

How do you explain participatory leadership in one sentence?

Imagine... a meeting of 60 people, where in an hour you would have heard everyone and at the end you would have precisely identified the 5 most important points that people are willing to act on together.

Traditional ways of working	Participatory leadership
Individuals responsible for decisions	Using collective intelligence to inform decision-making
No single person has the right answer but somebody has to decide	Together we can reach greater clarity - intelligence through diversity
Hierarchical lines of management	Community of practice
Wants to create a FAIL-SAFE environment	Creates a SAFE-FAIL environment that promotes learning
Top-down agenda setting	Set agenda together
I must speak to be noticed in meetings	Harvesting what matters, from all sources
Communication in writing only	Asking questions
Organisation chart determines work	Task forces/purpose-oriented work in projects
People represent their services	People are invited as human beings, attracted by the quality of the invitation
One-to-many information meetings	A participatory process can inform the information!
Great for maintenance, implementation (doing what we know)	When innovation is needed – learning what we don't know, to move on – engaging with constantly moving targets
Information sharing	When engagement is needed from all, including those who usually don't contribute much.
Dealing with complaints by forwarding them to the hierarchy for action	Dealing with complaints directly, with hierarchy trusting that solution can come from the staff
Consultation through surveys, questionnaires, etc.	Co-creating solutions together in real time, in presence of the whole system
Top-down	Bottom-up
Management by control	Management by trust

Questionnaires (contribution wanted from employees)	Engagement processes – collective inquiry with stakeholders
Mechanistic	Organic – if you treat the system like a machine, it responds like a living system
Top down orders – often without full information	Top-down orders informed by consultation
Resistance to decisions from on high	Better acceptance of decisions because of involvement
Silos/hierarchical structures	More networks
Tasks dropped on people	Follow your passion
Rigid organisation	Flexible self-organisation
Policy design officer disconnected from stakeholders	Direct consultation instead of via lobby organisations
People feel unheard/not listened to	People feel heard
Working without a clear purpose and jumping to solutions	Collective clarity of purpose is the invisible leader
Motivation via carrot & stick	Motivation through engagement and ownership
Managing projects	Better preparation – going through chaos, open mind, taking account of other ideas
Focused on deliverables	Focused on purpose – the rest falls into place
Result-oriented	Purpose-oriented
Seeking answers	Seeking questions
Pretending/acting	Showing up as who you are
Broadcasting, boring, painful meetings	Meetings where every voice is heard, participants leave energised
Chairing, reporting	Hosting, harvesting, follow-up
Event & time-focused	Good timing, ongoing conversation & adjustment

Adapted from a posting by Toke Moeller http://www.evolutionarynexus.org/user/toke_moller.