

Innovative Management for a Changing World

ARE YOU READY TO BE A MANAGER?¹

Welcome to the world of management. Are you ready for it? This questionnaire will help you see whether your priorities align with the demands placed on today's managers. Rate each of the following items based on what you think is the appropriate emphasis for that task to your success as a new

manager of a department. Your task is to rate the top four priority items as "High Priority" and the other four as "Low Priority." You will have four of the items rated high and four rated low.

	High Priority	Low Priority
1. Spend 50 percent or more of your time in the care and feeding of people.	☒	☐
2. Make sure people understand that you are in control of the department.	☐	☒
3. Use lunches to meet and network with peers in other departments.	☐	☒
4. Implement the changes you believe will improve department performance.	☒	☐
5. Spend as much time as possible talking with and listening to subordinates.	☒	☐
6. Make sure jobs get out on time.	☐	☒
7. Reach out to your boss to discuss his expectations for you and your department.	☒	☐
8. Make sure you set clear expectations and policies for your department.	☐	☒

Scoring and Interpretation: All eight items in the list may be important, but the odd-numbered items are considered more important than the even-numbered items for long-term success as a manager. If you checked three or four of the odd-numbered items, consider yourself ready for a management position. A successful new manager discovers that a lot of time has to be spent in the care and feeding of people, including direct reports and colleagues. People who fail in new management jobs often do

so because they have poor working relationships or they misjudge management philosophy or cultural values. Developing good relationships in all directions is typically more important than holding on to old work skills or emphasizing control and task outcomes. Successful outcomes typically will occur when relationships are solid. After a year or so in a managerial role, successful people learn that more than half their time is spent networking and building relationships.

A person's first job can be one of the most exciting times of life, but few people get the experience and challenge of being a manager at the age of 16. Teresa Taylor, now chief operating officer at Qwest, feels that she got just that. Taylor considered herself lucky to be working as hostess at a local restaurant, but she was a bit stunned by the level of responsibility she had. "I was in charge of scheduling, and I was in charge of deciding who gets to go early, who gets to come in late, who gets to go on break, who doesn't, what stations should they be at," she says. It seemed like a lot of power for someone just entering the workforce, but Taylor soon realized she had to listen to the servers and try to meet their needs in order to keep things running smoothly. It was a valuable lesson she applied many times in future years, especially when she stepped into an official management role. "I had to take a step back and say, 'Well, I can't muscle my way through this. I can't do it all myself.'" Like most managers, Taylor found that the more her responsibilities grew, the more she had to listen to and rely on others to accomplish goals.²

Many new managers expect to have power, to be in control, and to be personally responsible for departmental outcomes. A big surprise for many people when they first become a manager is that they are much less in control of things than they expected. Managers depend on subordinates more than the reverse, and they are evaluated on the work of other people rather than on their own work. The nature of management is to

Evolution of Style

This questionnaire asks you to describe yourself. For each item, give the number "4" to the phrase that best describes you, "3" to the item that is next best, and on down to "1" for the item that is least like you.

1. My strongest skills are:

- 3 a. Analytical skills
4 b. Interpersonal skills
1 c. Political skills
2 d. Flair for drama

2. The best way to describe me is:

- 3 a. Technical expert
4 b. Good listener
1 c. Skilled negotiator
2 d. Inspirational leader

3. What has helped me the most to be successful is my ability to:

- 2 a. Make good decisions
4 b. Coach and develop people
1 c. Build strong alliances and a power base
3 d. Inspire and excite others

4. What people are most likely to notice about me is my:

- 3 a. Attention to detail
4 b. Concern for people
2 c. Ability to succeed in the face of conflict and opposition
1 d. Charisma

5. My most important leadership trait is:

- 3 a. Clear, logical thinking
4 b. Caring and support for others
2 c. Toughness and aggressiveness
1 d. Imagination and creativity

6. I am best described as:

- 3 a. An analyst
4 b. A humanist
2 c. A politician
1 d. A visionary

Interpretation: New managers typically view their world through one or more mental frames of reference. (1) The *structural frame* of reference sees the organization as a machine that can be economically efficient and that provides a manager with formal authority to achieve goals. This manager frame became strong during the era of **scientific management** and **bureaucratic administration**. (2) The *human resource frame* sees the organization as people, with manager emphasis given to support, empowerment, and belonging. This manager frame gained importance with the rise of the **humanistic perspective**. (3) The *political frame* sees the organization as a competition for resources to achieve goals, with manager emphasis on negotiation and hallway coalition building. This frame reflects the need within **systems theory** to have all parts working together. (4) The *symbolic frame* of reference sees the organization as theater—a place to achieve dreams—with manager emphasis on symbols, vision, culture, and inspiration. This manager frame is important for **learning organizations**.

Which frame reflects your way of viewing the world? The first two frames of reference—*structural* and *human resource*—are more important for new

managers. These two frames usually are mastered first. As new managers gain experience and move up the organization, they should acquire political skills and also learn to use symbols for communication. It is important for new managers not to be stuck for years in one way of viewing the organization because their progress may be limited. Many new managers evolve through and master each of the four frames as they become more skilled and experienced.

Scoring: Higher score represents your way of viewing the organization and will influence your management style. Compute your scores as follows:

$$ST = 1a + 2a + 3a + 4a + 5a + 6a = \underline{17}$$

$$HR = 1b + 2b + 3b + 4b + 5b + 6b = \underline{24}$$

$$PL = 1c + 2c + 3c + 4c + 5c + 6c = \underline{9}$$

$$SY = 1d + 2d + 3d + 4d + 5d + 6d = \underline{10}$$

SOURCE: From Roy G. Williams and Terrence E. Deal, *When Opposites Dance* (Davies Black, 2003). Used with permission.

New Manager Self-Test