

# *Management Styles*

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## *1. Introduction*

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It is accepted that different managers display different styles of management in the course of their work. This paper serves an overview of some of the most common management styles. After reading this paper, you should evaluate yourself to see which of these styles apply to you or to a manager that you know.

## *2. Different Styles of Management*

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It is said that managers display one or more of the management styles that are discussed in this paper. Below is an examination of some of the most commonly exhibited management styles.

### a) Authoritarian Style

Also referred to as coercive style of management, authoritarian managers would normally demand immediate compliance. Basically such managers are saying “just do as a say”. In modern business organisations, this style of management cannot succeed, as it will ultimately cause staff demotivation or possible rebellion and legal action

for bullying. However, authoritarian management style may be suitable in crisis situations and in the military.

b) Authoritative Style

Full of authority and influence, managers who display this type of management style can very easily mobilise people with a great deal of enthusiasm and with clear objectives. These are very confident and charismatic managers who are basically saying "come with me, trust me".

Some cynics might feel that such managers are too over confident and arrogant.

c) Democratic Style

As the name implies democratic managers seek to achieve their objectives by consensus and staff participation. These are managers who would seek the opinion of their staff on serious issues. This creates the feeling of joint participation and responsibility among the staff.

It is said that such management style is likely to reduce staff rebellion. However, there may be problem areas if, for instance, the staff are against an important plan that management wants implemented.

Nevertheless, this style of management is likely to facilitate effective communication within the organisation, which in turn is likely to reduce rebellion.

d) Affiliative Style

Closely related to the democratic style, affiliative style of management is intended to create unity and harmony in the organisation by seeking to build an emotional bond among staff. Such bonding is expected to create an atmosphere of friendliness, unity and love in the organisation, which in turn is seen as a motivator. It can also breed staff feeling that they are all tied to the same destiny.

While there is no doubt that it is a positive style, some may worry that being too close and friendly with the staff could cause problems relating to too much familiarity.

e) Permissive Style

Also referred to as Laissez-Faire Style, this is the style management where managers give little or no direction to the staff, basically, letting the staff to just carry on with their job. This provides a great deal of empowerment for the staff, who may feel proud that they are in charge of their work and can work without supervision.

However, this style of management is only appropriate where the staff are:-

- Highly skilled and experienced
- Interested in working on their own
- Trustworthy
- Independent experts that are hired from outside.

Some of the potential problems with this style is that:

- Managers are kept in the 'dark' as to what is going on as there is little or no feedback from the staff.
- It could create insecurity and uncertainty, where staff are not properly trained or experienced.
- It can lead to a situation where managers do not compliment the staff at all, as they don't know how efficient the staff has been.
- The manager's role and responsibilities are effectively reduced.

f) Indifferent Style

While a bit similar to the permissive style, the indifferent style is basically that the manager just can't be bothered. This may be the case where the manager is seriously demotivated as a result of lack of recognition or simply that he/she has had enough and does not care what goes on. Obviously, this is an unacceptable style in modern management.

g) Coaching Style

This is a management style where a manager focuses on training, guiding, counselling and staff personal development for the future growth of the organisation. This will be extremely useful for the improvement of staff performance and the future strength of both staff and the organisation.

Properly trained staff will be much more confident and efficient on the job.

h) Pacesetting Style

This is a style of management where managers set examples and standards for high performance. Basically, it is management by example, where managers are saying "do what I do". It is like a role model management style.

This sort of style may only be suitable for staff who are highly motivated. Others may find it too intense and overwhelming and may just give up, because they are unlikely to achieve such standards.

i) Visionary Style

This is a management style, where managers move their staff to share positive dreams of the potential benefits and opportunities that they stand to gain. This is where when both staff and organisational goals are clearly defined and the means of achieving them are well known by everyone.

Visionary managers can be innovative and would normally seek to develop the staff ability to make effective decisions and to improve performance.

j) Bureaucratic Style

This is a management style by the book, so such managers are completely inflexible. Basically such a manager is saying "I go by the book, no more no less".

The Bureaucratic style require that everything is done in accordance with company policy, procedure and culture. This type of management style may only be useful where:

- Staff perform routine tasks
- The job requires staff to know and understand all the policies and procedures.
- For health and safety reasons, certain work (e.g. machine operation) has to be done in a certain way
- For security reasons, certain procedures have to be performed in the course of the job.

However, a bureaucratic style could cause problems:

- Where innovation and initiative is required on the job
- Where staff have become bored of their job and need challenges
- In breaking bad work habits that have been formed over the years
- As staff will object to changes to be introduced, as they are used to certain ways of work

k) Defensive Style

This is a management style that is practiced by managers who always seek to find fault from the staff and gives the impression that he/she is correcting the fault. For example, such managers may always say words like:

"that is wrong, you shouldn't be doing that".

The problem is that such managers are always negative in their attitude towards the staff, finding faults and errors, but not their positive contributions.

This sort of management style can be very de-motivating and demoralising. If such behaviour persists, the staff may also become defensive towards the manager.

## ***Conclusion***

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There is no particularly accepted style of management, but styles that lead to increased staff motivation, job satisfaction and productivity should be encouraged. While those that have the opposite effect should be discouraged.

## ***8. Self-Assessment Questions***

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1. *Which of the management styles do you personally exhibit?  
Justify your answer.*
2. *Which in your opinion is the most desired management style?  
Justify your answer.*
3. *Which in your opinion is the most undesired management style?  
Justify your answer.*

