

Management styles and theories | a comparison



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Whether you are captaining your team, managing a small group at work or leading employees in a large company, your management style is crucial to your success. There is no doubt that the manager deals with his or her employees with different approaches. Some are strict with their staff and like to control every thought and step of their workers, while others are more flexible and allow workers freedom to run their own working styles.

Whichever style is used, will be vital to the success or failure of the company business. Recent developments in management have heightened the need for leadership styles. As a whole, there are many management styles, and, through the history, the two main categories of leadership styles are laissez faire and democratic styles. The aim of this paper is to compare and contrast democratic and laissez faire styles. In terms of decision-making, communication, skill requirements, and job priorities. In addition, it will assess how they (laissez faire and democratic styles) affect employee motivation in terms of decision-making, skill requirements, communication and problems priorities.

Firstly, Ciulla (2004: 22) states that " A leader is a person who has the ability to get other people to do what they do not want to do and like it. In addition, he defines management style as " the management strategy that a person exhibits through verbal and non verbal communication which includes a team-oriented or individual employee approach". According Adam (1982: 416), democratic means " organized according to the principle that everyone has a right to be involved in making decisions". Finally, as Bass (2006) indicated that laissez faire is used to describe a leader who leaves her or his staff to get on with their work after identifying the tasks required.

With regard to decision-making, delegation of responsibility is similar in both democratic and laissez faire styles, According to Hannagan (2005), democratic managers delegate authority to their staff and build trust by giving them responsibility and supporting them to create ideas and make decision. Also, he or she encourages their employees to complete the tasks using their own work methods. In addition, the democratic manager is sensitive to the impact he or she has on their employees and tries to adjust their style to achieve the best results. In the same way, the laissez faire manager delegates the responsibility of decision-making to his or her staff and gives them complete freedom to complete the tasks as they see it fit. In fact, they completely trust that their employees can take the right decisions without any doubt. They, also, expect them to take the responsibility of achieving the tasks and the company aims with suitable approaches. On one hand, there are benefits for delegating the authority and responsibility of making decision to the employee which might develop her or his responsibility taking. In a study of Watson and Hassett (2003: 47) found that sharing inputs by the workers to the managers can lead to better decision-making and enhance their motivation by giving them fair amount of responsibility and allowing them to challenge themselves which leads employees to be more enthused to work and enjoy what they do. On the other hand, both democratic and laissez faire styles are not very effective if the workforce is inexperienced, because workers need a fair amount of experience to make the right decisions which can be a crucial affect with respect to worker motivation.

A second similarity between democratic and laissez faire styles is the good two-way communication between the manager and his or her employees. In addition, the work of Fryer (2004) shows that both democratic and laissez faire styles allows open and revolving communication with their employees. It is important to point out that democratic style requires a high two-way communication and usually involves a democratic discussion group which can offer useful ideas and lead to distinguishing results. Many democratic managers seek to know the opinions of their employees and let their opinion be known. Furthermore, Fryer (2004: 50) notes that “ the democratic manager listens to their ideas and gives them encouragement”. It must therefore be recognised that they welcome employee questions and feedback on the results of their decisions and ask for any suggestions for benefits of working environment. Similarly, laissez faire leaders provide employee with the materials they need to accomplish their goals and they are always there for their employees who might face difficulties or have questions by advising and supporting them so they can solve their issues. The evidence seems to indicate that the good two-way communication in both democratic and laissez faire styles could increase employees motivation when workers feel that their opinion counts. As a result, they are more committed to achieving the goals and objectives of the group.

In terms of the differences between laissez faire and democratic styles, the most significant one is problem priorities for managers and how this can affect employee motivation. The work of Bass (2006) reveals that laissez faire leaders set overall priority or instruction, then they avoid taking stand in issues. So, tasks can be left to run on the employee own way and

sometimes they could not do it. In addition, laissez faire leaders are disorganized in handling priorities, especially when they have to take one side in a dispute. They also as Bass (2006: 206) goes on to “divert attention from hard choices”, and give a limited attention to employee’s difficulties. In general, they give their employees the main tasks without outlining how they can reach them. As a result, this would make the staff feel that the laissez faire manager does not take their job seriously and is not meet the responsibility of manager. Furthermore, as Bass (2006) points out, because the element of administrative rule is removed which is the intervention of the manager, employees may feel neglect or ignored. Democratic managers, on the other hand, always concentrate on both completing tasks at the time and how these tasks can affect staff feelings and lives. This would make employees feel that the manager understands them as they understand him or her not with force or fear but as a result of mutual understanding. Another important different to note is that democratic leaders focus on how can they enhance their employees by encouraging them to state their suggestions and asking other employees to give their advice. It is clear therefore that managers realize if the employee has a sense of comfort and belonging that could reflect in his or her performance in work. So, if he or she concentrates on the employee needs that could facilitate reaching the objectives of the company. Thus it could be concluded that democratic style can be more effective on employee motivation. Also, it might lead to a significant rise rather than laissez faire style by supporting others to become leaders and be involved in leadership development.

Another way in which democratic and laissez faire styles are different is employee skill requirements. Laissez faire style needs highly professional workers with a creative staff since the laissez faire manager assigns the tasks and allows workers freedom to run the tasks as they see it fit. Thus, if the employee do not has enough knowledge or self-confidence he or she might face failure or has feelings of inferiority. Bass (2006: 206) gives a good example of sales laissez faire managers who “ regularly told their sales team that they were working on plans, but they provided little direction and were frequently absent from the office. The sales staff took it upon themselves to develop strategies and make decision”. The evidence seems to be strong that the team should have specialist skills and Self-confident to complete the tasks without manager’s instruction or guidance. In addition, employees might feel lost or frustrated which weakens his or her motivation and reduces their interest in working. In contrast, democratic manager takes the responsibility for workers development and, as a rule; he or she enhances continuing evolution. This responsibility of the democratic manager can raise employee motivation step by step and day by day. However, laissez faire style could raise the employee motivation if the employee has a creative sense and many experiences for the laissez faire manager who can accept any useful ideas for the company. On this basis it may inferred that this would make the employee feels appreciated and belonging. Thus it could be concluded that there are several advantages and disadvantages for both democratic and laissez faire styles. It must therefore be recognised that the successful manager needs to use both styles as the work environment requires every single day.

In conclusion, this essay has shown similarities and differences between democratic and laissez faire styles and has demonstrated how it is affect worker motivation in terms of decision-making, communication, manager priorities and skill requirements. In addition, it has shown that democratic and laissez faire styles are similar in terms of delegating the authority and how this can increase the employee motivation by allowing them to challenge themselves. As a result, this can lead employees to be more committed, enthused to work and enjoy what they do. However, democratic style in general increases the employee motivation since the democratic manager takes responsibility of learn and learning. There is, therefore, the need to use different styles in different situations to have equal development for both manager and employees because every style is complementary to another and the leader can never dispense the other approaches of management if he or she aims for success in their company.