Having good management skills is an important area for all librarian professionals. So is having an understanding of which management skills style(s) that you have. Understanding your personal management style will help you become a better manger and professional in any library or an information service organization. To understand that, it helps to look at one’s work history. The following paragraphs will look at the jobs that I have had and then in each of those jobs, the management styles that have been employed. I will then discuss which management style(s) were the most effective and which were not as effective. Finally, I will discuss how I think these management styles have influenced my own management style as well as how they’ve shaped how I interact both with other workers as well as with my own managers.

The first real job that I had was at a residential living facility whose residents were both in-house residents as well as semi-independent living. My main job there was a dietary server where I served in-house residents meals. In the job, I also helped prep some foods and clean tables and dishes. My official manager was the director but the head cook also had some management over me. These people were more in charge of my daily activities while the director was overseeing long term objectives and needs. In trying to decide which management style was in place at this facility, I have decided that it is the Administrative Approach. In this approach, Evans and Ward (2007) write that management who use workers that are divided work best, they use authority and give workers responsibility, and they have clear rules and consequences that happen if those rules are broken (20). The director of the facility really employed the use of authority and responsibility (Evans and Ward, 2007, p. 20). For example, the one issue that I had when I worked there, was, that at home, I can cut bananas in hand, using my thumb as a stabilizer. So, while at work I did this and the head cook saw and reported (as she should have) it to the director. The director did talk to me and gave me a warning about not doing something like that again. At the facility because of the residents and what their issues where and where I worked, there was a definite need for rules and regulations.

My second major job was as a place that did market research. In this place I would sit at a computer with a headset and be placed on calls by a computer. During these calls, I would try to get the person on the other end of the line to complete a “survey” to participate in market research. This research ranged all over the map in terms of products and thoughts surveyed. The place where I worked at was only a satellite place, meaning that it was not the home office. The management system in place at the office was there was a head manager and then shift managers. Looking back on this job, I have come see that the management style in this place was a combination of “rabble hypothesis” (Evans and Ward, 2007, p. 28) and “Theory X” (McGregor, 1960). Rabble hypothesis is that “workers are a disorganized group of individuals, each of whom acted only out of self-interest” (Evans and Ward, 2007, p.28). In “Theory X” management style, it says that “the employee is a range of a hard and soft approach – the proverbial carrot and stick” (McGregor, 1960, p. 1). Why I say a combination of these two because the way the pay amounts and assignment works at this job is that the more surveys done equals more money and the possibility of better assignments. The management was always reminding us of this by posting the highest completion of numbers of surveys done, as well as highest customer satisfaction. An example of this is that one week I won the highest number of surveys done. The day after I had won this, I got a better assignment and a much more complicated survey as well as higher pay. The atmosphere at this job was very competitive as well as depressing as the employees were all trying to get the best surveys and jobs.

My second to last job was working for Safeway grocery store. There, I was a courtesy clerk and my duties included helping customers in the checkout process, in questions about the store and some cleaning. The management structure at Safeway was that there were Person in Charges (PIC) then a second assistant manager, then a first assistant manager and then a manager. Therefore, the person that had the most management over me were the PICs and the second assistant management. The PIC’s management style was that complicated as well as not really having one. In the Safeway where I live hires a lot of college students and therefore most of the PICs are just that so that the PICs do not really have a management style. Most of them are just make sure that courtesy clerks and stockers do what they are told by the managers to do. Because of this, I think one of the combinations of management styles that Safeway employs is that of the Administrative Approach which one of the tenants is “division of labor-workers perform best (are most productive when they specialize)” (Evans and Ward, 2007, p.20). There were many different positions at Safeway. There were courtesy clerks, stockers, florist clerks, deli clerks, checkers, chefs, bakers, and meat clerks.

Another management theory/system that I feel Safeway employs is that of “Theory X” in part where management tends to think that works are not as intelligence as they are (McGregor, 1960). One example of this, is that one time, while I getting carts out of the parking lot, I heard a pop in one of my wrists. To me, this is actually quite normal because I have wrist problems. However, it was still bothering me a couple days later so I went to the doctor who because it happened at work, she had to report it. Which then I had to tell my manager, who, when I came to talk to him about it, asked me why I did not report it right away. I told him that it was because it wasn’t the first time it had happen. His reaction was that of that he did not believe me and that I did not know my own body. There were several other instances of this with this manager and not just with me but other employees.

My current job is at a local cultural community center where I work as an administrative assistant to the director. My job includes assisting tenants, security to the building, and to deal with administrative tasks such as copying, posting directional signs, and filing. My manager is the director but there is also a board of directors. Because of the hours that I work, most of the time, I do not see my manager, though he is there sometimes. Therefore, the strategy that I feel that he employs is that of contingency which one of the features is, “managers need to employ a variety of strategies/techniques when dealing with people and activities-no one approach is always “right””(Evans and Ward, 2007, p.31). Another theory that may also work for my manager’s position is the quality approach. I feel this system works because in our building we have many tenants but we also have rooms available to rent for events such as weddings, funerals, holiday parties, and performances. We have many people have used a room one time and liked the room and the services that we offer and have come back time and time again. This fits into one of the key points of the quality approach which Evans and Ward (2007) write, “successful organizations are ones that have satisfied customers” (33).

Over my working career, which I will admit, is quite short, I have had a variety of different styles of management. One thing that has been hard in seeing which styles would be the best or the worst is that in the positions I was in/at I am not really in a position to see what style or type of management the organization at large uses. So because of that, I feel the best system of management to use would be two different ones. One would be a combination of all of the different types and using one or another based on the circumstances which are most like the Contingency approach (Evans and Ward, 2007). I feel this way because whenever you as a manager encounter a problem, the circumstances surrounding that problem will be different if ever so slightly. Therefore, a variety of techniques and approaches would be best suited.

The other approach that I feel that best works would be the administrative approach. I like this approach because as Evans and Ward (2007) stated, one of the key points in this approach is “Authority and Responsibility” (20) where “giving orders and being responsible must go together” (Evans and Ward, 2007, p. 20). I think every organization needs to have clear rules and regulations outlines and what happens if a worker breaks one of those.

The system(s) that I think does not work are both the “rabble hypothesis” (Evans and Ward, 2007) and “Theory X” (McGregor, 1960). I do not think these systems work because they do not give any credit to the worker and the worker’s thoughts, ideas, and give the worker an opportunity to input about the organization/company. I do not how I could change each of these systems except to not use them because they, to me, do not value the employee and to me just that the employee is a worker to be used and thrown away. Employee value in both the people they work for and the organization at large is very important to the well-being of an organization. If an employee is unhappy with an organization, they are not going to care about it and will not want to help improve and will only do their job with minimal effort. If you have an employee who cares at least a little about the organization, they will most likely put a little effort into their job to help the organization.

In conclusion, looking back over my work career up to this point has been eye opening in that, it has given me to a chance to think of what kind of management system I would *like* to see and what type of system that I, myself will employ when I become a person with a Masters in Library and Information science. These jobs that I have had, at times, shown me both what a good manager is and what is not.

References

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