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Chapter 9

Successful Employee Communication

The Biggest Challenge

Casey is seated at his desk reviewing his human resource strategic plan when Lily walks in, obviously upset. Her facial expressions show she is upset, and after she enters, she crosses her arms while standing in front of Casey's desk. Casey thinks Lily is a very hard worker and does an excellent job managing people as the manager of her marketing department. Lately, she has been having trouble with some of her employees.

"Casey," she says, "I really need to vent. Can I sit down and talk with you?" Casey offers Lily a seat and she sits down. She tells Casey that Sam, a marketing manager, made snide and underhanded comments during a meeting this morning. "For example, when I asked the status on one of our projects, Sam said snidely, 'Why don't you ask one of your marketing assistants? They are doing such a great job, after all.' I suspect he is upset with something I wrote on my blog last week. As you know, I started the blog to continually let employees know of changes in the department and to provide feedback. In last week's blog, I wrote about what a great job the marketing assistants are doing in my department."

Lily goes on, "So I pulled him aside after the meeting and asked him about his comment. He said that he was upset that I had given feedback to the marketing assistants because he feels that as their manager, it is his job to do that. He felt I had stepped on his toes and the toes of other marketing managers."

Casey thinks about the situation and asks Lily if she apologized. Lily responds, "I didn't feel like I needed to. I do think the marketing assistants are doing a good job, and I don't need to apologize for mentioning that. I am just trying to raise morale among them. You know, two marketing assistants have quit in the last three months."

Casey leans back in his chair and gives some thought as to how to advise Lily. He suggests that Lily speak with Sam directly (not via e-mail) and tell him that her intention was only positive and not meant to be harmful, and see what happens. Lily thinks about that and says she will try to see Sam later today. When she leaves,

Casey sits back and thinks about how communication is one of the biggest challenges in any job, but especially in human resources.

Communication Introduction

[\(click to see video\)](#)

The author introduces the chapter on employee communication

9.1 Communication Strategies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the concept of emotional intelligence.
2. Describe the four types of communication in the workplace.
3. Explain the various communication styles and identify your own style.
4. Define nonverbal communication and describe the importance of it in an HR setting.

Communication, as you see in our opening scenario, is key to a successful career as a human resource manager (HRM) or as a manager. While communication is likely discussed in several of your business classes, it should also be addressed in an HRM book, since much of what we do in HR is based on effective communication.

How many times do miscommunications happen on a daily basis, either in your personal life or at your job? The good news is that we can all get better at communication. The first thing we need to do is learn how we can communicate with our employees. Then we will want to look at our own communication style and compare that with other styles. Have you ever spoken with someone you just didn't "get"? It is probably because you have different communication styles. We address this in [Section 9.1.3 "Communication Styles"](#). Body language is also a key contributor to communication; in fact, as was suggested in the late 1960s by researcher Albert Mehrabian, body language makes up 93 percent of our communication. Albert Mehrabian and Susan R. Ferris, "Inference of Attitudes from Nonverbal Communication in Two Channels," *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 31, no. 3 (1967): 248–58. Part of communication is also looking at the way we manage people. Depending on our style of management, we may use a variety of management styles to communicate things we need done or to give performance feedback. One major way companies communicate with employees is through the use of meetings. Some meetings can be very effective, but as you probably already know, many meetings aren't very productive. We will discuss some strategies to help you run a more effective meeting.

Communication and Emotional Intelligence (EI)

1. The ability to know and manage our emotions, motivate ourselves, understand others' emotions, and manage relationships.

One of the most important aspects to good communication is emotional intelligence (EI). **Emotional intelligence**¹ is different from IQ. First, EI predicts much of life success, much more than IQ, in fact. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New

York: Bantam Books, 2005). The great thing about EI is that it can actually improve over time, unlike IQ, which stays the same over a lifetime. According to Daniel Goleman, Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 2005). a researcher on EI, there are five main aspects or domains to EI:

1. Knowing your emotions
2. Managing your emotions
3. Motivating yourself
4. Recognizing and understanding other people's emotions
5. Managing relationships

First, let's discuss knowing your emotions. If we don't know how we feel about something, it can be difficult to communicate. It may seem obvious to know what we are feeling from moment to moment, but oftentimes we do not. How we feel impacts our body language as well as our verbal communication. For example, let's say you just got home from work and had a really crummy day. When you get home, you find that your spouse has not unloaded the dishwasher yet, as you had agreed. Tie this with a crummy day, and you might communicate differently about it than if you had a great day.

On the other hand, if you recognize that you are tired and a bit cranky, your awareness of these emotions allows you to manage them. The third aspect of EI, motivating yourself, goes without saying in a management or human resource role. This is the key not only to career success but also to personal success.

The last two domains of EI revolve around being able to see and understand emotions in other people, which in turn can benefit the relationship. Let's say, in the situation above, you get home and the dishwasher isn't unloaded, but you recognize immediately through body language and facial expressions that your spouse is extremely upset by something. Seeing this emotion in someone else may help you decide if you should mention the dishwasher—or not—at this specific time. But what if you didn't recognize this emotion and raised your voice to your spouse about the unloaded dishwasher? It will probably result in an argument. Using this example, I am sure you can see how this translates into the workplace. Emotional intelligence allows us to work better with people, understand them, and communicate with them.

Human Resource Recall

Do you think you are a good communicator? What could you improve?

Communication Directions

As you already know, communication in companies is key to having a successful organization. Those companies who communicate well with their employees end up with more loyal and motivated workers. Those that don't communicate well, though, see increased turnover, absenteeism, dissatisfied customers, higher product defect rates, lack of focus on business objectives, and lack of innovation. "Effective Communication in the Workplace," Business Performance, accessed July 19, 2010, http://www.businessperform.com/workplace-communication/workplace_communication.html. Proper communication can result in a sense of belonging and self-worth, leading to less turnover and absenteeism, which is mentioned in the opening scenario. These issues are also discussed in [Chapter 7 "Retention and Motivation"](#). In [Section 9.1.3 "Communication Styles"](#), we discuss some of the ways we can stay connected with our employees.

Four main types of communications occur within a company: upward communication, downward communication, diagonal communication, and horizontal communication. Each type of communication can serve a different purpose in human resources, and many messages may be sent in a variety of ways.

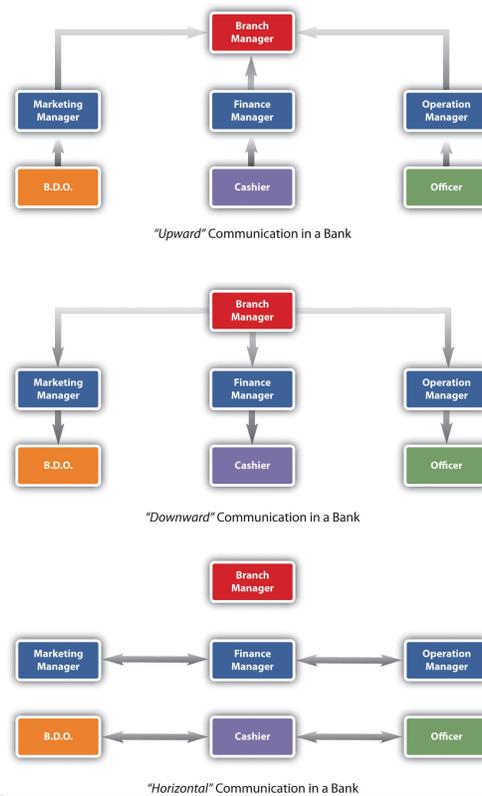
Upward communication² is when the lower levels of an organization communicate with the upper levels of an organization. Some examples might be an employee satisfaction survey using online survey tools such as SurveyMonkey. These kinds of tools can be used to determine the changes that should occur in a company. Oftentimes human resource departments may develop a survey such as this to find out how satisfied the employees are with things such as benefits. Then the organization can make changes based on the satisfaction level of the employees. Employees might also engage in upward communication in a given work situation. They might tell their manager their plate is full and they can't take on any new projects. This is considered upward communication, too.

Downward communication³ is the opposite of upward communication, in that the communication occurs from the upper levels of an organization down to the lower levels of the organization. A manager explaining how to do a task to an employee would be considered downward communication. Development of training programs

2. When the lower levels of an organization communicate with the upper levels of an organization.
3. The opposite of upward communication, in that the communication occurs from the upper levels of an organization down to the lower levels of the organization.

to communicate safety in the organization might be another example. A change in a pay or bonus structure would be communicated using the downward approach as well.

Figure 9.1 Types of Communication Flow in Organizations



A **diagonal communication**⁴ approach occurs when interdepartmental communication occurs with people at different levels of the organization. When the human resources assistant speaks with the marketing manager about the hiring of a new employee in marketing, this would be considered diagonal communication.

Horizontal communication⁵ occurs when people of the same level in an organization, for example, a marketing manager and a human resource manager, communicate usually to coordinate work between departments. An accounting manager might share information with a production manager so the production manager knows how much budget they have left.

4. Interdepartmental communication occurring at various levels of the organization.

5. When people at the same level in the organization communicate.

Within all the communication methods we discussed, there are a variety of approaches. Of course, the most obvious is the informal communication that occurs. An e-mail may be sent or a phone call made. Meetings are another way to

communicate information. Companies can also use more formal means to communicate. A blog would be an example. Many companies use blogs to communicate information such as financial numbers, changes to policy, and other “state of the business” information. This type of information is often downward communication. However, blogs are not just for upper management anymore. Companies are using microblogs more and more to ensure that people in various departments stay connected with each other, especially when tasks tend to be very interdependent.

Companies also use social networking sites to keep in touch, such as Twitter and Facebook. For example, Alcatel-Lucent, a 77,000-employee telecommunications company in Europe, found that using social media keeps a large number of employees connected and tends to be a low or no-cost method of communicating. Rather than sending e-mail to their employees telling them to expect updates via these methods, the news is spread via word of mouth as most of the employees blog or use Facebook or other social media to communicate. In fact, Alcatel-Lucent has over eight hundred groups in its system, ranging from business related to ones social in nature. Sharon Gaudin, “Alcatel-Lucent Gets Social with Company Communication,” *Computerworld*, accessed July 19, 2010, http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9179169/Alcatel_Lucent_gets_social_with_company_communication. Use of this type of technology can result in upward, downward, horizontal, and diagonal communication all at once.

Companies also use intranets to communicate information to their employees. An intranet is an internal website, meaning that others generally cannot log in and see information there. The intranet may include information on pay and vacation time as well as recent happenings, awards, and achievements.

Communication Styles

In addition to the communication that occurs within organizations, each of us has our own individual communication style. Many organizations give tests that may indicate their candidate’s preferred style, providing information on the best job fit.

Our communication styles can determine how well we communicate with others, how well we are understood, and even how well we get along with others. As you can imagine, our personality types and our communication styles are very similar. Keep in mind, though, that no one person is “always” one style. We can change our style depending on the situation. The more we can understand our own dominant communication style and pinpoint the styles of others, the better we can

communicate. The styles are expresser, driver, relater, and analytical. Let’s discuss each of these styles next.

People with an **expresser communication style**⁶ tend to get excited. They like challenges and rely heavily on hunches and feelings. Depending on the type of business, this can be a downfall as sometimes hard data should be used for decision-making purposes. These people are easily recognized because they don’t like too many facts or boring explanations and tend to be antsy if they feel their time is being wasted with too many facts.

People with a **driver style**⁷ like to have their own way and tend to be decisive. They have strong viewpoints, which they are not afraid to share with others. They like to take charge in their jobs but also in the way they communicate. Drivers usually get right to the point and not waste time with small talk.

People with a **relater style**⁸ like positive attention and want to be regarded warmly. They want others to care about them and treat them well. Because relaters value friendships, a good way to communicate well with them is to create a communication environment where they can feel close to others.

People with an **analytical communication style**⁹ will ask a lot of questions and behave methodically. They don’t like to be pressured to make a decision and prefer to be structured. They are easily recognized by the high number of questions they ask.

Table 9.1 Which One of These Communication Styles Do You Tend to Use?

- 6. A communication style that is easily excitable and relies heavily on hunches and feelings.
- 7. A communication style in which a person likes to have his or her own way and be decisive.
- 8. A communication style by someone who prefers to be warmly regarded and have positive attention.
- 9. A communication style in which a person tends to ask a lot of questions and behave methodically.

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Definition	Communication style in which you put the rights of others before your own, minimizing your own self-worth	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights while maintaining respect for the rights of others	Communication style in which you stand up for your rights but you violate the rights of others
Implications to others	my feelings are not important I don't matter I think I'm inferior	we are both important we both matter I think we are equal	your feelings are not important you don't matter I think I'm superior
Verbal styles	apologetic	I statements	you statements

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
	overly soft or tentative voice	firm voice	loud voice
Nonverbal styles	looking down or away	looking direct	staring, narrow eyes
	stooped posture, excessive head nodding	relaxed posture, smooth and relaxed movements	tense, clenched fists, rigid posture, pointing fingers
Potential consequences	lowered self-esteem	higher self-esteem	guilt
	anger at self	self-respect	anger from others
	false feelings of inferiority	respect from others	lowered self-esteem
	disrespect from others	respect of others	disrespect from others
	pitied by others		feared by others

Let's discuss an example of how these communication styles might interact. Let's assume an analytical communicator and a relater are beginning a meeting where the purpose is to develop a project time line. The analytical communicator will be focused on the time line and not necessarily the rapport building that the relater would be focused on. The conversation might go something like this:

Relater:	What are you doing this weekend? I am going to my son's baseball game. It is supposed to be hot—I am looking forward to it.
Analytical:	That's great. OK, so I was thinking a start date of August 1 st for this project. I can get Kristin started on a to-do list for the project.
Relater:	That would be great. Kristin is a really hard worker, and I'm sure she won't miss any details.
Analytical:	Yes, she's OK. So, your team will need to start development now with a start day coming up. How are you going to go about this?

How do these two personality styles walk away from this conversation? First, the relater may feel ignored or rejected, because the analytical communicator didn't want to discuss weekend details. The analytical communicator may feel annoyed that the relater is wasting time talking about personal things when they have a goal to set a project time line. These types of small miscommunications in business are what can create low morale, absenteeism, and other workplace issues.

Understanding which style we tend to use can be the key in determining how we

communicate with others. Here is another, personal example of these communication styles and how a conversation might go:

Expresser, to his partner:	I am really excited for our hiking trip this weekend.
Driver:	I still think we should leave on Thursday night rather than Friday.
Expresser:	I told you, I don't think I can get all day Friday off. Besides, we won't have much time to explore anyway, if we get there on Thursday, it will already be dark.
Driver:	It won't be dark; we will get there around 7, before anyone else, if we leave after work.
Expresser:	I planned the trip. I am the one who went and got our food and permits, I don't see why you have to change it.
Driver:	You didn't plan the trip; I am the one who applied for the permits.

In this situation, you can see that the expresser is just excited about the trip and brings up the conversation as such. The driver has a tendency to be competitive and wants to win, hence his willingness to get there Thursday before everyone else. The expresser, on the other hand, tried to sell his ideas and didn't get the feedback he felt he deserved for planning the trip, which made the communication start to go south.

In addition to our communication personalities, people tend to communicate based on one of three styles. First, a **passive communicator**¹⁰ tends to put the rights of others before his or her own. Passive communicators tend to be apologetic or sound tentative when they speak. They do not speak up if they feel like they are being wronged.

10. A communication style in which a person puts the rights of others over his or her own.

11. The style of a person who stands up for his or her rights but possibly violates the rights of others.

12. Respects the rights of herself and others when communicating.

An **aggressive communicator**¹¹, on the other hand, will come across as standing up for his or her rights, while possibly violating the rights of others. This person tends to communicate in a way that tells others they don't matter, or their feelings don't matter.

An **assertive communicator**¹² respects his rights and the rights of others when communicating. This person tends to be direct but not insulting or offensive. The assertive communicator stands up for his or her own rights but makes sure the rights of others aren't affected.

Have you heard of a passive-aggressive communicator? This person tends to be passive but later aggressive by perhaps making negative comments about others or making snide or underhanded comments. This person might express his or her negative feelings in an indirect way, instead of being direct. For example, you are trying to complete a project for a client and the deadline is three days away. You and your team are working frantically to finish. You ask one of your employees to come in to work on Saturday morning to finish up the loose ends, so the project will be ready to present to the client on Monday. Your employee agrees, but when you show up on Monday, the project isn't ready to present. You find out that this person had plans on Saturday but wasn't direct with you about this. So the project didn't get completed, and you had to change the appointment with the client. Later, you also find out that this employee was complaining to everyone else that you had asked her to come in on Saturday. As you can see from this example, passive-aggressive behavior doesn't benefit anyone. The employee should have been direct and simply said, "I can't come in on Saturday, but I can come in Sunday or work late Friday night." Ideally, we want to be assertive communicators, as this shows our own self-esteem but at the same time respects others and isn't misleading to others, either.

When dealing with someone who exhibits passive-aggressive behavior, it is best to just be direct with them. Tell that person you would rather she be direct than not show up. Oftentimes passive-aggressive people try to play the martyr or the victim. Do not allow such people to press your buttons and get you to feel sorry for them. This gives them control and can allow them to take advantage.

Nonverbal Communication

Now that we have discussed the types of communication in organizations and different verbal communication styles, it is only appropriate to discuss body language as well. Most successful HR professionals are excellent at reading and understanding nonverbal language, especially during the interview process. This is discussed in [Chapter 5 "Selection"](#). The interviewer's nonverbal language can also help or hinder a candidate, so we want to be careful of our nonverbal language when interviewing someone. **Nonverbal language**¹³ accounts for a large part of communication. Without seeing and hearing the nonverbal clues, it is easier to have misunderstandings. Nonverbal language can include facial expressions, eye contact, standing or sitting posture, and the position of our hands. Our tone of voice, loudness or softness, and gestures can also be part of body language. The better we can get at knowing what our own body language is telling others and reading others' body language, the better we can get at communicating well with others.

13. A type of communication that can include facial expressions and eye contact.

Strategic HR Communication Style in Organizations

[\(click to see video\)](#)

This video addresses the importance of determining company communication style.

Consider the use of digital forms of communication, such as e-mail and text messaging. These forms of communication do not allow us to read another's body language, which can often result in misconceptions about what another is saying. Use of "smiley" icons can make this clearer, but often people cannot detect sarcasm and other nonverbal communication cues. If you have something important to communicate, it is better to communicate most of the time in person or via phone, so you can hear tone and see facial expressions.

How Would You Handle This?

She Said What?

As the HR manager, you have a meeting scheduled in a few minutes with Adeline. Adeline is the accounting manager for a small firm in Boise, Idaho. She has four people who report to her, Alan being one of them. Alan manages three people in his position as account director. Adeline just left a meeting with one of Alan's employees, who complained of Alan's communication style and threatened to quit. She said that Alan belittles them and withholds information. She also complained of Alan making inappropriate comments, which were meant as a joke but were offensive. How would you handle this?

How Would You Handle This?

<https://api.wistia.com/v1/medias/1360833/embed>

The author discusses the How Would You Handle This situation in this chapter at: <https://api.wistia.com/v1/medias/1360833/embed>.

Another note to consider on body language is how body language can be different across cultures. For example, the OK sign (thumb and pointer figure put together to form a circle) means "great" or "fine" in the United States, but in Brazil, Germany, and Russia, this sign would be considered both rude and offensive. In Japan, this sign means you want the store to give you change in coins. When traveling, we often take for granted that gestures, and even interpersonal distance, or how far apart we stand from another person, are the same at home, but obviously this is not the case. Different nonverbal language can be different wherever you go, so reading up on the place you will visit can ensure you won't offend anyone while there. Having this information can also help us train our employees for overseas

assignments. This is discussed in [Chapter 8 "Training and Development"](#) and [Chapter 14 "International HRM"](#).

Figure 9.2



What Are Each of These Images Telling Us?

Listening

Listening is obviously an important part of communication. There are three main types of listening. **Competitive or combative listening**¹⁴ happens when we are focused on sharing our own point of view instead of listening to someone else. In **passive listening**¹⁵, we are interesting in hearing the other person and assume we hear and understand what the person says correctly, without verifying. In **active listening**¹⁶, we are interested in what the other person has to say and we are active in checking our understanding with the speaker. For example, we may restate what the person has said and then verify our understanding is correct. The feedback process is the main difference between passive listening and active listening.

14. A type of listening that happens when we are focused on sharing our own point of view instead of listening to someone else.
15. A type of listening in which we are interesting in hearing the other person and assume we hear and understand what the person says correctly, without verifying.
16. A type of listening in which we are interested in what the other person has to say and check our understanding with the speaker.

Figure 9.3 Active listening involves four phases. Lyman Steil, Larry Barker, and Kittie Watson, "SIER Hierarchy of Active Listening," Provenmodels, accessed August 1, 2011, <http://www.provenmodels.com/554>.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Emotional intelligence* can be improved over time, unlike IQ, which stays stable throughout life.
- Emotional intelligence includes knowing and managing your emotions, motivating yourself, recognizing and understanding other people's emotions, and managing relationships.
- There are four types of communication at work: *downward*, *upward*, *horizontal*, and *diagonal*. All types of communication can happen at once, especially with the use of blogs and social networking sites.
- Companies that use good communication tend to have less turnover and less absenteeism.
- There are four main types of communication styles: *expresser*, *driver*, *relater*, and *analytical*. The better we can understand our own style of communication and the communication styles of others, the easier it will be to communicate with them.
- Passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive behaviors are not healthy ways of communicating. Assertive behavior, on the other hand, respects one's own rights and the rights of others.
- *Nonverbal communication* is one of the most important tools we can use to communicate how we feel. Watching others' body language can give us signals as to how they may really feel.
- Listening is also an important part of communication. *Active listening* occurs when we are interested in what the other person has to say, and we check with the speaker to make sure we understand what they have said. *Competitive or combative listening* is when we are focused on sharing our own point of view. *Passive listening* is when we listen to someone, but do not verify that we understand what someone is saying.

EXERCISES

1. Learn more about your EI by going to http://www.queendom.com/tests/access_page/index.htm?idRegTest=1121 and taking the test. Then answer the following questions:
 - a. What did the test say about your EI?
 - b. What are some things you can do to improve your EI? What strategies might you use to improve your EI?
2. Which communication style, the expresser, driver, relater, or analytical, do you typically use? How can you get better at understanding other people's style and get comfortable communicating in their style?
3. Do you tend to be passive, assertive, or aggressive? Give an example of when you used each style and discuss the result.
4. Take a few hours and watch the body language of the people in your workplace or personal life. Pay careful attention, really being aware of body language. What was the situation? What kinds of body language did they show?

9.2 Management Styles

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define the various types of management styles.
2. Explain how we can determine which style to use in a variety of situations.

Management style ties in very closely with communication style. There isn't necessarily one management style that is better than another; they are simply different and might be used in a variety of situations. HR managers can provide training on each of these areas since management style impacts the ability and motivation of employees to do their jobs. This is addressed in [Chapter 7 "Retention and Motivation"](#).

Fortune 500 Focus

One of the most famous *Fortune* 500 management styles is the GE Way, which has been discussed in numerous books and articles. In fact, GE has traditionally been the recruiting ground for other companies' CEO searches. When Jack Welch, the famous GE CEO known for several books on his management style, including *Winning*, retired and was replaced, it took less than a week for the two runners-up for his job to be offered jobs at other *Fortune* 500 companies. Home Depot recruited Robert Nardellia and 3M recruited W. James McNearney. Claudia Deutsch, "The GE Way Isn't for Everyone," *New York Times*, January 7, 2007, accessed August 1, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/04/business/worldbusiness/04iht-ge.4102488.html>. However, the command-and-control management style responsible for the success of GE did not work out well for several former GE executives. Command-and-control style is based on military management. The idea is to get people to do what you tell them to do, and if they don't, there are major penalties, similar to an autocratic style. Many say that Nardellia was unsuccessful at Home Depot because of this ingrained management style learned at GE. Claudia Deutsch, "The GE Way Isn't for Everyone," *New York Times*, January 7, 2007, accessed August 1, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/04/business/worldbusiness/04iht-ge.4102488.html>. For example, Nardellia insisted that shelves be stocked during off hours, and he instituted formal inventory control. Unfortunately, he didn't understand most employees were not looking to rise within the organization, so the extra work didn't provide any upside for the individuals, causing high turnover. An autocratic style may work well in some organizations, well enough for numerous books to be written, but management style isn't always transferable to other organizations, as Nardellia found out at Home Depot.

Management styles are one of the most challenging topics we can deal with in a work setting. Everyone is different; everyone has a preference for which style motivates them the best in a variety of situations. Oftentimes managers make the mistake of using the same style for everyone, regardless of ability or motivation. In this section, we will discuss some of the main management styles and how to know which one to use in a specific situation.

Task Style versus People-Centered Style

When we look at the styles of management, we see that most styles fall into one of two categories, a task-oriented management style or a people-centered style.

A manager with a **task-oriented style**¹⁷ will focus on the technical or task aspects of the job. The concern for this manager is that employees know what is expected of them and have the tools needed to do their job.

A **people-oriented**¹⁸ style is more concerned with the relationships in the workplace. The manager emphasizes the interpersonal relations, as opposed to the task. The manager is most concerned about the welfare of the employee and tends to be friendly and trusting.

Understanding these two main differences in management style, we will now look at other possible styles a manager might use.

Participatory, Directing, or Teamwork Styles

Utilization of a **participatory management style**¹⁹ involves both a task-oriented style and a people-centered style. This style emphasizes how the employee's assigned task fits into the bigger picture. This style will provide support and input where needed. As a result, the focus is on the task but also on the person and the relationships required to get the task done. This style might be used when the employees are experienced and the deadlines reasonable enough to provide the time needed to focus both on the task and the person. If more hands-on management is required, "Three Effective Management Styles," Dun & Bradstreet Credibility Corp., 2010, accessed February 5, 2010, <http://smallbusiness.dnb.com/human-resources/workforce-management/11438-1.html>. a **directing management style**²⁰ might be appropriate. Consider a very tight deadline or an emergency situation in which someone needs to be calling the shots. For example, in your doggie treats business, you just received an order for one hundred dog cookies by later this afternoon. You might consider using a directing style to make sure it gets done on time. This style doesn't focus on the person, but rather focuses on getting the task done; hence it tends to be more of a task-oriented style.

A manager who uses a **teamwork management style**²¹ believes there is a value (or necessity) in having people work in teams. As a result, this style tends to require a people-centered approach. Relationships are most important, and assuming the individuals work well together, the task will be successfully accomplished. The advantage to this style, given the type of task and situation, is that as a manager you are able to pool resources and abilities from several different people. Use of a team style can also provide big benefits for the company. For example, Google uses a teamwork approach it calls "**grouplets**"²². Google believes that individuals should be able to spend time on something that interests them and is also company related. Engineers at Google spend 20 percent of their time on this endeavor. As a result, grouplets are formed, and the grouplet works on their idea with no specific

17. A management style that tends to focus on the details of what must get done.
18. A management style mostly concerned with the interpersonal relationships within the organization.
19. A management style that focuses on task-centered and people-oriented styles. This style is supportive.
20. A management style in which the manager tends to direct rather than allow for feedback.
21. A highly people-centered approach to management in which relationships are most important.
22. A specific teamwork management style approach used by many organizations.

budget. Some of the best ideas from Google have come through this teamwork process. Gmail, in fact, was developed using a grouplet. Bharat Mediratta, as told to Julie Bick, “The Google Way: Give Engineers Room,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2007, accessed February 15, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/21/jobs/21pre.html>.

Autocratic, Participative, and Free-Reign Styles

An **autocratic style**²³ of management involves the task-oriented style. The focus is on getting things done, and relationships are secondary. This type of manager tends to tell people what to do and takes a “my way or the highway” approach. Another description for this type of manager is a taskmaster. This person uses his or her authority and makes all the decisions as to who does what, how it is done, and when it should get done.

On the other hand, a **participative style**²⁴ constantly seeks input from the employees. Setting goals, making plans, and determining objectives are viewed as a group effort, rather than the manager making all the decisions.

At the other extreme, a **free-rein style**²⁵ gives employees total freedom to make decisions on how things will get done. The manager may establish a few objectives, but the employees can decide how those objectives are met. In other words, the leader tends to be removed from the day-to-day activities but is available to help employees deal with any situation that may come up.

Path Goal Model for Leadership

The path goal theory says that the role of a leader is to define goals and lay down the path for the employees to meet those goals. Aspects include clarification of the task and scope of the process. Clarification of the employee’s role and clarification around how the success of the task will be measured are key aspects in this model. The leader also is involved in guidance and coaching surrounding the goal and removes obstacles for employees that might affect the completion of the task. The path goal theory says that if employees are satisfied by the leadership style, they will be motivated toward the goals of leadership. Part of the model also stresses that the skills, experience, and environmental contingencies of the job play a role in the success of the leader.

- 23. A management style that takes a task-only focus and tends to make most of the decisions for the department.
- 24. A management style that seeks input from employees.
- 25. A management style that gives employees freedom to make decisions.

Figure 9.4 Path Goal Model for Leadership



Applying Management Styles

It is great to talk about management style, but application of that management style, especially in an HR environment, is just as important as knowing the management styles. In this section, we will discuss how and when you might use each style when managing people.

Another way we can view leadership is through the **situational leadership model**²⁶. Ken Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi, and Drea Zigarmi, *Leadership and the One Minute Manager* (New York: HarperCollins Entertainment, 2000). This model, developed by Ken Blanchard (author of the *One Minute Manager* series of books), does a good job explaining how we might use one type of management style versus another.

The model looks at three areas: the relationship behavior of the manager, the task behavior of the manager, and the readiness of employees. The relationship behavior means how supportive the manager needs to be in helping employees. Task behavior refers to the type of style the manager should use when managing employees, based on their readiness level. Readiness includes the willingness and

26. A method of viewing the application of management styles, as developed by Ken Blanchard.

skills to perform the task at hand. Depending on where the employees fall in each of these areas, you might use a different management style:

- D4—High Competence, High Commitment—Experienced at the job and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. May even be more skilled than the leader.
- D3—High Competence, Variable Commitment—Experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone or the motivation to do it well/quickly.
- D2—Some Competence, Low Commitment—May have some relevant skills but won't be able to do the job without help. The task or the situation may be new to them.
- D1—Low Competence, High Commitment—Generally lacking the specific skills required for the job at hand but has the confidence and/or motivation to tackle it.

Based on the readiness and commitment of the employee, the leader can see what management style and level of support the employee should experience: Situational Leadership Grid, Chimaera Consulting, 2008, accessed February 4, 2010, <http://www.chimaeraconsulting.com/sitleader.htm>.

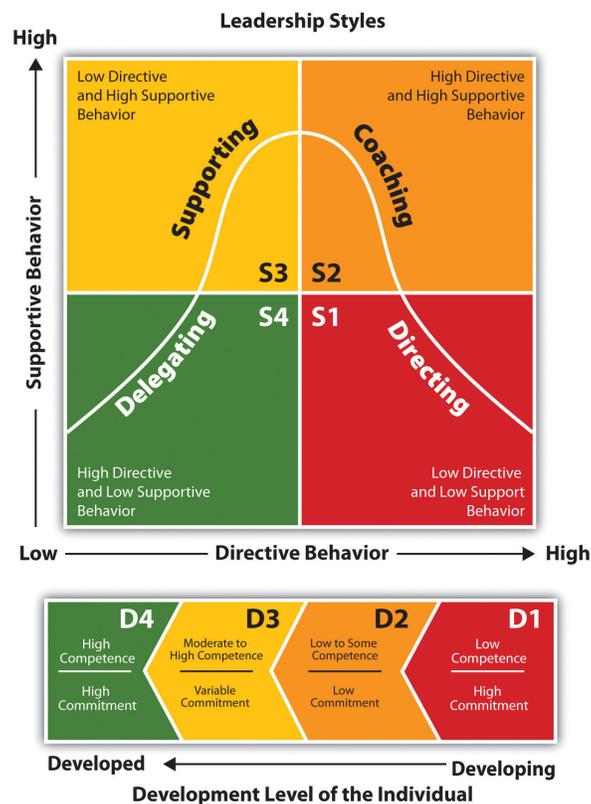
- S1—Telling/Directing—High task focus, low relationship focus—Leaders define the roles and tasks of the “follower” and supervise them closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one way. This style can be used with people who lack competence but are enthusiastic and committed and who need direction and supervision to get them started.
- S2—Selling/Coaching—High task focus, high relationship focus—Leaders still define roles and tasks but seek ideas and suggestions from the follower. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more two-way. This approach can be used with people who have some competence but lack commitment and who need direction and supervision because they are still relatively inexperienced. These individuals may also need support and praise to build their self-esteem and involvement in decision making to restore their commitment.
- S3—Participating/Supporting—Low task focus, high relationship focus—Leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the follower. The leader facilitates and takes part in decisions, but control is given to the follower. This style can be used with people who have the necessary competence but lack confidence or motivation. These individuals may need little direction because of

their skills, but support is necessary to bolster their confidence and motivation.

- S4—Delegating—Low task focus, low relationship focus—Leaders are still involved in decisions and problem solving, but control is with the follower. The follower decides when and how the leader will be involved. This style would work with people who have both competence and commitment and who are able and willing to work on a project by themselves with little supervision or support.

The bottom line when discussing management style is that no one style works best in all situations. We may be more comfortable with one style versus another, but we need to change our management style depending on the person and task we are working with. For example, if you have an employee who is brand new, you will likely work with that person using a more directive style. As she develops, you might change to a participative style. Likewise, someone who does good work and has lots of experience may prefer a free-rein style. Many managers make the mistake of trying to use the same style with every person in every situation. To be a great manager, we must change our styles based on the situation and the individual involved.

Figure 9.5 Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model



How does this relate to human resources? First, in HR, we are the “go to” people when there are communication issues or issues between management and employees. By understanding these styles ourselves, it will be easier to communicate with and provide solutions for the people we work with. We might even be able to use this information to develop management training, which can result in better communication and higher productivity.

Human Resource Recall

What kind of management style does your supervisor use? Is it effective?

The Three Types of Bad Managers

[\(click to see video\)](#)

This video discusses several ways to deal with a poor manager.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Just like in communication, a different management style should be used depending on the employee.
- *Task styles* focus on getting the job done, while *people-centered styles* focus on relationships.
- A *participatory* style involves both task-oriented and people-centered styles. A *directing style* is focused on the task and doesn't allow for employee participation. A *teamwork style* focuses on teamwork and is a people-oriented style. The advantage of this style is the ability to use strengths from everyone on the team.
- An *autocratic* style doesn't allow much room for employee decision making; the focus is on getting the task done. A *participative* style constantly requires input from employees. The *free-rein* style gives employees freedom to make decisions on how things will get done.
- The *situational leadership model*, which looks at relationship behavior, task behavior, and the readiness of employees, is used to recommend different management styles.
- No one management style works in all situations. Just like with communication, you will likely want to vary your approach based on the situation to get the best results.

EXERCISES

1. Why is it important to understand management style if you are an HR professional or manager? Discuss at least three points.
2. What combinations of management style might you use in each of these situations and why?
 - a. You are considering a major change in the way your company does business. Your staff has an excellent record of achieving goals, and your relationship with them is trusting and supportive.
 - b. Your employees do a great job. A situation has developed in which you need to make quick decisions and finish a project by the end of the week.
 - c. Your employees are having trouble getting the job done. Their performance as a whole is less than expected.
 - d. You have an employee who is very motivated but has little experience.

9.3 Cases and Problems

Chapter Summary

- *Emotional intelligence* can be improved over time, unlike IQ, which stays stable throughout life.
- Emotional intelligence includes knowing and managing your emotions, motivating yourself, recognizing and understanding other people's emotions, and managing relationships.
- There are four types of communication at work: *downward*, *upward*, *horizontal*, and *diagonal*. All types of communication can happen at once, especially with the use of blogs and social networking sites.
- Companies that use good communication tend to have less turnover and less absenteeism.
- There are four main types of communication styles: *expresser*, *driver*, *relater*, and *analytical*. The better we can understand our own style of communication and the communication styles of others, the easier it will be to communicate with them.
- Passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive behaviors are not healthy ways of communicating. Assertive behavior, on the other hand, respects one's own rights and the rights of others.
- *Nonverbal communication* is one of the most important tools we can use to communicate how we feel. Watching others' body language can give us signals as to how they may really feel.
- Just like in communication, a different management style should be used depending on the employee.
- Task styles focus on getting the job done, while people-centered styles focus on relationships.
- A *participatory style* involves both task-oriented and people-centered styles. A *directing style* is focused on the task and doesn't allow for employee participation. A *teamwork style* focuses on teamwork and is a people-oriented style. The advantage of this style is the ability to use strengths from everyone on the team.
- An *autocratic style* doesn't allow much room for employee decision making; the focus is on getting the task done. A *participative style* constantly requires input from employees. The *free-rein style* gives employees freedom to make decisions on how things will get done.
- The *situational leadership model*, which looks at relationship behavior, task behavior, and the readiness of employees, is used to recommend different management styles.
- No one management style works in all situations. Just like with communication, you will likely want to vary your approach based on the situation to get the best results.

Summary

[\(click to see video\)](#)

The author provides a video summary of the chapter.

Chapter Case

Management Style, Applied

You recently completely overhauled several aspects of employee benefits, including health insurance and compensation packages. You have also developed clear succession plans and career development plans to assist in the retention of your current employees. You are pretty excited about the changes and feel they are better for the employees, while costing your organization less money. These plans came from your development of a strategic plan and goals set last year. You think these plans will result in lower turnover.

However, in four recent exit interviews, the former employees mentioned the lack of communication from your department on the changes you made. They said they did not feel well informed and are disappointed they were not notified. In addition, they complained of micromanagement on the part of two particular managers. They said they spend half of their day responding to their managers with project updates, instead of working on the projects themselves. As you begin to think about these exit interviews, you realize that development of the strategic plan and implementing it simply isn't enough; you must communicate the changes to employees as well. You also have a bit of concern about the management styles mentioned and think it might be a good time to offer training on effective management to your entire company.

1. Using concepts from this chapter and other HRM chapters, develop an outline for a training program on effective management.
2. Discuss some of the ways you can communicate the following topics to the employees: changes to benefits, training opportunities, compensation plans, and succession plans.

Team Activity

1. In groups of three to five, prepare a presentation you could give to a team of managers on management style and communication. In your presentation, address how management style affects employee retention.