

Value of flexible management flashcard



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Introduction Prior to researching this topic, my impression of management was limited. My concept was meshed within the framework of business and economics.

Therefore, my definition of this construct was in error. For rectification, and foundational reference, management is the process of directing resources towards the accomplishment of a specific goal. This definition, one that I have derived from the compilation of many, incorporates two key variables. The first operative word in this definition is “ resources. Resources can mean anything from money, employees, athletes, students, or just about any organized effort, group or cohort.

The other functional variable in this definition is “ goal. ” The goal or aim of the organized effort can be defined in countless ways, not only in terms of economic gains or corporate success. This definition helps to illustrate just how much management filters through a gamete of industries. Management roles are found in business as well as sports, academics, and many other industries in many forms.

Now that there is a foundation for what management is, why is this process important? Management has the ability to realize potential and direct resources in such a way that will optimize the return on the invested resources. Managers can create opportunities of advantage and promote successful goal attainment. Herein lays the importance of this role. Effective management ensures that with the application of minimal resources, there will be a return of maximum benefits. Since there are such benefits of good

management, it is helpful to explore the variety of styles. This paper will, first, outline the major styles of management.

While there are many different names and classifications of management styles; there are three main types. These include autocratic, participatory, and laissez-faire. The major difference of the three styles is the degree to which the manager directs the given resources. The autocratic style of management involves the managers making all the decisions for resources, with no other input.

The participative style of management calls for the consultation of others, such as employees, in the decision-making process. In laissez-faire style of management, the manager has little to no part in the direction of resources. Considering the differences of these major styles of management, is there one style that takes precedence over another? Is there a “best” managerial practice? In 2006, Harvard Business School published an article delving into the differences of management techniques (Silverthorne, 2006). The basis of the article explores how one’s management style is heavily influenced by what kind of person they are.

Therefore, managers need to be aware of the type of person they are to fully understand how they manage and in what situations they will be successful. This article supports the notion that a manager’s effectiveness is limited by their dominant style of management. In addition, because of personal dispositions, managers are unable to change themselves and must be careful to align themselves with situations that agree with their style of management. In reality, this construct is quite impractical.

We are, oftentimes, unable to choose the situations in which we operate, professionally. How, then, does one manage effectively? Various management styles can be employed dependent on the culture of the business and the nature of the task, workforce, and resources. This idea supports that the prevailing circumstances dictate the most effective management style and managers should exercise a range of techniques. This is the subsequent focus of this discussion.

While many are defined by a dominant style of management, an effective manager is one who can adapt their management techniques to a variety as they arise. Autocratic Management Autocratic Management is the style in which the manager has the greatest degree of control over the direction of the resources. In this style, managers make all decisions unilaterally. Managers usually dictate orders and employ a strict system of checks and balances to ensure adherence to protocols. Also known as directive management, managers tell their subordinates what to do, how to do it and when to have it completed by (Coye & Belohlav, 1995, p 16). They assign roles and responsibilities, set standards, and define expectations.

Within this style of management communication is one way, and go from management to resources. For example, when the manager speaks the employee listens and reacts. As defined above, the purpose of management is to direct resources toward a goal. In autocratic management, the manager sets all goals with specific deadlines to track progress. The autocratic manager is the principal of the decision making process.

When a problem arise the resources report to the manager and the manager evaluates the options and makes the decision as to the direction and action that should be taken (Coye & Belohlav, 1995). In terms of management feedback, the autocratic style of management calls for detailed instructions of changes that need to be made to the final product. Any rewards and recognition bestowed by autocratic managers are dictated by how well people follow directions. A perfect illustration of a working application of the autocratic style of management can be seen though the management employed in United States Military. Within the military the ranking system sets a scene for the role of the manager. In accordance with a strict chain of commands, members with a higher rank than another, have the responsibility to direct the actions of subordinates (See Exhibit A).

Subordinates such as Airmen, in the U. S. Air Force, are charged with carrying out the orders of their Sergeants and other commanding officers. There is no discussion or exchange of ideas. Here, managers, or senior officers, give directions and expect that their resources are allocated according to exact orders. Goals are set by military officials and then handed down through the ranks.

All strategy is developed by high ranking members, as well. Members of the military are rewarded with a successive rank as a result of properly serving within their assigned role. Though autocratic management seems limited, there are definite benefits to behold. Because there is clear direction given by managers who subscribe to the autocratic style, there is no confusion about expectations. This clear understanding of what is expected promotes tasks being completed according to deadline and product consistency.

Along with the positive aspects of the autocratic management style there are certain negative points. With this type of management, employees or resources have no input in the tasks that they are given (Vanderburg, 2004). This causes the producer to be disconnected from the product. Resources do not feel valued and have no ownership in their work.

Therefore there is a decrease in motivation and a high turnover rate. (See Exhibit B) Participative Management The participative style of management is different from autocratic in that there is a lesser degree of direction from the manager. A participative manager, rather than making exclusive decisions, seeks to incorporate others in the process. Participative managers possibly include subordinates, peers, superiors and other stakeholders in the decision-making process (Coleman, 2004). Because this type of manager considers the views of others, decisions are often made based on the agreement of the majority.

Although there is major consideration of external sources, the most participative activity remains within the immediate team of peers. The participative manager allows less control and direction to transfer to subordinates. The question of how much influence may vary on the personal preferences and beliefs of the manager. This style of management may also be known as the democratic style. The communication is quite extensive in this style of management.

There is considerable exchange in both directions, from manager to resources and vice-versa (Coleman, 2004). The ideal is for the majority to reach a consensus over a business decision. The goal setting process is also

done in a cooperative effort. Participative managers decide upon goals with the consideration of outside ideas, as well. The accessibility of reaching these goals is also a point of discussion in the participative style of management. This type of manager has a paternal quality in that the well-being and success of subordinates, peers, superiors and other resources are taken into account (Coleman, 2004).

Therefore the decision-making process is not unilateral. The participative management style promotes constructive manager feedback. If changes are to be made to the product, there is discussion of the direction that should be taken. Participative managers give positive feedback, as well. This is in line with the paternal characteristics of this style of management.

When deciding on rewards and recognition, participative management incorporates the performance review process. Because participative managers welcome the active role of subordinates, they are willing to discuss employee performance, celebrate strengths, and develop weaknesses. This type of management is, perhaps, the most prevalent in the infrastructure of many large corporations, today. Corporations such as IBM, Home Depot, Pitney Bowes and countless others have embraced participative management style.

It is very common for employees to operate in cohorts and subgroups and work as teams. Many are given year-end performance reviews and are able to access company management. The participative style of management can be particularly useful when complex decisions need to be made that require a range of specialist skills. From the overall business's point of view, job

satisfaction and quality of work will improve. By creating a sense of ownership in the company, participative management instills a sense of pride and motivates employees to increase productivity in order to achieve their goals.

However, the decision-making process is severely slowed down, and the need of a consensus may avoid taking the ‘ best’ decision for the business. It can also grant decision-making responsibility to unqualified parties. In some cases of participatory management, decisions are swayed by politics and hidden agendas; which can also act as a barrier to the best business decision. (See Exhibit C) Laissez-faire Management The management style with the least degree of managerial direction of resources is known as laissez-faire. In this particular style the manager’s role is very much “ hands-off” and peripheral (McCoy, 1996).

The resources, be it employees, or others; manage their own area of business. There is an evasion of official managerial duties and uncoordinated delegation is, often times, inevitable. The communication within laissez-faire management is horizontal but flat. There is little to no communication that occurs in comparison to the autocratic and participatory styles of management. With no communication there is no opportunity for goal setting.

Resources have to be internally motivated and set their own goals. Managers who participate in this type of management also incorporate unilateral decision making within their framework (McCoy, 1996). However, it is not the manager who engages in this practice. It is the subordinates and resources

who are totally responsible for making all decisions. Because managers are uninvolved in the production processes in laissez-faire management, they provide no feedback or rewards for a job well done. A real-world example of laissez-faire management can be seen in partnerships of colleges.

We can think in terms of a law firm, a private medical practice, a consulting firm or any other cooperative effort in which all parties possess a similar level of expertise. A more vivid illustration can be made through the following example. As emergency room doctors, with equal training, receive a patient, they simply begin to take action without formal direction. As we can glean from the above example, there are certain situations in which it is effective to apply laissez-faire management.

An environment in which employees are highly skilled, experienced and educated is a prime setting to apply the laissez-faire practices. This creates a setting where employees have pride in their work and the drive to do it successfully on their own. Employees who thrive under this type of management are usually trustworthy and experienced. On the contrary this style of management would be detrimental in situations where the resources needed direction and lack experience. Laissez-faire management may cause employees to feel insecure at the unavailability of a manager.

The manager does not provide regular feedback to let employees know how well they are doing or how they may improve. This leads to a lack of staff focus and sense of direction, which in turn leads to much dissatisfaction, and a poor company image. (See Exhibit D) The Most Effective Style After considering the three major styles of management above, there must be one

model that supersedes the others. Perhaps we are more apt to choose participative management as the most effective. This would not be a far reaching selection, since it was the style of management that prevailed in the 1970s (Robbins, 2005).

The participative style of management was seen as an amalgamation of democratic styles of management. It represented the most successful qualities of each style. The participative style of management is alive and well in the infrastructure of business models. It is probably the style of management that the majority of people are familiar with, and the style that most managers strive to imitate. However, I do not accept that perfection has been attained within the participative style of management. There are very apparent limitations like slow business processes and difficult decision making that can undercut the best interest of a business (Keef, 2004).

If the participative style of management is not the most effective; is there a “best” practice? Although participative management is quite popular, we may be witness to a shift in ideology. More and more, business leaders and managers are subscribing to the effectiveness of versatility rather than one dominant management style (Sumukadas & Sawhney, 2004, p 1013). It is more efficient for a manager to apply the most effective style of management as situations arise rather than use a cookie-cutter approach. This flexible approach to management is the most practical when considering today’s changing technology, global trading and dynamics of business. Managers must be willing to abandon traditional ways of decision-making and adapt to their environment, in order to stay competitive and collect the greatest return on invested resources. In such a growing,

diversified business landscape, one manager may be responsible for new hires, project management, and resource development.

In order to best handle the new hires, this manager must take an autocratic approach, and painstakingly detail expectation. When acting as project manager, this same manager must incorporate a more participative style. Projects are, usually, assigned to a team of resources that come together in a collective exchange of expertise. The manager would then garner optimal results by delegating resource development to industry experts, and taking a laissez-faire approach. It is most valuable for one manager to be all things to all people. In essence, the most effective style of manager knows what style to apply in every situation.

Though they were not managers in the conventional business industry, Bobby Knight and Mike Krzyzewski, dubbed Coach K, are fine examples of effective managerial practices. To further expand the analogy, I offer that their business was college basketball; their resources were young athletes, and their goal was the glory of a national championship. Many argue that these two coaches are among the most successful in the game of college basketball; though, their overt management styles could not be more different. Both coaches support the idea that one's ability to exhibit various style of management is the most effective style of management. Both coaches exhibit key behaviors that are inline with flexibility in management.

Both coaches are aware of and understand their personal assumptions and human nature. This promotes the awareness of how human nature influences their behaviors and automatic responses to given situations. This

understanding of personal tendencies and over styles, allows a manager to rise about inherent responses and adapt their leadership and management skills to effectively govern a circumstance. Coach Bobby Knight was overtly a top-down, autocratic manager to his college basketball players. He would throw chairs, yell, get physical, and tightly supervise his team toward winning games.

However, as Coach Knight's style would change as he spent more time with his team (Silverthorne, 2006, p 2). His control and direction was relaxed as he was confident in the training and ability of his players. Over the years, Coach Knight managed his athletes according to their needs for direction. He exhibited "tough-love" and versatility in management, and led many victories in college basketball. Coach Mike Krzyzewski's overt management style would be defined at the other end of the spectrum.

He had more of a laissez-fair management philosophy. Coach K believed that "people were fundamentally good and they want to do their best and would be self-motivated to perform." (Silverthorne, 2006, p 1). Though Coach K had this inherent approach, he definitely knew how to mobilize and motivate his players.

He knew how to toughen up and manage his players more autocratically. He also determined his management techniques according to the tasks and resources at hand, which led to many won games. There is a twist to this pseudo-case study of managers. In the 1960s, Coach Knight was a basketball coach at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, where he recruited a young Mike Krzyzewski.

“ Coach K was a young scrappy kid. He wasn’t the best athlete on the team, but he had a lot of leadership potential,” remarked Knight (Silverthorne, 2006, p 2). After Krzyzewski left the Army, he joined Knight as a graduate assistant at Indiana, where Knight was a valuable mentor. Though very different in nature, the coaches have been great friends for many years. Though these coaches have very different overt styles, their situational adaptability allows them to share in the success of effective management and many college basketball victories. Conclusion There is greater value found in managing according to a given situation than applying a “ one-size-fits-all” approach.

The three major types of management all have effective practices. Therefore it is more appropriate to be autocratic to resources that require detailed direction, participative to peers and engaged employees, and laissez-faire to high-level experts. A valuable lesson can be gained from successful managers like Bobby Knight and Coach Krzyzewski. In order to nurture their resources to create the greatest return on investment, they had to become all things to all men. In the end it is adaptability that will not only support survival, but success, as well.

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Exhibits Exhibit A List of Military Rank

_____ Officers Letter Navy Army/Air
 Force/Marines O-12 (GAm) Grand Admiral O-11(FAm) Fleet Admiral(COp)
 Chief of Operations O-10(Adm) Admiral(Gen) General O-9(VAdm) Vice
 Admiral(LtG) Lieutenant General O-8(RAdmU) Rear Admiral(MG) Major
 General O-7(RADmL) Commodore(BG) Brigadier General O-6(Capt)
 Captain(Col) Colonel O-5(Cdr) Commander(LtC) Lieutenant Colonel O-
 4(LCdr) Lieutenant Commander(Maj) Major O-3(Lt) Lieutenant (Cap) Captain
 O-2(LtJG) Lieutenant Junior Grade(1Lt) First Lieutenant O-1(Ens) Ensign(2Lt)
 Second Lieutenant Warrant Officers W-4(CW4) Chief Warrant Officer W-
 3(CW3) Chief Warrant Officer W-2(CW2) Chief Warrant Officer W-1(WO1)
 Warrant Officer Enlisted Personnel Grade Navy Marines Air Force Army E-
 9(MCPO) Master Chief Petty Officer(SgtMaj) Sergeant Major(CMSgt) Chief
 Master Sergeant(CSM) Command Sergeant Major E-9(MGySgt) Master
 Gunnery Sergeant(SGM) Sergeant Major E-8(SCPO) Senior Chief Petty
 Officer(1stSgt) First Sergeant(SMSgt) Senior Master Sergeant(1SG) First
 Sergeant E-8(MSgt) Master Sergeant(MSG) Master Sergeant E-7(CPO) Chief
 Petty Officer(GySgt) Gunnery Sergeant(MSgt) Master Sergeant(SFC)
 Sergeant First Class E-7(PSG) Platoon Sergeant E-6(PO1) Petty Officer First

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Class(SSgt) Staff Sergeant(TSgt) Technical Sergeant(SSG) Staff Sergeant E-5(PO2) Petty Officer Second Class(Sgt) Sergeant(SSgt) Staff Sergeant(Sgt) Sergeant E-4(PO3) Petty Officer Third Class(Cpl) Corporal(Sgt) Sergeant(Cpl) Corporal E-4(SrA) Senior Airman(Sp4) Specialist 4E-3() Seaman(LCpl) Lance Corporal(A1C) Airman First Class(PFC) Private First Class E-2(SA) Seaman Apprentice(PFC) Private First Class(Amn) Airman(PV2) Private E-1(SR) Seaman Recruit(Pvt) Private(AB) Airman Basic(PV1) Private

The Value of Flexible Management I. Abstract II. Introduction a. Thesis: “ While many are defined by a dominant style of management, an effective manager is one who can adapt their management techniques to a variety as they arise.

” III. Body a. Define autocratic Style i. Give examples of what situations require this style of management b.

Define participatory Style i. Give examples of what situations require this style of management c. Define laissez-faire Style i. Give examples of what situations require this style of management d. Give examples of historical situations in which managers were successful because they adapted to the situation or antithesis of this model i. Example 1 ii.

Example 2 iii. Anti-Model IV. Conclusion a. Restate thesis and summarize the value of adapting to situational nuances V. Exhibits that may be relevant VI.

Works Cited