Management Skills and Styles Assessment

Overview

All managers possess a unique set of skills, abilities, and personality traits. The key to their effectiveness relies heavily on whether or not they are also good leaders. Effective managers must therefore possess traits that will empower their employees.

To be truly effective, a good manager must have the ability to motivate, inspire, and enable others to perform at their best and maximize individual and group productivity. Managers must be good at making decisions and have strong strategic planning skills. They also need to be understanding, compassionate, and respectful of others. Keep in mind that each organization has its own definition of what traits it wants its managers to possess.

Management styles can vary greatly. A style that may work well for one manager may not work for another. Effective managers are well aware of this truism and have a good understanding of their own personal styles and approaches for overseeing the work of others. They know how to communicate and delegate duties in ways that will result in the best possible outcome for each individual employee.

To ensure that managers are working as efficiently as possible, organizations will regularly assess their skills and management styles through a variety of measurements. There are a plethora of measurement tools available which companies can utilize to assess how their managers’ skills, abilities, and personality traits contribute to the company’s overall success.

Purpose of Assessments

An assessment should seek to measure managerial performance levels and provide the upper leadership of an organization with the proper information to make recommendations and improvements for its managers across all levels.

Through the use of formal and informal assessments, an organization can determine how effective a manager’s style is, and whether or not their approach is a good fit for the company. Issues such as productivity, morale, planning capabilities, interpersonal communication, and self-awareness can be identified and evaluated with the use of these tools. An assessment can uncover areas of weakness and identify ways in which management styles can be improved. An
assessment will also help to point out an individual’s strengths which are then used to provide positive feedback and encouragement during the review process. When an organization considers promotions, an employee’s assessment history will be reviewed and evaluated to determine if that person is ready for professional advancement.

**What Assessments Measure**

Each managerial assessment will have a particular focus based on several factors that the organization believes to be critical for its current mission. Primary areas of interest may include a manager’s decision-making, time management, organizational and strategic planning skills, as well as other related disciplines that affect productivity outcomes. These skills ensure that the organization remains focused on previously established goals, while continuing to be forward-driven in the years to come.

Assessments can uncover the levels at which a manager possesses the necessary skills to delegate, communicate, motivate, and listen effectively. A successful manager will know how to reward employees for a job well done and should respect all employees equally. By clearly outlining set expectations and goals, managers can empower individuals and teams to perform at their best.

In addition, assessments can help determine how well managers mitigate internal conflict, both among their employees as well as with their fellow executives. Managers should also know how to act as team leaders – if they are unable to facilitate positive interaction among their employees, productivity will decline, morale will tank, and the overall focus within the organization may shift towards the wrong priorities.

Certain assessments seek to evaluate a manager’s personality and attitudes. The level at which a manager is self-aware of his or her emotions and feelings can have a large impact on how well they perform their job. These characteristics are essential in determining if a manager can keep his or her cool, and they will also help identify how well the leadership of an organization is able to deal with stress, deadlines, and crises. Managers need to be open to feedback, both positive and negative.

* * * Other important traits that all good managers should possess include honesty and integrity, passion, confidence, and ambition.

**Types of Assessments**
Personality Tests

One of the most popular assessments is the Myers Briggs Personality Test. This questionnaire identifies an individual’s perceptions of the world and his or her preferred decision-making processes. This test identifies and describes 16 personality and psychological types, and looks at the various ways in which people think. Launched in 1943, this evaluation has been updated and perfected through the years and is used by industries throughout the business world. In particular, companies may use this assessment to develop leadership skills, training programs, and placement strategies.

Functionality Assessments

In addition to personality tests, assessments can also be used to evaluate how well an employee functions with day-to-day activities. The Kaufman Functional Academic Skills Test, which evaluates one’s competence in reading and math as applied to daily life, is an example of a functionality test. This assessment can be used as a supplement to other assessments that measure intelligence, achievement, and how well one adapts to various situations. Other assessments, known as Basic Skills Tests, measure an individual’s math and reading skills, and test his or her comprehension and problem-solving abilities.

These tests will help determine general knowledge as well as the levels at which the manager is able to accomplish his or her tasks. Administered on a regular basis, this type of assessment can determine whether or not that manager’s skills and abilities show improvement over time.

Analytical Assessments

Many organizations use analytical assessments to determine a manager’s ability to process information. Problem-solving requires an individual to obtain and identify data relevant to an issue at hand, and process that information in order to produce practical solutions. By evaluating a manager’s analytical skills, a company can determine if he or she is proficient at these essential business abilities. Examples of these assessments include the Nielsen Analytic Assessment Test, the Analytical Reasoning Test given by the ARCH Profile organization, and the Expert Rating’s Analytical Skills test – which provides test takers with a formal certification upon completion.

Adaptability Assessments

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Businesses experience changes constantly, and it is important for managers to quickly adapt to those changes. Adaptability assessments include Gallup’s Strengths Finder 2.0, which assesses strategies for identifying one’s strengths and provides insight into how one might improve their workplace performance.

Another assessment is The Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI), given by Clarion Enterprises, and based on the works of Dr. Richard Boyatziz and Daniel Goleman. These kinds of assessments evaluate the levels at which employees and managers are able to adapt to new challenges and excel under adverse conditions.

Vocational Assessments

While used mainly by retailers, a vocational assessment evaluates what training an employee may need, how well he or she communicates with others, and how well he or she can work within a team. Examples of these assessments include Career Assessment Inventory™ – “The Vocational Version,” and the Valpar Pro 3000 exam given by P. W. Boswell & Associates, which provides vocational rehabilitation.

Evaluating Assessment Results

No test or assessment is of any value unless it is accurately evaluated and then followed by some sort of action based on the results. In order to conduct an accurate evaluation, it is helpful to have a foundation from which to compare results. There are several ways of accomplishing this. First, the company could use a diagnostic model, which will include all the functions within the organization and descriptions of all strategies and activities as they relate to the specific goals and objectives of the company. There is some thought that these models should be biased based on what practices the company wishes its managers to employ and how it expects managers to work within their teams or functions. This model would include specific, desirable actions related to various issues within an organization. In contrast, an objective approach would attempt to avoid biases and would likely forego the inclusion of prescribed solutions in the hopes of attaining a more holistic understanding of their management team.

Once a methodology is determined, the results can be used to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. Once these areas are identified, methods for improvement or enhancement can be put into place. Subsequent assessments could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of subsequent hiring, firing and promotions within the organization.
Each organization must determine the model that works best for its company and industry. Additionally, many companies have a unique corporate climate; as a result, their leadership should select a method which is efficient, productive, and suitable to their style of conducting business.

**Summary**

- Well honed leadership skills are an essential tool for managerial effectiveness and success.
- Good managers have the ability to motivate, encourage, and support others. They must be good at making decisions and must have strong strategic planning skills.
- Each organization defines the traits it wishes its managers to possess. These traits may vary with a company’s hierarchy from task to task or from department to department.
- Management styles vary greatly – effective managers recognize that not all management styles will work with every employee. Effective managers are quick to adapt and have a good understanding of their employees specific needs.
- Organizations assess their managers’ skills and styles through a wide variety of measurement tools. These tools can be used to determine the degree to which a manager possesses the appropriate skills necessary for his or her duties.
- Characteristics and traits evaluated through assessments often include productivity, morale, planning capabilities, interpersonal communication, and self-awareness.
- Assessments are used to uncover areas of strengths and weaknesses and help to identify ways in which management styles can be improved.
- Assessments measure such areas as decision-making skills, time management, organizational skills, strategic planning skills, and the ability of a manager to identify his or her own feelings and emotions.
- Assessments identify how well the manager interacts with employees and managerial counterparts.
- The following assessments are used to measure a manager’s skills and abilities: personality tests, functionality tests, analytical tests, adaptability tests, and vocational tests.

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• Assessments must be properly analyzed in order for them to be of any value. There are several models that organizations can use to evaluate assessments, each with their own unique approach for improving managerial effectiveness.

• Each organization must determine the evaluation model that matches the needs of its corporate climate, industry, and management structure.