

CONSIDERATION

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Introduction and Definition of Consideration in Leadership

The term **Consideration**, within the domain of organizational psychology and leadership theory, denotes a critical dimension of leader behavior focused squarely on the relationship between the leader and their followers. This concept fundamentally describes the degree to which a leader exhibits concern, empathy, support, and friendship toward their subordinates, emphasizing the human element of organizational interaction above strictly task-related imperatives. It is often conceptualized as the socioemotional aspect of leadership, standing in contrast to behaviors that prioritize solely efficiency or production metrics. A leader high in **Consideration** actively works to create a supportive and psychologically safe work environment, fostering mutual trust, respect, and open communication channels. This behavioral pattern is instrumental in mitigating workplace stress and conflict, cultivating robust interpersonal relationships, and nurturing feelings of job satisfaction and personal worth among team members, thereby underpinning the stability and morale of the entire group structure. Consequently, **Consideration** is not merely an optional nicety but a foundational pillar of effective, sustainable leadership that recognizes the vital role of individual well-being in achieving collective organizational success.

Historically, the study of **Consideration** emerged from seminal research efforts aimed at identifying universal leadership factors that transcend specific industries or contexts. These investigations sought to distill the vast complexity of leadership into measurable, independent behavioral dimensions. The resulting framework positioned **Consideration** as one of the primary, independent factors determining leadership effectiveness, alongside the dimension known as **Initiating Structure**. While **Initiating Structure** focuses on defining roles, organizing activities, and stressing output, **Consideration** attends to the affective domain--the feelings, attitudes, and psychological needs of the workforce. The deliberate display of care and personal interest by the leader serves as a powerful motivational tool, signaling to followers that they are valued as individuals rather than simply interchangeable components of a productive machinery. This recognition is key to building enduring loyalty and commitment, forming a social contract based on reciprocal goodwill and shared organizational goals.

Historical Context and Origin (Ohio State Studies)

The formal conceptualization and empirical validation of **Consideration** are inextricably linked to the groundbreaking leadership research conducted at **Ohio State University** in the late 1940s and 1950s. Prior to this period, leadership research often focused on identifying innate personality traits that supposedly differentiated effective leaders from ineffective ones--a pursuit that yielded inconsistent and often contradictory results. The Ohio State researchers pivoted the field's focus from traits to observable behaviors, marking a paradigm shift in how leadership was studied. Utilizing extensive surveys and observation tools, notably the **Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)**, researchers meticulously analyzed thousands of instances of leadership

behavior across various contexts, including military and industrial settings. This rigorous empirical process led to the identification of two principal, statistically independent dimensions that accounted for the majority of observed leader behaviors.

These two dimensions were formalized as **Initiating Structure** and **Consideration**. The isolation of **Consideration** as an independent factor provided the first robust theoretical framework defining the relational aspect of leadership as distinct from the task aspect. It provided researchers and practitioners with a standardized, quantifiable way to measure how supportive, friendly, and approachable a leader was perceived to be by their subordinates. Crucially, the studies demonstrated that a leader could be high or low on **Consideration** regardless of their score on **Initiating Structure**, suggesting that these behaviors were not mutually exclusive but orthogonal. This finding contradicted earlier assumptions that leaders had to choose between being people-focused or task-focused. The Ohio State model thus established **Consideration** as a core, measurable element of leader behavior, paving the way for subsequent contingency theories that examined how different combinations of these two behaviors impacted outcomes in varying situational contexts.

The development of the LBDQ provided an essential methodological tool for quantifying relational leadership behaviors. Specific items designed to measure **Consideration** included statements related to the leader's willingness to listen, their efforts to be approachable, their advocacy for subordinate welfare, and their tendency to minimize conflict. The consistent factor analysis results across diverse samples cemented the idea that a leader's socioemotional support was a universal and measurable component of their influence, solidifying **Consideration's** place as one of the foundational constructs in leadership psychology that continues to influence modern research and management training programs.

Core Components of Consideration Behavior

Understanding **Consideration** requires dissecting the specific behaviors and attitudes that collectively define this leadership dimension. These components are manifested through consistent actions designed to enhance the subordinate's emotional and psychological well-being within the work environment. The primary component is **Supportiveness**, which includes actively listening to followers' concerns, providing assistance when needed, and acting as a buffer against unnecessary external pressures or bureaucratic hurdles. This involves more than superficial politeness; it demands genuine attention to the challenges faced by team members, whether professional or, when appropriate, personal, demonstrating that the leader values the individual's overall state and is invested in their success both inside and outside the immediate scope of their duties.

A second crucial component is the establishment of **Mutual Trust and Respect**. Leaders high in

Consideration foster an environment where followers feel safe to express opinions, admit mistakes, and take calculated risks without fear of undue reprisal. This involves maintaining open and honest communication, keeping followers informed about decisions that affect them, and delegating authority in a manner that conveys confidence in their capabilities. This trust is reciprocal; followers trust the leader to act in their best interests, and the leader trusts followers to execute their tasks responsibly. This foundation of trust is essential for high-performing teams, as it reduces the need for constant surveillance and micromanagement, freeing up both leader and follower time for more productive endeavors.

Furthermore, **Empathy and approachability** form the bedrock of this dimension. A considerate leader is perceived as accessible and willing to engage with followers on a personal level, recognizing their unique needs, aspirations, and limitations. They treat all subordinates equally and fairly, promoting a sense of equity and minimizing perceived favoritism. This fairness is critical; inconsistent application of supportive behavior undermines the trust built through other considerate acts. These combined elements work synergistically to build strong relational ties, transforming the supervisor-subordinate relationship from a purely transactional exchange into a deeply rooted, interpersonal connection characterized by loyalty and psychological safety, which are critical buffers against organizational stressors.

Behavioral Manifestations and Practical Application

In practical settings, **Consideration** translates into a set of observable behaviors that distinguish relationship-focused leaders. These actions are often subtle but carry significant weight in daily interactions. For instance, a considerate leader frequently offers **positive recognition and reinforcement** for a job well done, ensuring that efforts are acknowledged publicly and privately. They take the time to inquire about the personal lives of their team members--such as family, hobbies, or significant life events--showing interest that extends beyond immediate work tasks. This practice of personalized attention communicates genuine care, distinguishing it from generic, mandated motivational speeches. Furthermore, **facilitating follower development** is a key manifestation; this includes mentoring, providing constructive feedback delivered with sensitivity, and advocating for opportunities for subordinates to grow professionally, thereby demonstrating a commitment to their long-term career success within the organization.

Specific, day-to-day examples of high-consideration behaviors include: offering flexible scheduling options when feasible to accommodate personal needs; proactively mediating conflicts between team members to restore harmony before disputes escalate; apologizing promptly when the leader has made an error or imposed an unnecessary burden; and ensuring that workload distribution is perceived as equitable across the team. These actions reinforce the leader's role not just as a manager of tasks, but as a guardian of team well-being. A leader high in this dimension often demonstrates a protective instinct toward their team, shielding them from unwarranted criticism

from higher management or external stakeholders, thereby cementing their position as a trusted advocate.

Another vital application involves **reducing emotional strain**. When organizational changes, restructuring, or crises occur, the considerate leader focuses intently on communicating honestly, managing follower anxiety through transparency, and providing emotional support necessary to navigate uncertainty. They consistently strive to make the work environment pleasant, utilizing appropriate humor and maintaining a cheerful, yet professional, demeanor. These consistent displays of warmth and personalized attention solidify the leader's image as a reliable ally, significantly reducing feelings of alienation and fostering a collaborative, supportive team culture essential for sustained high performance, even when facing challenging operational demands.

Organizational and Follower Outcomes of High Consideration

The behavioral investment a leader makes in **Consideration** yields profound and measurable positive outcomes at both the individual follower level and the broader organizational level. For the individual, the most immediate benefit is a significant increase in **Job Satisfaction**. When employees feel genuinely cared for by their supervisor, their attitude toward their work and the organization improves dramatically, leading to higher morale. This feeling of being valued directly translates into greater **Organizational Commitment**, as employees are less likely to seek employment elsewhere, resulting in lower turnover rates--a substantial economic benefit for the organization due to reduced recruitment, onboarding, and training costs associated with constant workforce churn. Loyal employees are also more likely to be organizational citizens, performing duties that go above and beyond their formal job descriptions.

At the team level, high **Consideration** fosters enhanced **Group Cohesion** and cooperation. The leader models positive interpersonal behavior, which encourages followers to treat each other with similar respect and support. This supportive climate significantly reduces internal conflict and strife, improving the efficiency of teamwork and complex problem-solving processes where diverse opinions must be integrated constructively. Furthermore, **Reduced Stress and Burnout** are critical psychological outcomes. Knowing that the leader provides a safety net and emotional support allows employees to handle demanding work tasks without the debilitating effects of chronic stress. This psychological security often correlates with higher levels of creativity and innovation, as subordinates feel comfortable proposing novel, potentially riskier ideas without fear of harsh judgment or ridicule, thus accelerating adaptive organizational learning.

While early research sometimes struggled to find a direct, unmediated link between **Consideration** and objective performance metrics (like short-term production output), subsequent contingency models and meta-analyses have clarified its powerful indirect influence. High **Consideration** reliably improves intervening variables--such as intrinsic motivation, trust in management, and

organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs)--which are themselves prerequisites for sustained high performance over the long term. Essentially, **Consideration** builds the psychological infrastructure necessary for employees to willingly exert discretionary effort, ensuring that performance gains are achieved through intrinsic motivation and psychological ownership rather than coercive control or mere compliance. It creates a psychological environment where individuals are motivated to perform because they want to contribute to the success of a leader and organization they trust and respect.

Distinction from Other Leadership Dimensions (e.g., Initiating Structure)

To fully grasp the essence of **Consideration**, it is necessary to differentiate it clearly from its counterpart dimension, **Initiating Structure**. While both are recognized as primary behavioral dimensions of leadership effectiveness, they operate on fundamentally different planes of organizational interaction. **Initiating Structure** is fundamentally task-oriented; it focuses on defining roles, establishing formal communication channels, setting clear performance standards, planning activities, and pushing for adherence to schedules and procedures. It addresses the "what," "when," and the "how" of work execution, aiming for predictability and efficiency. Conversely, **Consideration** is relationship-oriented; it focuses on the emotional support, rapport, trust, and psychological well-being of the team members. It addresses the "who" and the underlying motivation, seeking to ensure the human resources are healthy and willing to perform.

A leader high in **Initiating Structure** might spend their time developing detailed workflow diagrams, conducting rigorous operational audits, or enforcing strict deadlines. A leader high in **Consideration**, however, might spend time mentoring a struggling employee through a personal crisis, advocating for a better work-life balance policy, or ensuring that performance recognition is fair and personalized. Crucially, the Ohio State framework established these dimensions as independent, meaning a leader can possess various combinations of both. For example, a leader could be high in both **Initiating Structure** (highly organized and goal-focused) and high in **Consideration** (highly supportive and empathetic)--often deemed the most effective combination, particularly in environments requiring both high productivity and complex collaboration. Conversely, a leader could be low on both, resulting in laissez-faire or ineffective leadership characterized by drift and low morale.

The distinction highlights the complexity of effective leadership. While **Initiating Structure** provides the necessary clarity and direction to achieve short-term operational goals, **Consideration** provides the necessary emotional capital and resilience to maintain long-term commitment and organizational health. Neglecting **Consideration**, even in highly structured, high-pressure environments, typically results in employee resentment, high turnover, and passive resistance, as followers feel exploited or dehumanized. Therefore, understanding **Consideration** is understanding that efficiency alone is insufficient for organizational longevity; it must be balanced

by a deep, demonstrable commitment to the welfare of the people who execute the work, ensuring that productivity is built upon a foundation of mutual respect and psychological investment.

Challenges and Modern Relevance of Consideration

Despite its proven benefits, leaders often face challenges in consistently applying high levels of **Consideration**, particularly in fast-paced or crisis-driven environments. One primary challenge is the lingering perception that **Consideration** is "soft," "time-consuming," or unrelated to profit, leading some leaders to default to prioritizing immediate task completion (Initiating Structure) over relationship building, especially when resources are scarce or deadlines are pressing. Furthermore, maintaining high **Consideration** can be emotionally draining for the leader, requiring significant emotional labor to consistently display empathy and support for diverse individual needs while simultaneously managing their own organizational stress. Leaders must find a sustainable balance, ensuring their efforts at supporting others do not lead to their own personal burnout or create a perception of unfairness or boundary violation among team members who prefer greater professional distance.

The relevance of **Consideration** has only amplified in the modern work environment, particularly with the rise of remote and hybrid work models. In virtual settings, the spontaneous, informal interactions that naturally build rapport--such as water-cooler chats or casual hallway conversations--are often lost, making deliberate, scheduled acts of **Consideration** essential. Leaders must intentionally schedule virtual check-ins, utilize technology to maintain personalized contact, and ensure that remote workers feel equally supported, recognized, and integrated into the organizational culture as their in-office counterparts. The psychological distance created by technology requires higher levels of proactive communication, intentional vulnerability, and emotional transparency from the leader to maintain trust and prevent feelings of isolation or detachment among followers who lack daily physical proximity.

Moreover, modern organizational contexts emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) underscore the necessity of sophisticated **Consideration**. Effective consideration requires deep cultural sensitivity and emotional intelligence, ensuring that supportive behaviors are perceived as genuine and appropriate across different cultural backgrounds, generational cohorts, and personal contexts. A truly considerate leader must be attuned to systemic differences and strive to create an inclusive environment where every individual feels respected, heard, and valued according to their unique needs, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach to support. In essence, **Consideration** serves as the leadership dimension most aligned with ethical and humanistic management practices, remaining a vital component for building resilient, engaged, and high-performing teams in the complex global economy of the 21st century.