

Japanese vs. U.S. Leadership Styles

In a number of ways, Japanese leadership styles differ from those in the United States. A number of reasons have been cited for these differences. One of the most common is that Japanese and U.S. managers have a basically different philosophy of managing people.

Table below provides a comparison of seven key characteristics that come from William Ouchi's *Theory Z*, which combines Japanese and U.S. assumptions and approaches. Note in the table that the Japanese leadership approach is heavily group oriented, paternalistic, and concerned with the employee's work and personal life. The U.S. leadership approach is almost the opposite.

<i>Philosophical Dimension</i>	<i>Japanese Approach</i>	<i>U.S. Approach</i>
<i>Employment</i>	Often for life; layoffs are rare	Usually short-term; layoffs are common
<i>Evaluation and promotion</i>	Very slow; big promotions may not come for the first 10 years	Very fast: those not quickly promoted often seek employment elsewhere
<i>Career paths</i>	Very general; people rotate from one area to another and become familiar with all areas of operations	Very specialized; people tend to stay in one area (accounting, sales, etc.) for their entire careers
<i>Decision making</i>	Carried out via group decision making	Carried out by the individual manager
<i>Control mechanism</i>	Very implicit and informal; people rely heavily on trust and goodwill	Very explicit; people know exactly what to control and how to do it
<i>Responsibility</i>	Shared collectively	Assigned to individuals
<i>Concern for employees</i>	Management's concern extends to the whole life, business and social, of the worker	Management concerned basically with the individual's work life only