

**AUTHORITARIAN ATTITUDES RESULT IN CONFRONTATION;
LEADERSHIP AND CO-OPERATION RESULT IN ECONOMIC SUCCESS**

Having held positions ranging from line supervisor to executive manager, in organizations from small to large, and in cultures that have varied from authoritarian to laissez-faire, it seems that an effective manager is one who is a chameleon, demonstrating a leadership style which component parts change in accordance with the objectives and culture of the entity being managed. Even within a company that may operate in a basically democratic fashion, a manager might be tasked with directing activities or departments that operate most efficiently in a more autocratic fashion, and vice versa. For example, a retail or hospitality business can best cultivate its customers by allowing salespersons much discretion and latitude in servicing needs and complaints; whereas, other areas such as finance and accounting, facilities maintenance and information technology usually operate most efficiently when adhering to formalized schedules, policies and procedures. Each of the different functional areas has its unique objectives, most efficient operating methodologies, and personality types. Thus, to achieve the best results, the effectiveness of the entity is determined by the ability of the individual manager to administer tasks, dependent on the attitudes and aptitudes of the staff and on the ability of the leader to effectively translate the company's strategy into enthusiastic action by the group.

The author's experience in the military showed that an authoritarian management style was most effective in time- and mission-critical situations and during emergency operations, because team members were well trained and motivated toward mission accomplishment such that individual atavism was suborned for the duration of operations.

Leading in such a controlled environment required a high degree of self-regulation and motivation.

Work in a variety of corporate environments, however, demonstrated that enterprises organized on authoritarian lines had many problems, such as poor efficiency and high employee turnover. For example, during 3 years employment as a project director with an international business management consulting firm, the policies, procedures and methodologies for conducting client engagements were so strictly regulated that individual consultants had very little ability to bring their individual talents to bear, thereby alienating employees and clients alike, leading to a considerable degree of cost inefficiency and lost referrals. Whereas consulting requires knowledge transfer calling for management traits of empathy and social skills, the dictatorial methods of the consulting firm's executives presented conflicts directly antithesis to the learning process. In such an environment, it was incumbent on the project director to employ the same authoritarian traits as within a military environment when dealing with senior management, yet more collegial characteristics of empathy and social skills during interaction with the project team and clients. The experience taught the author that those who organize their companies on authoritarian lines are probably seeking to improve their own standard of living, disregarding the best interests of employees and clients, and ultimately of the company itself, resulting in a culture of much internal conflict.

Conversely, since the objective of leadership is to get people to work together efficiently, productively and profitably, cooperation can increase by adopting and propagating a more participative, respectful style of management. While currently managing high-budget, multi-year projects for a financial entity, involving hundreds of

persons, across broad geographic areas, the author has found that a participative style of leadership incorporating the full spectrum of emotional traits creates an environment of effective cooperation, which can persist under adverse as well as under favorable conditions. In such an environment, some of the character traits that contribute toward a manager's ability to organize projects in a participatory manner include continuously communicating with all stakeholders in a straightforward manner, being a teaching archetype, finding self-esteem through self-reliance and personal expression, and relating to people in intuitive and empathic ways. With those core traits, a manager can then gain the credibility to influence group decisions through the use of logic, facts and reason.

The working methodology inherent in a participatory style of project management would seem to be more transactional than conceptual, as it involves managing specific tasks, assigned to specific persons, for completion during a specific timeframe and within a specific budget. Ideas on what tasks need to be accomplished in order to meet project requirements are gathered from all stakeholders, and subject matter experts are asked to recommend courses of action for accomplishing those tasks. The project manager will then synthesize everyone's best ideas into a single, cohesive plan of action; an amalgam of ideas that comprise what the manager deems to be the best parts of each that will attain milestones most efficiently. Tasks and timeframes are then presented to and discussed with the entire project team.

The greatest resistance to any idea is usually not that the team is unwilling or uncooperative, nor that the idea is unworkable, it is when the team is presented with a manager's decision before being asked for their input and cooperation. A dictatorial management style demonstrates contempt and disregard for everyone else's capabilities.

As well, if the manager unilaterally negates commitments previously made in consort with others, undermining the expectations of the team, then the manager will lose credibility and the group's trust.

During implementation of the project plan, the project manager must exercise traits of control and motivation by monitoring how well tasks are performed, issuing corrective action directives, and reporting progress via meetings with the group and with all other stakeholders (project sponsors, executives, users). Finally, motivational skills are paramount to the successful conduct of projects. A leader must know what inspires individual team members, and then reward them for performance that contributes value.

Once again, the key to participatory project management is through continuous, collaborative communication, such that expectations are understood and commitments are kept by all. Doing so most effectively and pleurably in a corporate environment, the author has found, calls for an ever-shifting blend of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivational talents, empathy, and social skills.