

Leadership Styles: Lateral or Vertical?

Through the years, I have observed various leadership styles and methods. Some are effective in certain contexts but significantly limit their reach because of their limited perspective. This article aims to explore the differences between what I call “lateral” and “vertical” leadership.

By lateral leadership, I refer to a person who is horizontal in scope and perspective and functions more as a facilitator of vision, ideas and abilities. By vertical leadership, I am referring to a person who is vertical in scope and perspective and has more of a narrow view regarding how to accomplish the vision and with whom they will work.

Breaking news, Spirit-filled stories. Subscribe to Charisma on YouTube now!

7 Traits of Lateral Leadership

- 1. Lateral leaders are open to diverse perspectives in their decision-making process.** Although lateral leaders can have strong opinions, their leadership proclivities allow for interaction with others who may have alternative opinions and solutions. This protects the lateral leaders from their blind spots and makes them less likely to make a huge mistake.
- 2. Lateral leaders release many people to accomplish their mission.** One of the greatest attributes of lateral leaders is their ability to motivate and inspire numerous people to implement the corporate mission based on their unique abilities. One of the earmarks of an organization led by a lateral leader is the fact that delegated authority to function has been given to many

people, resulting in many moving parts, all under the vortex of one compelling vision.

3. **Lateral leaders are innovative.** Due to their nature, lateral leaders are always on the cutting edge regarding the best methodologies to accomplish their mission. They can also hear God's voice more clearly through the various perspectives and gifts represented on their diverse team. Lateral leaders are not threatened by other gifted leaders but are energized by them, their passion and their ideas.
4. **Lateral leaders have a horizontal view of reality, perception and vision implementation.** Lateral leaders enjoy perusing ideas and information from various political, economic and cultural sources. This gives them a well-rounded view, protects them from groupthink and fortifies what is true in their heart and mind. Of course, all influential leaders must also be grounded in their core values to lead without compromise. They also have a clear sense of direction from above (vertical) for all major decisions to guide their team to arrive at the correct consensus (hence, they are vertical in their core values but horizontal in their methodology).
5. **Lateral leaders are flexible and open to change.** One of the most significant traits of lateral leaders is their flexibility, which means they are willing to change course and adapt to more effective measures as soon as their paradigm becomes limiting. They are also usually more open to personal correction and more readily accessible in communication.
6. **Lateral leaders are easy to approach.** Lateral Leaders are usually more empathetic and willing to learn from others, which also means they are generally easier to access and communicate with than vertical leaders.
7. **Lateral leadership is based on a biblical methodology.** God utilizes many kinds of people and churches to accomplish His vision and mission. This can be seen by the vast diversity of ethnicities,

denominations and expressions of His family, advancing His kingdom globally. We can also see how God administers His will through various operations and gifts (Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12:3-8).

Get your FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS today! Stay up to date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!

Four Traits of Vertical Leadership

- 1. Vertical leaders process decision-making with echoes of themselves.** Vertical leaders tend to be more focused and narrow in their approach to implementing their mission, and they do not have much time for diverse opinions. This attribute lends itself to functioning with a team of people who merely echo their leader.
- 2. Vertical leaders are entrenched in old methodologies.** Sometimes, our greatest strength becomes our greatest weakness. What used to work in the past during a particular season in life may no longer be effective in the present day. Vertical leaders can be very effective in an emergency since there is not much time to deliberate a broad decision-making process. They can also work in the short term. However, in the long term, gifted leaders will be bored and eventually leave the organization if they sense their input is either not valued or taken seriously. At the very least, even successful vertical leaders can significantly increase their influence if they merely learn to broaden their reach and their perspective.
- 3. Vertical leaders release only a few in their inner circle.** Vertical leaders only tend to trust and release a few people at a high level to engage their vision and mission. This is because they are so obsessed with quality control. They do not allow for any deviation

from the mission and the method of accomplishing it. This mindset greatly limits the creativity and capacity of gifted leaders, who will eventually become bored and leave the organization if things do not change.

4. **Vertical leaders function within the context of their comfort zone.** Vertical leaders do not like being challenged and attempt to navigate the organization through clones that fit their culture and DNA. They are not generally successful in interfacing with those not operating within the same wineskin or methodology.

This article brushes with broad strokes. Effective leaders may sometimes have to transition from vertical to horizontal or vice versa, depending on the situation. Also, effective lateral leaders will not waste their time with those always pushing back at them for the sake of pushing back. In every organization, all the key leaders and members must buy into the overall values, vision and mission of the entity (Amos 3:3).

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!