

# The Managerial Grid In Three Dimensions

## Additional Attribute Is Depth of Managerial Style

Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton

"The Managerial Grid," first described in the *Training Directors Journal* six years ago, is being used as a basis for management development in 167 of *Fortune's* 200 largest corporations, as well as in many hundreds of other companies in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Japan and elsewhere.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

Why has the Grid proved so appealing as an intellectual framework?—For perhaps several reasons:

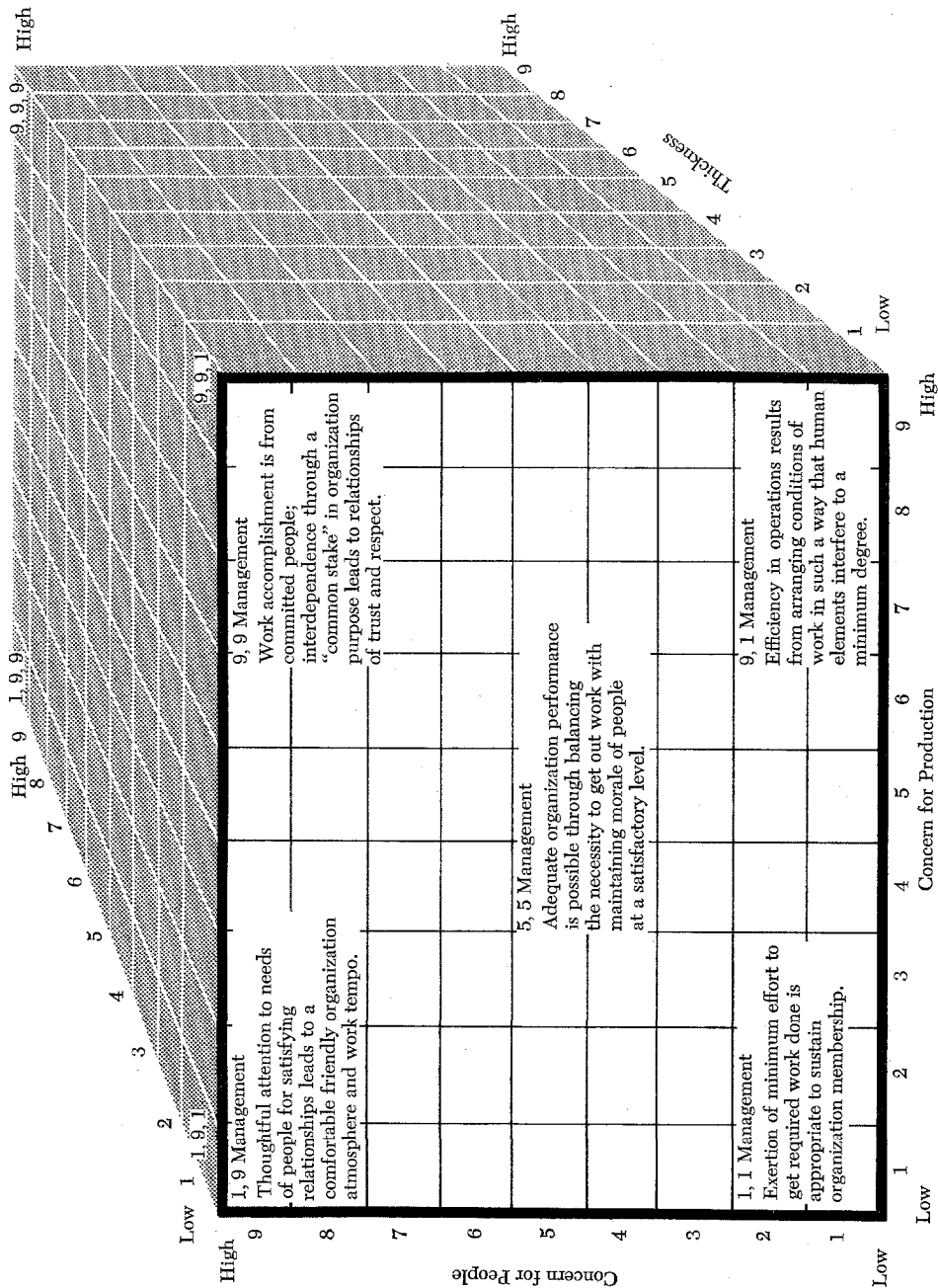
1. The Managerial Grid appears to define dilemmas of management that are at the core of utilizing people in an effectively productive manner. Much behavioral science theory and research which bears on this dilemma becomes understandable within the Grid framework.
2. The concepts it contains and the language it employs have proved to be culture free. That is, the concepts and language of the Grid have proved as appealing in Indo-

nesia as in Indiana, in Aruba as in Alabama.<sup>4</sup>

3. The 9,9 relationship shown in the Grid constitutes the universal value. That is, Japanese managers, just as American or British managers, agree that 9,9 is the soundest basis for a human relationship in the context of production.
4. Studied in a week-long Seminar, the Managerial Grid has proved to be a powerful vehicle for increasing individual effectiveness. It is as useful for wage earners as for managerial personnel.
5. Used in the context of the six-phase approach to Grid Organization Development, it has demonstrated its usefulness in increasing total organization effectiveness.<sup>5, 6</sup>

It thus appears that the Managerial Grid may provide a framework which managers need to comprehend their problems of supervision which has hitherto been lacking.

Figure 1. The Three-Dimensional Grid



In the initial writings on the Grid, we indicated that a third dimension might prove useful as a further refinement and elaboration of the concepts.<sup>7</sup>

### **What Is The Third Dimension?**

There is a third dimension of the Managerial Grid which is useful in aiding managers to gain insight into their managerial conduct beyond that afforded in the two-dimensional plane.

The Managerial Grid's horizontal dimension is concern for production. It ranges from 1, a very low concern, through 5, an intermediate amount of concern, to 9, a very high degree of concern. The vertical axis is concern for people, ranging from a low of 1, through intermediate degrees of 5 to a maximum concern for people of 9. The third dimension of the Managerial Grid represented is the thickness or depth of a given style. It also ranges from 1, a minimum degree, through 5, a moderate amount, to 9, a maximum degree.

To what aspect of managerial style does the thickness dimension point? It deals with how long a managerial style is maintained in any given situation of interaction, particularly under pressure from tension, frustration, or conflict. The Managerial Grid's thickness dimension shows the degree to which a manager resists changing any given style under pressure. For example, take a man whose dominant approach to managerial situations is from a 9,9 point of view. When he is confronted by conflict which is both threatening and has the capacity to promote defensiveness, he is likely to shift from 9,9 to some other set of assumptions. If he shifts under minimum pressure, his theory is a very thin one; let us say 9,9,1.

Another man in the same circumstances operating from a 9,9 point of view, may for some time continue to probe for problem-solving ways of

coping with the conflict through a series of additional steps. Finally, in frustration, he may shift to another style or approach. His 9,9 is moderately thick, or 9,9,5.

Still a third man, confronted with the same set of forces arousing conflict, might restrain himself from shifting through a persistent effort to find ways of solving the difficulty. He might continue to do so in the face of what appears to others to be unsurmountable difficulties, resisting the temptation to shift to other managerial approaches. In this case, it might be said that his 9,9 approach represents maximum thickness, or is 9,9,9.

### **Psychological Distances Between Styles**

Each managerial style is found to some degree in every person. For most managers one style is his most dominant or most characteristic approach, a different style his backup or secondary approach, still another is his tertiary approach, and so on down to the style least characteristic of him.

The psychological distances between the styles that a person employs in attempting to cope with a problem are not necessarily of equal magnitude. A person may hold on to a 5,5 approach until eventually he shifts and adopts a 9,1 strategy of dealing with the problem. His 5,5 dominant theory then is thick or 5,5,9. If the 9,1 backup fails, he may leave it quickly; however, in this case his backup would be 9,1,1 and so on through other major points in the Grid.

### **Use Of The Third Dimension Of Thickness**

The idea of thickness as the Managerial Grid's third dimension has been evaluated over the past four years in many situations, both in Managerial Grid Seminar training and in Phase 2 of Grid Organization Development in

the work team setting. In these latter situations, managers who share a team responsibility for a certain scope of activity study their problems of team effectiveness including an analysis of each individual's managerial styles. These participants are managers who have had working interrelationships over an extended period and therefore know one another far better than is possible under the typical arrangements of a Managerial Grid Seminar, where participants who study together are strangers at the outset.

Under work team development conditions it has proved useful for managers to explore with one another not only the dominant backup Grid styles, but the degree of thickness of each and to identify the circumstances of interaction which cause the shift from one managerial style into another. There are indications that thickness as a third dimension also is useful in research on managerial behavior.

A dimension of effectiveness has been suggested elsewhere as the third dimension.<sup>8</sup> However, this creates inherent difficulties of analysis. For ex-

ample, thinking of a person who manages in a 1,1 way, it is difficult to comprehend in what manner he might be thought to be effective. It is also a contradiction to the basic thinking originally expounded in the *Managerial Grid* to think of a 9,9 set of assumptions which are ineffective. Whereas, the thickness concept has a demonstrative utility as a third dimension, the effectiveness dimension is relatively ineffective.

### Summary

An additional attribute of behavior beyond that described in the *Managerial Grid* has been presented here. It involves a dimension of thickness which indicates the resistance of the managerial style to change. A thin theory is easily changed under pressure. A thick theory withstands pressure. This dimension has proved useful in studying personal managerial behavior in the work team development phase of Grid Organization Development and has also found utility from the standpoint of behavior research.

### References

1. Blake, R. R. and Mouton, J. S. "The Developing Revolution in Management Practices," *Training Directors Journal*, 1962, 16.
2. Blake, R. R. and Mouton, J. S. "The Managerial Grid," Gulf Publishing Company, 1964.
3. Blake, R. R. and Mouton, J. S. "Improving Organization Problem Solving Through Increasing The Flow and Utilization of New Ideas," *Training Directors Journal*, 1963, 9, 48-57 and 10, 38-54.
4. Blake, R. R. and Mouton, J. S. "International Managerial Grids," *Training Directors Journal*, May, 1965.
5. Blake, R. R., Mouton, J. S., Barnes, L. B., and Greiner, L. R. "Breakthrough in Organization Development," *Harvard Business Review*, 1964, 42 (6).
6. Portis, Bernard. "Management Training for Organization Development," *The Business Quarterly*, 1965, 30 (2).
7. Blake, R. R. and Mouton, J. S. "The Managerial Grid," Gulf Publishing Company, 1964, p. 243.
8. Reddin, W. J. "The Blake Approach and the Grid - A Critique," *Training Directors Journal*, May, 1965.