

Women Leadership Styles

By Scott Roberts, eHow Contributor

Business experts such as Lois Frankel, author of "See Jane Lead: 99 Ways for Women to Take Charge at Work," advise women who seek positions of leadership in the workplace to abandon feminine behaviors that make them seem unauthoritative. However, Frankel and others-- including researchers at Northwestern University-- believe many feminine approaches to leadership can be powerful. While it may not be wise for a woman in the workplace to deflect praise or smile excessively in business meetings, she also doesn't need to act like a man to succeed in a leadership role.

Transformational

In June 2001, researchers at Northwestern University published a study that found women leaders more likely than men to adopt a transformational style of leadership. In this style, a leader sets high personal, moral and professional standards for herself, serving as a role model and inspiring subordinates to rise to her level. It's a style that puts the leader in the role of cheerleader for employees seeking to meet their individual goals. The traditionally male counterpart to this style is transactional, in which the leader focuses entirely on subordinates' work and gives tangible rewards for tangible achievements.

Democratic

A democratic leader allows those she leads to participate in decision making, while an autocratic leader gives commands that must be followed without discussion. Author and Whirlpool innovation officer Nancy Tennant sees the feminine tendency toward a democratic approach as a strength. "We're long past the idea of the lone-genius innovator," she says. Large businesses, according to Tennant, are now more concerned with drawing on the ideas and experiences of the many members of their organizations.

Interpersonally Oriented

The masculine approach to leadership tends to be task-oriented; meaning the leader's relationship with subordinates is structured around assigned tasks. The feminine, interpersonally-oriented style, according to Northwestern University, includes "behavior such as helping and doing favors for subordinates, looking out for their welfare, explaining procedures, and being friendly and available."