

Understanding and Changing Your Management Style

by Robert C. Benfari

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282 pages including an extensive set of tests and an index.

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I began *Understanding and Changing Your Management Style* expecting just another book on management theory. While Benfari definitely is well versed in management theory, he's packed this book full of dozens of practical tools, advice, and descriptive case "studies."

After reading *Understanding and Changing Your Management Style*, I've come to see that books on management are often like the three blind men trying to describe the elephant—they each describe focus on one aspect of the whole. Benfari attempts to take in the whole picture and help the reader understand all the aspects of managing. Quite a daunting task!

In the introduction, Benfari says, "The most fruitful way of working through the book is to take the assessment in the appendixes before you start your journey" (p. xii). I was already familiar with the Myers-Briggs profile but much less familiar with the influence inventory, and the assessments of needs, conflict resolution style, problem solving style, values, and stress. I spent so much time assessing; I almost gave up on the book without even reading the first chapter!

I'm glad I gave the book a chance. This book is Benfari's explanation of his "integrated management style." In his words, "Changing your management style is possible once you understand what can be changed (and what cannot) and are willing to do the work to shift your assumptions, perceptions, and behavior" (p. xi). We can't change our basic wiring-personality—but we can change most everything else. Benfari even offers techniques on influencing and temporarily flexing our personality tendencies.

At times, I found *Understanding and Changing Your Management Style* to be somewhat redundant. I think this stems from trying to describe the elephant from eight different angles. No matter how many ways you look at it, the elephant is still an elephant. Much of what Benfari writes about already appears in many management theory and pop psychology books. The value of this book is precisely in the "multiple views" packaging Benfari gives the material.

Understanding and Changing Your Management Style is more of a workbook than a textbook. Don't just read this book. Have a pen handy and be ready to flip back-and-forth between the section you're reading and the appendixes in the back. The last chapter was a bit of a let down for me. Rather than "developing an action plan," it amounted to little more than re-recording the results of the assessments.

Nevertheless, if you're interested in developing yourself and your management skills, *Understanding and Changing Your Management Style* may be a useful book to have in your library.

The table of contents for Understanding and Changing Your Management Style is:

Introduction: What Makes a Good Manager?

Part One: A Model for Change

- 1 The Dynamics of Management Styles: What Can Be Changed?
- 2 Personality and Psychology: What's Your Type?
- 3 Practical Intelligence: How Do We Make It Work?
- 4 Mental Models: How Do We Make the Shift?

Part Two: The Elements of Management Style

- 5 Needs: The Drive Towards Competence
- 6 Power Bases: Influence, Authority, and Expertise
- 7 Problem Solving and Conflict Management: Catalysts for Change
- 8 Values: Clarifying What You Stand For
- 9 Stress: Managing Work and Difficult People
- 10 Putting It All Together: Developing an Action Plan for Your Management Style