

TITLE: Leadership Practices in the Public, Private, and Nonprofit Sectors:
A Comparison/Contrast Using The Leadership Challenge Model

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OBJECTIVE: To examine whether executives practice leadership differently across public, private, and nonprofit organizations.

METHODOLOGY: Respondents were 69 executives and managers from the Hagerstown/Washington County, Maryland area (46% response rate), with about equal participation from public, private and nonprofit organizations. Interviews with 10 executives supplemented the empirical analysis.

KEY FINDINGS: The rank order of leadership practices by this sample was consistent with published data by Kouzes and Posner (1995). The rank order was very consistent between the private and public sectors, but not with the nonprofit sector. The latter group reported more engagement in Encouraging and less in Challenging than the other two sectors.

The author summarizes: "The overall statistical analysis agrees with that expressed in the Leadership Challenge study. There appear to be no significant differences in leadership traits as practiced across the three organizational types" (p. 63). However, the author goes on to explain that these results were not entirely consistent with what he found in his interviews with leaders: "I conclude that the most telling result is that what a leader verbalizes is important to him/her but not necessarily be the trait that he/she perceive themselves to use most frequently" (p. 64).

The author concludes: "I have also found that it is important to recognize the 'context' in which leadership is discussed. Though the research and in discussions with Kouzes and Posner, I have come to realize that the practice of leadership involves changes in context, not the actual practice. Leadership practices are portable across all business and social organizations. It is the context of how these leadership practices are presented and reinforced to the followers that present the differences. This is the underlying morale to this research and what I had hoped to understand better through the model and the analysis of the responses" (p. 76).