Assessing Flexibility as a Mastery of Opposites

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Flexibility is important...

But how to assess it?

Two Methods

1. **Trait — flexibility as a generic tendency to adapt behavior to changing circumstances**

   **Items**
   - Varies approach with the situation
   - Makes adjustments in behavior
   - Takes ideas different from own seriously
   - Not set in his/her ways
   - Thinks in terms of trade-offs

   - Not compelling conceptually
   - Not behaviorally precise; hard to act on
   - Weakly related to effectiveness


2. **Mastery of Opposites — capability and skill with complementary behaviors that seem to be incompatible**

   - Conceptual/theoretical basis
   - Behaviorally specific/prescriptive
   - Highly predictive of effectiveness

Theoretical basis

“…playing multiple, even competing roles, in a highly integrated & complementary way” Hooijberg & Quinn (1992). Behavioral complexity

“…leader effectiveness entails the mastery of countervailing behavior patterns“ Zaccaro (2001). Nature of executive leadership

“…using opposing approaches, unrestricted by bias for one and prejudice against the other.” Kaplan & Kaiser (2006). The versatile leader

Assessment

- Behavioral content
- Measurement method
Behavior

Tough-Love

Initiation
Autocratic
Task-oriented
Consideration
Participative
People-oriented
Transactional
Transformational
Short-term
Long-term
Stability
Change
Efficiency
Innovation

Practical-Vision

How You Lead

Forceful Leadership vs. Enabling Leadership

exercising power and authority to creating conditions for other people
push for performance to be influential and contribute
• Takes charge • Empowers
• Declares/decides • Listens/includes
• Pushes • Supports

What You Lead

Operational Leadership vs. Strategic Leadership

driving the organization to get positioning the organization to
results in the near term be competitive in the future
• Execution • Direction
• Efficiency • Growth
• Order • Innovation

### Management
Realizing efficiency through command and control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forceful Leadership</th>
<th>Enabling Leadership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>exercising power and authority to push for performance</td>
<td>creating conditions for other people to be influential and contribute</td>
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### Leadership
Inspiring people with a vision for change

<table>
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<th>Operational Leadership</th>
<th>Strategic Leadership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>driving the organization to get results in the near term</td>
<td>positioning the organization to be competitive in the future</td>
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### Style
Psychology

### Substance
Management

### Measurement

**Problem with 1-to-5 rating scales:**
- "Opposites" are positively related

![Correlation Chart]

New response scale


Validity

Leadership Versatility Index®

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Polarity effect

N = 484 middle to senior managers

Versatility
Too Little ENABLING
Too Much FORCEFUL

Too Little FORCEFUL
Too Much ENABLING

Overall Versatility

$M = 80\%$
$SD = 8\%$
Versatility & Outcomes

- Perceived overall effectiveness
  Single-item rating on 10-pt scale, 
  5 = “adequate”, 10 = “outstanding”

- Team performance
  Vitality (subordinate ratings of morale, engagement, & cohesion)
  Productivity (superior ratings of quantity, quality, & overall output)

N = 669 senior managers

Versatility & Perceived Effectiveness

![Scatter plot showing the relationship between overall versatility and overall effectiveness with an r value of .71]
Versatility & Team Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Team Vitality</th>
<th>Team Productivity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forceful-Enabling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versatility</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic-Operational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versatility</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.40***</td>
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<tr>
<td>( R )</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>.36***</td>
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\( N = 484 \) middle to senior managers. Versatility based on average rating across all coworkers. Team Vitality based on subordinate ratings; Team Productivity based on superior ratings.

Leadership Versatility Index

10. Pays attention to the details—has a finger on the pulse of day-to-day activities.
15. Thinks broadly—takes a big-picture perspective.
Advantages

Mastery of Opposites

- Respects the tensions and tradeoffs managers are familiar with
- Highly related to leadership effectiveness
- Behaviorally specific; more diagnostic value
Suggestions

- Construct leadership models in terms of opposites
- Cover interpersonal style and organizational substance
- Don’t assume “more is better”—assess for too little and too much

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