

Leading light

Which management style works best? Mark Blackmore has considered the issue and believes he has the answer

You've worked with many managers and have your favourites and those that got the very best out of you. They may have been very involved in your day-to-day activity, or simply left you alone to get on with the job. They either gave you clear direction, or allowed you to make your own decisions. If you are a manager, what kind are you? There are four distinct management styles dictated by how much involvement the manager has at the front line and how much they empower their people.

The front line autocrat

This manager is a warrior. He is Braveheart. He leads from the front, has rugged good looks and an ego to match. He is the best, he knows it and, to be perfectly honest, so do you. Guys want to be like him, while women want to be with him. He will fight until the end, until victory is gained, and he'll expect the same from you. Mind you, he wouldn't expect you to do anything he wouldn't do. In fact he wouldn't want you to do anything he wouldn't do.

His is the best way, so why do anything else? If you devotedly follow

him, he'll repay your loyalty by defending you at all costs. If he sees you in trouble, he'll bravely wade in with his sword, crushing your oppressor. His enemies respect him, his followers love him and the world proclaims him. Well, kind of...

You see, unless you are able to do it his way, you are not welcome in his team. He doesn't want rebels in his camp. He wants followers. Strange, when you realise he is a maverick himself, a total rebel. He doesn't follow the rules, he makes them. He doesn't respect authority, he is it. This makes him and, by association his team, outsiders. They are wild cannons, difficult to control and impossible to manage.

Yes, they are successful, but at what price? His unwillingness to toe the company line means that eventually he becomes too high risk. They are 'The A Team' of business. They get the job done outside of the law. This may sound exciting but, in the long term, they limit themselves because their way isn't necessarily the best way. His blind loyalty to his team means that he is prone to making wrong decisions. He lacks professional detachment. He covers up the team's weaknesses, but also denies them the opportunity of gaining help from anyone else.

Not that this matters if you are one of his followers. You are happy just be mentioned in the same breath. If you ever leave the team, you will still meet

up with the guys for a beer, reminisce about the good old days and raise your glasses to the greatest team ever.

Front line autocrat

Personal Motto:

"Live by the sword, and die by the sword – death or glory."

Key Value:

Commitment

Strengths:

*Ability to do his people's job
Team loyalty
Motivation*

Weaknesses:

*Myopic view as to how it should be done
Unwillingness to follow anything he doesn't agree with
Professional detachment*

Famous People:

*William Wallace (as portrayed by Mel Gibson in Braveheart)
Alan Sugar
Gordon Ramsey*



	Front Line		
Democratic (Team members make decisions)	Front line democrat Leads by example	Front line autocrat Leads through commitment	Autocratic (Leader makes decisions)
	Behind the line democrat Leads through empowerment	Behind the line autocrat Leads by control and command	
	Behind the Line		

The behind the line democrat

This manager leads from behind the front line. He knows that he doesn't have to be the best at doing his people's job. Indeed, his key role is finding people who can do it better than him. His world revolves around empowerment. He believes in harnessing the resources of others. Give them enough rope, and they will build the Forth Bridge for him. He'll leave you alone and won't be

constantly on your back, unlike some of the other managers you've come across. You almost can't believe the autonomy he gives you, but then that's because he trusts you. He is always talking about trust and loyalty. It's his

Behind the line democrat

Personal Motto:

"Trust and loyalty is everything."

Key Value:

Empowerment

Strengths:

Belief in people

Ability to delegate

Weaknesses:

Out of touch with current marketplace

Fear of confrontation

Famous People:

Sven Goran-Eriksson

John Major

Gerald Ford



code. If you show him trust, he'll trust you. If you give him loyalty, he'll be loyal to you. You can even underperform in his team providing you demonstrate the code... up to a point. His belief is that if you follow the code, the results will also follow. If this team were naval, it would be 'The Love Boat'.

Sounds great, doesn't it. Well, yes, except despite what the Beatles said, love *isn't* all you need. You also need strong leadership. You need someone who is still in touch with what is happening at the front line, and can put together strategies based on today's agenda. This manager is unwilling, almost scared, to get out there and do the job he expects you to do. He is a dinosaur and he knows it. That is why he is happy, almost grateful, if you



come up with the strategy. Sure, build it, and they will come, but the builders need a plan.

Strong leadership means taking on difficult situations and understanding that confrontation is healthy. As in parenting, good parents show love, but they also set the boundaries. Too much love without discipline leads to misleading messages, and ultimately a dysfunctional team.

The behind the line autocrat

You know where you stand with this kind of leader. They clearly set direction, boundaries and consequences. If you are successful, you'll be rewarded. If

you are unsuccessful, you'll be punished. Enough said.

This manager is almost a dictator. He leads by control and command. He doesn't have to do the job himself, that's what you're there for. He has a very clear view on how things should be done and, as one of his direct reports, you appreciate the clear, simple direction. There are no grey areas like you've experienced at some of the companies where you've been employed. You are given clear direction with measurable objectives. Sure, he is tough when you miss a target, but do a good job and he'll look after you.

His guidance and strategy is based

on what worked for him in the old days. His approach is limited in a changing world, however. Things have moved on, but they haven't. Try to point this out and the response will be less than appreciative. In his world he is paid to know everything, not you. Knowledge

Behind the line autocrat

Personal Motto:
"My way or the highway"

Key Value:
Control

Strengths:
Clarity of direction
No misunderstandings
Short-term successes

Weaknesses:
Motivation is through fear
Needs constant reinforcement

Famous People:
Margaret Thatcher
Theo Paphitis
Alex Ferguson



is power, and power is the only currency worth owning.

To be a behind-the-line autocrat, you need ultimate authority. It is all over the minute he shows weakness, concedes that he doesn't know something or, worse still, admits that he is wrong. This is a large step down a very slippery slope and the only outcome is a coup. This constant paranoia about a future mutiny makes him incredibly insecure.

The concern over his lack of competence is covered up by shouting even louder at his staff. His failures are taken out on those that work for him. "You are to blame – not me. In my day that would never have happened." This manager gets results, and delivers best when his back is against the wall. In the

long term, however, he often finds it difficult to breed loyalty within his team, and constantly needs to reinforce his authority.

The front line democrat

This leader is very active at the front line, quietly and competently leading by example. His theory on management is that you shouldn't ask anyone to do something that you wouldn't do yourself but, unlike the front line autocrat, it is up to you whether you choose his way. All he expects from you is that you look yourself in the mirror at the end of the day and ask: "Did I give it my best shot?" This passive style gives you an ideal opportunity to be mentored, whilst allowing you the freedom to proceed as you wish. His dedication to

front line democrat

Personal Motto:
"Don't ask anyone to do something you wouldn't do yourself."

Key Value:
Personal standards

Strengths:
Activity levels
Autonomy
Ability to perform role

Weaknesses:
Lack of discipline and implementation of standards
Delegation skills

Famous People:
Anita Roddick
David Beckham (when captain of England football team)
Ghandi



the cause is unquestionable. He will be the first one in, and the last one to leave. If there is an ugly job to do, He'll volunteer himself to do it. He happily

carries the bag and he is still one of the best in the business at performing your role.

This all works well when everything is going to target. You operate in a highly motivated team where everyone, including the manager, is equal. In tough times however, the manager gets frustrated that not everyone shares his high standards. He finds it difficult to enforce set disciplines and tends to become insular and inward-focused. Instead of driving activity and performance in the team, he just works even harder at doing your job, hoping that his increased work rate will rub off on you.

In fact, all that happens is that you become ostracised and crave clearer direction and support. You still admire his work ethic and ability to do your job, but you come to the conclusion that maybe this role isn't for you as you could never do it as well as he does. He is unfortunately unable to attend your leaving do, as he couldn't find time to get away from the office, particularly as he now has an extra workload to carry on his back. He is a martyr who will struggle to get his just rewards unless he learns how to delegate across the team, and realise that he can't do everything.

So, which type makes the best manager? Each style has its benefits but, equally, there are pitfalls to avoid. The key is using each style appropriately, depending on the situation. By utilising all four styles, successful managers empower their people (democrat), ensure they clear direction and boundaries (autocrat) and stay in touch with their people's role (front line) whilst allowing them the freedom and autonomy to make their own decisions (behind the line). ■

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