


CHAPTER ONE

2Rs Are Better Than 1

 **T**he 3Rs are the foundation of American education. Reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic are the building blocks on which all advanced learning depends. Even if a student is brilliant in math and knows his future is in this field, he is expected to become proficient in reading and writing. No matter what a student's most "natural" R might be, she is taught the other two on the assumption that one way or another, they will be needed. The brilliant mathematician, for instance, may be able to convince his colleagues that his new theorem is correct because he is able to write a clear, persuasive paper on the subject. While he may lean on his math skills to make his reputation, he must also access his reading and writing capabilities to further his career and perform his job more effectively.

The 2R system serves a similar function for managers. To be a good manager today, you need the versatility to *relate* to the people you manage and to *require* that they produce results. Of these 2Rs, one is going to be more natural for you than the other. The trick is learning how to use your less natural R, when needed, to acquire the versatility of a 2R manager and the increased effectiveness that comes with it.

THE PROBLEM WITH BEING A 1R MANAGER

Managerial performance suffers when people get locked into one style. All of us are Relaters or Requirers to varying degrees. At the extreme, the Requirer acts like a drill sergeant when she should be collaborating, whereas the Relater is trying to be his subordinate's best friend when he should be setting deadlines and goals. Most managers don't operate at the extreme—they are not 100 percent Relater or Requirer—but they are overly reliant on their natural style. They are so dependent on that style, in fact, that they deny themselves access to a range of problem-solving ideas and effective approaches. Many managers operate at significantly reduced capacity by ignoring or infrequently using their less natural style.

Jack, for instance, was a young brand manager with a Fortune 500 company. He had a sterling pedigree—Harvard M.B.A., two years with a top consulting firm, and three years of glowing performance reviews. Jack was known in the company as someone who met deadlines, brought projects in on budget, and possessed superior marketing skills. During his first three years with the company, he was rotated through a series of staff assignments and consistently came up with problem-solving ideas. Because management had tabbed him as a high-potential employee, he was expected to perform well in his first-time managerial position.

It wasn't that Jack performed poorly in this position. His first assignment, introducing a line extension, went well. Jack crafted an innovative strategy and worked with his people and the company's ad and sales promotion agencies to create a splash. After a solid test-marketing program and rollout, however, a competitor introduced a similar product with lowball pricing that began eroding Jack's company's share. Jack responded by riding his people and his agencies hard to develop a plan to regain market share. When they didn't come up with anything he found suitable after a few days, he took on the assignment himself, working round the clock for a week to devise a new strategy. Although his direct reports liked aspects of Jack's plan, they also noted some glaring flaws. Two of his people, who had worked on the brand for a number of years and were more familiar with the market than Jack was, pointed them out. But Jack brushed them aside and refused to entertain a discussion of the issues they had raised.

When the strategy was implemented, it didn't live up to Jack's or the company's expectations. Just as significant, Jack had quickly created a bad relationship with his direct reports, who were convinced that their boss wouldn't listen to their ideas unless they agreed with his own. His inability to use a Relating style when it was needed damaged his relationships, thereby causing his people to withhold ideas and information in the future.

If Jack doesn't learn to use his other R, he won't be on the fast track for long. Either negative feedback from his people will reach Jack's boss, or his group will lose talented individuals. Careers are derailed when managers fail to learn to use their other R.

Essentially, people like Jack are managing with one hand tied behind their back. Like just about every manager, he is capable of drawing on both Relating and Requiring styles. The problem, of course, is that most managers reflexively apply their dominant style, especially in times of stress. If they're Relaters dealing with a crisis situation, they automatically try to relate their way out of that crisis, rarely considering a Requiring solution. It's as if they have a blind spot that keeps them from seeing other possibilities.

Managers who are more versatile can choose from a much greater spectrum of alternatives. In a workplace where versatility is becoming increasingly important, this is a major advantage. Unfortunately, traditional management training does not focus on versatility. Instead, it tries to help managers learn each of the different functions that make up managing, usually in discrete modules.

TOO MUCH INFORMATION, NOT ENOUGH TIME

It's difficult to train managers effectively in an environment where they have less time and more to do than ever before. Years ago, managers did most of their learning on the job over long periods of time, observing their bosses in action. These informal apprenticeships allowed them to pick up skills incrementally, an appropriate training approach in that they were given increased responsibility at a slow, measured pace.

Today, with many managers barely more experienced than the people they manage, there is no time for slow, or even fast, apprenticeships. To accelerate learning, numerous types of training may have become

part of a manager's daily life. You may have attended sessions on an assortment of topics, from communication, decision making, leadership, or project management to diversity, team-building, e-commerce, performance appraisal, compensation, or something else. A host of techniques, including coaching, brainstorming, risk-taking outdoor adventures, distance learning, and computer simulations may have been used to help you. But how much has the learning process really been accelerated?

Just about every company is concerned about rising training costs and the lack of return on that investment. Developing managers by creating discrete training modules for each management function is too slow. With so many topics, organizations are forced to select the most vital ones, leaving important gaps. There's too much for managers to absorb in the time they and their organizations are willing to devote to it. Perhaps more important, the training is often not designed to adapt to the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of existing managers.

HEARING WHAT YOU BELIEVE, TUNING OUT WHAT YOU DON'T

People hear best the ideas that reinforce what they already believe. If you are naturally a Relater, you readily absorb the Relating messages in a training session (or in a workshop, lecture, or book). The instructor might talk about the need for managers to be supportive of their direct reports and learn to empathize with them. Upon hearing the instructor make this comment, a Relating manager might say to herself, "That's a good point. I should regularly ask my employees if they are doing well and how I can help them do better." A Requiring manager might hear this same message and think, "Give me a break! I'm the manager here. It's wimpy to ask your employees how they feel all the time."

Let's turn the scenario around and consider how a Requirer might respond to a Requiring-friendly message. In a training session on project management, the instructor stresses that it's crucial to build in project checkpoints designed to assess employee progress at various stages. The Requirer says to himself, "Good reminder. In every project, I should incorporate these checkpoints so that I can assure that my employees are on target to produce the quality we need." A manager who is a natural Relater, however, might hear this message and think, "I trust my people. I'm not going to let them know I think they

can't get it right by insisting up front that they continually check in with me.”

We each hear different things from the same words depending on our belief systems. Messages have to pass through our filters to be heard, and unless we are versatile, these filters block the messages from being understood as they are meant. The problem with traditional training is that it does not distinguish between the Relaters and Requirers in the room. It sends the same message to both.

Let's say an organization wants to help a group of managers improve their decision-making skills. The Requiring manager, comfortable with her own judgment, generally makes decisions easily. Because she feels she has the answer, she is often eager to tell others why the group should go in a certain direction. Her decision-making weakness, however, is her tendency to decide too fast. She should be advised to slow down and to get (and be open to) input from others to make better decisions.

On the other hand, the Relating manager generally wants other people's ideas before making a decision but then hears conflicting opinions from his direct reports. Since his tendency is to procrastinate, allowing the conflicting views (and the resulting disagreement when he makes a decision) to delay the decision, he should be trained to make a decision sooner—not by majority rule, but by what he feels will best achieve his group's goals.

Clearly, these two individuals need to receive very different messages to become more effective managers, but the decision-making curriculum assumes that one message fits all. Managerial training in many organizations is not tailored because trainers have underestimated the grip our natural styles have on our managerial behaviors and our ability to listen. The solution is to first acknowledge that managers are Requirers or Relaters and then structure the training with these two styles in mind. By recognizing a manager's natural style and asking her to adapt, rather than ignoring it and asking her to change, the training will more effectively accomplish its goals.

A MISSING LINK

Some companies attempt to offset unimessage training by offering personality or communication style tests to increase self-awareness. Myers-Briggs, for instance, is a well-known personality test that helps determine if you are introverted or extroverted, intuitive or sensing,

thinking or feeling, judging or perceiving. By studying your particular profile (out of sixteen possible profiles), you can gain significant insight into your personality.

Another approach to help managers gain self-insight involves a communication style test such as the one found in *The Art of Managing* (Hunsaker and Alessandra, 1986), which divides people into Expressives, Drivers, Analyticals, and Amiables. These tests are a popular way to illustrate different and distinct communication styles. They are especially useful to understand why you have conflicts with individuals who use opposing styles.

Some consultants have used the Myers-Briggs and communication style test results to create management development courses, with some positive results. The insight gained helps you understand how to communicate better with people who have different styles from yours. However, the successes would be greater if there were a way to overcome three limitations:

- The tests do not directly test managers' relationships with the people they manage. Instead, they test personality or communication style.
- To avoid sounding too critical, an attempt is made to tell everyone that no matter what his or her personality or communication type is, it's OK. As managers, however, they are not all OK; most have minor negative impacts, and some have severe ones.
- The connection between what you learn about your personality or communication style and what actions you should take to manage better is unclear. For example, let's say your communication style is Expressive. After learning the impact Expressives have on others, what should you do differently to get better results from your people? Are you supposed to be less expressive as a manager?

By overcoming these limitations, the 2R system represents the next logical step in managerial training. The tests are specifically about your actions and behavior with your employees. The results may show that your style is not effective in many situations. And most important, the connection between the insights you will gain and the actions you must take is a strong one, easily understood and intuitive. The insights you gain will be about how you now relate and require. The actions you must take to become a better manager will be to relate and require

effectively, as dictated by the situation. The 2Rs provide a missing link between insight and action so that you can achieve more of what you want as a manager. By increasing your versatility to use both Rs, you'll not only get more out of training but also increase your managerial effectiveness to the point that you've already achieved what the training was designed to confer.

VERSATILITY: A SHORTCUT THAT WORKS

Ideally, all new managers would take a course that would teach them about Relating and Requiring styles, identify their dominant style, and help them become more versatile so that they can shift to that less natural style when the situation calls for it. This basic training would make any other subsequent type of training much more effective. Instead of tuning out training messages that went against their natural style, managers would open their minds to these ideas. In a communication course, for instance, the Relater would not automatically resist learning how to talk to direct reports about deadlines to ensure they're met, and the Requirer would not automatically resist learning how to talk empathically with direct reports in an attempt to see their point of view. Because they are being trained to be 2R managers right from the start, more information would be heard, more alternative solutions considered, and more problems solved.

Because most people lack this basic training, the 2R system functions as a tool to retrain managers. Every manager at every level needs to evaluate his current penchant for Relating and Requiring and transform his style to increase his versatility. You should understand, however, that the more you are locked in to a particular style, the more challenging this task may be. Managers can become very comfortable with their natural style and resistant to hearing messages that conflict with the inherent truths of this style. Overcoming that resistance is facilitated by certain common situations managers find themselves in. Let's look at two.

Awareness that their natural style is no longer as effective as it once was

Going back to basics is easier if clear evidence exists that being a Relater or a Requirer is creating problems in the current environment

that didn't exist before (or weren't major issues in the past). Kim, for instance, was a forty-one-year-old senior manager with an accounting services company that had done extraordinarily well for the past fifteen years. Kim had been with the company for thirteen of those years, and her relating style dovetailed with the company's laid-back culture. Recently, however, the company's fortunes had taken a turn for the worse, and there was increasing pressure on all senior managers for results. In the past, Kim's boss had encouraged her to be a bit tougher with her people, but she had not taken his suggestion very seriously. Her new boss, however, made this same suggestion more emphatically, and Kim was acutely aware that she had to get better performance out of her key people. As a result, she was more willing than in the past to question her Relating style and attempt to draw on a Requiring approach at times.

Observing that some managers with different styles can easily accomplish tasks that they find difficult

Sometimes you observe, even in managers whose style you don't like, that they can do some things with their reports that you find very difficult to do. The Requiring manager can ask for what he wants, for example, and can easily set deadlines and priorities. The Relating manager communicates very easily with her people. You see these skills in a manager whose style is different and know if you could tap in to your less natural style, you would be significantly more effective.

Ultimately, retraining a manager using the 2R method recalls the following adage: Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime. It is more helpful to the manager to teach him to use both Rs than to give him a seemingly endless series of training courses on every management subject. If he knows his 2Rs, he will perform every managerial function better. Knowing when to relate versus when to require is relevant whether you're trying to motivate one of your people to work harder or attempting to solicit reactions to a tentative conclusion you have reached. A versatile manager is a better communicator, a better decision maker, and a better consensus builder than his 1R counterpart. Anyone who knows how to use both styles will, like the skilled fisherman, know how to provide for himself and his team in all sorts of situations.

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AND STAYING VERSATILE

Why can't you just tell a manager who is primarily a Relater that she needs to take greater advantage of her Requiring style and a Requirer that he must use Relating skills at appropriate times? Because our Relating and Requiring styles have psychological roots that aren't easily changed through verbal suggestion. To understand why we need to change, we need to accept that what we're doing isn't always working and that we're a big part of the problem. It's relatively easy for most people to admit that they should make greater use of the opposite R. What stops them is knowing how. It's not just a matter of exercising willpower and making an effort to exhibit their less natural R behaviors. Instead, it's a four-step process of *self-assessment*, *style familiarity*, *increasing versatility*, and *situational implementation*. These steps coincide with the four parts into which this book is organized.

The *self-assessment* phase, covered in Part One, will help you locate yourself on the Relating-Requiring matrix. Using questions about your activities and behavior, you'll be able to pinpoint this location. Because people aren't pure Relaters or Requirers, each style has a number of gradations. Whereas it's relatively easy to identify your dominant style, it's not as easy to determine how strong your Relating drive is versus how weak your Requiring drive is (or vice versa). The more precisely you pinpoint this mix, the easier it will be to address what changes need to be made.

Part Two deals with *style familiarity*. Many managers cling to one style because they believe it's what makes them effective or it's what feels comfortable to them. As a result, they have difficulty letting go and becoming more versatile. In this part, we'll explore some of the myths and misconceptions that keep managers overreliant on one of the Rs. As you'll discover, the more you understand the ramifications of each style, the more motivated you'll be to learn how to shift between styles, based on the dictates of a given situation.

Part Three focuses on *increasing your versatility* as a manager, a challenge for many but a realistic goal for most. We'll begin by defining what versatility is and isn't within a 2R context. It's not about achieving a 50–50 balance between relating and requiring but rather about learning how to switch between styles at appropriate moments. Achieving versatility is more difficult than it might seem, since people's

attitudes often militate against switching styles. We'll examine the attitudes that favor and fight against versatility and the types of attitude adjustments that managers should make. A critical portion of this discussion involves exercises and other prescriptive tools designed to help managers become more versatile. I'll provide "interim" steps that will help managers move toward a more versatile stance. (Relaters, for instance, need to take the interim step of becoming more assertive, while Requirers must take the step of becoming more attentive.)

In Part Four, on *situational implementation*, I'll concentrate on how to use and maintain versatility in the daily role of managing. It is easy to slip back into a dominant style when faced with the daily pressures or when you're in an unfamiliar setting (after being promoted to a new job, for instance). In this final part, you'll find a variety of common scenarios portrayed and advice on how to maintain your versatility in each.

Although this four-phase process is straightforward and easy to read, it will take some introspection and openness to understand the effect you have on others and how you can increase your behavioral options. The payoff, however, is significant. By the time you've finished this book, you'll know exactly what you need to do to become an infinitely more effective 2R manager. The first step is to pinpoint whether you are a Relater or a Requirer. This is the subject of Chapter Two.