

The Blake Mouton Managerial Grid

Identifying five different leadership styles

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You are in charge of a certain project, what do you do first?

- Do you develop a time line and start assigning tasks?
- Or do you think about who would prefer to do what and try to schedule around their needs?

When the planning starts to fall behind schedule, what is your first reaction?

- Do you chase everyone to get back on track?
- Or do you ease off a bit recognizing that everyone is busy just doing his/her job, let alone the extra tasks you have assigned?

Your answers to these types of questions can reveal a great deal about your personal leadership style.

Some leaders are very task-oriented; they simply want to get things done. Others are very people-oriented; they want people to be happy. And others are a combination of the two. If you prefer to lead by setting and enforcing tight schedules, you tend to be more production-oriented (or task-oriented). If you make people your priority and try to accommodate employee needs, then you are more people-oriented.

Neither preference is right or wrong, just as no one type of leadership style is best for all situations. However, it is useful to understand what your natural leadership tendencies are, so that you can then work on developing skills that you might be missing.

A popular framework for thinking about a leader's 'task versus person' orientation was developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton in the early 1960s. Called *the Managerial Grid*, *the Leadership Grid*, or simply *the Blake Mouton Managerial Grid*. It is a practical and useful framework that helps you think about your leadership style. It plots the degree of task-centeredness

versus person-centeredness and identifies five combinations as distinct leadership styles.

By plotting 'concern for production' against 'concern for people', the grid highlights how placing too much emphasis in one area at the expense of the other leads to low overall productivity.

The model proposes that when both people and production concerns are high, employee engagement and productivity increases accordingly. This is often true, and it follows the ideas of Theories X and Y, and other participative management theories.

While the grid does not entirely address the complexity of "Which leadership style is best?", it certainly provides an excellent starting place to critically analyze your own performance and improve your general leadership skills.

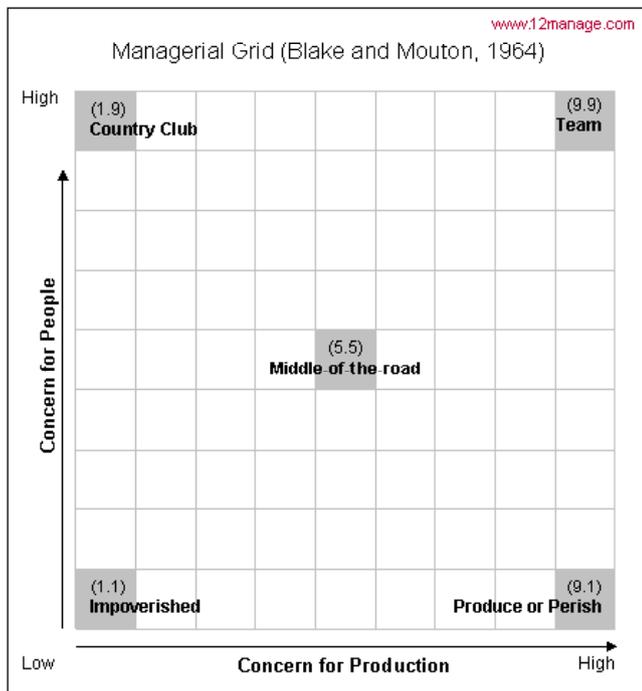
Usage of the Blake Mouton Managerial Grid

In the 1940s, in an attempt to identify the behavioral characteristics of successful leaders, Blake and Mou-

ton identified two fundamental drivers of managerial behavior: the concern for getting the job done, and the concern for people doing the work.

They argued that, on the one hand, an exclusive concern for production at the expense of the needs of those engaged in production, leads to dissatisfaction and conflict, thus adversely affecting performance; but that, on the other hand, an excessive concern to avoid conflict and maintain good relationships is also detrimental to the achievement of goals and objectives.

In order to provide a framework for describing management behaviors, the two variables of “concern for production” and “concern for people” were plotted on a grid showing nine degrees of concern for each, from 1 indicating a low level of concern, to 9 indicating a high level of concern. Five positions on the grid represent five differing managerial behavior patterns.



The concept distinguishes 5 different leadership styles, based on the concern for people and the concern for production:

1. The Impoverished or the Indifferent Style (1,1) (Low Production / Low People)

A delegate-and-disappear management style. A basically lazy approach. The manager shows a low concern for both people and production. He (or she) avoids getting into trouble. His main concern is not to be held responsible for any mistakes. Managers use this style to preserve job and job seniority, protecting themselves by avoiding getting into trouble. As a result, disorganization, dissatisfaction and disharmony due to lack of effective leadership are present.

2. Country Club Style (Low Production / High People)

One-sided, thoughtful attention to the needs of employees. The relationship-oriented manager has a high concern for people, but a low concern for production. He pays much attention to the security and comfort of the employees. He hopes that this will increase performance. He is almost incapable of employing the more punitive, coercive and legitimate powers. This inability results from fear that using such powers could jeopardize relationships with the other team members. The organization will end up to be a friendly atmosphere, but not necessarily very productive.

3. Produce, Dictatorial or Perish Style (9,1) (High Production / Low People)

An authoritarian or compliance leader. A task-oriented manager, he has a high concern for production and a low concern for people. He finds employee needs unimportant and simply a means to an end. He provides his employees with money and expects performance back. There is little or no allowance for cooperation or collaboration. He pressures his employees through rules and punishments to achieve the company goals. Heavily task-oriented people are very strong on schedules. They are intolerant of what they see as dissent (it may just be someone's creativity). This dictatorial style is based on Theory X of Douglas McGregor. It is often applied by companies on the edge of real or perceived failure, such as in Crisis Management.

In this case, whilst high output is achievable in the short term, much will be lost through an inevitable high labor turnover.

4. The Middle-of-the-road or The Status-quo Style (5,5) (Medium Production / Medium People).

Balance and compromise. The manager tries to balance between the competing goals of the company and the needs of the workers. The manager gives some concern to both people and production, hoping to achieve acceptable performance. He believes this is the most anyone can do. Consequently, compromises occur where neither the production nor the people needs are fully met.

5. The Team or Sound Style (9,9) (High Production / High People).

Contribute and commit. It is the ultimate. The manager pays high concern to both people and production. Motivation is high. This soft style is based on the propositions of Theory Y of Douglas McGregor. The manager encourages teamwork and commitment among employees. This style emphasizes making employees feel part of



the company-family, and involving them in understanding organizational purpose and determining production needs. This method relies heavily on making employees feel they are constructive parts of the company. And this will result in a team environment organization based on

Application of the Blake Mouton Managerial Grid

Being aware of the various approaches is the first step in understanding and improving how well the manager performance is. It is important to understand how you currently operate, so that you can then identify ways of becoming competent in both realms.

Step One: Identify your leadership style.

- Think of some recent situations where you were the leader.
- For each of these situations, place yourself in the grid according to where you believe you fit.

Step Two: Identify areas of improvement and develop your leadership skills

- Look at your current leadership method and critically analyze its effectiveness.
- Look at ways you can improve. Are you settling for 'middle of the road' because it is easier than reaching for more?
- Identify ways to get the skills you need to reach the Team Leadership position. These may include involv-

ing others in problem solving or improving how you communicate with them, if you feel you are too task-oriented. Or it may mean becoming clearer about scheduling or monitoring project progress if you tend to focus too much on people.

- Continually monitor your performance and watch for situations when you slip back into bad old habits.

Step Three: Put the Grid in Context

It is important to recognize that the Team Leadership style isn't always the most effective approach in every situation. While the benefits of democratic and participative management are universally accepted, there are times that call for more attention in one area than another. If your company is in the midst of a merger or some other significant change, it is often acceptable to place a higher emphasis on people than on production. Likewise, when faced with an economic hardship or physical risk, people concerns may be placed on the back burner, for the short-term at least, to achieve high productivity and efficiency.

trust and respect, which leads to high satisfaction and motivation and, as a result, high production.

As a further refinement to Grid theory, additional managerial styles combining two or more of the basic styles are identified. For example, **the paternalistic style, prescribe and guide**. This style was added to the grid theory before 1999. It was redefined as 9,1-1,9 management where the manager swings between two extremes. There is a need to control and dominate and resistance is met with punishment. At the other extreme compliance is reinforced by recognition and appreciation. Managers using this style praise and support, but discourage challenges to their thinking.

And **the opportunistic style, exploit and manipulate**. That was added to the grid theory before 1999. Individuals using this style do not have a fixed location on the grid. They adopt whichever behavior offers the greatest personal benefit.

Strengths of the Managerial Grid. Benefits

- Using the Grid model makes the various leadership styles measurable to a certain extent and allows more than two competing options (X versus Y).
- Accurate measurement is important, because of the tendency by managers for self deception and exaggeration.
- 80% of all people rate themselves as 9.9! Once this is discussed using the grid, this number is reduced to 20%.
- Using a model makes it easier to openly discuss behavior and improvement actions.

Limitations of the Managerial Grid. Disadvantages

- There are more dimensions of leadership that can be relevant.
- The model basically neglects the significance of the internal and external constraints, context, circumstances and situation.

www.12manage.com

www.wikipedia.org

www.thefreelibrary.com

www.mindtools.com

Guide to Better Managing Your Time Organize your day for more productivity

Think you'll never have enough hours in the day to accomplish all you need to? Restructure your time with these three steps, and you'll find you have more time than you thought:

1. Get a handle on all that needs to be done
2. Prioritize
3. Set limits

Learn to love lists and logs

Keeping track of every task, and every minute of your day, will give you a true sense of all that's on your plate.

I recommend: See how much time you spend on everything — from phone calls to bathroom breaks

Ditch the endless piles

An office full of unnamed piles here and there will only add to the confusion.

I recommend: Software solutions can make it easy to track down anything in any document on your hard drive.

Do what's most important first

If you tackle the crucial projects first, you won't find yourself as pressed for time at the end of the day.

I recommend: Prioritize your workload.

Take charge

A 24/7 open-door policy is the straightest road to time mismanagement. Close your door when you really need to concentrate, and tell your employees when you're available — and when you're not. Set specific times to do bulk activities, like returning phone calls or emails.

I recommend: Don't be afraid to use something as simple as a kitchen timer to keep you on track, whether with tasks, phone calls or meetings.