

How To Know Your Team – And Manage Them

By Charles Moore

Modern leadership places an ever-higher premium on coaching team members to get results. The only problem with this approach is that well-educated and highly skilled executives simply cannot be managed in a command-and-control fashion. Modern management places far greater emphasis on listening and influencing.

Leaders need to recognize that in order to be effective, they must adjust their communications style to suit individual team members.

According to Gerry Roche, senior chairman at Heidrick & Struggles, the very definition of management is getting work from others, not doing it yourself.

“How can you get work done through others, if you aren’t a good communicator or if you don’t have good human sensitivities?” Roche asks.

“Whether you are a chief operating officer or a chief executive officer, you are not going to be measured by what you do yourself – you are going to be judged on the team that you build, enthuse, motivate, integrate, assess and compensate. You are going to be measured on what that team does.”

Roche says that what it takes to run a team is mainly communication skills, human sensitivity and a bias for action and good judgment. Renowned industrial psychologist Dr. David Merrill developed ideas that have had a profound influence on modern management theory.

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He reasoned that there are two types of behavior – “assertiveness” and “responsiveness.”

A person’s “assertiveness” is roughly the degree by which others see him as being forceful or directive. A person’s “responsiveness” is how people express themselves and react to them. For example, they may react in a more reserved or more open, emotive fashion, depending on how they are managed.

Four Personality Types

Dr Merrill further developed his theory to create four broadly defined personality styles in the workplace: *the driver*, *the analytical*, *the amiable*, and *the expressive*.

Each personality has its own objectives. The *driver* likes to get things done as expediently as possible. The *analytical* likes to analyze all the facts before making the most informed decision. The *amiable* places a high premium

on getting along, and the *expressive* wants to be highly regarded by those around him.

The leader who recognizes where he fits among these four groups, and adjusts his leadership style to better suit the individual traits of his team members, will be taking a big step to improving both the dynamics of his team and its productivity.

Drivers are decisive, enthusiastic, and prefer to be in control. They like quick action, using the information that is immediately available. They speak forcefully and prefer discussing things verbally. Drivers require a leader's complete attention, and leaders need to listen to the driver's thoughts and ideas. Given drivers' penchant for

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direct action, often a leader's role is helping them find the fastest route to get to their objective. A sure sign of a driver is somebody who calls you and, without preamble, launches into a discussion of an issue.

To create a successful relationship with a driver, managers need to focus on facts, not feelings. When empowering a driver, it is useful to offer a range of different courses of action, and then let the driver choose the most suitable one. It is also important to set up an arrangement where you periodically check on the driver's progress. If you don't do this, tracking their efforts can be challenging.

Just The Facts

Analyticals, on the other hand, are far more interested in acquiring a mass of details and facts, which they comb carefully through in order to come to the right decision. Analyticals place a premium on accuracy, and expect it from others. Often, analyticals tend to prefer working on their own, and rarely discuss personal topics.

To work effectively with an analytical, remember just a few key words: accuracy, precision, and punctuality. With analyticals, it pays to be on time with things such as memos, calls, meetings, and the like. When meeting an analytical, cut straight to the chase. Be prepared, for they will know if you are not. When assessing an analytical's performance, keep feedback precise and be ready to back it up with hard facts.

People Power

Amiables are all about people. Highly responsive, amiables are sensitive to others' feelings, are patient, and relationship-oriented. Unlike drivers or analyticals, amiables hold an interest in colleagues' personal lives and are willing to share about their own. Of the four types, amiables are perhaps the best team players.

When working with amiables, be willing to touch base personally. They will invite you to discuss events in your life, and you should invite them to do so as well. When talking to an amiable, always be sure to allow an opportunity for him to enter the conversation. Given their nature, amiables rarely speak out in disagreement. Rather, their uncertainty can be seen through changes in their body language. When in doubt, ask their opinion: "Others have issues with this plan – but what do you think?"

Image-conscious

Expressives are both responsive and assertive. They have no qualms about speaking out, and are often viewed as upbeat and enthusiastic. First and foremost, expressive like to be noticed. They can be persuasive when they put

their mind to it, and often prefer talking over other forms of communication.

Expressives thrive on open communications with others. Inclined to informality, expressives prefer informal discussions, but tend to lack an inclination for details. The key role of a leader is to harness their enthusiasm, and then help them channel it toward the achievement of objectives. Ultimately, expressives live for recognition – preferably if it is shown publicly.

In Touch

Finally, it's important for leaders to remember that in this technology-rich world, it can be tempting to rely solely on email and BlackBerry smartphones. Though such devices are useful, the best way to influence somebody, to know somebody, is through face-to-face interaction.

Takeshi Niinami, CEO of Lawson, a major Japanese convenience store chain, says: "I believe a word from my mouth, or from anyone, has a strong soul. If you talk directly instead of through email and as long as you have a strong will, you can convey your will."

In his early days as CEO, Niinami says he spent almost 70 percent of his time talking and listening to people face-to-face.

The bottom line is that no executive will fit precisely into

any of the four categories outlined in this paper. People cannot be clearly defined in four easy steps.

But they are likely to have characteristics that can be understood by a perceptive leader.

Once you know with whom you are dealing, you can as a leader understand the deeper motivations of your team.

The next step is to communicate in a manner that satisfies them, connects with them, and makes them part of your loyal power base.

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