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## Participative management style in a state transportation agency regional office

Linda Renee Grimes

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PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT STYLE  
IN A  
STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY REGIONAL OFFICE

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Public Administration

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by  
Linda Renee Grimes  
June 1994

PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT STYLE  
IN A  
STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY REGIONAL OFFICE

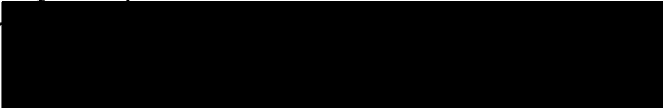
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A Project  
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by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

"Participative Management" describes employee participation in decision-making. It can foster both satisfaction and frustration, and is subject to interpretation.

This research project investigates internal perceptions about the degree to which participative management is practiced in a state transportation agency regional office that has historically been authoritarian, but currently professes a participative philosophy. The paper is a nonscientific human inquiry based on survey research design and it involves limited and well-defined concepts. A sample of non-management employees in the agency was surveyed to determine how they perceive the agency and its management practices.

Studies indicate that a change to participative management increases the likelihood that a previously authoritarian agency will become more productive and efficient. Positive results can occur when an organization has a more cooperative workforce which takes pride in itself. A participative management environment can create a willing, cooperative workforce. Employees who take pride in themselves without authoritarian directive induce their own desire and ability to improve skills and productivity.

For years the work force in the state transportation agency's regional office has been conditioned to react to direction by management in a manner developed by management. As management styles change, employees want to become more involved in the process of how business is conducted more efficiently.

The survey led to the belief that there should be improvements in the organizational structure and that there should be a stronger team approach. Employees want to become involved in job planning, cost effectiveness as well as the safety of employees. In summation, "Don't think, just do it" is being replaced with "Bring your mind to work, and use it."

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## INTRODUCTION

### Overview

The purpose of this research is to investigate the application of **Participative Management** in a public agency that has traditionally been authoritarian in its management style. Participation is a basic stance or philosophy about working with people. The concept is that managers share decision-making with subordinates.<sup>1</sup> The project was also undertaken to expand the author's knowledge of participative management and its utility in government.

The paper deals with a key ingredient for successful management---PARTICIPATION. Although participation is crucial it seems to be poorly understood and practiced. I have drawn upon the literature and experiences of psychologists, social-psychologists, and management practitioners. For example, Chris Argyris<sup>2</sup> recognized that attitudes are focused beliefs that affect behavior, Douglas McGregor<sup>3</sup>, a critic of "authoritarian" management, introduced Theory X and Theory Y

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<sup>1</sup> S. G. Huneryager, Human Relations in Management, 2nd edition, New Rochelle, N.Y. South Western Publishing Company, 1967, pp.594-595.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Argyris introduced behavior patterns in terms of A and B. *Increasing Interpersonal Competence*, in Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behavior, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas McGregor identified the Theory X and Theory Y definitions of management as outlined in his book, The Human Side of Enterprise, McGraw-Hill, New York. 1960. pp. 33-34.



concepts, Abraham Maslow<sup>4</sup> developed a theory of motivation based on assumptions about human nature, and Frederick Herzberg<sup>5</sup> explored job motivation. Their writings are based upon carefully developed and well thought-out ideas and on research and practice as well.

For this study a survey was developed (Figure 2) and distributed to a sample of employees at the regional office of a state transportation agency. Since the agency is comprised of over 10 departments (fields of activity), the sampling was taken across all departmental lines of activity. The sample was small but representative of the agency. The departments typically consist of small groups (2 to 10 people) under a supervisor. This is intended to promote better control of project delivery, functional activities and personnel management. The groups are generally homogeneous and individual opinions show little variance. The survey and its results are found in Chapter 2 of this report.

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<sup>4</sup> Abraham Maslow (1908-70), American psychologist and leading exponent of humanistic psychology, developed the needs hierarchy. Maslow concluded that self-actualization is beyond the basic needs of food and shelter. Theo Haimann, William G. Scott and Patrick E. Connor, Management, Fifth Edition, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. 1985. pp 388-390.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Herzberg identified factors that affect frequency and duration of motivation which he called satisfiers and dissatisfiers. Theo Haimann, William G. Scott and Patrick E. Connor, Management, pp. 416-418.

## Methodology

This research project is a nonscientific human inquiry.<sup>6</sup> It involves limited and well-defined concepts and relies on the ability to control the research setting. There was control from the initiation of the survey to its conclusion. The major limitation was the inability to control for biases introduced by selection of subject employees from various departments.

The regional agency was a controlled research setting. Respondents were selected at random with a wide range of years of service (one to 35 years) and occupations (engineering, clerical, maintenance, planning and administration). This particular regional office is in the process of reorganizing and downsizing because of budget reductions and it is possible that answers to the survey reflect these changes. When dynamic changes are being made in an organization the employees may have a different perspective of management.

Forty-five (45) employees were asked to complete the survey and return it anonymously. To increase the probability of honest responses to the questions and to protect confidentiality, individual respondents were not identified, and the employees were directed not to give their work status or supervisor's name.

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<sup>6</sup> Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research, Sixth Edition, Wadworth Publishing Company, Belmont Ca. 1992, Chapter 9.

The survey consisted of 50 questions relating to employee/supervisor relationships, the agency, and management's treatment of employees.

## CHAPTER 1

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory of participative management is a center of debate in management theory. The literature abounds with definitions of participative management and the subject of participation is growing. Much of the early writing was speculative and normative, because there was little evidence. Continuing research and findings on the process and effects of participation require further examination. The research here will not do much to resolve the controversy but, nevertheless, it will bring out the employees' perspective of management practices in a state regional office that professes to employ participative management.

Participative management is basically a philosophy that urges organizational decisions to be made in such a way that input and responsibility are extended to the lowest level appropriate to the decisions being made. The purpose of participative management is to ensure that effective decisions are made by the right people.

Of all the generalizations about the theory of participative management, that *participation promotes satisfaction* is one of the more widely discussed. The theory is that members of a group tend to be more satisfied if they have some feeling of participation in the decision-making process. Ralph White and Ronald Lippitt, in Autocracy and

Democracy<sup>7</sup>, state that participation in a group's decision normally means stronger identification with the group, and greater commitment to jointly held goals. As a motivational force, the power of democratic participation is often great.

The literature supports the proposition that participation does increase feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, and participation in organizational decisions increases satisfaction with the organization and the job. Satisfaction is a function of the type of decision that participants are involved in as well as their degree of involvement.

Participation has a human value; there is a relationship between morale and participation. The more involved managers and workers are in planning activities, the more enthusiastic they are about carrying out the plans, the better their plans and programs. In Teaching the Elephant to Dance (1990)<sup>8</sup>, James A. Belasco, states that participation produces empowerment. He argues that people can become empowered by a vision of the organization they understand. He also argues that empowerment creates change and that understanding is enhanced by participation. Lee Iacocca, former Chief Executive Officer of Chrysler Corporation, said in his

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<sup>7</sup> White, Ralph K. and Ronald Lippitt, Autocracy and Democracy, Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1960, p. 272.

<sup>8</sup> Belasco, James A., Teaching the Elephant to Dance, (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1990).

autobiography "...all business operations can be reduced to three words: people, product and profits. People come first. Unless you've got a good team, you can't do much with the other two."<sup>9</sup> This same reasoning applies to participative management in a public agency.

### Theory X and Theory Y

Theory X (authoritative) and Theory Y (participative) perceptions of management were developed by Douglas McGregor.<sup>10</sup> McGregor noted that management perceptions create organizational climate. He identified two general perceptions; one based on what he called Theory X and the other, Theory Y.

Climates consistent with Theory X are closely controlled. Authority is centralized, leadership is autocratic, and decision-making is nonparticipative. McGregor explains that Theory X managers create these climates because they follow logically from the manager's beliefs about human behavior:

- o The average person dislikes work and avoids it as much as possible.
- o The average person has to be threatened or forced to work toward the organization's goals.
- o The average person is passive; he or she wants to be directed rather than to take on the responsibility of directing. Above all, people want security.

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<sup>9</sup> Lee Iacocca, Iacocca, New York: Bantam Books, 1984, p. 167.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise, McGraw-Hill, New York. 1960. pp. 33-34.

Theory Y managers hold the following, vastly different assumptions:

- o The average person finds work as natural as play or rest, and therefore doesn't avoid it.
- o The average person is self-motivated, finding an inherent satisfaction in work. Coercion is not the only form of motivation.
- o Commitment is a crucial factor in motivation.
- o In the right environment the average person learns to accept and even to look for responsibility.
- o Contrary to popular stereotypes, the ability to solve problems creatively is widely, not narrowly, distributed throughout the population.

Theory Y managers who are high in their respect for subordinates and who consult them regularly on departmental issues are expected to achieve subordinate satisfaction.

An employee who has a supportive leader is motivated to work toward organizational objectives as a means of achieving his own goals. The approach is similar to McGregor's "Theory Y."

#### Authoritarian vs. Participative

Following is a comparison of the Authoritarian and Participative management styles.

#### Authoritarian

In an authoritarian organization the leadership relies on formal authority. Authority is used to dominate work groups and places little emphasis on interpersonal needs. Authority is dependent on formal delegations of power and control along

rigid hierarchical lines. In authoritarian environments the leaders argue that "I am the boss" and operate by telling their subordinates what to do. This leadership is a top-down approach that comes from top management to subordinates, implying that management knows what is best and that it is the employee's obligation to follow orders without question.

In a traditional organizational structure managers define, measure and control the work of employees. Employees can make only limited decisions regarding their own work. Autocratic rule stresses control, not creativity. The difficulty with the authoritarian approach is that it does not utilize the capacities of the individuals in the group because it emphasizes control rather than cooperation, teamwork and participation. Under this approach, the sole power and authority for decision making rests with the manager. The subordinates do not share in the decision-making process, nor are they expected or encouraged to question decisions. The assumption is that the manager knows best what is to be done and the subordinate does not.

An authoritarian organization is not always undesirable.<sup>11</sup> Some types of work and certain work groups (immature or inexperienced) require highly structured work that operationally works better under an autocratic leadership. Authority is necessary to enforce policies and rules.

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<sup>11</sup> Huneryager, Human Relations in Management, p. 582.



The autocratic (nonparticipatory) style of management is no longer advocated in all situations. Most managers today consider such a style to be socially undesirable and few will admit to its use in practice. However, the autocratic style is still commonly used.

### Participative

The concept of participative management is that managers must involve employees in decision making so that employees know what is going on and how it affects them and their jobs; managers must recognize good performance. When employees have a say in decisions, when they understand what they are doing and why they are doing it, when they know their work is important and appreciated, some of their social and personal needs are met. With this satisfaction comes increased productivity.

The participative approach is based on concern for employees as members of a work group. It recognizes that employees work harder to carry out decisions they have influenced. McGregor says, "The motivation, the potential for development, the capacity for assuming responsibility, the readiness to direct behavior toward organizational goals are all present in people."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *The Human Side of Enterprise*. reprinted in Jay M. Shafritz and J. Steven Ott, Classics of Organization Theory, Wadsworth, Inc. Belmont, CA. 1992. pp. 178.

Participative management in an organization can have a beneficial effect. It can ensure that the capabilities of the group contribute to the best interest of the organization. Employees would want to perform to the best of their capacity because the goals of the organization have also become a part of their personal goals.

Two departments of the regional state agency in question recently had an authoritarian type leadership. The supervisory staff was discontented, employees did not feel they were participators and the morale of the department was low. When the managers were replaced with a participatory type leader, the morale improved. Staff meetings became group discussions of a participatory nature, individual self-esteem improved and there were improvements in decision-making because of a group consensus. Staff members felt they were treated more fairly and supervisors felt they were better able to accomplish their work tasks because of improved morale. The authoritarian type leadership had a negative effect on staff and the participatory style resulted in a significant improvement.

There are barriers to constructive participation. These barriers should not be overlooked or underestimated. People have feelings of inadequacy, rejection, and personal satisfaction that are goal oriented. A person that feels other members of the group are better educated, trained and experienced may feel inadequate. Fear of rejection are

typified by feelings that people will laugh, ridicule or openly attack others in the group. Finally, people may use the group to satisfy some individual goal which is unrelated to or may actually interfere with group goals.

Under the participative approach managers must be skilled in interpersonal relations. They must understand people, they must be communicators. They must be able to bring out the best in a group setting and to capitalize on individual strengths. These skills are not easily learned and this is one reason participative management is sometimes underutilized.

Participatory management can also be risky. It can encourage employees to provide conflicting information on sensitive or controversial issues that could cause negative results for decision makers when they are trying to formulate solutions. It must be focused in areas where those called upon can help make meaningful contributions. For example, there would be no justification in asking maintenance personnel for their opinion on planning programs. On the other hand, perhaps maintenance employees could be helpful in resource management for their own needs.

A Supportive Model of organizational behavior as shown in Figure 1 is oriented towards the concept of participative management. The manager is shown in support of his/her employees rather than in a power or economic role. The result

is a feeling of participation in the organization. This brings the term "we" instead of the "they" when referring to the organization; ownership of a project as "ours" instead of "theirs".

Figure 1

COMPARISON OF ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

	Autocratic	Custodial	Supportive	Collegial
Depends on:	Power	Economic resources	Leadership	Mutual contribution
Managerial orientation:	Authority	Material rewards	Support	Integration and teamwork
Employee orientation:	Obedience	Security	Performance	Responsibility
Employee psychological results:	Personal dependency	Organizational dependency	Participation	Self-discipline
Employee needs met:	Subsistence	Maintenance	Higher-order	Self-realization
Performance result:	Minimum	Passive	Awkward	Enthusiasm
Morale Measure:	Compliance	Satisfaction	Motivation	Commitment to task and team

Source: Keith Davis, Human Relations at Work: The Dynamics of Organizational Behavior, 3rd ed(New York: McGraw and Hill, 1967), p.480

## CHAPTER 2

### FINDINGS

#### The Survey

A survey (Figure 2) was distributed to 45 of some 1100 employees (3% to 4%) from a state transportation regional office that professes to use a participatory management style. The employees surveyed were first-line supervisors or rank and file with diverse professional backgrounds. No one from upper management was included. The agency is too large to survey everyone, so a random sample of employees was taken. The survey questions were devised so they did not suggest a particular answer, and the responses were only made with a check mark. The survey was strictly confidential with no personal identifying marks and was given only to those volunteering to complete it.

Following are the questions along with the responses that were collected from the 45 employees.

Figure 2

**EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT SURVEY**

Please place an "X" in one of the spaces below.

	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
1. I like my job.	33	11	1
2. I enjoy coming to work.	18	21	6
3. I am proud to work here.	18	22	5
4. I am able to use my abilities on my job.	24	16	5
5. I can give my opinions on the job.	31	11	3
6. My supervisor listens to me.	32	9	4
7. I am motivated to do a good job.	24	14	7
8. I am treated with dignity and respect on my job.	22	18	5
9. I like my supervisor.	35	8	2
10. I feel important on my job.	17	23	5
11. I have confidence in management.	6	10	29
12. My family is proud of me that I work here.	31	12	2
13. My supervisor listens to me.	30	11	4
14. The work climate is not adversarial in nature	19	14	12
15. Management encourages me to give my opinions.	10	13	22
16. I am committed to doing a good job.	38	6	1

	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
17. I have a good relationship with my supervisor.	36	8	1
18. I enjoy my physical work environment.	20	16	9
19. We work as a team here.	17	18	10
20. Teamwork is encouraged here.	20	13	12
21. Management gives me an opportunity for self-development on my job.	15	15	15
22. My job has a positive impact on my personal life.	20	13	12
23. I am respected by people in the community because I work here.	10	22	13
24. I am treated fairly here.	19	18	8
25. I respect my supervisor.	35	3	7
26. My job is meeting my personal career goals.	15	16	14
27. Employees are advanced and promoted based on merit.	4	17	24
28. The demands of my job are reasonable on me.	25	16	4
29. My job is stressful on me.	10	24	11
30. I can freely disagree with my supervisor.	28	11	6
31. Communication is good here.	14	16	15
32. I trust my fellow employees.	22	19	4
33. Employees are willing to help each other on the job.	17	22	6
34. I know what the goals and objectives of this agency is.	20	16	9



	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
35. I know what the vision of this agency is.	19	15	11
36. This agency is well managed.	5	12	28
37. My job is not demeaning to me.	32	5	8
38. The agency is willing to use my talents and abilities.	16	18	11
39. I feel important on my job.	18	20	7
40. I am utilized properly by management.	11	16	18
41. I enjoy participating in problem solving groups.	30	10	5
42. My supervisor encourages employee involvement in our department.	27	13	5
43. I am asked my opinions on my job.	24	12	9
44. The agency is concerned about my needs on the job.	4	16	25
45. I like the way the agency treats its employees.	5	13	27
46. Management encourages me and nurtures me on the job.	6	13	26
47. This agency really cares about me.	5	10	30
48. Management supports the decisions that I make on my job.	9	27	9
49. The agency is concerned that the employees are happy on the job.	6	9	30
50. Management communicates well with the employees.	6	7	32

## Results

Forty-five (45) surveys were distributed and all were returned. The 50 questions were separated into three groups:

Group 1: 20 questions concerning self-satisfaction.

Questions in Group 1: 1 2 3 7 9 12  
16 17 18 19 22 23 25 26 30 32 33  
37 39 41

Group 2: 20 questions related to the agency.

Questions in Group 2: 4 5 6 8 10 13  
24 27 28 29 31 34 35 38 42 43 44  
45 47 49

Group 3: 10 questions concerning management practices.

Questions in Group 3: 11 14 15 20 21 36  
40 46 48 50

The survey represented only about 4% of the staff in the controlled group (the regional office). The office is made up of small working groups of 2 to 10 people and generally there is a consensus of opinion about management and working conditions within a working group.

## Comparison of Responses

The findings relate to the concepts of participation and theory of management practices. All participative activities are lumped together and ignore individual and situational differences. From the responses three variables

were developed: self-satisfaction, agency satisfaction and management satisfaction.

The survey was structured to expect similar answers to equivalent questions at different locations within the survey. Some questions were a rephrasing of earlier questions. There was an interesting and substantial contrast in some results when comparing responses between questions that should have had equivalent answers. For example out of the 45 responses:

Question 4: 24 (53%) say they are able to use their abilities on the job.

Question 38: 16 (36%) say agency is willing to use their talents and abilities.

Question 40: 11 (24%) say they are utilized properly by management.

Question 5: 31 (69%) say they can give opinions on the job.

Question 15: 22 (49%) say management does not encourage them to give their opinions.

The responses lead to the conclusion that questions regarding self-satisfaction leaned towards the positive side, agency responses were mid-range or neutral; however, responses concerning management were more on the negative side.

Questions relating to self-satisfaction had over a 50% positive reaction when it concerned employees themselves or their relationships with others. Seventy-three percent

liked their jobs but only forty percent enjoyed going to work or were proud of their place of work. Forty-four percent said they know what the goals and objectives of the organization are.

The most positive finding in the survey is that virtually all respondents were satisfied with their immediate supervisors, 78% said they had a good relationship with their supervisor.

Questions relating to the agency were essentially evenly divided across the board, leaning towards the yes or positive side. However, when the term "management" became part of the question the answers became more negative. Sixty-four percent said they have no confidence in management. Sixty-nine percent said they could give their opinions on the job but 49% said management does not encourage their opinions. Less than 10% of the respondents expressed negative attitudes toward their work but 40% felt that their skills were underutilized. Fifty-six percent said they could not use their abilities on the job. Over 69% complained about a lack of management's concern over their working environments, particularly employee needs and communication. Seventy-one percent felt that management does not communicate well with employees. Team building can be used to improve work tasks, yet the survey says only 41% feel teamwork is encouraged.

The majority of the findings support the inference that managers who least value their subordinate's capabilities or who least often seek their contributions on department issues have the least satisfied subordinates.

This study did not attempt to determine if the actual management of the organization or the term "management" itself generated negative reactions. It would be interesting to determine if the management practices of the organization need improvement or if this is simply a typical "generic" reaction when employees think of management.

In a bureaucracy where there are budget cuts, government cutbacks, and program changes, management is sometimes looked at more unfavorably than in better economic times.

The results of the survey may also have been biased by the mood of the moment. One respondent noted that they had changed positions, and the answers were based on the previous position.

One way in which participation may improve both organizational outcomes and the self-satisfaction of individuals in the workplace is by improved communication and increasing the flow of information. The survey showed that 71% of the respondents felt that management does not communicate well with employees.

Individuals tend to become more empowered when they use highly valued skills and abilities to work toward a goal. Empowerment can lead to changes of self-esteem. It is

important for management to find out to what extent the employees have the knowledge and skills to contribute to a solution.

Maslow's "Needs Hierarchy Theory" states that one of the need levels is *Ego and Esteem*, which is concerned with the achievement of status and recognition. Only 39% of those surveyed said they felt important. The survey shows that only 8% believe that employees are advanced and promoted on merit; 53% feel that employees are not advanced on merit.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory holds that achievement recognition, advancement and responsibility are factors that help satisfy employees needs. The survey showed that 53% were motivated; however, only 33% said management gives them an opportunity for self-development.

Douglas McGregor theorized that people will exercise self-direction and self-control in the achievement of organizational objectives to the degree that they are committed to these objectives. Participation is a means of generating such commitment.

The survey indicates that 84% are committed to doing a good job, yet only 40% enjoy coming to work. This finding suggests employees are committed to completing organizational objectives. Yet, only a small percentage (13%) express confidence in management. This suggests a conflict in employee response to management styles.

The following table summarizes grouped responses:

GROUPED RESPONSES OF QUESTIONS

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>
Like job	51%	9%	40%
Use Abilities	38%	25%	37%
Like Supervisor	72%	7%	21%
Agency cares	10%	61%	29%
Management Support	22%	40%	38%
Communication good	22%	52%	26%
Confidence in management	13%	64%	23%

Supervisors provide a link between management goals and employee efforts. From this table and from the readings on supervisorial management, it is concluded that the majority of supervisors in this agency provide positive direction, support their staff, and dedicate themselves to the organization. This is in line with participatory management practices. However, management is still looked upon unfavorably. Management includes communication with staff and motivating organizational goals. For example:

Question 36: 28 (62%) feel the agency is not well managed.

Question 50: 32 (71%) feel that management does not communicate well with employees.

Recall earlier that two styles of leadership were compared--participative and authoritarian. Present indications are that both types can lead to an effective

performance; but an identification of the more intangible effects of these two styles indicates a greater desirability towards the participative. The organization needs people who:

1. are well aware of its goals;
2. have developed a strong sense of responsibility for the achievement of its goals;
3. feel confidence in their judgement;
4. consider they have the support and backing of their superiors in the exercise of judgment.

The bulk of the findings support the belief that if management does not value employee capabilities, it will not have a satisfied workforce. It would be incorrect to place the "Theory X" label on the management practices of this regional office from the findings, yet it appears to lean towards an authoritarian style in terms of employee perception and dissatisfaction.

The regional agency should strive to create an environment that will allow employees to respect their organization and its management practices. This must be a continuous assessment of the core values of employee development. The majority of the findings support the need for a study of the participative management concept by the regional agency. The survey and the literature readings indicate that participative management can have a dramatic effect in improving both productivity and morale.



## CHAPTER 3

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

In general terms, the participatory management survey described through the preceding chapters has two basic uses. First, it could be used to aid management in understanding the current feelings of employees. Second, it can aid in establishing a framework for increasing teamwork participation in the decision-making process.

Participative management employs two strategies used to achieve a more productive work environment. One is to improve working conditions and the other is to increase employee involvement in problem solving.

A noticeable increase in communication among various functional units in the planning department of a state transportation agency came about through a committee of representatives involved in a common effort involving a personnel issue. This arrangement led to better trust among managers and department supervisors and opened up better lines of communication. If workers are given the opportunity to participate in the search for improved methods of job performance and productivity, and if this participation is maintained, their job performance should improve.

Support of management is a must for a participative management program. It is important that all supervisory personnel be trained and coached in changing a management

style from the old traditional authoritarian approach to the participatory style.

Managers in some public agencies are still dominated by a commitment to organizational hierarchy and authority. The message is reinforced in the way employees refer to each other as bosses and subordinates, or when people say they are on the "top", in the "middle", or on the "bottom". Another example is when those who deliver services are referred to as "rank and file."

In a participative, productive work community, leaders should not be commanders and controllers, bosses and big shots. They should be servers and supporters. It is not common for managers in the public sector to talk about their employees as constituents and themselves as servers and supporters. Think about how you describe your relationships with others at work. Then try going through a day at work without using the terms boss or subordinate. Employees are not naive, they recognize the positions people hold in organizations: rank has its privileges.

To promote a high level of morale it is important to hold the right values. It is also necessary to challenge constituents to confront controversy and to encourage disagreement, without fear of retaliation. With the emergence of a changing society, there is more awareness by employees in improving the operational structure of public agencies and to

examine the ability to act meaningfully in response to internal pressures.

To change from command to participative management has to be done from the top-down as well as from the bottom-up. The bottom-up or acceptance theory is that the employees accept the manager's authority. An accepted order is an acceptance of authority.

Participative management is not as concerned with the method of achieving a goal as it is with the appropriateness and the accomplishment of the goal. For example, an agency can establish one or a combination of the following goals:

1. To improve the quality of decisions.
2. To improve employee productivity.
3. To improve employee morale and job satisfaction.
4. To enable the agency to better respond to the demands of the environment.

Managers must involve employees in decision making; managers must communicate with employees so that they know what's going on and how it affects<sup>13</sup> them and their jobs; managers must recognize good performance. When employees influence decisions, when they understand what they're doing and why they are doing it, when they know their work is important and appreciated, their social and personal needs are met. And with this satisfaction comes increased productivity. It is being recognized that productivity and

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<sup>13</sup> James W. Fesler, The Politics of the Administrative Process, Chatham House Publishers, Inc., New Jersey. 1991, p. 191

quality of work life can be enhanced by involving those who do work in solving problems associated with their work. This approach is referred to as joint problem solving, quality circles, employee participation groups and work teams.

In order to demonstrate the attributes of participative management, I will use the following formula to highlight the importance of each component and to serve as an illustration that all elements are essential if success is to be attained.

The Participative Management Formula is:

$$PM = ( A + T ) HF$$

PM = Participative Management

A = Attitude

T = Technique

HF = Human Factor

This formula is not mathematical but it does indicate the importance of the human factor. All terms are important but consideration of the human factor is by far more valuable. The result is achievement and cooperation.

Another way to view this is  $1 + 1 = 2$ . The authority of a manager and the help of a subordinate is greater than either one (1) alone. Participation can increase, not weaken, the authority, power and influence of managers and their groups.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS

Clarify the vision, mission and management philosophy of the team. Determine the core values--trust, fairness, cooperation. Develop a plan for checking views of subordinates in the organization to get their opinion and suggestions.<sup>14</sup>

**Participative Management** is not a cure-all for organizational problems. It has disadvantages and limitations, but it is an approach to management that if properly practiced can improve organizational effectiveness. Experience has shown that small participative working groups can become temporarily dysfunctional but eventually stabilize. This happens when there is a change in supervision or management style, or disruption by a disgruntled staff member. A staff member's attitude toward management or working conditions can be disruptive to a group, but generally this is short-term. The agency tries to dispel any dissension as quickly as possible.

The survey findings lead to the belief that there should be improvements in the organizational structure and that there should be a stronger team approach. It is apparent that most of the respondents were reasonably satisfied with their immediate supervisor; however, it appeared that employee

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<sup>14</sup> Summarization of article by Allan Hendrix, Deputy Director, California Department of Transportation, Transportation Planning, "Purpose, Mission, Vision and Goals", Caltrans Management Today, Caltrans Office of Training, Sacramento, July 1993.

attitude was related to feelings of dissatisfaction with management.

The findings from the research justify further examination of the effects of participatory management. The research and its implications will not do much to resolve the conflict in management styles; nevertheless, it may prove to be of value to the agency.

One finding concerns management's leadership in creating a vision of the future of the agency that is shared with employees. About fifty-seven percent of those surveyed said they do not know what the vision, goals or objectives of the agency are. It appears that one way to sustain employee satisfaction is making sure that the mission, vision and goals are deeply shared throughout the organization. Building a shared vision can foster a long term commitment. Employees that share a common mission can excel and learn, not because they have to, but because they want to.

When employees are asked about being part of a team, they sometimes have little experience. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents showed that teamwork is lacking in the agency. The literature suggested that teamwork is needed for success in participatory management and teamwork requires cooperation to a common vision for that success.

Open communication is important, not just because of the information shared, but also to show that managers value and trust employees. In the survey 71% felt that management does

not communicate well with the employees. It is the responsibility of management to demonstrate to everyone in the agency that they listen and care about all employees in the agency.

Another interesting finding is that employees had very little confidence in management. The survey indicates that 82% feel they are not encouraged by management in the decision making process. To raise the confidence level managers should give employees the opportunity to perform successfully.

This paper was not intended to determine the best management style, but rather call attention to what can happen in an organization that leans toward a participatory approach while hampered by individual authoritarian management styles. Productivity, efficiency and employee morale can be affected by a more authoritarian management style. Any change requires time to assess the effects and to let the employees adjust. However, if after a reasonable time frame, noticeable problems remain and a manager is not willing to adjust, the agency should take a closer look at the cause. It could involve employee unwillingness to change<sup>15</sup>, management's insensitivity, or new approaches to program delivery. Many problems can be solved through tactful communication<sup>16</sup> and management taking the time to listen to constructive

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<sup>15</sup> Huneryager, Human Relations in Management, p. 597

<sup>16</sup> David Jamieson, Managing Workforce 2000, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991, pp. 169-170.

criticism. As a personal example I once had an employee tell me, "You know, when I had an opinion, you never took my criticism as personal, you separated personal feelings from supervisory duties. You listened and responded as best you could." That made me feel good, but more importantly I had listened to the employee and made a decision based on the facts. Employees have been labeled as troublemakers just because they had a different opinion; they were not the chronic complainers; they were employees who really care about the organization. In a participative management climate, managers must be able to enhance the self-esteem of the employees. They must treat the employees as a valuable resource and show that they care for and trust them.

It took the experience of becoming a supervisor, and meeting the problems involved, to teach me what no amount of observation of other people could have taught. I believed a leader could operate successfully as an adviser to the organization. I thought I could avoid being "boss". I hoped to avoid the unpleasant necessity of making difficult decisions, of taking the responsibility for a course of action among uncertain alternatives, of making mistakes and taking the consequences. I thought I could operate so that everyone would like me---that "good human relations" would eliminate all discord and disagreement.

It took a couple of years, but finally I began to realize that a leader cannot avoid the exercise of authority any more



than he can avoid responsibility for what happens in the organization. In fact, it is a major function of a top executive to take on his own shoulders the responsibility for resolving the uncertainties that are always involved in important decisions. Moreover, since no important decision ever pleases everyone in the organization, one must absorb the displeasure, and sometimes severe hostility, of those who would have taken a different course. One of my supervisors recently summed up what my experience has taught me in these words: "A good leader must be tough, but not tough enough to be insensitive to the opinions of their subordinates." This notion is consistent with participative leadership and shows that good human relations can develop out of strength not weakness.

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