

Self-directed learning: managing yourself and your working relationships

MANAGING PEOPLE

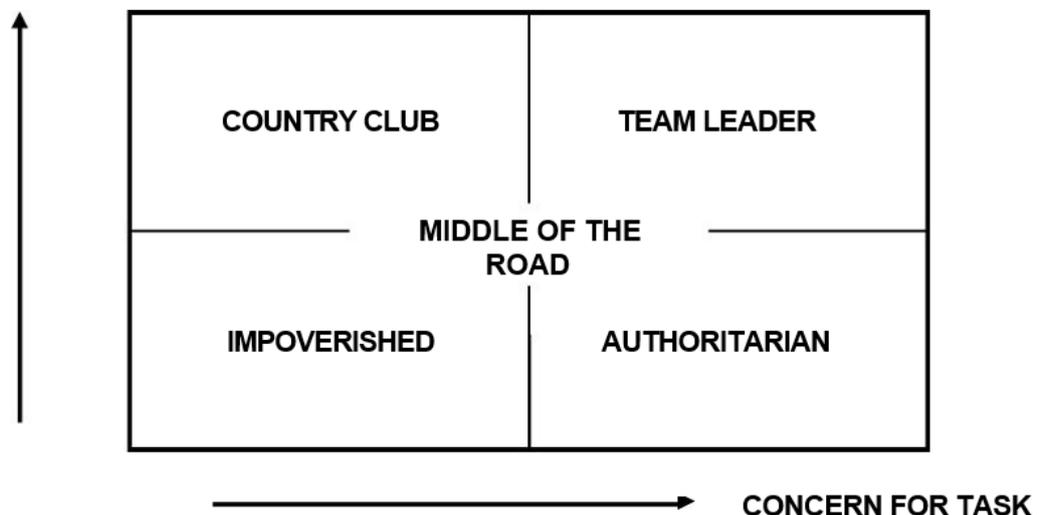
In this chapter we focus on the situation where you are a line manager with responsibility for managing a number of people. John Adair suggests that an effective manager needs to meet the needs of the task, the team and the individuals within the team, and we organise the chapter around these three aspects. We end the chapter by comparing management with leadership, suggesting that to be successful you need a blend of both management and leadership.

Concern for task and concern for people

Before looking at the three elements of the Adair model, let's look at a slightly different leadership framework developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton, which they called the managerial grid. As illustrated in Figure 7.1, this proposes that a manager has to balance concern for making sure that tasks are completed with a concern for the needs of their people.

Figure 7.1 Blake and Mouton's managerial grid

CONCERN FOR PEOPLE



The grid suggests five styles of management:

- An **authoritarian** manager is concerned largely or exclusively with making sure that the task is completed. They are focused on production not people. They reckon that employee needs are unimportant. In their view, people are paid to come to work and must deliver performance in return. One situation where this might be an effective style of management is in a crisis.
- A **country club** manager, on the other hand, has a high concern for people and a low concern for task completion. They are focused on making sure that people are treated well, hoping that this will lead to performance. The culture created is likely to be friendly but not very productive.
- The **impoverished** style of management combines low concern for task and low concern for people. Such a manager may be focused on looking after their own self-interest, seeking to protect themselves and to avoid being held responsible for any mistakes.
- The **middle of the road** manager is trying to balance the goals of the organisation and the needs of the employees. Their belief is that by giving some concern to both the task and the people they will achieve suitable performance.
- The **team leader** style of manager, however, considers that there does not need to be a tradeoff between the needs of their people and getting the task done. They see that the task is only achieved through the people, and so show high concern for both. They seek to encourage teamwork and commitment among their people, which leads to high performance.

The managerial grid can be related to the Theory X and Theory Y view of motivation developed by Douglas McGregor. A manager who takes a **Theory X** view of people assumes that employees are inherently lazy, dislike work and seek to avoid responsibility. Such a manager does not trust their people, and uses a mix of carrot and stick to ensure compliance with detailed direction from above. An authoritarian manager is likely to have a Theory X view of people.

In contrast, a manager with a **Theory Y** view of people assumes that employees can enjoy work and are talented, creative and able to motivate themselves. They believe that people want to do a good job, and that this in itself can be motivating. They are more likely to communicate openly, share decision making and generate a climate of trust. A team leader in Blake and Mouton's terms is likely have a Theory Y view of people.

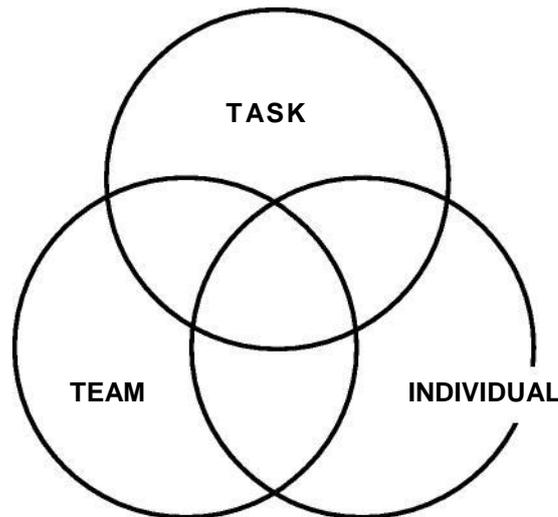
Task, team and individual

Although John Adair developed what he terms his action-centered model of leadership independently of Blake and Mouton's managerial grid, I think of his framework as adding an extra dimension to their notion of concern for task and for people. Adair suggests that an effective leader needs to allocate time to

- meet the **individual** needs of each team member
- keep the group or **team** working together
- ensure the **task** is completed

This is illustrated in Figure 7.2 where the area of effective leadership might be viewed as lying in the overlap between task, team and individual.

Figure 7.2 John Adair's action centered leadership model



Let's now consider how as a manager you might address the needs of the task, the team and the individuals.

Managing the task

To ensure that tasks are completed effectively and efficiently, Adair says that the leader must:

- Specify and agree objectives
- Allocate resources
- Review progress
- Evaluate performance

I think this first bullet point is fundamental. You – and the people who work for you – need to be clear about what you are trying to achieve. My impression is that, while this is the norm in many organisations, in some places people do not always have clear objectives. Moreover, when the environment changes, people may be working to objectives that are clear but no longer entirely appropriate. We shall return to this point at the end of the chapter when we contrast management of the status quo with leadership of change.

A commonly used mnemonic is that objectives need to be SMART. There are various versions of what these five letters mean, but typically SMART objectives are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time bounded

While I think that it is often useful to have objectives which are SMART, and that this is a helpful checklist when setting objectives, I also believe that there are times when objectives are necessarily and usefully somewhat fuzzy and where the attempt to make them SMART is unduly constraining. As an illustration, let's imagine that you have decided to write a book on managing people. Assume that at this stage you

know some of the topics you wish to cover but have still to settle on who your target readership is and what style to write the text in. At this point you aren't ready to be specific, needing time for your thoughts to ferment. At a later date it will be useful to be more explicit about what exactly you will cover in the book, your style of writing and how many words you are aiming for. It will be useful too, to set yourself some deadlines, and at that point your objective might be phrased in words that are SMART. But at this point, while you have a definite idea that you will work on, your objective can't be specified in SMART terms.

Having set or agreed objectives, it is also important to monitor progress. I know that this was one of my weaknesses when I line managed a small team of learning and development professionals in Transco, the gas pipeline business. While I did agree objectives with each individual, I tended to leave them to get on with things, trusting that they would deliver. With hindsight, while the people were both competent and reliable, I realise that more regular checking of progress would have helped them as individuals and led to better outcomes for the tasks.

Moreover, if some of your people are less than wholly reliable or competent – or perhaps simply lacking relevant experience - then monitoring progress is vital. This becomes particularly important when managing someone who regularly performs poorly.

I would make two brief comments about allocating resources. First, as with setting objectives, the importance of this seems both obvious and fundamental. However, I have observed on countless occasions people being asked to do a task without being given sufficient resources – people, budgets, equipment – to do the job properly. Second, it is important to reallocate resources when the environment changes and the demands on you and your team shift. I think one of the weaknesses of some public sector organisations is that they stay with historical allocations of resources for too long even though the world has changed.

Delegation

One of the important skills in management is the ability to delegate tasks effectively. Managers who find it difficult to delegate frequently give excuses such as the following:

- I don't have time to delegate
- I don't have anyone to delegate to
- It's too risky to delegate this
- My people are already overloaded

There are occasions when each of these excuses is absolutely valid and constitutes a reason rather than an excuse for not delegating. But I suspect not nearly as often as people think.

Other reasons for not delegating which may be true but are less likely to be admitted to include:

- I don't trust my people
- I can do it better or quicker myself
- I like doing this task
- I enjoy helping people

Here are some guidelines on how to delegate a task effectively:

- Choose an appropriate person to delegate the task to
- Explain clearly – so that they understand – the outcome you are looking for
- Be as precise as you feel it necessary to be about quality standards, constraints and deadlines
- But don't tell the person how to do the task – let them use their initiative and creativity
- Check that the person is committed to completing the task
- Monitor progress appropriately – delegation isn't abdication – and be available to offer support if necessary
- Review the task when it's completed and, if appropriate, help the person to distil what they have learnt
- Say *Thank You*

I like the quote from the US Second World War general, George Patton, who said, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what you want them to achieve and they'll surprise you with their ingenuity."

The ability to delegate effectively is also a vital skill in managing your time. Taking time to delegate a task effectively can be a great investment of time which pays off not only in the time you subsequently save but also because it can build the capability and confidence of the person to whom the task is delegated. Moreover, a manager who can delegate effectively is freed up to work on more important or strategic tasks – or to create a healthier work-life balance for them self. When effective delegation becomes the norm within a team, it can help to create a culture of empowerment.

Managing the team

Let's turn now from delegating tasks to considering teams. To ensure that the team is working well and developing its overall effectiveness and capability, Adair says that the leader must:

- Ensure key roles are filled by appropriate people
- Build trust and inspire teamwork
- Deal with conflict
- Expand team capabilities
- Facilitate and support team decisions

One of the most important ways in which you invest your time as a manager is interviewing to recruit a new member of the team. Recruiting someone who isn't suitable is a mistake that you may have to live with for a very long time if the culture and policies of your organisation make it difficult to get rid of people who aren't performing well enough. On the other hand, recruiting a talented and motivated person who is going to get on well with the rest of your team is one of the delights of the role.

Managing the dynamics within the team – handling conflict, dealing with rivalries, encouraging the more reticent to contribute, putting people with complementary styles together, and so on – is also part of your role as a manager. You may, as many people do, choose to ignore tensions, disagreements and rivalries within the team. But the performance of the team and the morale of the individuals within it will be influenced by the team dynamics, and you ignore it to your cost.

From time to time conflict – which we define in another chapter as any form of disagreement, no matter how large or small - can emerge in any team. In a well-managed team conflict is acknowledged and worked through to find a way forward.

In less healthy teams, conflict gets ignored, which means that it persists and undermines morale and performance.

What is a team?

In their book *The Wisdom of Teams* Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith offer a very useful definition of a team:

- A team is a small number of people with complementary skills committed to a common purpose, performance goals and ways of working together for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

I think it is worth studying the various phrases which make up the definition, all of which are carefully chosen. For me, the key phrase is *mutually accountable*. I find that the definition is liberating. There are many groups who work together reporting to the same manager but who are not and need not be a team. I remember facilitating a team building away day for the Support Services managers in Transco, the gas pipeline business. Each of them reported to the Support Services Director, but they had very different responsibilities – for Finance, Human Resources, Purchasing, Legal, and so on. They had certain needs to communicate with one another as senior managers in the organisation and they shared a boss, but they did not need to struggle to be a team and did not need to go on the away day. Each of them, however, was the leader of a team – that is, a group of people mutually accountable for delivering results - within their own function.

In a similar way the Executive Directors of many organisations do not need to be a team most of the time. The key occasion when they need to be a team is when they meet together to discuss the strategy of the organisation, for which they genuinely are mutually accountable.

You might like to think about the work unit that you lead or are a member of, and consider to what extent they are a team according to Katzenbach and Smith's definition.

Stages of team development

There are a variety of models of how teams develop. The most widely quoted is Bruce Tuckman's *Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing* model. However, I think its popularity owes more to the memorability of the mnemonic rather than its accuracy as a model. For example, while some groups do go through a Storming stage as people vie for position, I don't think it's inevitable that this has to occur. Tuckman's original 1965 formulation was based on a survey of fifty articles on group development, and three quarters of these studies were based on therapy groups or encounter groups. It is not obvious to me that the stages of development of these groups will necessarily be the same as those of, for instance, a project group of business managers with a designated leader.

In *Coaching for Performance* John Whitmore describes a model of team development that makes more sense to me. This suggests that teams go through three stages:

- Inclusion
- Assertion
- Co-operation.

In the *Inclusion* stage, people are gauging to what extent they are included in the group. They may be feeling insecure, and possibly asking themselves if they want to be in this

group. Some people will deal with their anxiety about acceptance or rejection by being quiet or tentative, while others may compensate by being vocal or forceful.

In the *Assertion* stage, people who feel included begin to assert themselves in order to stake a claim for their territory within the group and their place in the pecking order. There may be power struggles and lots of competition within the group. This can make the group productive. Many groups do not advance beyond this stage.

In the *Co-operation* stage, people who feel established begin to support each other and to trust each other. There is a lot of commitment to the team, patience and understanding of each other, and humour and enthusiasm. There is also a willingness to challenge ideas and debate issues constructively. The team is aligned well towards the achievement of its goals.

Note that it is entirely possible that a team will slip backwards at times to earlier stages of development. I like the way that the three stages are linked to the feelings and behaviours of individual members, which strikes me as a realistic basis for a model of group development.

If someone new joins a team – even one that is co-operative – they will still need to go through the inclusion and assertion stages, and this might affect how others behave. A long standing member of the team might revert back to the Inclusion stage when a new manager or colleague joins the team.

You might like to think about the people who work in the team that you lead or manage and consider where each of them – including yourself – stands on the team development model: Are they:

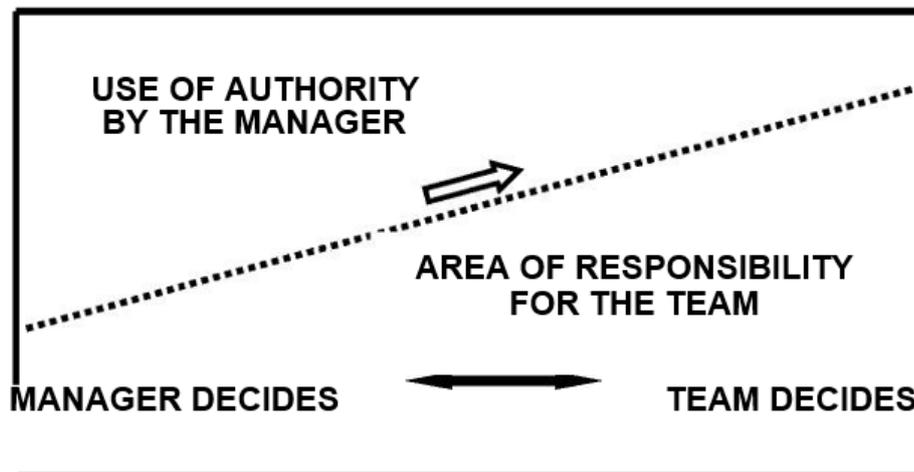
- Still looking to be included?
- Assertively staking out their territory?
- Co-operating with and supporting the other members of the team?

The Tannenbaum and Schmidt continuum

Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt described a continuum of leadership styles in which at one end of the spectrum the team leader makes the decision on their own and at the other the team is free to decide. They listed the following seven styles of leadership along the continuum illustrated in Figure 7.3. It can be helpful as a manager to realise that these options are available to you. Clearly which option you choose depends on the situation you are in and the capability of your team.

- 1) Manager takes decision and announces it
- 2) Manager decides and then sells the decision to the team
- 3) Manager presents decision with background ideas and invites questions
- 4) Manager suggests a provisional decision and invites discussion about it
- 5) Manager presents the problem or situation, get suggestions, and then decides
- 6) Manager explains the situation or problem, defines the parameters, and asks team to decide on the solution
- 7) Manager allows team to identify the problem, develop options, and decide on the action within the manager's limits of authority

Figure 7.3 The Tannenbaum and Schmidt continuum



As an illustration of the continuum, consider a situation where the team's budget for next year has to be cut by 20%. At the left hand edge of the continuum, the manager simply decides where the cuts are to be made and announces this as a *fait accompli* to the team. In the middle of the continuum, the manager seeks the views of the team on ways of reducing the budget and takes these into account in the decision. At the right hand edge the manager lets the team decide how to cut the budget – an unlikely scenario as this is probably inappropriate abdication by the manager of an important decision.

The continuum can be a useful guide when the manager is chairing a team meeting. There may be some items where the manager is simply announcing a decision and others where the manager is genuinely consulting the team. It saves the time and energy of all concerned if the manager is clear about this. There may also be items where the manager wants the team to decide. An example of this might be the choice of where to go for the departmental Christmas night out.

You might like to reflect on whether there are some parts of the continuum where you tend to operate and others that you generally avoid, and consider any changes you wish to make.

In the chapter on a coaching style of management we shall look at a similar idea, the coaching dance, where an effective manager can move skillfully between **Telling** someone what they need to do and **Asking** them for their ideas on how they are going to do it.

Managing the individuals

We turn now from the team as a whole to managing the separate members of the team. To meet the diverse needs of each of the different individuals within the team, Adair says that the leader must:

- Treat each member as an individual
- Acknowledge different opinions, work-styles and motivation
- Encourage each individual to contribute fully
- Keep individuals informed
- Provide development opportunities according to individual needs

We look at a number of aspects of managing individuals in other chapters. One of the most important ways in which you manage people is through the conversations you have with them, and we explore this in the chapter on conversations. In the chapter on coaching we consider how you can use a coaching style of management. And in the chapter on developing yourself and others we look at the importance of offering people challenging experiences at the edge of their comfort zone to develop their skills, confidence and sense of self.

We looked earlier in the chapter at delegation. I think the following checklist is useful in considering whether and how to delegate a task to an individual. Ask yourself if the person you are delegating to is:

- Clear
- Capable
- Confident
- Committed

First of all, the person to whom the task is being delegated needs to be clear what you are asking them to do. Note that it's not enough that you are clear – what matters here is that they also are clear.

Second, if the person isn't capable of doing the task, then it's foolish to delegate it to them – unless you're going to help them develop their capability at the same time. Third, they may be clear and capable but lack confidence. In this case, you might delegate the task but need to offer them appropriate support. Someone who successfully achieves the task in this situation may very well grow considerably. Finally, if the problem lies in the person not feeling committed to the task, then the intervention you require is very different than in the other instances. I think that commitment and motivation ultimately come from within, so you'll need to consider what – if anything - will motivate this individual to take on responsibly this particular task.

Managing poor performance

One of the most unpleasant areas in managing people is when an individual regularly underperforms over a significant period of time. This may be due to a lack of motivation or commitment. Or it may be down to a lack of ability, which could be because the person has been promoted to a level beyond their competence or because they are simply in the wrong job. Or it may be because of illness or injury or stress. How you address matters will differ depending on the key cause of the poor performance.

In a case of underperformance, it's important that you tackle this rather than bury your head in the sand and hope that the issue will somehow resolve itself. You will have to engage in some difficult conversations with this person, something which neither of you is likely to enjoy. Your organisation probably has policies and procedures for managing poor performance, and it is essential to make yourself familiar with these and then follow them. These are likely to involve setting very specific objectives and monitoring them closely, together with the provision of appropriate training if the poor performance is due to a lack of ability.

You need to let the employee know explicitly what is expected of them and agree a set of specific and realistic objectives with appropriate deadlines. This is best done at a face to face meeting. Your intention at this point is to offer the necessary support to enable the employee to succeed. You then need to meet regularly to review progress and update plans.

Hopefully, this turns the situation around and the employee delivers a satisfactory level of performance. However, if you are unsuccessful in this, and if they have not found an alternative role which is better suited to their abilities, then you may have to invoke formal procedures to dismiss the person. Such a process needs to be fair, consistent and thorough. It is important to keep detailed and accurate written records at each stage of the process.

If the individual then takes matters to appeal or to an Employment Tribunal, then demonstrating that you have scrupulously followed the appropriate procedures over time is vital. Matters which reach these formal arenas are likely to be stressful, time consuming and possibly expensive. Moreover, even the party who nominally wins the case is likely to have lost a lot along the way.

Management and leadership

In this final section we look at the difference between management and leadership. In a classic Harvard Business Review article first published in 1990 and entitled *What Leaders Really Do* John Kotter distinguished between leadership and management.

Table 7.1 Management versus Leadership

MANAGEMENT <i>Coping with complexity</i>	LEADERSHIP <i>Coping with change</i>
☐ Planning and budgeting	☐ Setting a direction
☐ Organising and staffing	☐ Aligning people
☐ Controlling and problem solving	☐ Motivating and inspiring

In Kotter's view management is about coping with the complexity which results from the emergence of large organisations in the last century. Good management brings order and consistency, and promotes stability.

Leadership, on the other hand, is about coping with change, which becomes crucially important in a volatile and highly competitive world. In such an environment change is essential for survival.

Kotter writes that there are three key activities required in both management and leadership:

- deciding what needs to be done
- creating relationships to do what needs to be done
- ensuring that people do what needs to be done

Management and leadership address these three activities in different ways, however. Managers decide what needs to be done through planning and budgeting processes; they enact plans by creating and staffing an organisational structure; and they ensure that plans are indeed carried out through controls, monitoring processes and problem solving. On the other hand, leaders initiate change by developing a vision of the future and strategies to accomplish this vision; they communicate the vision to enable people to form coalitions committed to achieving it; and they motivate and inspire people by tapping into their basic needs, values and emotions. Since leadership is about change and management is about dealing with the status quo, leadership may be required less often than management as most of the time we are trying to carry out our activities efficiently and effectively rather than changing what we do.

Kotter argues that while management and leadership have different purposes both are essential. As an illustration, when President Kennedy said in the early 1960's that his country would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade, that is an example of a leader painting an inspiring vision.



To make the vision the reality it became when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon in 1969, a lot of management had to have taken place in the meantime.

The President of the United States has vast resources at his disposal. Many people have to do both the leadership and the management them self. You may like to consider when you need to act as a leader and when you need simply to be a manager, and to look at how much time you spend on both activities.

Kotter underlines the necessity to have both leadership and management when he writes:

It is possible to have too much or too little of either. Strong management with no leadership tends to entrench an organisation in deadly bureaucracy. Strong leadership with no management risks chaos, and the organisation itself may be imperiled as a result.

Another notion which also distinguishes leadership from management is the difference between being strategic and being operational. The word *strategic* is somewhat nebulous. One idea which gives a handle on what it is to be *strategic* is that the origin of the word is the Greek word *strategos* which means *a general*. Hence, being strategic is to sit in the general's headquarters deciding which battle to fight and where and with what resources. The general doesn't engage in hand to hand combat.