

## **Personalities and Management Styles**

**An Essay by  
Howard W. Penrose, Ph.D., CMRP  
President, SUCCESS by DESIGN**

### **Introduction**

This essay represents Part 6 of the ‘Maintenance is from Mercury, Management is from Pluto,’ communication series. In this essay, we will discuss management and leadership styles and how they interact with a variety of skilled worker environments. This is key to understanding communication between the ‘man on the floor’ and the ‘front office.’

The purpose of this essay is not to identify which styles of management or personalities are the best for any situation, it is simply to help identify the management styles and personalities, generalized, that exist. Understanding the environment can go a long way to assist you in identifying how best to communicate.

### **The Four Basic Management Styles<sup>1</sup>**

There are four common management styles (Tayeb, 1996) each suited for specific types of environments. Unfortunately, as is often the case, each leadership style is often applied in the incorrect environments, which can lead to discontent, slow growth, lack of a forward path, etc. In this part of the essay, we will briefly explore each style.

#### The Autocrat

The autocrat manages by telling people what to do and when to do it. Within industrial environments, the autocrat has little confidence in subordinates and often distrusts them. However, in certain military applications, this type of leadership – following without question – may be the best style in order to save lives.

Within small organizations, this style will result in treating workers as automations to perform multiple tasks that the manager cannot perform his or her self. As the organization grows, workers are unable to make decisions without approval and much work and shared ideas do not occur. The usual result can be a high turnover rate.

#### The Benevolent Autocrat

The ‘benevolent autocrat’ pictures himself (or herself, I am going to remain using the masculine term throughout the essay) as a father figure who makes the important decisions then works to convince subordinates to go along with him. Will sometimes allow minor decisions to be made by selected subordinates within limits that he sets. Often uses rewards and punishments to ‘motivate’ personnel.

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<sup>1</sup> Tayeb, M H, The Management of a Multicultural Workforce, Wiley, 1996.

### The Consultative Democrat

The 'consultative democrat' will have confidence and trust in most people and will consult with subordinates. He will usually discuss any potential decisions to 'get a feel' but will be the final say in any actual decision.

### The Participatory Democrat

The 'participatory democrat' will share the decision making process with subordinates. He will have complete confidence and trust in employees. When a major problem arises, or a decision must be made, all of the stakeholders are invited to discuss the issue(s) and the majority provides the final decision.

## **The Environment**

The general corporate environment will often follow similar lines to that of most world governments. In this, there are six basic types of systems:<sup>2</sup>

1. Autocracy: Absolute government where power and management is held by either an individual or very small group. They are often supported by control of resources, military, tradition, charisma and other claims to personal privilege. All decisions and laws are controlled at the top.
2. Bureaucracy: Rule exercised through the written word and 'rule of law.'
3. Technocracy: Rule exercised through the use of knowledge, expert power and the ability to solve relevant issues.
4. Codetermination: Opposing parties combine in the joint management of mutual interests, as in a coalition government or corporatism, with each party drawing on a specific constituency.
5. Representative Democracy: Exercised through the election of officers mandated to act on behalf of their constituency. These officers hold office for a specific period of time, or so long as they command the support of their constituency, as in US government and forms of worker and shareholder control in industry.
6. Direct Democracy: Everyone has an equal right to rule and is involved in all decisions such as with cooperatives. This type of organization encourages self-organization as the primary means of organizing.

## **The Individual**

The common theory for individuals now includes one of two systems. The one that we will explore is the John Holland Hexagon.<sup>3</sup> These types are broken down to: Realistic; Investigative; Artistic; Social; Enterprising; and Conventional.

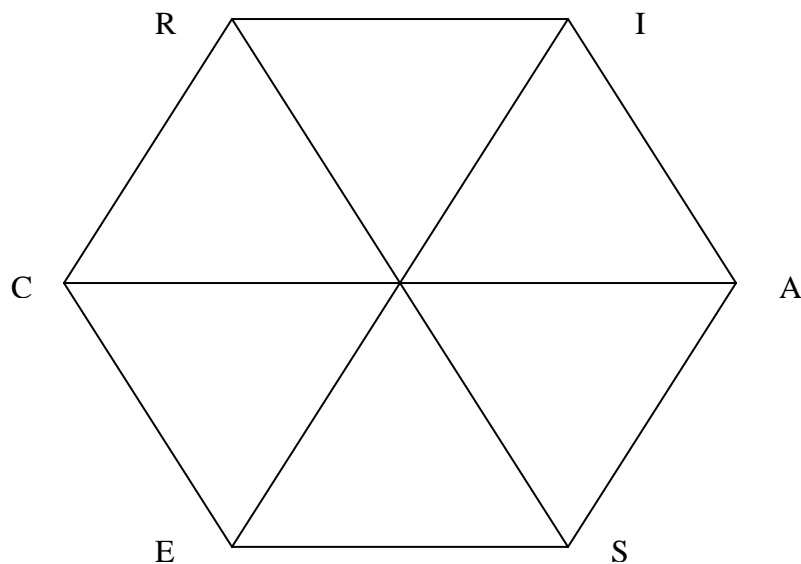
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<sup>2</sup> Morgan, G, Images of Organizations, Sage, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Johns Hopkins University, Human Resources Career Management Program: Occupational Personality Types, <http://hrnt.jhu.edu>, 2006.

1. Realistic (R): This type of individual is active, stable and hands-on, ideally, these individuals are suited for careers in the military, as an electrician or engineer. These individuals often prefer to learn by doing in practical task-oriented settings as opposed to classrooms. Will often communicate in a frank, direct manner and value material things.
2. Investigative (I): This type of individual is analytical, intellectual and observant, with a focus on research, mathematics and science. These individuals are suited for careers as chemists, analysts, etc. They do not like highly structured environments and are introspective, focused on creative problem-solving and do not often seek leadership roles.
3. Artistic (A): This type of individual is original, intuitive and imaginative and enjoys creative activities. These individuals are suited for musician, reporter and interior decorators. They prefer flexibility and ambiguity and have an aversion to convention and conformity.
4. Social (S): This type of individual is humanistic, idealistic, responsible and concerned with the welfare of others. These individuals are suited for social careers such as teacher, counselor or social worker. They prefer participating in group activities and helping, training, caring for or counseling and developing others.
5. Enterprising (E): This type of individual is energetic, ambitious, adventurous, sociable and self-confident. These individuals are suited for careers such as salesperson or management. They prefer activities that require them to persuade others and seek out leadership roles.
6. Conventional (C): This type of individual is efficient, careful, conforming, organized and conscientious. These individuals are suited for careers including secretary or accountant. They prefer carrying out well-defined instructions over assuming leadership roles.

Figure 1: John Holland's Hexagon of Personality Types



In reality, most people have some mixture of the above personality types, which is what makes us individuals. A similar process for evaluating individuals is the 'Myers-Briggs Type Indicator' (MBTI). The result is a system that breaks personalities into sixteen different types.

## **Conclusion**

Communication issues, from the individual perspective, come from the type of leadership style implemented, the environment and the individuals involved. For instance, an individual with a bend towards the artistic or investigative type personality would find it very difficult to communicate, or deal with, an autocratic style management in an autocratic environment.

A good condition-based maintenance technician may be an electrician (realistic) with some balance towards the investigative. What type of an environment and management style would be best suited for this individual to work within? Most likely, it would require democratic management in a technocracy. However, this ideal is rarely experienced in a skilled trade industrial or manufacturing environment.

In a manufacturing and industrial environment, leadership tends towards the autocratic perhaps with some scattering of democratic management. Enter the skilled trades for maintenance and condition-based maintenance. In addition to the differences in philosophy identified within the other essays, the differences in management styles, environment and the individual have a dramatic impact on the ability to communicate the importance of reliability to management.

The next step in the process of exploring communication issues between maintenance and management will be the publishing of the Maintenance and Management Study.

## **About the Author**

Howard W Penrose, Ph.D., CMRP, is the President of SUCCESS by DESIGN, a reliability and maintenance services consultant and publisher. He has over 20 years in the reliability and maintenance industry with experience from the shop floor to academia and manufacturing to military. Dr. Penrose is a past Chair of the Chicago Section of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, Inc. and is presently the Founding Executive Director of the Institute of Electrical Motor Diagnostics. For more information, or questions, related to this article or SUCCESS by DESIGN services, please contact Dr. Penrose via phone: 860 575-3087 or email: [howard@motordoc.net](mailto:howard@motordoc.net).