in a deliberate order that represents their theoretical proximity. In addition, based on statistical analyses, the highest correlations are between contiguous styles, with correlations generally decreasing the farther one moves away from a given style on the diagram. Thus, the diagram represents both the theoretical and statistical adjacency of the nine achieving styles.

Whereas individuals rarely rely entirely on one style to accomplish their tasks, for explanatory purposes, the nine styles will be described as if individuals utilize only a single style. Within the direct set, the three achieving styles are intrinsic, competitive, and power. People who prefer intrinsic behaviors are attracted to challenging and important tasks. The challenge of mastering the task on their own excites them. People with a preference for the intrinsic achieving style evaluate their performance against an internal standard of excellence, that is, their own past attainments. Individuals who prefer competitive behavior use an external standard of judgment and compare themselves to the performance of relevant others. They have a passion to outperform others and structure tasks as competitive encounters. People who prefer the power style like to take charge, coordinate, and organize situations, events, resources, and other people. These individuals may delegate tasks to others, but retain control over how those tasks are accomplished.

Within the relational set, the three achieving styles are collaborative, contributory, and vicarious. People who tend to use the collaborative style enjoy working with others on teams and joint projects, sharing both rewards and responsibility. People who prefer the contributory style derive their satisfaction from helping other people complete their tasks. Finally, people who consistently call upon the vicarious style do not actually participate in others' activities. Instead, they encourage or facilitate others' accomplishments, perhaps by acting as a facilitator or mentor, offering wisdom or advice, or cheering them on.

The third set of achieving styles, the instrumental set, includes the personal, social, and entrusting styles. The personal style involves using every aspect of oneself to draw others into one's cause. For example, individuals who rely on this style may use their wit, charm, attractiveness, family background, or other aspects of themselves to attract supporters to help them accomplish their task. People who prefer the social style often rely on "contacts" or their "networking" skills to engage the appropriate people to help them accomplish their tasks. They call upon others who have the specific skills, experience, or contacts needed for the project. Finally, people who tend to utilize the entrusting style expect everyone to help them accomplish their tasks. They select capable individuals, regardless of whether those people have the relevant skills or experience necessary, to assist in attaining their goal.

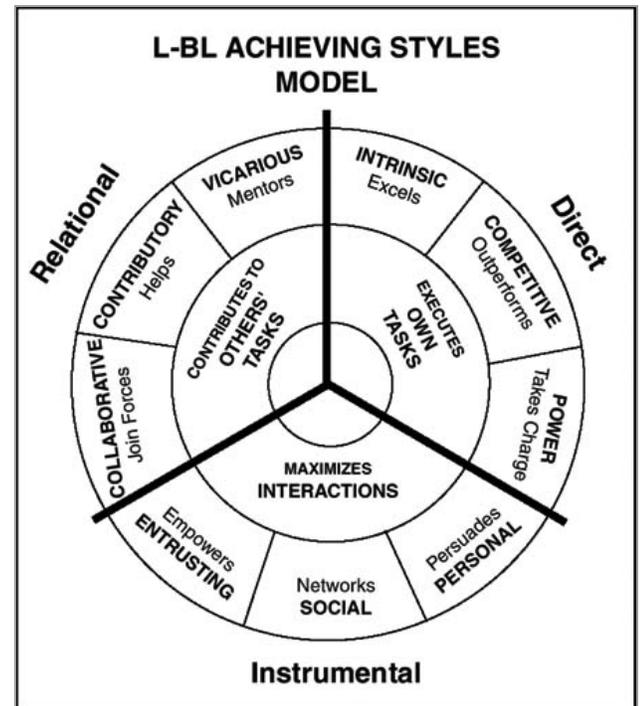


Figure 1. Achieving Styles Model  
Lipman-Blumen (1988).

## CONNECTIVE LEADERS

As noted in the previous section, connective leaders utilize a wide range of achieving styles in accomplishing their tasks. They have developed the capability to utilize all nine achieving styles in a wide range of situations. This behavioral model rests on the assumption that each person learns to use achieving styles successfully through past experiences. Consequently, by extension, individuals can learn through practice to use a broader range of achieving styles.

In particular, through using one of the tools developed in conjunction with this model, the individual achieving styles inventory (which will be discussed in the next section), individuals can identify which of the nine styles they use most often and which they tend to ignore. In that way, an individual can target the underutilized styles for future development. By developing and expanding their profile to include all or most of the achieving styles, individuals can become more effective connective leaders.

## **AVAILABLE TOOLS BASED ON THE CONNECTIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL**

Several inventories currently exist that allow individuals to assess their connective leadership profile. The first tool, the individual Achieving Styles Inventory (ASI), is a forty-five-item Likert-type survey. The respondent answers a series of questions indicating how frequently he or she performs stated behaviors and receives a score for each of the nine achieving styles. The scores indicate the frequency with which each style is used. The specific, computer-generated, narrative feedback the respondent receives describes each achieving style, along with the advantages and disadvantages of the degree to which the respondent uses each achieving style.

A second tool, the organizational achieving styles inventory (OASI), is a survey taken by the individual to determine the extent to which various achieving styles are rewarded by a specific organization. Thus, an individual can examine the fit between his or her approach to accomplishing tasks and the achieving styles (or connective leadership) profile that is rewarded by that organization.

Both instruments have been subjected to reliability and validity testing. In addition, they have been translated into seventeen languages, including Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Thai, French, Bulgarian, and Portuguese. The Achieving Styles Institute houses a web-based database containing responses from more than sixteen thousand respondents from a variety of occupations, industries, and countries, collected beginning in 1984.

A third tool, the achieving styles situational evaluation technique (ASSET), is currently being revised for web use. This tool allows an individual to analyze key aspects of a given task or project to determine which achieving styles would be most effective to address the particular task. Comparing the individual Achieving Styles Inventory (ASI) of potential team members and the achieving styles situational evaluation technique (ASSET) provides a useful method for selecting an optimal team for a given task. This method assumes that the cadre from which team members are drawn have the requisite technical background. (The Achieving Styles Institute website at [www.achievingstyles.com](http://www.achievingstyles.com) offers more detailed information on the Model and the instruments.)

## **RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Approximately 150 papers have been written based on the connective leadership model and achieving styles. Although the majority of these were presented at conference or are unpublished dissertations, reference information for these works can be obtained by contacting the Achieving Styles Institute. The topics studied include cross-cultural leadership, decision making in educational settings, achieving styles of women leaders, students' achieving styles, the relationship between achieving styles and job satisfaction, person-organization fit based on achieving styles, product development teams, and many more.

In the early twenty-first century, a team of researchers at the Achieving Styles Institute is working on publishing a series of articles discussing the relevance of achieving styles to the analysis of various types of leaders. For example, one paper examines the differences in achieving styles profiles for male and female managers, while another paper examined differences in achieving styles profiles among managers from various

countries. In addition, one paper investigates the differences in achieving styles profiles between entrepreneurs and corporate managers, while another paper investigates different approaches taken by public sector and private sector managers.

The connective leadership model presents a framework for viewing the role of leaders in a new, connective environment. Related tools have been developed for leaders to assess their current approach to accomplishing tasks. The connective leadership model also offers conceptual possibilities and a nonjudgmental vocabulary for resolving person to person and person to organization conflicts. Moreover, the model presents developmental possibilities that leaders can use to become more effective in a new era of leadership.

— Lipman-Blumen

—Michelle D. Jones

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## Assessing Achievement Styles

According to the Achievement Style Institute, "Achieving styles are characteristic behaviors individuals use to achieve their goals and connective leadership emphasizes connecting individuals to their own, as well as others', tasks and ego drives. The Achieving Styles Model includes three sets of achieving styles (direct, instrumental, and relational), each subsuming three individual styles, resulting in a full compliment of nine distinct achieving styles." To help individuals and organizations assess their leadership styles, the institute has developed an inventory that can be completed at the institute's website. Responses on a seven-point continuum range from "Never" to "Always." Listed below are sample questions from the Achieving Style Individual Inventory:

1. For me, the most gratifying thing is to have solved a tough problem.
2. I get to know important people in order to succeed.
3. I achieve my goals through contributing to the success of others.
4. For me, winning is the most important thing.
5. When I want to achieve something, I look for assistance.

Achieving Styles Institute. <http://www.achievingstyles.com>

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## Further Reading

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