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The Choice of Leadership Style with the Help of Transaction Analysis

Different types of leadership styles are used by heads of enterprises. Autocratic, democratic and free-rein styles do not only set the pace of work, but also greatly affect the outcomes of the enterprise. Leaders often make the choice of a style based on their personal opinions, but it would be better to analyze the area of interaction first, and then determine the style.

The analysis of interactions between people can be carried out using the transactional model of Eric Berne. It considers a person in three roles: the Parent, the Adult, and the Child. The person plays these roles at every moment of his/her life. Communication between people can be described with the transactions that can go parallel (effective communication), be cross-cut (ineffective communication) or be hidden (when one of the people has a hidden motive).

The autocratic style should be used when the interaction is between the Parent (leader) and the Child (subordinate). In this case, the functions of the Parent are to put the task, to control its implementation and to evaluate the results. The function of the Child is an accurate implementation of the task. An example of this interaction will be: "Are you late to work again?" (P) - "I would have arrived on time, but was stuck in traffic" (C). When the subordinates are irresponsible or have no initiative, the leader must play the parental role.

Democratic style is suitable for the interaction between Adult and Adult. All members of the team perform their functions and control themselves. They can correctly assess the results of their activity. For example: "You need to recalculate the data in your report. I have noticed inaccuracies" (A) - "Thank you for your comment. I will fix them" (A). It is the conflict-free and the most effective interaction.

Free-rein style is suitable for leaders that are not able to make decisions and to supervise the work. Such a leader acts in the role of a Child. His subordinates can be Adults, Parents or Children. In the first case, the work will be performed without leader participation. In the second case, the Child, who is the leader, will be assessed by Parents-subordinates (whispering behind his back). In the third one, the enterprise will exist for a short while, because only children work.

At work, it is possible to combine leadership styles when communication is with each employee. If one worker shows himself/herself as an Adult, and another one as a Child, then communication with them should be different.

To summarize, it should be noted that the Eric Berne model cannot be always used. This model will not work for another selection factor. At an enterprise where complex and dangerous work is carried out (mining, production of expensive equipment), it is better to always follow the autocratic style. However, where workers do the creative activity or they cannot be limited by the formal dialogue, it is better to use a free-rein or democratic styles.