

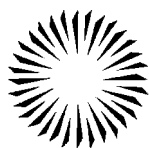
Changing How to Evaluate and Improve Your Own Performance *Your* Management Style

Robert Benfari

Changing Your Management Style

*How to Evaluate and Improve
Your Own Performance*

Robert C. Benfari



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Preface

“Media discussion of prominent executive officers and the continued speculation in the business press about the possible departure of others attribute those respective companies’ inability to master their difficulties significantly to the management style of their chief executives.” This statement was made by Harry Levinson, a noted business psychologist, in an Award Address at the 101st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, in August 1993.

Some of the factors in the “fall of the behemoths” include:

- Difficulties with rigid corporate structures.
- Inability to grasp the importance of foreign competition.
- Subtle *psychological assumptions* of which many business leaders are unaware.

Levinson cautions us to be wary of mere description without explanation. If one lacks an appropriate diagnosis, one will have trouble finding appropriate solutions. Part of the diagnosis is understanding our management style and the key assumptions underlying our behavior.

In my book *Understanding Your Management Style* I addressed the four main building blocks of management style: psychological type, needs, power, and conflict styles. The main purpose of that book was to explain management styles. In my numerous corporate workshops and graduate seminars on this topic the inevitable question arose: “Now that I know about my style, how do I change it?” I offered some personal interventions in my earlier book, but not to the extent needed to ensure positive results.

Over the past four years I have searched the psychological literature to find the most viable techniques for this important change task. Psy-

chology underwent a vital transformation during the 1970s and 1980s. New cognitive theories and methods gained scientific and clinical acceptance. These new methods provide stepping-stones for changing one's behavior without undergoing the long and expensive process of psychoanalysis or subjecting oneself to behavioral modification. Cognitive theory respects both the depth aspect of psychoanalysis and the here and now action orientation of behaviorism. In this respect it is an integrative approach that captures the best of the two worldviews.

This book builds on the previous one, but adds the dimension of corporate culture and the role of occupational stress to my analysis of management style. Each factor affecting management style is diagnosed with the explicit intention of maximizing individual and group potential.

During the past four years I have devised a number of cognitive-behavioral techniques and used them in my management development workshops. In these field trials I have invited feedback on the effectiveness and utility of my methods. I am indebted to the hundreds of managers who played a vital role in the construction and testing of the model for changing management style.

The theorists and practitioners in the field of cognitive-behavioral psychology have provided the critical links to the chain of understanding and changing management style. In this regard I have attempted to give attribution to all who helped me in this process.

I offer my special thanks to Beth Anderson (Senior Editor of Lexington Books) who made the project possible with her enthusiastic support, backed with careful, insightful comments and suggestions. Judith Hildebrandt provided day-to-day scrutiny of both my writing and my ENFP tendencies to avoid details at all costs. Her help tempered my overly enthusiastic intuitive approach and helped in bringing forth the final product. My students at Harvard University and Tufts Medical School and numerous corporate clients provided the critical input that fine-tuned the process.

David Lajoie and Tom Zommer, training and development managers at Raytheon, gave immeasurable contributions in the formulation of the book.

Introduction

Managers today face volatile and often unpredictable changes within their own organizations and outside them—changes ranging from the sudden obsolescence of skills to hostile takeovers to downturns in the economy, both local and global—and they must respond effectively to them. Certainly, they have no control over the external factors; they do, however, have control over their own management style. Accordingly, the first step to being an effective manager is self-understanding. My previous book, *Understanding Your Management Style*, is a guide toward attaining this knowledge of self and others and the complex situations that arise from inherent human differences. The second step in the process is learning how to change your management style. This book is intended to help you achieve that goal of change for the better.

The organization of the future will see more interdependencies at all levels of management. Richard Hogan, a psychologist, asserts that effective leaders rely on persuasion, not domination. Authority can no longer be used as the sole source of power to influence others because the team concept has gained prominence; it is a more positive approach that includes participation from everyone, both managers and workers, who have no direct reporting obligations among each other. Team building is an essential element of total quality management and can be accomplished when attention is paid to developing good people skills.

Managers largely agree that good interactive managers have the following characteristics:

- An understanding of their own management style, both its strengths and its weaknesses.

learned, and an exploration of current views on behavior modification, from a variety of psychological and behavioral schools.

In *Understanding Your Management Style*, I presented four critical building blocks that can be used in understanding managerial style: psychological types, needs, conflict management styles, and the effective use of power. These building blocks fit together to form an individualistic mosaic, one that varies from manager to manager. This book reexamines those building blocks, adds one more to it—managing stress—and explains how to use them within the context of the organizational environment.

- Skills for resolving conflict at the lowest level. Conflict is natural; timely effective solutions can prevent problems down the line.
- Effective communication skills for influencing people; for negotiating roles with subordinates, peers, and superiors; for dealing with difficult people; and for building morale.
- An understanding and acknowledgment of interdependent roles and the team concept.
- Techniques for dealing with stress and daily pressures to prevent burnout.
- An understanding of the organization's unique culture.

This last point—understanding organizational culture—is an important consideration. In truth, individual managers have little control over an organization's culture because so many factors determine its character. No individual manager can turn around a culture that has evolved over years or even decades, but every manager can learn to be more effective in that predetermined environment, and every manager can effect subtle changes in that culture through spheres of influence. The key to this process is a simple truth: *each manager can control his or her own behavior and can change his or her own interaction within the organizational environment.* For example, a manager may introduce process changes that improve group and individual problem-solving techniques: delegating, coaching, managing conflict, and dealing more effectively with difficult people.

So how do you change your management style? Follow these four steps:

1. Understand your style—both its strengths and its weaknesses.
2. Identify situations in which you have been effective and those in which you have been ineffective.
3. Determine what aspects of your management style played a role in both positive and negative outcomes.
4. Work on modifying your behavior to achieve more positive outcomes all of the time.

The exact procedures are presented in the following chapters.

My approach is to integrate various views on behavior modification, beginning with an examination of behaviors, both innate and

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1

The Origins of Your Management Style

In a sense, all styles of management stem from personality and behavior. How we react to problematic situations and individuals in an organization is largely based on the sort of people we are—whether we are extroverts or introverts, for example, or whether we meet conflict head-on or shrink away from it. Some of us almost instinctively make the right moves, but most of us do not. Nevertheless, we all have within us the capacity to modify our management style and to become more effective in dealing with our bosses, peers, and subordinates.

Personality and Behavior

Are personality and behavior predetermined by biological and genetic factors, or are they more malleable? The debate about the roles of nature and nurture has been a lively one throughout this century, with proponents of one or the other striving to prove that they alone are right—and in the process failing to appreciate the essential interdependence of both the genetic and the environmental influences in shaping behavioral and psychological traits. The reality thus lies in the reconciliation of these two positions to create a third position that proposes an interaction between nature and nurture. In other words, behavior is shaped by both nature *and* nurture: some facets of behavior are totally the result of nature, some

are totally the result of nurture, but most facets of an individual's behavior are determined by some mix of the two.

Nature

When Freud intoned “Biology is determinism,” he was coming down solidly on the side of nature. Nature supporters have since used animal research to uncover ingrained behavior patterns and have amassed impressive data to support their position. Studies on monozygotic twins (identical twins derived from a single egg) too have produced powerful evidence for the inheritability of many human traits, including extroversion or introversion and some psychiatric conditions.

Most of these inherited traits follow the Mendelian model, whereby the traits are largely predictable. Some inherited traits, however, follow a different path referred to as *emergence*. Richard Lykken, a geneticist, has proposed that certain traits “emerge” when unique combinations of genes come into play. He uses the case of the great thoroughbred Secretariat to explain this concept. As a result of careful breeding, race horses had seemingly reached a plateau of excellence. Then Secretariat, the wonder horse, came along. Paradoxically, his numerous offspring were mere plodders. In explanation, Lykken suggested that genius—rare strength and speed in the case of Secretariat—comes from the emergence of unique genes and that this unique combination will not be passed on to the next generation. True geniuses fall into the emergent category. Rarely do their offspring demonstrate the same genius. Cases in point include Shakespeare, Benjamin Franklin, and Gauss (one of the princes of mathematics), none of whose progeny were distinguished.

Nurture

B. F. Skinner was an extreme experience advocate. He dismissed the significance of any mental phenomena that could not be observed, and he insisted that all behavior is determined by learning. This extreme behaviorist position was modified in the 1960s by social learning theorists. Although they still emphasized the role of conditioning and reinforcement, they also recognized the importance of cognitive

processes, self-reinforcement, and imitation in the development of behavior. Yet in neither its radical nor its modified form did behaviorism leave room for genetic determinism, that is, for nature.

The Interactive Position

Between the nature and nurture extremes is a position that reconciles the differences. This interactive position has been well defined by Jerome Kagan, a developmental psychologist at Harvard University:

One of the happy consequences of the marriage of the modern synthesis in evolutionary theory with increasingly sophisticated research in neuroscience and genetics is an acceptance of the view that the young infant's behavioral profile interacts with the social environment to produce, over time, a particular constellation of moods and behavioral propensities. The psychological characteristics are neither fixed permanently by biology nor shaped entirely by social interaction. Rather, each child's changing profile is a historical product of genetically influenced reactions accommodating to particular sequences of experience.

Lykken has identified what he calls *impact traits*, traits seen only when the right circumstance arises to promote use of a natural talent. Charismatic leadership is an example of an impact trait. For example, George Patton was a genius on the battlefield, and Eisenhower was a master of coalition building. If either had changed roles, his effectiveness most likely would have been diminished.

When these three positions are united, we see a continuum regarding the sources of behavior, extending from pure nature, to a mix of nature and nurture, to pure experience-based behaviors. My view is that we can assign selected managerial behaviors to places along this continuum and thereby achieve a realistic approach to changing managerial style. We can pinpoint behaviors that are inbred and impossible to change, and we can also identify behaviors that are amenable to change.

Management Style

The key to changing one's management style is the development of a wholeness based on strengthening weaknesses and maximizing

strengths (or what Carl Jung called “striving toward individuation”). Each opposite strives to be dominant, thereby creating one-sidedness; wholeness is achieved when thesis and antithesis are integrated. William Whyte in the 1950s described the one-dimensional organizational man, a conformist shut off from his individuality. Since that time a plethora of self-help books have advised people about how to avoid this fate, but few have taken into account the integrating concept of wholeness. Becoming a three-minute manager does not make you a whole or complete person. Therefore I am not offering one quick fix to improving management style.

In *Understanding Your Management Style*, I pinpointed four critical factors: 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. Combinations of these four factors constitute the building blocks of management style. This book adds one more factor, the management of stress, and looks at all four in terms of their interaction with another factor: organizational culture.

The Psychological Types

The psychological types I posit are based on Jungian theory and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI), a significant personality test designed after World War II by Katherine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers, a mother-daughter team. The following four polarities of human nature form the psychological types:

1. *Extroversion versus introversion.* This polarity defines how we use our psychic energy. Extroverted persons find their orientation in the objective, outer environment, through people and institutions. Introverted persons derive their orientation from within.
2. *Sensing versus intuition.* This polarity defines the perceptive function. Sensing people focus on details, facts, and data derived from the five senses. Intuitive people focus on possibilities, go beyond the facts, and use their sixth sense.
3. *Thinking versus feeling.* This polarity defines the judgment function. Thinking types use impersonal, logical, and analytical approaches to judging situations. Feeling types base their judg-

ments on individual value systems and focus on the personal impact of their judgments.

4. *Perception versus judgment.* The last polarity determines which function, sensing versus intuition (the perceptive function) or thinking versus feeling (the judgment function), is used in dealing with the outside world.

Significantly, these types arise more from nature than from nurture. For example, recent research indicates that patterns of shyness and assertiveness—or the extroversion–introversion polarity—emerge at an early age. Kagan has asserted that “[t]he temperamental category we call uninhibited to the unfamiliar refers to a select group of children . . . who are likely to become sociable, effectively spontaneous, fearless 10-year-olds, and very unlikely to become quiet, shy, and timid, although a small proportion of these children who are outgoing at age 2 acquire a timid demeanor later on because of intervening stressful experiences.”

Research on the sensing versus intuition polarity has revealed chemical and neurological differences between these two groups. For example, brain scans of the intuitive types show more interaction between the hemispheres, with many crisscrossing firings in the brain, while those of the sensing types demonstrate more linear firings, with fewer crossovers between the hemispheres.

Regarding the thinking versus feeling polarity, Lawrence Kohlberg has amassed a large body of solid evidence indicating that children develop definite logical (thinking) versus moral (feeling) judgment throughout puberty.

Psychological types do seem to be determined early in life, and they appear to have a genetic source, a conclusion with far-reaching implications for behavioral modification of psychological types. One is that an intervention intended to change a person’s psychological orientation (his or her mix of the four sets of polarities) will introduce stress factors, which are potentially damaging to the person. For this reason, attempts at long-term alterations are not recommended. However, adjustments designed to respond to particular situations can be made. (Jungians call this “rotating your axes.”) For example, an introvert can engage in assertiveness training and project his energy outward for particular roles. An intuitive

type can learn to deal with details and time management and to be more precise to meet the requirements of a specific job. Then once the situation is dealt with, the person's natural orientation comes to the fore again. The preferences can be likened to the concept of plastic memory, in physics, whereby an object returns to its original shape after bending for short periods of time. The preferences of the psychological type operate under the same principle.

If a person is pressured to change her natural orientation, tension, internal conflict, and even mental disorder can result. For example, parents who demand that their children be clones of themselves cause their offspring psychological stress. A parent who tries to change a shy, introverted child into an extrovert may be thwarting a natural pattern of behavior; the consequence can be mental disorder. This situation has a parallel in organizational life: bosses who demand conformity to their preferences stress their subordinates.

The concept of psychological types not only explains why people behave in different ways, it explains why it is so difficult to change basic behaviors. But when people of differing psychological orientations clash, their conflict can be turned into a positive force that leads to greater synergy in the workforce. All efforts at team building must start with examination of the temperaments of the participants. Otherwise the result will be unresolved conflict at both a conscious and a subconscious level. The participants will be trapped in a dance of death that none of them understands. Irrational and cruel behavior can result.

Although a person cannot permanently change his or her basic profile in terms of the psychological types, he or she can train himself or herself to change temporarily when circumstance dictates flexibility. The polarities of extroversion versus introversion, sensing versus intuition, thinking versus feeling, and judgment versus perception can be viewed as on-off switches that can be activated by the individual as circumstances change. For example, extreme extroverts have their E switch on most of the time. However, there are times when the I (introversion) switch can and should be switched on. The same principle applies to the other preferences. The trouble begins when an extrovert or an introvert tries to keep the opposite switch open all the time.

The Needs

Human needs are determined by nature (e.g., the needs for air, water, food, and safety) and shaped by experience. Richard Gregory, in his book *The Mind*, identifies other needs: “the needs that one may call social: the need for companionship, the need to be part of a group with a hierarchical structure, the territorial needs of a group of which one forms a part.”

Needs are forces that organize our perceptions, judgments, and actions to attain competence. A need presupposes that a condition is unfilled. All of us have complexes of needs that demand satisfaction and that express our personalities—for example, the need for achievement or autonomy. Interpreting these individual patterns is one of the challenges of understanding management styles. Understanding and accepting people’s different needs can bring us another step on the way toward appreciating them as unique individuals, putting their skills to the best use, and resolving management difficulties.

I will use some of the new techniques from the field of cognitive psychology to demonstrate how needs can be modified. The rationale behind changing them is that sometimes we can be too needy. Conversely, our strengths can become our weaknesses if they are overplayed. For example, if a person with a high need for achievement and dominance tries to control the task in a small problem-solving group, the result may be negative for all.

The Bases of Power

Acquiring power and using it effectively is vital to achieving success in organizations, to managing relationships, and to individual fulfillment. The manager’s sense of self-esteem, desire for self-fulfillment, and competence are enhanced by his or her ability to use power effectively.

A simple definition of power is that its goal is to influence the beliefs, emotions, and behaviors of other people. In this sense, power is neutral until it is translated into action. In a one-sided relationship, there will be only one recipient and one wielder of power. The behavior of the wielder of power will be perceived as negative when the wielder is trying to exploit, manipulate, or control the ac-

tions of others. But power can be a positive force when other people feel that they are sharing in the interaction.

Some people have an uncanny ability to use power effectively (and positively). Why these individuals can skillfully influence others is not entirely known. Other people use power to manipulate, disinform, and subvert (this is negative power). People are used like fuel in the furnace of power or cleared away like worn-out gears for more efficient replacements. Both types of power—positive and negative—operate out of an instinctive base.

The effective use of positive power is an acquired skill. Its opposite, negative power, can be shaped as well by our environment. In either case, it is a learned response. In the first case, it is an active, conscious attempt to be effective. In the second instance, it is probably negative conditioning from the environment.

Our use of power depends on our assumptions, perceptions, and feelings (APFs) about it, which themselves are shaped by our value system, our culture, and our experiences. For example, the glare of power bothers some people. Some believe that power poisons, and they shun its use. They may use power on a subconscious level, but probably in an ineffective way. Other people recognize the reality of power—both its uses and abuses—and try to build effective power skills. Another part of the learning process is to know when to use the various bases of power given the requirements of the task. This is situational management.

Each of us can do something about our power orientation since it can be developed by skill building.

Conflict Styles

The biological basis of how we handle conflict is the “fight-or-flight” response, a primitive pattern based on our perceptions of any danger posed by a situation. On some rare occasions the fight-or-flight response is appropriate. Most of the time, however, we need to develop other means of communicating in order to resolve conflicts. These skills can be learned.

In various ways, overtly and covertly, we are always being conditioned to avoid or dominate conflict; therefore, our strategies for conflict resolution are culturally overdetermined. And, in most