

Effective Leadership Is a Two-Way Street

By V.R. Buzzotta, Ph.D., and Robert E. Lefton, Ph.D.

There are three important things to remember about the life of French General Jean Martinet.

One: He was a strict disciplinarian. He drilled his men brutally and demanded rigid adherence to the rules. He was so severe and exacting, he earned a place in the dictionary. Today, anyone displaying this style of leadership is branded "a martinet."

Two: At the battle of Duisberg in 1767, General Martinet was shot to death by his own men.

Which brings us to item three. What General Martinet failed to realize, and what we can all learn from his experience, is that leadership is a two-way street. Effective leadership depends on other people. It is their willingness to accept us and support us that makes our leadership possible.

For several years, Psychological Associates has been surveying participants at our leadership seminars to find out what they think of themselves as leaders and what they think of their bosses' leadership abilities.

To fully understand the implications of the collected data, one must be familiar with the Dimensional[®] Model of Leadership Behavior (Figure 1) that we use in all leadership seminars to characterize the four basic styles of leadership.

As you can see, two intersecting lines, which represent the leader's regard for people and concern for

productivity, are used to form four distinct styles of leadership. The Q1 style, for example, would aggressively pursue production goals but exhibit little concern for the people who do the work.

The on-the-job behavior of these four styles of leadership can be summarized as follows:

- Q1 — controlling, domineering, insensitive to others
- Q2 — cautious, unassertive, secretive
- Q3 — highly sociable, overly optimistic, talkative
- Q4 — collaborative, assertive, businesslike.

Obviously, we believe Q4 behavior, which maintains an appropriate level of regard for both productivity and people, is the most desirable and effective style of leadership.

It should be emphasized that these quadrants represent styles of behavior, not types of people. No one is a pure Q1 or totally Q4. One individual can display all four behaviors in a single meeting. Each of us may assume a different style of behavior depending upon with whom we are dealing (e.g., boss, peer, direct report).

With regard to leadership, the question becomes *which style of behavior do you assume most often when dealing with direct reports?*

That is the question we posed to the hundreds of managers who have attended our leadership seminars over the past several years. Before each seminar started and again after each was over, we asked participants to rate themselves by dividing 100 points among the four behavior styles, indicating which one was their dominant leadership style with their direct reports.

Prior to the seminars, managers felt they were "Q4" when dealing with their direct reports about 62% of the time, while exhibiting Q1 behavior only 10% of the time.

However, a dramatic change took place by the time the seminars concluded. During the seminars, the managers' understanding of the various behaviors had deepened; and their awareness of their own leadership style had been heightened through role playing, self-assessment, and peer feedback.

So, when polled after the seminar, managers said they practiced Q1 behavior 30% of the time. **That's a 300% increase!** Meanwhile, the frequency of their Q4 behavior dropped by nearly a third to 41%. (The variance in Q2 and Q3 totals was negligible.)

By raising their Q1 and lowering their Q4 scores, managers were

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admitting that their behavior was more inflexible and domineering than they had previously realized. For almost a third of their on-the-job time, they were Q1 leaders, those who tend to tell instead of ask, who pit one worker against another, and encourage competitiveness instead of cooperation among their direct reports.

More important, they were acknowledging what psychological research and our own observations have shown to be true for many years. It is difficult for us to see ourselves as others see us.

When we judge ourselves, we tend to focus on our good *intentions*. When we're evaluated by others, they tend to judge us by our *actions*.

Consequently, while General Martinet's intentions were to build a well-disciplined military unit, in reality, he may have merely been planting the seeds of mutiny. As we said, leadership is a two-way street.

Leaders Need People

Leaders need the energy and commitment of people to achieve their assigned objectives. The likelihood of their success is directly enhanced by their ability to fulfill the needs of the people they must depend upon.

So, what are *your* direct reports looking for that *you* can provide? Research at Psychological Associates has identified certain special abilities or competencies a leader must have to succeed. (Ours are similar to those identified by other researchers, so they appear to have validity.)

The eight competency areas we

have identified are:

1. Vision, purpose, and direction
2. Technical/administrative skills
3. Cognition/idea presentation/thinking skills
4. Drive and motivation
5. Trust and respect (in both directions)
6. Teamwork and collaboration
7. Empowering and enabling performance
8. Coaching, appraising, and rewarding.

Obviously, not all positions in an organization require the same

have found to be lacking most in their leaders:

1. Coaching, appraising, and rewarding
2. Empowering and enabling performance
3. Teamwork and collaboration.

We were not surprised that appraising and rewarding performance was ranked at the top as the competency most needing improvement. For decades, study after study has indicated that leaders do not provide sufficient feedback. Workers want to know "How well am I doing?" and "How will you recognize and

reward me for what I am doing?" Knowing where they stand is vital. It's basic information for any worker who wishes to improve performance.

The second most-often cited leadership quality needing improvement is their bosses' ability to **empower and enable others**. Workers want the go-ahead to take on responsibility and to be given an opportunity to excel. Empowerment satisfies the need to feel

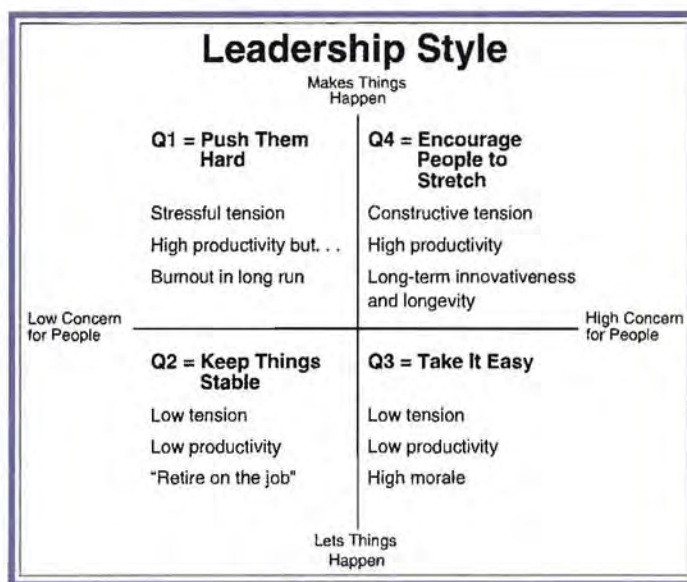


Figure 1

amounts of all eight competencies. However, all leaders should exhibit all of these traits to some degree.

To learn more about these competencies, we again turned to the managers who have attended our leadership seminars over the years. In this case, they were asked to rate their boss on 63 different behavioral characteristics, each of which related to one of the eight competencies listed above. Here, then, are the three abilities that literally hundreds of managers

that what we do is important to the organization. This feeling helps us build a commitment to our jobs. Workers in the survey specified that they wanted clearer goals. They also wanted a clarification of their roles, responsibilities, and authority, as well as the necessary assurance that they would have the boss's backing for their actions.

The next leadership skill in greatest need of improvement was to **encourage collaboration among the worker's peers**. Workers want

their leaders to solicit more participation and involvement before solutions are cast in concrete. They also want to work closely with their peers because they feel they can learn a great deal from them.

The Payoff

In defining these leadership deficiencies, the respondents are actually identifying attributes they would most like to see in the people who lead them. It is interesting to note that, according to the Psychological Associates' survey, the three leadership competencies in **least** need of improvement are:

- Drive and motivation
- Technical/administrative skills
- Cognition/idea presentation/ thinking skills.

Managers seem well-satisfied with their leaders' intellectual abilities and grasp of administrative fundamentals. That's understandable; in fact, it's good news.

It's understandable because people who are promoted to leadership positions for their conspicuous personal performance often have the technical abilities and intellect, but lack the experience of leadership. An exceptional accountant, engineer, or sales rep may rise quickly through an organization because he or she has intuition, confidence, intellect,

personality — some of the characteristics of good leadership and traits, we might add, that are rarely acquired through training.

However, in this era of leaner, flatter organizations, where leaders are required at every level, the good news is that something can be done about meeting your leadership needs. You can help develop the abilities that leaders seem to lack most. Coaching; appraising; and the abilities to reward workers, empower others, and foster collaboration can be taught. These are skills you can promote through training and consultation.

For your leaders, that means they'll be equipped with the competencies needed to get the most from what they have by managing people effectively.

For your workers, that means they'll have the type of leadership they respond to best.

It's a two-way street that leads to high performance.

Dr. V. R. Buzzotta and Dr. Robert E. Lefton serve as Chairman and President, respectively, of Psychological Associates, a full-service international human resource development firm and recognized leader in assessment, consulting, and training services.

Together with colleagues, Dr. Alan Cheney and Dr. Ann Beatty, they have recently co-authored Making Common Sense Common Practice, a book about using common-sense leadership to achieve high performance in any organization.

If you would like more information regarding the book or fostering common-sense leadership in your organization, call Communicare Inc., 800-598-4646 or (416) 769-0846.