

Your Personal Style of Leadership

Know what it is and how to maximize its potential

2. The Leader Who Is Motivated By ACCOMPLISHMENT

This is the second in a series of articles under the heading "Your Personal Style of Leadership".

In last month's first article you had an opportunity of starting to discover or define your own personal style of leadership. You did this by selecting your main motivation and by establishing your motivational pattern.

In the present article we will start looking at a day in the working life of a leader who is very strongly motivated by the first motivation on last month's list, the motivation of ACCOMPLISHMENT. You will recall that we described the person motivated by ACCOMPLISHMENT as being the type of person who "likes to do what's right, to accomplish things, and to reach goals and objectives, making sure that everyone concerned gets equal gain for equal effort".

We will take as an example a foreman in a manufacturing plant who is so strongly motivated by accomplishment that he is barely functional in his job. We do this to clearly illustrate the tendencies possessed by accomplishment motivated leaders and to show how those tendencies impede leadership effectiveness. Most leaders motivated by ACCOMPLISHMENT would react in less extreme fashion to situations such as those occurring in this example, because their motivational pattern would be dominated in a less lopsided manner by accomplishment, as secondary motivations would play a larger role in their motivational pattern. In our example, the protagonist does not really have a motivational *pattern*, because in his case ACCOMPLISHMENT is for all intents and purposes the only motivation that drives him.

Let's say the name of our foreman is Joe. Joe was promoted to the foreman position because of his outstanding productivity as an operator. He was the fastest operator on the floor and was quick in making decisions when encountering problems in his operation. He always met his production quota and usually exceeded it. When other operators came to him with problems he quickly showed them how to solve them. Joe was a no-nonsense kind of a worker, impatient with himself and with others. He couldn't understand why some other workers who weren't as fast as he were getting the same pay as he was. This to him was unjust. Even in cases where the difference in productivity was relatively small, he felt that there should be a way of insuring absolute justice. He also found it unjust when a small guy in the shop was mistreated by a big guy and he would invariably

come to the rescue of the underdog in no uncertain terms. He was respected by the other workers, although he wasn't necessarily liked by most. To many, Joe was too impatient, too direct, too abrupt, too blunt and often too hurtful and even brutal. Joe had definite views about most things, and unless you agreed with him you couldn't discuss things with him. Nevertheless, no-one doubted his competence and efficiency and management promoted Joe to foreman when a position became vacant.

How did Joe do as a foreman?

Let's look at one day in the working life of foreman Joe. It's 07:30 Friday morning. Joe just got in to work. Joe always gets to work 15 minutes early, but on Friday's he arrives 15 minutes earlier still in order to prepare for the 08:00 team meeting which he had instituted from the beginning for every Friday morning. Except for very special occasions, Joe allows for only one team meeting a week, and for the sake of efficiency he makes sure to keep the meeting to 30 minutes. Joe is very much a down-to-earth foreman, believing that operators need clear and concise face-to-face direction to be most efficient. He doesn't think much of written reports and written explanations. In his view, reports and analyses are fine for management planning and overall decision making, but when it comes to the operators, the foreman's role is to translate quickly the information he obtains into appropriate action on the floor.

Joe's definition of effective leadership is to provide straightforward instruction on what needs to be done and on how it is to be done, and to make sure that tasks are carried out accordingly. He believes that when an employee is told clearly what his task is, he has no reason not to perform well. When a task is not carried out satisfactorily, it is his, the foreman's, task to let the employee know in no uncertain terms. Joe will try to replace operators who need to be reminded repeatedly, whatever the reason for the employee's inability to meet standards. Personal problems are not allowed to interfere with performance as, in Joe's mind, everybody has those.

Joe's team has been outperforming the other teams almost from the day Joe became foreman, which was close to three months ago. Joe is proud of the results his team has achieved, although he is not happy that this month's production is not progressing according to plan. His team seems to have reached a plateau. He also noticed some grumbling in the team. There is one week left till the end of the month. It is Joe's intention during this morning's meeting to get the team motivated for a special effort next week in order to surpass last month's production by at least two percentage points.

As usual, Joe first looks at his in-basket. He likes to get rid of reports and other paperwork before doing what he considers "real" work. Joe considers much of the paperwork to be unnecessary "hair splitting". He finds most useless the material he gets from the Personnel Office about the theory and practice of management and of leadership. He would like them to stick to factual information such as changes in the

union contract, pay scales, and the like. It normally takes Joe approximately ten minutes to deal with his in-basket, which would leave him enough time to focus on what he is going to communicate to his team at the meeting.

To-day, the first piece of paper in the in-basket not only does not sit well with Joe but actually gets him raving mad. The Personnel Department has distributed the summary of a report on employer-employee relations to all employees. Joe remembers that something was mentioned in last month's management meeting about this. Joe had been somewhat uncomfortable in that meeting because of the general tone of the employer-employee report, but he had no idea that there would be a summary or that it would be anything like what he has just received! At the management meeting the information provided was very boring to Joe, because it dealt with a lot of detail about surveys conducted, about a variety of conclusions, and about what were to Joe speculations on what employees were thinking and what approaches various employers were using. All this was a lot of hair splitting to Joe who believed in making things simple and in following up with decisive action. Joe had thought that all of it was just more hot air about how to be a good leader, a lot of mumbo jumbo from people who had nice theories but who didn't have much of an idea about the practical side of managing a team. He had dismissed the whole thing as something some managers like to review and discuss, and he thought that the whole thing would be rehashed anyway at future meetings, that it wasn't important, and that nothing would come of it.

Now Joe is suddenly confronted with a summary that in his view clearly challenges his way of working with his team. To top it all, the message was not sent to managers and foremen to consider, but to all employees to read. He is furious! He jumps to his feet and starts pacing up and down his small office. He kicks his desk and starts swearing about "those soft headed, hair splitting and ignorant b***s in their ivory tower who have no idea of what a good day's work is like". He rushes out of the office and runs upstairs to find out whether his manager, the Chief of Production, has arrived. There is no sign of Henry. Joe looks at his watch. It is 07:34. Henry sometimes arrives early, but seldom before 07:45. Joe is fuming inside about Personnel: "I'd give those b***s a piece of my mind, but they won't be around before 09:00, those lazy, good for nothing bureaucrats!"

He runs back down to his floor to make sure that the report has not been pegged to the bulletin board. He then rushes to his office and shoves the copies intended for his team in his desk drawer. No way is he going to distribute that garbage to his team! Not before the meeting and not after the meeting. "Come on Henry, hurry up, so I can show you this nonsense!" he mumbles to himself. It is now 07:36, and Joe again dashes upstairs to Henry's office. Henry hasn't arrived. In his frustration, Joe pounds Henry's desk with his fist, then darts out into the hallway, stopping at the window to see whether Henry's car is in the parking lot. There is no sign of the car and Joe hurries back to Henry's office.

Glancing at Henry's in-basket, he notices the same report at the top of the pile of papers. He snatches the report from the in-basket and slams it down on the middle of Henry's desk blotter. It is 07:39. Joe runs back to his office and starts preparing his agenda for the meeting. He tells himself "I m not going to say anything about this report to my team – my meeting will deal with next week's production only. They will be motivated once they see how I propose they go about achieving it". He abruptly decides to forget about drafting an agenda, crumples the draft in his right hand and throws it into the wastepaper basket. With his left hand on the desk, he pushes himself up from the chair, walks quickly around his office in a small circle, then grabs the phone and dials Henry's local. No answer. He slams the phone down and hurries again to Henry's office. It is 07:42. On his way, he again checks the parking lot, and to his relief he sees Henry's car parked in its usual spot. He doesn't find Henry in his office. "Where the --- did he go?" It is 07:45. Joe decides to be patient and sits down in Henry's chair.

10 seconds later he jumps up to again check the hallway. He sees Henry approaching from the end of the hallway. Joe rushes back into Henry's office, grabs the summary lying on the desk blotter, and runs out with it to meet Henry. Without any greeting, Joe hollers to Henry: "Look at this garbage from Personnel, Henry! I have no intention of distributing this to my team. I have a team meeting at 08:00 and we have a production target to meet next week. I don't want any of this distraction. Just wanted you to know."

Henry: "Do as you see fit in your meeting, Joe. But we need to discuss this afterwards because I am a little surprised at your reaction to this report. As you know, this was reviewed extensively in the management meeting. You didn't intervene during the meeting nor did you take it up with me after the meeting, so I figured you were OK with the action that was decided upon at the meeting".

Joe: "I don't recall any mention of this sort of action. I am the foreman, and if any new ways of handling employees are to be introduced, I should be the one to do it with my team."

Henry: "Joe, I can see that there is a misunderstanding here, so lets you and I get together after your team meeting to review this together. Can you be at my office at 08:45?"

Joe: "I'll be here. I still think this is bloody nonsense".

Henry: "I'll be expecting you at 08:45. Bring your copy of the minutes of the management meeting so we can go over them together. As a matter of fact, you may want to look at the minutes before you come to see me. Do you want to come at 09:00 instead of 08:45?"

Joe: "No. I don't need to go over them. I know what I know and it's very simple. But I'll listen to what you have to say."

Henry: "Right. See you at 08:45".

Find out in next week's installment what happened in Joe's team meeting, how the session with Henry went, how Joe's day ended that Friday, what the consequences were of the whole incident, and what the conclusions are in general about leaders who possess ACCOMPLISHMENT as their main motivation, whether or not that motivation is of a lopsided nature.

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