Management Skills and Styles Assessment

Overview

All managers possess their own set of skills, abilities, and traits. The key to their effectiveness is whether or not they are also good leaders. Effective managers must possess traits that will translate into becoming an effective leader.

To be effective, a good manager must have the ability to motivate, inspire, and enable others to perform at their best and to be the most productive. Managers must be good at making decisions and have strong strategic planning skills. They also must be understanding, compassionate, and respectful of others. However, keep in mind that each organization has its own definition of what traits it wants its managers to possess. Plus, desired traits within an organization may vary within the hierarchy, as well as from department to department, or task to task.

Management styles vary. A style that may be effective for one employee may not work for another. Effective managers know this and have a good understanding of their own personal style and approach. They know how to communicate in ways that will result in the best outcome for each individual employee.

To ensure that managers are as effective as possible, organizations will assess their employees’ skills and management styles through a variety of measurements. There are a wide range of measurement tools, which companies use to assess how one’s skills, abilities, and traits contribute to being a good manager. We will now further look into the purpose of these assessments.

Purpose of Assessments

Being a good leader is one of the most important components of good management. The purpose of an assessment is to identify a manager’s style, determine the degree to which a manager possesses the appropriate skills, and the levels at which a manager functions. Ultimately, an assessment should seek to measure performance.

By understanding a manager’s behavioral style, an organization can determine how effective that style is for the manager as well as the company. Issues such as productivity, morale, planning capabilities, interpersonal communication, and self-awareness can be identified and evaluated. An assessment can uncover areas of weakness and identify ways in which management styles can be improved. An assessment can also point out the strengths of the manager, providing valuable feedback and encouragement to continue with practices that have been successful.
Additionally, when an organization considers promotions, an employee’s assessment history will be reviewed and evaluated to determine if that person is ready for professional next-steps.

**What Assessments Measure**

Assessments can evaluate any number of measureables. Each individual assessment will have a particular focus based on factors that the organization believes are essential for its managers to possess. Assessments will measure such areas as the ability of a manager to identify his or her own feelings and emotions, how well the manager interacts with employees and other managers, as well as his or her general executive level abilities. Other areas may include the manager’s decision-making skills, time management, organizational skills, strategic planning skills, and other related disciplines. Let’s look at some of those factors more closely.

Traits that all good managers should possess include strategic planning and decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, and vision. These skills ensure that the business remains focused on set goals and continues to be forward-driven.

Assessments can uncover the levels at which a manager possesses delegation skills, communication skills, strong motivational skills, and active listening skills. An effective manager also should know how to reward employees for a job well done and should respect all employees equally. These skills will enable the manager to ensure that employees understand what is expected of them and perform at their best, while knowing that they can rely on their manager at all times.

In addition, assessments can determine how effective managers are at handling conflict, both among employees as well as fellow executives. This is an essential skill that must be evaluated frequently. Effective managers are also good team leaders. If a manager does not facilitate positive interaction among his or her employees, productivity will decline, along with morale and loss of focus.

An assessment will 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 an impact on that manager’s practices and professional results. These characteristics are important in determining if a manager can keep his or her cool and how the manager deals with stress, deadlines, and crises. How a manager prioritizes his or her time is also an important trait to understand. In addition to being self-aware, it is important to know how open a manager is to feedback, both positive and negative. Is the manager willing to accept the opinions of others? Or, does the manager believe that his or her approach is the only correct one? An assessment can uncover these important factors and determine if that manager is the best fit for that company or organization.
Other important traits that a good manager should possess include honesty and integrity, passion, confidence, and lack of fear. The wide range of available assessments can uncover these and the other characteristics discussed earlier. We will now look at types of assessments.

**Types of Assessments**

**Personality Tests**

One of the most popular assessments is the Myers Briggs Personality Test. This assessment identifies an individual’s perceptions of the world and his or her decision-making processes. This test identifies and describes 16 personality and psychological types as well as the 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 as well as to help managers understand their styles and enhance productivity.

**Functionality Assessments**

In addition to personality tests, assessments can also be used to evaluate how well an employee functions. 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 tests, known as Basic Skills Tests, also measure math and reading skills as well as comprehension and problem-solving.

These tests will determine the levels of knowledge a manager possesses 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 are increasing over time.

**Analytical Assessments**

Many organizations use analytical assessments to determine a manager’s ability to analyze information as a key to problem-solving. Problem-solving requires a manager to obtain and identify data relevant to the problem at hand and process that information in order to produce effective solutions. By evaluating a manager’s analytical skills, a company can determine if he or she is proficient at these essential business skills. Examples of these assessments include the Nielsen Analytic Assessment Test, the Analytical Reasoning Test given by the ARCH Profile organization, and Expert Rating’s Analytical Skills.
Adaptability Assessments

Businesses experience changes constantly, and it is important for managers to easily adapt to those changes. Adaptability assessments include Gallup’s Strengths Finder 2.0, which assesses strategies for identifying one’s strengths as well as how to apply those strengths. 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 can evaluate the levels at which employees can adapt to changes while remaining productive. Managers also need to be able to work with others who may not adapt as easily.

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 teams, as well as coworkers. 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, followed by some type 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 should have a diagnostic model, which will include all the functions within the organization and descriptions of all strategies and activities as they relate to the individual company’s goals and objectives. 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. Also, this model should include specific, desirable actions related to various issues. Another approach is for the model to be without a bias and not include solutions, incorporating a more objective approach to evaluating the assessment.

Once a methodology is determined, the results can be used to identify areas of strength and weakness. Once these areas are identified, methods for improvement or enhancement can be put into place. Subsequent assessments can evaluate the effectiveness of the changes from which corporations may make hiring, firing, and promotion decisions.

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Each organization must determine the model that works for its company and industry. Additionally, companies have their individual personalities and corporate climate, which will inevitably lead to the approach that is most efficient, productive, and suitable to their style of conducting business.

**Summary:**

- The key to managerial effectiveness is good leadership skills.

- Good managers have the ability to motivate, encourage, and support others to perform at their best and to be the most productive. 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 and effective managers recognize that not all styles will work with every employee. Effective managers have a good understanding that will result in the best outcome for each individual employee.

- Organizations assess their managers’ skills and styles through a wide variety of measurement tools and use these tools to determine the degree to which a manager possesses the appropriate skills as well as the level of performance for a manager.

- Characteristics and traits evaluated include productivity, morale, planning capabilities, interpersonal communication, and self-awareness.

- Assessments are used to uncover areas of strengths and weaknesses and 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 as well as other manager.
• The following assessment types are considered to measure a manager’s skills and abilities: personality tests, functionality tests, analytical tests, adaptability tests, and vocational tests.

• Assessments must be properly analyzed in order for them to be of any value, and there are several models that organizations can use to evaluate assessments.

• Each organization must determine the evaluation model that works best for its company, corporate climate, and industry.