

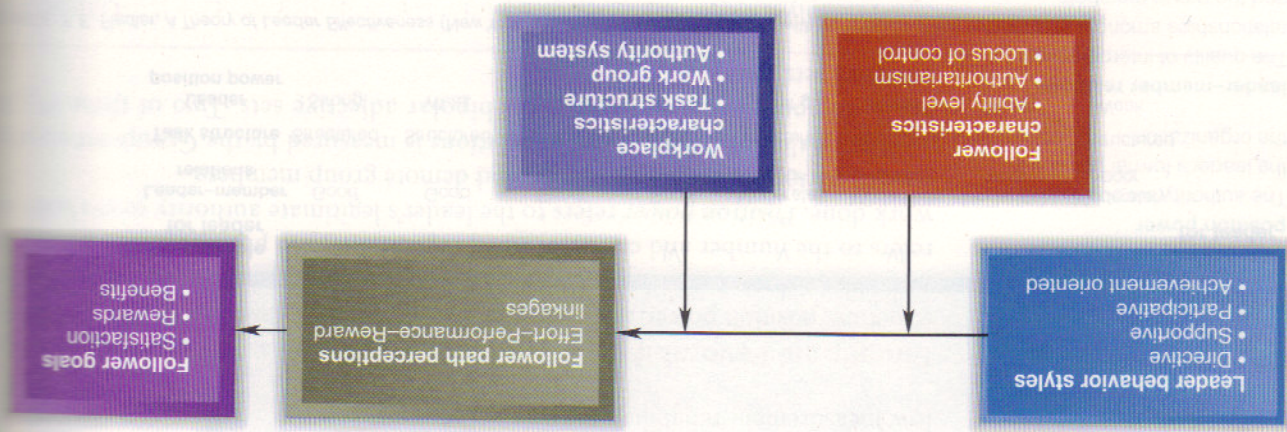


FIGURE 12.3 The Path-Goal Theory of Leadership

The path-goal theory assumes that leaders adapt their behavior and style to the characteristics of the followers and the environment in which they work. According to the path-goal theory, leaders adapt their behavior and style to the characteristics of the followers and the environment in which they work.

The path-goal theory assumes that leaders adapt their behavior and style to the characteristics of the followers and the environment in which they work. According to the path-goal theory, leaders adapt their behavior and style to the characteristics of the followers and the environment in which they work. According to the path-goal theory, leaders adapt their behavior and style to the characteristics of the followers and the environment in which they work.

Robert House developed a path-goal theory of leader effectiveness based on an expectancy theory of motivation.²² From the perspective of path-goal theory, the basic role of the leader is to clear the follower's path to the goal. The leader uses the most appropriate of four leader behavior styles to help followers clarify the paths that lead them to work and personal goals. The key concepts in the theory are shown in Figure 12.3. A leader selects from the four leader behavior styles, shown in Figure 12.3, the one that is most helpful to followers at a given time. The *directive style* is used when the leader must give specific guidance about work tasks, schedule work, and let followers know what is expected. The *supportive style* is used when the leader needs to express concern for followers' well-being and social status. The *participative style* is used when the leader must engage in joint decision-making activities with followers. The *achievement-oriented style* is used when the leader must set challenging goals for followers and show strong confidence in those followers.

What, then, is to be done if there is a mismatch? That is, what happens when a low LPC leader is in a moderately favorable situation or when a high LPC leader is in a highly favorable or highly unfavorable situation? It is unlikely that the leader can be changed, according to the theory, because the leader's need structure is an enduring trait that is hard to change. Fiedler recommends that the leader's situation be changed to fit the leader's style.²¹ A moderately favorable situation would be recommended to be more favorable and, therefore, more suitable for the low LPC leader. A highly favorable or highly unfavorable situation would be changed to one that is moderately favorable and more suitable for the high LPC leader. Fiedler's theory makes an important contribution in drawing our attention to the leader's situation.

Path-Goal Theory

- 6 Compare and contrast the path-goal theory, the Situational Leadership® model, leader-member exchange, and the Substitutes for Leadership model.