

# UNDERSTANDING

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# YOUR

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**B***eyond the*

*Myers-Briggs*

*Type Indicator*

# MANAGEMENT

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# STYLE

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# Understanding Your Management Style

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*Beyond the Myers-Briggs  
Type Indicators*

*by*

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*with*

Jean Knox



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## Preface

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*That virtue only makes our bliss below;  
And all our knowledge is, ourselves to know.*

*To know thy self is to know God.*

**T**he concepts presented in this book are based upon twenty-five years of clinical and organizational analysis of the lives of men and women in management. The model is based upon an integration of many great thinkers and practitioners in the field of personology. I have tried to apply the ideas of these individuals to the thousands of cases that I have worked with in various organizational settings. The cases presented in this book are real but disguised in order to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the individuals.

Most of the data collection, analysis, and interpretations came from workshops that had, as one facet, understanding the individual's management style. These workshops entailed hours of assessment, self-analysis, and interpretation.

My background is in clinical, organizational, and systems psychology. I have tried to apply these skills toward self-understanding as one of my major goals in becoming an effective manager. The same methodology can be applied to areas outside of the organization since they touch on the core of the self.

My first experience in the study of lives was with Douglas Bray in the ATT Management progress study. This was longitudinal assessment of managers over a six-year period. I owe Dr. Bray for the opportunity to begin my quest toward understanding the individual within the organizational environment.

My second experience was with Dr. Alexander Leighton at Harvard University and his innovative study of people's lives in various

cultures around the world. During this period of time I sharpened my research and clinical tools.

During both of these periods I began to study and integrate the theories of Carl Jung and Henry Murray. Much of the theoretical backdrops are based on their works. From their works I gained a deep appreciation of the complexities of life and especially the individual.

Coterminously, I carried out a clinical/organizational practice with various organizations ranging from Fortune 100 corporations, government agencies, and academic institutions. To these legions of men and women I owe the guts of this book.

The study of management style is not new, but in many instances it is based on one model that becomes a stereotype and ignores the interplay with other factors that shape our style. I hope I have avoided this tendency and added some wisdom and applicability to the people who work in our organizations.

I owe especial appreciation to Jean Knox, who helped shape the voice of the book and to Harry Wilkinson, one of my colleagues in the organizational workshops.

This book was written primarily as a roadway toward self-understanding, knowing others, and learning how to deal with complex interactions that arise from our inherent differences.

# A Management Scenario:

## *Phil, Carlo, and Lois*

**P**hil stormed out of Carlo's office feeling he had failed again. Carlo, the department manager, had just dismissed his progress report on the Apex project—with no justification, Phil thought angrily. It was a carefully structured report describing in exquisite detail every meeting and design detail that had been undertaken since the week before. Phil had been especially thorough with it, hoping finally to impress Carlo. Now he felt that he might as well have spared himself the effort.

Seated at his desk a short while later, Phil filed away the unappreciated report, stared out the window, and fumed. Why did he repeatedly anger Carlo? he wondered. Today's run-in was one of many over the months since Phil had become Carlo's assistant manager. Phil reviewed the most recent scene in Carlo's office:

"Damn it, Phil! Get to the big picture," Carlo had demanded. "I don't want all this detailed crap. I can't waste time reading about every cotton-picking meeting and specification sign-off. I need a summary of the major problems. That's why I gave you this job!"

"But you can't talk about major problems unless you know the details," Phil had argued. "You can't get to step C by skipping over steps A and B."

"In this project you can," Carlo had snapped.

"But you asked for a detailed progress report. Am I wrong?"

"It certainly looks that way."

And that was it. Meeting adjourned. No mention of Phil's hard work. How different meetings had been with Nathan, his former boss, Phil recalled. Nathan had liked his reports and had recommended

him for promotion as Carlo's assistant manager. Phil had seen the glowing performance reviews Nathan had written about him: thorough, dedicated, task-oriented, a producer who could meet deadlines, Nathan had called him. His ten years of experience in scheduling and production control had counted for something with Nathan. And Nathan was not the only boss to be impressed by Phil's careful planning and attention to detail. He had received laudatory performance reviews all along.

Phil opened his briefcase and slid a stack of memos inside. Well, there had also been some criticism of him in the past, he admitted to himself—something about not working cooperatively with other departments. Unyielding perfectionism. Meeting his goals at the expense of others. Stuff about poor team spirit and not building bridges. There was too much emphasis on that kind of thing these days, thought Phil. It was not essential to getting his job done. Besides, he had built a fine team within his own group. That was what counted. I'll deal with my problem and my group, and you deal with yours. What was wrong with a little old-fashioned competition anyway?

Phil snapped the briefcase shut. Might as well clear out for the day, he thought bitterly. Ordinarily he stayed late at work and scorned his colleagues who left early. But today he was in no mood to give the company an extra minute of overtime. He put on his trench coat and locked the office. "Project Staff Coordinator," read the title on the door. How good that had looked six months ago, when he had thought the opportunity to work for Carlo would be the stairway to the stars. Now he wished the promotion had never happened. He headed for the elevator and the parking lot.

It was a long commute home. As he drove, Phil continued to think about his boss. Funny how much he had admired Carlo before he worked for him, he mused. He had liked his demanding, take-charge attitude. At meetings Carlo had been forceful and authoritative—just as a manager should be, Phil had thought. Other staff had warned him that Carlo was sometimes abrupt, but Phil had thought he could handle that. He was just as achievement-oriented as Carlo. But God, what a competitor! Carlo didn't give credit to anyone and didn't care how he came across. He thought he could get away with being arrogant because he had such terrific insights. A brilliant strategist, someone had called him. But with all his intuition, Phil

thought, I'll bet he couldn't prepare a report half as good as the one I gave him today. Why did guys like Carlo get promoted? Talk about team spirit? Ha! The guy had as much team spirit as a Mack truck!

By the time Phil reached the last stretch of his commute, some of his anger had abated. A Mozart violin concerto was playing on his favorite FM station. The sky had cleared, and the suburbs were the deep rich green of early June. He had an idea. He would talk with Lois tomorrow. Lois was a project manager for another program and had reported to Carlo for the past five years. Many of her responsibilities were the same as Phil's. As far as Phil could determine, Lois and Carlo got along well. In fact, she seemed able to get along well with everyone—bosses, colleagues, and subordinates alike. Lois was a good listener and an expansive, warm talker. She had built a reputation as a gadfly problem solver. She would have some insights about Carlo. He would arrange to have lunch with her soon.

It was two weeks before Lois could schedule lunch with Phil. During that interval Phil began to have mixed feelings about discussing his problem with her. He noticed that Lois was something of a charlatan who faked her way through responsibilities. Lois would go to weekly meetings with brief summaries of progress reports and talk her way around Carlo's questions. She seemed content with making less than a full effort. Yet in spite of her shallow reports, Lois seemed to have Carlo's confidence and respect. Phil could not fathom why. He suspected that Carlo favored Lois because they had been classmates in graduate school and because she was attractive. Maybe Carlo had a different style with women. But Phil guessed it was more than that. He had noticed that Lois would listen to Carlo and build on the nuances implied in his questions. She seemed unfazed by Carlo's critical inquiries, just working around those moods. Phil was not optimistic about what he might learn from Lois when he finally met her for lunch at a rather uninspired steakhouse not far from the office.

Over a watery shrimp cocktail, Lois listened intently to Phil. Occasionally she murmured, "I know what you mean" or "I can see why you'd feel that way." Phil was encouraged by her genuine concern. Then it was Lois's turn to talk. Company relationships fascinated her, and she expanded on the subject. Soon she was talking about the value of building networks in the division and

getting to know what made each person tick. She talked about looking at global concepts and broad possibilities instead of focusing on details.

"The nitty-gritty slows you down, Phil," Lois said. "It's boring. Sure the facts are important, but they're not everything. Carlo has no patience for details."

"But somebody has to pay attention to the facts," objected Phil. "You can't just discuss the shape of the air! I have to be able to do things my way. If Carlo hates details so much, he should at least appreciate that I take care of them for him!"

As lunch went on, Phil felt Lois's sympathy for him changing into not-so-subtle criticism. He read her comments as personal attacks on his way of doing things. They both skipped coffee and dessert and headed back to work. Their parting was cool.

That afternoon, Phil was more certain than ever that his approach to the progress reports was correct. Any less-thorough job would compromise his professional competence and dedication. He wrote a memo to Carlo, arguing that his progress reports should be the standard for reporting out to superiors. He even argued irrelevantly that government regulations demanded such detail.

The next meeting between Carlo and Phil was a disaster. Carlo listened to Phil's justification for his approach to the progress reports and said nothing. The meeting adjourned with Phil feeling even more stubborn. The following week, Carlo transferred Phil off the Apex project and gave him the task of updating the management information system—an assignment for which he would report to a different manager.

Aspects of Phil's situation probably sound familiar. His story and others like it occur daily in management. All the players are conscientious and dedicated. In various capacities they are highly talented individuals. They may have even respected one another at one time. But now they are on a collision course. Given the individuals involved, did this situation have to happen? Was it headed for disaster from the beginning? Was Carlo unfair to Phil? Was Lois manipulative? Was Phil too stubborn? Why did Lois and Carlo get along, while Phil and Carlo did not? What different management styles are at work here? How could this situation have been prevented?

# Introduction

## *Understanding Management Style*

**S**ome gifted individuals have an ability to enter into a new situation, size it up, and instinctively make the right moves. They seem innately blessed with effective management skills. But most of us are not so blessed. We need training and coaching to become more proficient in dealing with people. Above all, we need to learn more about ourselves. Such knowledge rarely comes naturally.

Self-knowledge is the first step in developing positive management skills. Self-knowledge provides us with inner control. If we know ourselves and our management style, we can accept our weaknesses and acknowledge our strengths. We can learn to anticipate and control problematic situations. We can *proact*, not merely *react*. Most organizational conflicts are the result of personality differences that could have been resolved through a better understanding of ourselves and our colleagues. Power comes from recognizing the constellation of behavior patterns that swirl around work problems.

Learning what your management style is is your own job, and you are in charge of changing yourself. You cannot change the person in the next office. But you can influence him or her through your own behavior. To do these things, you need a model. It must be a model that shows how people are different and how you can work with these differences. It must show you not how you can manipulate or dismiss differences but how you can work with them. This book provides that model.

An effective manager must possess a staggering number of skills. A list of those skills gives you some idea of the size of the task that lies ahead. You, the effective manager, must be able to do the following things:

- You must be able to shift from being an individual contributor to being a manager who integrates the contributions of others.
- You must understand the goals and objectives of your organization. You must understand how its short-term priorities link up with its long-term goals.
- You must understand your own management style and the management styles of your bosses and subordinates.
- You must be able to understand and deal with difficult people. You cannot fall for reactive traps or hidden games.
- You must assume responsibility for your own behavior. All effective relationships are based on this principle. Perceiving yourself as the locus for control and change is the best avenue to influencing others.
- You must understand your organization's corporate culture, including its ethical position, its driving values or ethos, its reward structure, and its informal structure.
- You must be able to handle the natural and frequent conflicts that arise between individuals and groups both inside and outside the organization.
- You must have good writing skills, as well as the ability to interpret verbal and visual messages. Your communications must be congruent with others' perceptions of what you are saying.
- You must be able to delegate appropriate levels of responsibility, maximizing and enhancing the performance and growth of others.
- You must be a coach and mentor, creating a climate of increasing competence and opportunity.
- You must be objective, and not allow personal biases or preconceived expectations to interfere with your decisions.
- You must understand and use your power and influence to build coalitions and interdependent networks in your organization.

This is a tall order! But these skills are not impossible to attain if you know your management style. As you become aware of your previously unconscious behavior patterns, you will learn what impact these patterns have on your colleagues. If that impact is

negative, you can then choose to develop more effective patterns. Not surprisingly, bringing about a genuine change in your management style demands time, practice, and considerable personal commitment. But the process promises substantial rewards.

- You will feel more comfortable and accepting of yourself. You will acquire more self-control. You will be able to modify your behavior according to the demands of the situation.
- You will be more aware and accepting of individual personality differences. You will know that differences need not clash but can be managed. If you have ever fondly wished that your subordinates were clones of yourself, you will stop wishing this. By accepting and working with people's differences, you will strengthen your relationships.
- You will develop personal strategies for handling conflict and will make a commitment to changing recycled, negative behavior. You will accept personal responsibility for conflict intervention and action. This is the part of the process that will demand most of your time and energy.
- Your diagnostic skills will benefit your entire organization. You will be a team-builder, encouraging and combining individual strengths. You will understand where power really resides, how work flows, and how each work component contributes to the big picture. You will learn how your management style fits in with other styles in your organization, and whether it is typical or makes you a maverick.

Style differences produce either negative or positive behaviors, depending upon their mix within individuals. Our model of the effective manager assumes that individual management-style differences occur in four critical areas: how we perceive and judge the world around us, how we gain a sense of personal satisfaction and competence, how we handle conflict, and how we use power. This deceptively simple list encompasses a wide range of behaviors and propensities that profoundly affect all sorts of interactions. The four areas of difference have been around for a long time, but too often they are considered in isolation. It is in combination that they constitute the *building blocks* of management style.

The first of these building blocks—how we perceive and judge the world around us—has its origins in Carl Jung’s theory of psychological types. It is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI), which is being used increasingly by industry, government, and academia to help people understand themselves and their job performance. The MBTI reliably types people as extroverted or introverted, sensing or intuitive, thinking or feeling, and perceiving or judging. The MBTI alone cannot bring about effective changes in management style, but it is a highly useful beginning.

The second building block of management style—how we gain a sense of personal satisfaction and competence—is our need structure. Psychologists have described as many as forty different needs in people that determine their personal satisfaction and competence. We will restrict our discussion in this book to fifteen of them. Like the MBTI, needs are best understood in conjunction with the other building blocks of management style.

The third building block is our style of handling conflict. Here, environmental factors—family, culture, school, and work experiences—have the greatest impact. Psychological type and needs, though modified by experience, are primarily innate, but conflict style is learned. Nor can our psychological type and our needs predict what our conflict style will be—one does not grow out of the others. So conflict style must be examined separately, then understood in the context of the other building blocks.

The final building block of management style is our use of power. A whole system of psychology has been developed that is based upon types of power. Power comes in eight kinds: the power of individual authority, the power to reward, the power of affiliation, the power of expertise, power bought by coercion, referent power attached to charismatic leaders, power by access to information, and group power. Classifying power according to these many variations makes it easier to identify and understand and makes it possible to develop skills in using new power forms. But like the other building blocks of management style, uses of the different kinds of power must not be considered in isolation. Any practical application of power concepts must be integrated into an understanding of the other three building blocks.

These four building blocks of management style do not make up the total picture. Neurotic and aberrant behavior are missing, and so

are differing value orientations, which could require another entire volume to discuss. Nor are differences in styles of public presentation described. But the building blocks outlined above are the most significant and useful components of management style. They account for the greatest amount of variation among managers. Considered individually, they shed light on key areas of management, but it is how they fit together that is essential.

Part I of this book is devoted to understanding these factors and their interaction. Part II connects part I with reality, applying the building blocks to case histories and showing various management styles in action. Part II explores managerial personality types from the well-integrated CEO to the enterprising entrepreneur, from the difficult section leader to the neurotic assistant. Based on the well-known film *Patton*, part II also analyzes the complex management style of that World War II general. Then it looks at the difficult and the dark side of management to understand the causes of aberrant behavior. It takes the reader step-by-step through the stages necessary to influence a particular manager. Each case history follows the same format—describing the case, diagnosing the problem, providing the psychological profile, and offering a solution. This format is the reader's model for applying the building blocks of management style to his or her own situation. Hundreds of managers have already used this model to acquire insights into themselves and their colleagues. It should be easy to identify with these cases; they are all real people, though names and circumstances have been disguised. The appendixes tell you how to obtain and apply the various measurements of management style.

# Understanding Your Management Style

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**PART ONE**

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# The Building Blocks