

Methods of Management

By John Mehrmann

Everyone has the opportunity to act in a management capacity in some aspect or event in life. You may be in the role of a manager or supervisor at work. You might manage the activities in your household, in your community, or temporarily manage activities at an event. What is your management style? What would it be if you could choose? What if the people reporting to you could choose for you?

The following are some common management styles. See if you can find characteristics of yourself, or your management, in one or more of the following categories.

1. Delegation

Delegation is often considered a necessary trait of management. It is the ability to assign responsibilities and tasks to a direct report. This implies that the individual on the receiving end of the delegation has the capability and the authority to complete the assigned task effectively. Delegation is a means to share the burden, get more done, and can be an educational process. This is effective provided the recipient of the delegation is supported and receives recognition for accomplishing the assigned goal.

If the recipient of the delegation does not receive the corresponding recognition, then it is not delegation, it is obligation.

2. Obligation

Management by obligation is the theory that assuming higher levels of authority is equivalent to obtaining greater proximity to status as deity. By separating authority from responsibility, the manager is able to easily gather personal accolades for achievement and can just as easily assign blame to others for failure. A trait of management by obligation is a lack of communication between management and direct reports. An unfortunate side effect of treating direct reports as if they are obligated to produce and have no other alternatives is that the people begin to believe it. As a result, performance steadily declines to mediocrity, "just doing what needs to be done, enough to get by".

3. Procrastination

As this style implies, it is to put off work and decisions indefinitely. As a management style this allows unresolved issues time to get worse. This style allows competitors time to catch-up, surpass or get a bigger advantage. Taking too long to make a decision can cause disarray, as people begin to make independent and unguided decisions for individual activities. We will get back to procrastination later.

4. Constipation

Just as dangerous as procrastination, a constipated management style is best described as what happens when stuff get backed up. Sometimes there are decisions and clear directives that are issued at an executive level, a clear course for the organization and essential goals for success. When constipation occurs, these directives, goals and instructions never make it through management. Sometimes there is a hidden layer of management that acts like a Bermuda Triangle of information, the communication goes in but never comes out. Like procrastination, people are left to make independent decisions that may or may not be aligned with the overall objectives of the group. The only relief for constipation is communication. Otherwise you are doomed to perspiration.

5. Perspiration

This style is the mad rush to accomplish everything individually. This is only associated with a management style because even people in management positions sometimes fall prey to this habit. It is the unfortunate belief that the only way to get something done right is to do it yourself. While this may be true in isolated cases, it should not be the standard practice. It is essential to the health and growth of any organization to teach and share skills, knowledge and information. Anyone that takes isolated responsibility for conducting tasks is limited the throughput of the organization to their individual capacity. The way to break out of this habit is to delegate, share, teach and educate.

6. Desperation

Quite often this style of management is either the result of poor planning, improper forecast, or lack of intestinal fortitude. Desperation is most frequently exhibited in management related to sales, and may result in a panicked pricing response to market conditions or inappropriate berating of sales associates. In some organizations desperation is continually perpetuated, even during profitable and successful periods, for the purpose of motivating employees. Like a great march across the desert, the most dedicated personnel will endeavor to persevere through hardship. However, the danger of perpetual desperation is that the most talented individuals will eventually pack up their knowledge and experience to take it to a more promising environment. If desperation and obligation proliferate in an organization, it is not loyalty but rather lack of ambition or marketable talent that remains. These are not qualities that can sustain an organization.

7. What in 'tarnation?

This is the management style that results when the human capital is diluted of experienced and knowledgeable employees. This may occur after a large restructuring, known to the unemployed as a "lay off", or through attrition resulting from desperation. If management is accustomed to having activities carried out, but is disconnected from the people who actually do the work, then the infrastructure can be subject to collapse when key personnel are removed. While this does not mean that the business will fail, it does mean that certain aspects of the business may stagnate. The repercussions may take months or years to redesign and rebuild. Sometimes the new design and new processes are better, sometimes not. It is a gamble, and the only way to improve your odds is to remove the mystery by getting close to the action and the people who make the magic happen. Cross-train, communicate and understand your business.

8. Education

One of the most powerful and progressive styles of management is based on the recognition that we never stop learning. Supporting education can come in many styles and methods. Some managers use formal training seminars. Some managers effectively use cross-training or encourage documentation and Intranets to perpetuate internal knowledge. For some trades, education can be enhanced with school or activities with associations. A basic and effective method of combining education and communication is by direct training and cooperative support between the manager and the individual. This can be accomplished by conducting projects or tasks together, discussing the goals and defining conclusions through the process.

9. Communication

An essential requirement for effective management, communication is a two way street. It includes passing along communications from executive objectives, share holders, or company directives. It is the dissemination of the strategic goals for the group, and explanations of assignments for delegation. Productive communication is also based on active listening techniques, recognizing the importance of the feedback and insight from the employees and customers. A successful manager knows that wisdom and understanding are gained by listening, not by speaking. Share direction, strategy, goals and experience, but listen for feedback, insight, effectiveness and status.

10. Liberation

If the environment and situation support this style, give people the freedom to manage their own performance and activities. Nobody is closer to the job at hand than the one who is doing it. Trust that the individual is the master of the task. Give support if it is called for, but otherwise allow the person the flexibility to experiment with improvements and processes. In this style, the manager is like the conductor of an orchestra. Each person contributes to the performance, the leader keeps entire group aligned in timing and melody. There are periods for each person or instrument to be highlighted, and periods for each to support and compliment the others. When conducted properly, the result is a magnificent symphony performance.

11. Motivation

Do you know what is most important to each person under your care and guidance? If the answer is 'yes', then you are a motivator. If you hesitate, then it is time to sit down with each person for an open and honest conversation. We all work for our own reasons. Some people desire promotion, some expect to be rewarded with pay, and others are happy with the current situation. Some people are working for their next job, others are just happy to live near work, and a few thrive on personal recognition. There is no right or wrong reason for motivation. The desire to satisfy other people is no nobler than the desire for a bigger paycheck. What does matter is that you know what is important to each individual and have a plan to help them achieve personal goals. Please also keep in mind that personal goals change, so it is necessary to keep this open dialogue.

12. Inspiration

Thomas Edison said that invention is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. Keep in mind that he was talking about inventions, and management is about people. Inspiration in management is not the spark of a new idea, but rather it is the ability to inspire others. In a leadership capacity you must inspire not only the people who report to you, but it is also necessary to inspire the people to whom you report. Inspiration begins with learning to develop and exhibiting your characteristics that inspire others. Examples of character traits that inspire are consistency, reliability, honesty, integrity, strength and compassion. Regardless of your lasting or temporary leadership role, you have the ability to inspire others with your own activity. How you use this opportunity is up to you.

13. Direction

This trait is the ability to properly define goals. Goals and objective set the direction, communication makes is clear, and proper motivation will get everyone there together. It is important to note that goals are something to be obtained, not avoided. That very statement may seem self-evident, but it is often misunderstood. For example, achieving a milestone, a metric, a quota, a number or a destination are goals to be obtained. Hannibal, the great general of Carthage, marched men and elephants thousands of miles over the French Alps in winter on his quest from Spain to Rome. Rome was the goal for Hannibal, and his army was focused on obtaining victory. On the other hand, avoiding defeat or deficit is not an objective. Avoiding failure is a stalling tactic that may ultimately fail. You must aggressively seek to succeed, and the threat of failure will be a concern for your competitors. What are your clearly defined and measured objectives, and what is your path to achieve them?

We are all on a voyage of self-discovery and learning. By reviewing these methods of management, hopefully you have discovered some perspective about your method or your situation. If there is opportunity to improve, you are the better person for initiating it. If you are already maximizing your personal performance, then your organization is that much the better for it.

Self-Analysis Quiz

What Management Styles do you have?

- ☐ 1 Delegation
- ☐ 2 Obligation
- ☐ 3 Procrastination
- ☐ 4 Constipation
- ☐ 5 Perspiration
- ☐ 6 Desperation
- ☐ 7 What in 'tarnation
- ☐ 8 Education
- ☐ 9 Communication
- ☐ 10 Liberation
- ☐ 11 Motivation
- ☐ 11 Inspiration
- ☐ 13 Direction

What Styles does your Management have?

- ☐ 1 Delegation
- ☐ 2 Obligation
- ☐ 3 Procrastination
- ☐ 4 Constipation
- ☐ 5 Perspiration
- ☐ 6 Desperation
- ☐ 7 What in 'tarnation
- ☐ 8 Education
- ☐ 9 Communication
- ☐ 10 Liberation
- ☐ 11 Motivation
- ☐ 11 Inspiration
- ☐ 13 Direction

Do you have an article, idea or suggestion that you would like to share?

Submit your articles, ideas and suggestions to info@ExecutiveBlueprints.com

About the Author:

John Mehrmann is President of [Executive Blueprints Inc.](http://ExecutiveBlueprints.com), an organization devoted to improving business practices and developing human capital.

www.ExecutiveBlueprints.com provides resource materials for trainers, sample Case Studies, educational articles and references to local affiliates for consulting and executive coaching.

You may distribute this article freely, print it, sell it, or include it as part of a package as long as it is left completely intact, unchanged and delivered via the original PDF File.

Copyright © 2005-2006 Executive Blueprints Inc, www.ExecutiveBlueprints.com