

## MANAGEMENT STYLE AS AN INTEGRATIVE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE ACTIVITY OF A COMPETITIVE MANAGER

### STILUL MANAGERIAL – O CARACTERISTICĂ INTEGRATOARE A ACTIVITĂȚII UNUI MANAGER COMPETITIV

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**Abstract.** Management over the decades has been and remains one of the most acute and relevant problems in both the theory and practical activities of organizations. Particularly important for practice is the study of the effectiveness of managerial activities based on defined criteria, indicating the competitiveness of the individual and the community. In the empirical research, whose results are considered, R. Blake and J. Mouton's test was used to determine the dominant management style according to the "managerial grid" model. This model is developed within the behavioral approach to studying leadership styles. Scientists distinguish "orientation towards people" and "orientation towards work". According to the research results, the closest proximity was observed in the diagnosed managers to the style 5.5 – "Middle-of-the-road management," which reflects situations in which managers show an equally moderate interest in both employees and production. The obtained indicators (6,4/6,6) also testify to a tendency of managerial behavior of respondents to approach the ideal style (9.9) – "Team", which always leads to successful management of the organization. Based on the study results, it was concluded that the effectiveness and competitiveness of the manager depend greatly on the leadership style. Moreover, the best results are achieved by combining styles.

**Keywords:** management, management styles, "managerial grid" model, middle-of-the-road and team management.

The study of the management process is a relatively new direction of scientific research, and the definition of this concept is constantly evolving. The management process in an organization is studied at three levels: personality, management style, and the suitability of the management style to the situation. On this basis, criteria for the success of managers' work are proposed.

Management is the interaction between the leader and the group members who influence each other and jointly strive for substantial changes and achieve results that reflect common goals.

According to a common stereotype, the leader is different from the rest of the people he stands over. In reality, the qualities required for an effective manager are identical to the qualities required for effective subordinates [2].

Real subordinates know how to think independently, performing their assigned tasks with energy and enthusiasm. They are devoted to something beyond their personal interests and are able to stand up for their beliefs. They are not the kind of people who always nod in agreement and blindly follow the leader. Sometimes a person can be both an effective leader and an effective subordinate, skillfully playing one role or another depending on the situation. Ideally, management is evenly distributed between the leader and the group, with each person striving to increase their level of responsibility.

The study of managerial activity and leadership styles was initiated in the work of K. Lewin [5], which had a more ideological than functional direction. Following Lewin's work, a broad study of the problem of leadership styles and leadership began in the 1950s-1960s within the "human relations" approach. It is associated with the stages of development of management theory and organizations, dominant "models of man" and reflects their methodological provisions, merits and limitations.

Three main approaches to studying leadership styles are currently distinguished: 1) from the perspective of personal qualities (the best leaders possess a certain stable set of qualities), which has historically been one of the first in explaining management and remained fundamental for a long time (J. Gordon, G. Yukl, D. Hebert and L. Von Rosenstiel) [9, 4], 2) behavioral (the main criterion for classifying leadership styles or behavioral styles is not the personal qualities of the leader, but his manner of behavior towards subordinates, there is a certain optimal style) (K. Levin, R. Blake and J. Mouton, R. Likert) [5, 1], 3) situational (the choice of style, its success, and appropriateness are influenced by the situation in which the leader finds himself) (R. Tannenbaum and W. Schmidt, F. Fiedler, V. Vroom and P. Yetton). The situational approach includes analyzing the needs, personal qualities of subordinates, the nature of tasks, requirements, and environmental influences [7, 3].

Modern management theories primarily describe the changes made by managers. At the beginning of the 21st century, special importance is given to methods of implementing changes that allow adaptation to environmental conditions. Understanding the world as "dynamic, constantly changing, risky, and complex" creates new management concepts [2, 4]. From this point of view, creating conditions for change is a key aspect of management. The most challenging task for management is the rapid transformations of the surrounding world, which require the manifestation of creativity as a resource for adaptation in a politically and economically unstable environment [8]. Today's reality dictates the refusal to attempt to maintain stability in favor of change and crisis management.

Taking into account the combined issues of leadership style and the effectiveness of the leader's activities based on an analysis of literature sources, it is possible to identify the main features of managerial activity. They are determined, on the one hand, by objective conditions and on the other by subjective ones, actualized due to the non-identical personalities of people involved in joint activity.

Thus, the following psychological features of managerial activity that distinguish it from others can be singled out: 1) a wide range of simultaneously performed types of activity, which take place at different levels of management hierarchy; 2) high responsibility – for oneself, for performers, for work results; 3) non-algorithmic, creative nature of activity, implemented in conditions of deficit of various resources, in often contradictory changing environment; 4) pronounced prognostic nature of the tasks to be solved; 5) high role of communicative functions; 7) high mental stress and so on.

In the opinion of many experts, the effectiveness of leadership style is a dynamic characteristic determined by a manager's own qualities (or intrasubjective resources), as well as the characteristics of his subordinates (or intersubjective resources), and the conditions of work – the complexity of production tasks, the measure of administrative power (or extrasubjective resources) [3].

In summarizing, it may be noted that leadership styles are still a subject that requires further scientific study. Even after more than half a century of successive study of leadership styles, not all key issues of their genesis and functioning remain controversial.

R. Blake and J. Mouton propose a two-dimensional model. According to them, the "leadership grid" has two axes – the degree of consideration of production interests and the degree of consideration of human interests. Accordingly, the following styles are identified: *club management* (scrupulous attention to satisfying human needs leads to a comfortable and friendly atmosphere and work rhythm in the organization); *impoverished management* (applying a minimum of effort to achieve the necessary production results is sufficient to maintain membership in the organization); *power-oriented management* (production efficiency depends on creating working conditions where human aspects are present to a minimum); *organizational management* (good organizational management can be achieved by balancing the need to achieve production results and maintaining a satisfactory level of morale); team management (according to the authors of the concept, reflects the optimum and most effective style in which production successes are due to people dedicated to their work, interdependence between employees is maintained by focusing on common organizational goals, which leads to building relationships based on trust and respect) [1, 2, 4, 6].

Summarizing the concept of essential manifestations of management style, as revealed by authoritative experts, two independent basic factors that determine the stylistic behavior of a manager can be identified: 1) production activity technologies ("tasks," subject environment, i.e. objective resources) and 2) relationships and interactions with staff ("relations," "subjects," i.e. resources of interpersonal interactions of people).

Within the space of the two identified factors, managers act as subjects of object activity and as subjects of social relationships. Usually, styles described by researchers are localized in the space of two factors as limited, relatively closed, and self-sufficient systems. The effectiveness of different styles is determined by a greater or lesser representation in the perception of the subject and in his style of the set of conditions, requirements, laws of one of the two spheres – object (subject, production-technological) and subject (interpersonal). According to the professional worldview of the manager, certain resources are available to him.

Managers who are oriented towards employees focus on the needs of subordinates, demonstrating two qualities in doing so: they support positive interaction and strive to minimize conflicts. The employee-oriented leadership style corresponds to the concept of "attentiveness".

In contrast to the first type, the task-oriented manager directs the activities of subordinates, aiming to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and establish a workflow schedule. This type is associated with two qualities: a desire to achieve goals and optimization of employee activity. Behavior that is task-oriented is close to the category "initiating behavior".

Two types of behavior are contrasting to each other. Therefore, a manager who shows certain behavioral characteristics is attributed either a people-oriented or a task-oriented behavior style, but never both together. Another important consideration is that subordinates who support their manager often exhibit behaviors themselves associated with a desire to achieve goals, optimizing activities, constructive interaction, and minimizing conflicts, contributing to improved performance. Furthermore, the behavior of a manager not only influences the employees but is also influenced by situational factors.

Employee orientation: a type of manager behavior that involves focusing on the needs of employees and demonstrating two qualities: supporting positive interaction and striving to minimize conflicts.

Work orientation: a type of manager behavior that directs the activities of subordinates to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and establish a work schedule. This type is associated with two qualities: the desire to achieve goals and optimizing the activity of employees.

The "management style grid" model, developed in the 1960s by R. Blake and J. Mouton, underlies the test for assessing management style [6]. The authors distinguish between "people-orientation and work orientation": on the one hand, managers should accelerate the transformation of goals and the execution of tasks, and on the other – take into account the desires and suggestions of employees.

R. Blake and J. Mouton evaluated managers on a nine-point scale after conducting a week-long seminar based on two criteria: attention to people and attention to production. Grouped along two axes, the ratings reflect five main management styles, as shown in Figure 1.

Staff orientation	9	<b>1,9</b>								<b>9,9</b>
	8									
	7									
	6									
	5					<b>5,5</b>				
	4									
	3									
	2									
	1	<b>1,1</b>								<b>9,1</b>
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		Task orientation								

**Figure 1. R. Blake and J. Mouton's Management Grid**

Team management (9,9) is often considered the most effective style, and is recommended for use because it allows team members to work together to perform tasks.

Country club management (1,9) is observed in cases where the manager pays more attention to people than to work results.

Authority-compliance management (9,1) occurs when operational efficiency is the dominant orientation.

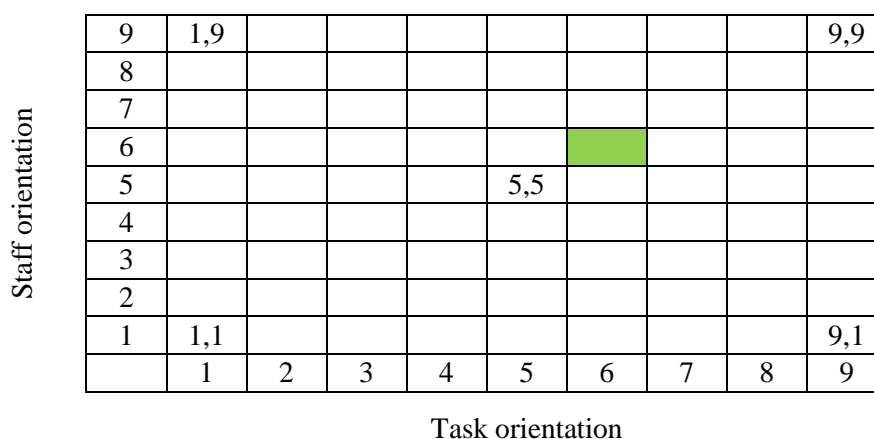
Middle-of-the-road management (5,5) reflects situations in which managers show an equally moderate interest in both employees and production.

Impoverished management (1,1) means the absence of leadership philosophy. Managers do not show interest in either employees or production.

The drawback of the Behavioral Theory approach is the absence of situation variables into account. Important variables are – coworkers, tasks or functional areas of managers. Therefore, people with a high performance orientation prefer a task-oriented management style. However, with new and complex tasks, a people-oriented management style proves to be more effective.

In our research, the R. Blake and J. Mouton test was used to determine the management style according to the “management style grid” model. The results of the investigation are presented in Figure 2.

The total scores from the test were plotted on a chart, marking the point with the score indicative of people-orientation (6.64) on the vertical axis, and the point with the score indicative of task-orientation (6.43) on the horizontal axis. Then, two lines were drawn from each point so that they intersect. The intersecting area is the measure of the leadership style (the cell marked in green).



**Figure 2. Indicators for Blake-Mouton Grid "Management Styles Grid"**

Based on the test results, the task-orientation score (6.43) is almost indistinguishable from the people-orientation score (6.64). As can be seen from the leadership styles grid, the result obtained in the study is closest to style 5.5 – *Centrist Management*. It reflects situations in which managers demonstrate an equally moderate interest in both employees and production.

It should be noted that the obtained indicators significantly exceed the parameters of the Centrist management (5.5) and show a trend of managerial behavior approaching the ideal style – (9.9) Team. The team management is characterized by a high interest in both cooperation and tasks. It is considered a universal style that consistently leads to successful management of the organization.

It should be emphasized that individual indicators of the task orientation of the studied leaders are in the range from min=4 to max=9 on a nine-point scale. Out of them, 69.23% showed a clearly expressed task orientation (7-9 points), and moderately – 30.77%. No marginal task orientation was identified in the studied sample.

Individual indicators of staff orientation are in the range from min=3 to max=9. A pronounced orientation towards relationships in the study sample was found in 26.92%, moderate orientation – in 65.38% of managers, slight staff orientation – in 7.69% of the surveyed.

The leadership style with a dominance of task orientation over staff orientation was found in 38.46% of managers. The leadership style with a dominance of staff orientation was identified in only 3.85% of managers.

These characteristics are very important in the behavior of managers. People-orientation and task-orientation represent fundamental aspects of human behavior, on which the success of the organization depends. It should be noted that these characteristics were identified in the process of field research of real managers. And if different studies produce similar results, one can assume that they reflect fundamental features of leadership styles. In a recent review of scientific works conducted over the last 50 years, people-orientation and task-orientation are defined as the main categories of manager behavior. Interest in tasks and interest in people are demonstrated by managers at various levels. And although these are not the only forms of behaviour, they are the most significant.

An important practical question is whether managers can combine task-orientation and people-orientation, and if so, how they manage to do it. The managerial grid shows that a combination is possible. This is confirmed by the results of our research. A leadership style characterized by significant task-orientation and significant people-orientation was demonstrated by 19.23% of the managers studied. A leadership style with moderate interest in both employees and production was demonstrated by 23.07% of managers. A leadership style with insignificant task-orientation and insignificant people-orientation was not found in the sample studied.

Although a leader may predominantly exhibit one characteristic, it is established that the most effective leaders are considerably oriented towards both people and tasks. That is, leaders of this type can alter their behavior depending on the situation. However, both leadership styles can be observed simultaneously. A task-oriented leader sets challenging tasks for subordinates and then simply puts pressure on them. In contrast, a people-oriented leader seeks improvement by establishing constructive relationships with subordinates. A leader who is significantly oriented towards both people and tasks will combine both styles in most situations.

Such a "compatible" style is recognized as more universal rather than situational. Universal style means that behavior is effective in all situations, and situational means that it is only effective in some. Research points to a certain degree of universality of behavior oriented towards both people and tasks. In other words, the style of a leader oriented to people more satisfies employees and creates fewer interpersonal problems in the most diverse situations. And task orientation in many cases leads to high productivity.

People can mimic the behavior of a leader. It is believed that a leader who is simultaneously oriented towards people and tasks is the most effective, as they are capable of meeting the needs of employees and production requirements. Although this type of leadership is not the only one, researchers are convinced that it allows to achieve success in a variety of situations.

The advantage of behavior theory models lies in their practical use in the field of training. At the beginning of the training, through questionnaires, leaders assess their personal managerial character traits. During the training, they adjust their managerial behavior to the ideal style – 9.9 team-oriented.

**Conclusions.** Within the theories of behavior, it is predicted that successful leaders exhibit certain forms of behavior. Many studies have been conducted in which attempts were made to identify these forms. Leaders who are focused on their subordinates concentrate attention on the needs of those under their management, exhibiting two qualities: they foster positive interaction and seek to minimize conflicts. Relations are very important for modern organizations, so many companies seek to find leaders capable of establishing constructive interaction among employees. In contrast to the first type, a work-oriented manager directs the activities of subordinates, aiming to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and establish a work schedule. This type is associated with two qualities: striving to achieve goals and optimizing the activities of employees.

Summarizing the concept of the essential manifestations of management style, we can determine the recommendations for practical use of behavioural components of management styles: to become a true leader, one should show interest in both tasks and people. People-oriented approach helps to avoid many personnel problems, while task-oriented approach contributes to the increase in productivity. The use of both forms of behaviour in different situations will help to become a successful manager.

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