Understanding Management Styles Checklist 236

Introduction

Which personal style should managers adopt to ensure success? What is the most effective approach to managing the work of subordinates? These questions have been extensively researched and debated since the 1950's, and while the general consensus has moved away from 'command and control' styles of management and leadership towards more consultative and participative approaches. However there is no single ideal, as the best approach may vary according to circumstances and individual characteristics.

Style is a personal matter, and it is important for managers to be able to discover the style that works best for them and to adjust it according to the tasks at hand and the people involved. Mintzberg (2009) comments on the importance of context in partnership with style and refers to a symbiotic relationship, where 'style matters and context matters, but mostly they matter together'.

This checklist introduces some models of management styles in order to help managers begin to assess and develop their own personal style.

Definition

Management style is the manner in which managers exercise their authority in the workplace and ensure that their objectives are achieved. It is about how managers plan and organise work in their area of responsibility and in particular about how they relate to, and deal with their colleagues, subordinates and team members. The key components of management and leadership style are attitudes and behaviours.

Some models of management styles

This review is by no means comprehensive but covers some of the best known models and provides some pointers for analysing management styles. (For further information see the related models and thinkers listed at the end of this checklist).

Rensis Likert

Early theories about management and leadership style focused primarily on behaviour – the manner in which authority was exercised. Based on research carried out at the University of Michigan in the 1950's, Rensis Likert identified four different styles:

- **exploitative/authoritative** – the leader has little trust or confidence in his subordinates, manages by issuing orders and uses fear and punishment as motivators
- **benevolent/authoritative** – the leader has some trust in his workers but treats them in a condescending and paternalistic manner
- **consultative** – the leader shows trust and confidence towards subordinates, seeks their opinions and ideas, but retains decision making power

- **participative** – the leader trusts his subordinates completely, seeks and acts on their ideas and involves them in setting goals.

Likert's research suggested that consultative and participative styles were more effective, but he did not consider the context in which management was being carried out.

Theory X and theory Y

Douglas McGregor, working in the 1960's, believed that management style was determined by the manager's assumptions about human nature. Based on his research, he identified two broad sets of beliefs which he labelled theory X and theory Y.

Theory X suggests that human beings have an inherent dislike of work and need to be controlled and directed if they are to achieve objectives. This leads to autocratic and paternalistic management styles. **Theory Y** sees work as a natural part of life from which people gain a sense of satisfaction. Workers can be motivated to give their best by respect and recognition. This leads to more consultative and participative management styles.

McGregor believed that while both styles could be effective, theory X management could lead to demotivation and low levels of performance, but theory Y management could produce high levels of motivation and performance.

The managerial grid

Working in the 1950s and 60s, Robert R Blake and Jane S Mouton identified two drivers of managerial behaviour: concern for getting the job done and concern for the people involved. To demonstrate how an individual manager's style is affected by their level of concern for these two factors, they used a nine by nine grid. (See related models). This showed five basic management styles:

1. **Impoverished management** – little concern for either the task or the people. This style involves little more than going through the motions, doing only enough to get by.
2. **Authority-obedience** – high levels of concern for task and low for people.
   This represents a controlling style, close to the traditional 'command and control' approach, but runs the risk of damaging human relationships.
3. **Country club leadership** – high levels of concern for people and low for task.
   This is seen as accommodating – it may create a warm and friendly working environment but at the cost of getting the job done efficiently.
4. **Team management** – high levels of concern for both task and people.
   This is seen as the most effective style with the potential for high achievement.
5. **Middle of the road management** – moderate level of concern for task and people.
   This achieves a balance between task and performance but is likely to perpetuate the status quo rather than achieve notable success.

William B Reddin's 3D theory

Reddin (1970) also focused on concern for the task and concern for people, which he defined as Task Orientation (TO) and Relationship Orientation (RO). He introduced the idea that particular styles might be more appropriate in some contexts than others. Starting from four basic styles: related (high RO), integrated (high RO and TO), dedicated (low RO) and separated (low RO and TO), he added a third dimension, depending on how appropriately and therefore efficiently the style was used. (See related models).

Style	Inappropriately used	Appropriately used
Related	Missionary	Developer
Integrated	Compromiser	Executive
Dedicated	Autocrat	Benevolent autocrat
Separated	Deserter	Bureaucrat

The Tannenbaum Schmidt Leadership Continuum

A different approach was taken by Warren H Tannenbaum and W H Schmidt in the late 1950's. They looked at the extent to which a manager exerts authority or control and the extent to which subordinates have freedom to act on their own initiative. They represented a range of possibilities along the continuum and identified seven styles: tells, persuades, shows, consults, asks, shares and involves.

They further suggested that a good manager will be able to judge the capabilities of the team and move between points on the continuum accordingly. Over time, as abilities develop, the manager may choose to accord a greater level of freedom while retaining overall responsibility for the work.

Situational leadership

Writing in the late 1980s, Hersey and Blanchard further developed the idea that different situations require different types of leadership. They saw the willingness and ability of subordinates to carry out the tasks allocated to them as the key factor in selecting the most appropriate leadership style:

- a **telling/directing** style when they are both unwilling and unable
- a **selling/coaching** style when there is some competence but a lack of commitment
- a **participating/supporting** style where they are competent but unwilling or insecure
- a **delegating** style where competence and commitment are both high.

Action checklist

1. Know yourself

Looking at the models described above, ask yourself where you fit in. Think about which styles you feel most comfortable with. What are your preferred ways of working? What motivates you? How do you communicate with your colleagues and team members?

You may, at this stage, wish to complete a diagnostic test or assessment (testing through HR, using a professional model, is generally recommended) or consult with colleagues you can trust, using the models provided here to support your insight and judgement.

See Additional Resources for books on assessing your personal style.

2. Look at your work habits

How do you manage your time? How do you set work priorities? How organised are you? Do you focus on formal team and one to one meetings or do you prefer to manage by wandering (or walking) about.

3. Think about how others see you

Reflect on how your colleagues and team members interact with you. How do they react when you ask them to complete a task or comment on their performance? Look at times when things have gone well or badly and try to identify how your own behaviour contributed to the outcome.

4. Consider the context in which you work

What motivates your team members? What do they expect from you? The answers may vary depending on their age, educational level or cultural background as well as experience and familiarity with the work. What may be an acceptable management style for one person may not be acceptable for another. Consider also the organisation you work for. What kind of management structure is in place? How are objectives set and how is performance managed across the organisation? What are the accepted behavioural and cultural norms? Do you work in a high pressure environment or are things more informal and relaxed? How well do you think you are fitting in?

5.   Identify areas for adjustment or development

Think about your strengths and weaknesses and any problems that have become apparent. Are there any areas where you need to develop your skills, adjust to the team you are leading, or adapt to the wider culture of your organisation? Consider what you need to work on and decide how you will go about this. Can you get advice from your line manager or can you find a mentor with whom you can talk things through? Would structured training in skills such as time management, communication or presentation be appropriate?

Managers should avoid:

- trying to imitate others or squeezing themselves into a mould that works for others
- taking an inflexible approach to management and leadership
- riding roughshod over the accepted style and culture in their organisation

National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership

This checklist has relevance to the following standards:
A: Managing self and personal skills, unit 3

Additional resources

Books

The leader's guide to influence: How to use soft skills to get hard results, Mike Brent and Fiona Elsa Dent,
Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2010

Leading people instant manager, Phil Baguley,
London: Hodder Education, 2010

Why do management practices differ across firms and countries? Nicholas Bloom and John Van Reenen
London School of Economics and Political Science ; Centre for Economic Performance, 2010

Managing, Henry Mintzberg
Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2009
(See especially p 128 Assessing your personal style of managing - the art-craft-science triangle)
This title is also available as an e-book.

Gods of management, Charles Handy,
London: Souvenir Press, 2009

All you need to know about leadership and the eleven roles of the leader, George Krasker,
Bloomington Ind: Author House, 2008

Making sense of leadership: exploring the five key roles used by effective leaders, Esther Cameron and Mike Green,
London: Kogan Page, 2008
This title is also available as an ebook

Leading at a higher level: Blanchard on leadership and creating high performing organisations, Ken Blanchard
Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007

Leadership theory and practice, Peter G Northouse
Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2004

Leadership styles, Tony Kippenberger
Oxford: Capstone, 2002
Test your management style, John Wilson
London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000

How to make your management style more effective, WJ Reddin,
London: McGraw Hill, 1987

How to assess your managerial style, Charles Margerison
Bradford: MCB Publications, 1979

The new managerial grid, Robert R Blake and Jane S Mouton
Houston, Texas: Gulf, 1978

Managerial effectiveness, William J Reddin
New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1970

The human side of enterprise, Douglas McGregor,
New York NY: McGraw Hill, 1960

This is a selection of books available for loan to members from the CMI library. More information at:
www.managers.org.uk/library

Related checklists

Empowerment (048)
Leading from the middle (041)
Understanding organisational culture (232)

Related thinkers

Douglas McGregor: theory X and theory Y (026)
Robert R Blake and Jane Mouton: the managerial grid (038)

Related models

Managerial grid
McGregor's theory X and theory Y
Reddin's 3D style model
Situational leadership
Tannenbaum and Schmidt leadership continuum

This is one of many checklists available to all CMI members. For more information please contact

t: 01536 204222   **e**: enquiries@managers.org.uk   **w** www.managers.org.uk

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