

Leadership Styles And How They Differ

The following are commentaries taken from Chapter Seven of "Police Personalities, Why Cops Act the Way they Do." by Stephen M. Hennessy, Ed.D. and James R. DeLung, Ph.D.

The Intuitive Feeling Style in Leadership

The typical NF style of management is people-oriented and somewhat reflective in nature. An NF street sergeant in a suburban department characterized his management style as follows:

"I think I've sacrificed maybe some short term performance for a long term relationship where in critical situations you may get performance that you may not have had otherwise. Some people think they should be a hard-nosed supervisor and I think they get begrudging results...if they stay behind somebody and crack the whip. This job relies so much on independent performance that (you don't want them to be) out in a car thinking what a jerk their supervisor is. They (the supervisor) can't be everybody's best friend, but if you take the abrasiveness out of it...you get better performance. That's just my style... that's reinforcing the idea of letting people do their jobs and valuing their input and valuing their talents...so I've been luckier than a lot of the other supervisors with what I consider to be high performance people."

These interesting comments contain several elements that are very characteristic of NFs. The "sacrificing short term performance" principle reflects the conceptual, future orientation of the Intuitives. It also demonstrates a typical supporting attitude toward people.

Another aspect of this managerial style is the premise that administrative power ought not be abused. From this perspective, "they don't need a clock watcher, they don't need a baby sitter, and they don't need a slave driver." One NF sergeant really resented his previous supervisor who timed lunch breaks, coffee breaks, and was always hustling on the radio to see if he could catch someone doing something wrong.

"It's January, it's 3:00 in the morning, 20 degrees below zero and you haven't seen a car on the road for two and one half hours. I don't care if you sit in a coffee shop for an hour because come July or August you aren't going to get a coffee break at all. And I believe that by the end of the year it's all going to wash out within five minutes, and I'm not going to lose sleep over five minutes and neither are you. And I would rather have you be open, and not try to be hiding things from me when you seriously have a problem. I want you to understand that I'm not being chicken shit and want you to understand that you can come to me first."

An NF police chief of a suburban department described his personal management style as emphasizing the service nature of the police role. He stated that the best cops he has, and "ironically, the ones who also have the best enforcement record," are those who are the most service oriented.

"Well, probably what I should do is send you a copy of our annual goals and you'll see where we are. We are primarily service oriented. Basically the idea is that my number one goal is that no one should ever have to call us twice. That means that if they call we will meet their needs. And I've taken it far enough that if it isn't in our jurisdiction we will connect them to the right one. We won't send people away saying we can't do that... because once they've reached us they have their link. I think I have a very open department. It's participatory in the sense that everyone has a chance to be heard and participate. I'm not democratic by any means, but if somebody has a good idea and if we adopt it, we let them run with the idea whether they are a patrol officer, sergeant, or whatever."

Describing this same outlook differently, an NF captain in a large metropolitan agency commented, "I'm a people person, that's my strongest asset." In his opinion, he considers a potential decision's implications for the people concerned with the decision, before considering anything else.

"To make black and white decisions without considering the people involved, I can't do it, even though it would be easier if I could." This captain experienced a continual struggle with his superiors, whom he felt typified an autocratic management perspective. He was friendly with the people downtown (his superiors), but noted a distinct lack of people skills in the command. He merely hopes they will leave his precinct alone.

"My people skills give me an extra dimension, but also it gives me more frustration because I'm dealing in a culture that historically does not consider the individual people involved... I've never been able to separate cold fact from the people involved. My philosophy is that we are all adults in an adult situation. You know the rules, you do the job. If you break the rules then I have to do something about it, but I'm not going to sit over you with my thumb. It seems to be working (management style)...I get the results that downtown is looking for. If I didn't get the results, though, I'm sure that management would think it's because I am more people oriented and in their eyes, not tough enough."

One can see in the conversational style of the NFs interviewed that they used the word "people" often and seemed to be more oriented towards the individual. The same is true with SFs.

The Sensing Feeling Cognitive Style in Leadership

The SF group represents their skills in dealing with people as their strongest managerial asset, as is the case with the NF group:

"I feel that my approach is, let's find out what the problem is, approach that person, sit down with him or her and give them an opportunity to say what is or isn't. And that's where we (the feeling types) differ, because so many times my sergeants will go out and they'll blow off steam... it creates a real conflict in the department."

Another chief (SF) of a major suburban metropolitan police department commented:

"You have to be sensitive to people's needs. I believe in a chain of command, but it can shut good ideas down... there was a time when the boss came in and gave orders and the people did what they were told or lost their jobs...that's not a creative atmosphere in which to work...you need an environment where you can make good faith mistakes. If you go out and break the law or something, everything is gonna fall on you, but good faith mistakes you learn from and go on. We don't criticize and we don't punish for good faith mistakes. As an example, two officers stopped to pass on some information, maybe personal business, and when they pulled away, one cut a turn too quickly and wiped out the side of both squad cars. I wrote them a note and said I could see where I could do the same thing myself. They (the cars) are in the shop being repaired. Press on, don't worry about it. Because they didn't plan to do that, they will make sure for the rest of their natural lives they'll never do that again... why should anybody harp on the issue. It's not productive. Just put it behind you and get on. They feel more of a part of the organization... that the car is a piece of equipment and they as people are more important. You don't have to beat them up and say "Be sure and don't damage squad cars. They know."

The emphasis on the people behind the job is evident in the comments of another SF chief of a large metropolitan police agency:

"As far as a management philosophy, until somebody proves that they aren't to be trusted, I trust people. The thing is... the days of autocratic rule are gone... the idea that officers require extremely close supervision because they might do something wrong is childish. Unfortunately that does happen, but for the most part I think there should be an expectation that the people are dedicated enough...to go out and do it without being told... we all wear the same uniform, we've all got the same goals, we might have a different approach to these goals, but nevertheless we do have the same goals. My weakness is because I'm accessible, maybe too accessible to people (I've been told)...you're gonna get some hard lumps as a result of that. I think that because I try to be tolerant, I think I'm more than kind."

Because of their Feeling preference and orientation toward people and their concerns, we might expect that SFs could get along well with other officers seeming to have the same orientation as they do. This was the case, especially when SFs recognized that associates who appeared to have the same work philosophy as they were also NFs or SFs according to Myers-Briggs cognitive styles.

"In a lot of ways, we have some real differences of opinion too (speaking about an NF associate). But then again when he does something, in my own mind I know why he's doing it...I wanna give him a bad time about being too easy, even though I know I would probably do the same thing. (Speaking about a different SF manager and associate) Oh, I can understand, sometimes I don't agree, but I understand I might have made the same decision because I probably relate too well to where he's coming from."

Similarly, an SF sergeant from a rural police department commented about his associations with a fellow officer sharing the same cognitive style.

"John and I always have, ya know... John's on a different shift, but we've always been able to communicate well together and I guess when there are certain department situations that come

up, we always seem to look at them in the same way... we always seem to have the same perspective."

The Intuitive Thinking Cognitive Style in Leadership

NTs are usually referred to as being the standard executive type. Because the Thinking Judgment function is, by its very nature, a critical function, NTs are generally impersonal and objective, in addition to being matter-of-fact. They are interested in the broad picture and not necessarily in the details of the job. This appearance of impersonality is also true with the STs, who are the majority of the officers in law enforcement. Both of these styles share the same Judgment function, that of Thinking, making decisions with impersonal considerations rather than personal ones (Feeling).

When the decision-making functions of Thinking and Feeling are discussed in seminars, many NTs and STs make the comment "Hey, I have feelings too." Obviously, we all have and express feelings, but here we are not talking about the lack of having feelings, but the way we process information and speak about people and things. Usually, those who make decisions through the Thinking function lack the appearance of using the Feeling function as they comment and speak about things very analytically and pragmatically. As an example, read the following quote from an NT head of a large department.

"I don't like the paperwork. I delegate most of that to my lieutenant. Pretty much it's been pure delegation. One of the things I haven't done is I haven't had a formal staff meeting...I don't wanna waste my time or their time having a staff meeting to say, "L[how are ya?" If something comes to my attention I'll fire it to one of my lieutenants or sergeants and say I expect you to take care of this...I delegate it out and expect it to be done, so I don't do a lot of follow up unless... it wasn't done."

Another NT from a rural department with ten officers commented about the reason he likes his position:

"Autonomy. I like to be in charge. I like to be able to make a difference. I like to be able to see things that need a change and make that change. I need to keep the ideas going and the challenge is much more than coming here day after day."

Note how the previous executive commented about change, which is the NT's strong suit because of the preference for variety, but never mentioned people or his desire to deal with them. Typically, as this illustrates, the NT command officer prefers to deal with tasks and make decisions with a very pragmatic logic and would prefer to leave the people issues to someone else.

The Sensing Thinking Cognitive Style in Leadership

The STs, like the NTs, seem to describe their strengths in management as related to task management. They did, however, mention people more frequently in describing management style than when describing duties. This makes sense in that their primary job duties, at the time of the interviews, concerned dealing with people. Still, as demonstrated by the following deputy chief's description of his organization, STs tend to emphasize roles rather than the people filling them.

"The people below me still have a direct connection to me and they are my ultimate employees or I'm the ultimate boss. We all... the four captains particularly all have interactions with the deputy chiefs... one controls the money and the transfers...another one has influence on investigations and discipline, and we run a rather open shop here so that they can interact with others."

Another ST deputy chief, after a reorganization of duties, was relieved that he didn't have to deal with a lot of people problems anymore. "I can do the others (people tasks)...but it's not much fun for me. Responsibility for a lot of other people's actions, ya know, that just wasn't much fun." He then went on to describe how he reorganized:

"I was responsible for my own actions, didn't have a lot of subordinates to worry about. I put together a set of goals and objectives and I told the captains to write me a plan".

You will notice with the words that this ST manager preferred to deal with tasks and not necessarily with people.

A Sensing Thinking deputy chief in charge of administration spoke about his managerial style as tough and forthright. Note his definite preference for dealing with task and not people.

"Well, I never thought of myself as being particularly tactful or diplomatic, but these are some of the things I would hear from my subordinates...he's fair, but hard, he doesn't take any crap and he can see through shallow excuses. You know, if I tell somebody to do it, goddamn it I expect it to be done. Period! I've gotten better at that too. The part I disliked most was dealing with the personnel issues...I have pretty good organizational ability... in budget, planning and training."

Suggesting that perhaps his present duties involved more use of "diplomacy than they were worth," this deputy chief remarked that he would go back out on the street "in a heartbeat" if his pay and benefits remained the same. He stated he often goes out on the street...he calls it "a little R and R." When he goes out to pull a shift, he said, "I go out to arrest drunks and throw 'em in jail. That's exactly what I do."

As the previous information and discussions indicate, the Feeling types, SFs and NFs, who comprise but probably twenty percent of law enforcement officers, are generally people-oriented, while the NTs and the STs, comprising over eighty percent of the forces, are task-oriented. This is one big reason why there are not a lot of "pats on the back for a job well done" in the profession.

The next chapter spends some time with the feeling types, which comprise, on the average, only twenty percent of the officers in the sworn ranks. Like everyone who finds themselves around people that are different, we all have a tendency to react in different ways. These officers, particularly the six percent who are Intuitive Feeling types, bring interesting additional dimension.