

I am in the business of creating a new group in my own organization now, in order to resolve some ancient hostilities inherited when I moved to a higher job. One of the curious events in the sequence is that, at first, in meeting with this set of people I am trying to form into an effective group, there was tremendous suspicion of my motives. I became aware after a little time that several of the people were convinced that I was just setting some of them up for slaughter. I was urging them, you see, to take on responsibilities and a freedom of action such as they had not experienced before. They were a bit alarmed at this. They thought there was a danger in it somewhere, obviously, and the main one they could think of was that Seashore was planning some major organizational surgery.

Well, it is going to take some time for them to realize what I hope is the truth, and that is that it is not going to hurt them to try this method of work. They are perfectly aware that I could fire them tomorrow if I wanted to, they have seen me do this in one case, and they still have some thought that maybe I will again. Meanwhile, out of caution they are less effective than they could be and participation is far less than I hope for.

QUESTION: Dr. Seashore, a previous speaker has suggested that you might like to present the criteria by which you classify a good boss and a bad boss.

DR. SEASHORE: I like the definition that was given, but I think something more than that might be said. I am going to give a weasel answer, and I am doing it deliberately, because I think the question calls for that kind of answer. I question whether there is "good" leadership practice and "bad" leadership practice and that one must only choose the good and reject the bad. The image of a single, ideal practice of management is a decision. I would argue that the management of an organization is such a complicated business that, like the work of a painter or a musician, to do it well requires a wide variety of techniques and strategies.

I do have in mind a model of preferred leadership style. I have, myself, a liking for a supervisor who is ready to consult with others, who is considerate of my needs, who allows exploration of the implications of what he proposes to do, who is technically competent, who takes my ideas seriously, et cetera. I could go on with this list endlessly. That is what I prefer right now for most circumstances I am in. But I reject this as an ideal model that all managers