

Shared Leadership

Have you looked at your management structure lately? It may be time for a change.

BY JANE HENDERSON-LONEY

Several years ago, the administrator of Family Recovery,¹ a residential drug treatment center for adolescents, decided to change the organization's management style. The age of information required a shared-leadership approach, he felt. Shared leadership is very different from the autocratic, top-down management style of the past. In a shared-leadership organization, teams of people accomplish goals together, disband, re-form, and accomplish new goals, in a fluid, mobile fashion.²

Family Recovery offers an exaggerated version of the management challenges faced by all nonprofits. Salaries are low, and the work is demanding and emotionally intense. Seventy percent of its staff is in recovery, either from chemical dependency or codependency. It is a 24-hour environment of raging hormones, drug-seeking behavior, and "acting out."

Since Family Recovery advocates 12-step programs (such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Codependents Anonymous), the administrator wondered why he couldn't use those same tools to facilitate shared leadership. These 12-step tools support a step-by-step, in-the-moment management style which empowers everyone, from the bottom up.

This is the story of how Family Recovery revolutionized its management structure to give all staff a leadership role. The steps it followed offer a useful model for any nonprofit that values its staff and wants to include them in decision-making.

Step 1 | Commit to Change

As the 12-step philosophy points out, the first step in any change is to recognize there is a problem. Family Recovery's administrator became convinced that change was needed when he noticed increasing conflict and unhappiness among staff members. He realized that a command-and-control, hierarchical management style was counter-productive. Such a model interfered with creative planning and discouraged employee leadership. The result: frustrated, disgruntled, nonproductive workers.

Deciding to make a change is perhaps the hardest part. Before doing anything else, the administrator needed to convey his vision to his management team and break down the natural resistance to change.³

Step 2 | Form a Committee to Facilitate Change

Once the administrator and management team agreed to change the organization's management style, their next step was to create a new group, which they called the Diversity Committee. The committee's task was to identify issues of difference (racial, ethnic, disability, lifestyle, gender) which affected staff and clients.

The committee itself was diverse in religion, education, and socioeconomic level. It included staff members who were African-American, gay and lesbian, Latino and Latina, and Caucasian. Committee members included clinical, teaching, nursing, business, and administrative personnel. The committee chair rotated, and there was no hierarchy among members.

The Diversity Committee and management team, along with a consultant, began a series of day-long meetings to explore the idea of sharing leadership. They spent many hours, some emotionally painful, moving through old paradigms of accountability toward a new culture of shared decision-making.

Jane Henderson-Loney, Ed.D. (403 Chupcan Place, Clayton, California 94517) is a management consultant and frequent Bay Area speaker on building healthy relationships in organizations. She received her doctorate in Organization and Leadership at the University of San Francisco.

A New Model for the Next Century

Step 3 ■ Turn Staff into Decision-Makers

The organization now had a core group fully committed to shared leadership. The next step was to involve all staff.

The best way to turn staff members into decision-makers, the group decided, was by dividing them into teams. To build the most powerful teams possible, they needed to help people appreciate their differences and draw on one another's strengths. The tool they chose for this purpose was the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a highly reliable psychological inventory that

identifies 16 different personality types—or 16 preferred ways of acting.⁴ All employees met with the consultant, who explained the MBTI and helped them identify their personality types.

For a sampling of the questions used to identify types, see “What’s Your Type?” on pages 42-43.⁵ As these questions indicate, people determine their type by selecting their preference in four categories:

1. Extroversion (E) vs. Introversion (I)
2. Sensing (S) vs. Intuition (N)
3. Thinking (T) vs. Feeling (F)
4. Judging (J) vs. Perceiving (P)

How to Share Leadership with Your Staff

- Be sure employees have complete information on which to base decisions.
- Use an understanding of personality differences to improve communication and enhance people’s self-confidence.
- Foster respect for diversity.
- Ask employees for input into any decision that will affect them.
- Use work teams to solve problems and make decisions.
- Reward staff for leadership, creativity, and team contributions.
- Harness all employees’ talents and creativity.
- Give staff both responsibility and authority to make decisions.
- Invest in education and training for employees. When they return from training, give them opportunities to use their new learning and share it with the rest of the organization.
- Give employees ongoing feedback about how they’re doing, and answer any questions they may have.

Based on people’s preference in each category, they are assigned four letters which define their personality type. For instance, an ESTJ is an extroverted, sensing, thinking, judging person. Such people make excellent administrators. An INFP is an introverted, intuitive, feeling, perceiving type. Such people are idealists and visionaries. Obviously, both types make valuable leaders, even though they are total opposites in personality.

The secret is to use this knowledge of types to enhance people’s work relationships, build decision-making teams, solve workplace problems, and improve communication. The type method can help different personalities—who otherwise might spar endlessly—respect and enrich each other. The method can also help everyone see how certain traits are best suited to certain tasks.

A good example is the difference between sensors (“Ss”) and intuitives (“Ns”). Sensors are superb at gathering concrete, specific data, while intuitives prefer to focus on the possibilities inherent in the data or the relationship between pieces of data. Each is a valid way to view the world, and each can enrich the other. But before such enrichment can occur, we need to recognize the differences between these two types of people. If one person sees a fact and the other sees a possibility, they can’t communicate. Once they realize that both have legitimate (but limited) ways of seeing reality, they can help each other see more clearly.

This need to understand each other’s point of view is also important for introverts and extroverts. Extroverts (“Es”) can

mistakenly see introverts (“Is”) as poor “team players” because they keep many details of their work to themselves. Introverts may be frustrated by the frequent interruptions of extroverts, who are eager to share their thinking. Both introverts and extroverts are merely working in their preferred world (inner or outer); without the understanding that the MBTI provides, however, they may misread each other.

Likewise, thinkers (“Ts”) and feelers (“Fs”) have equally rational ways of arriving at decisions, but the logic one uses can perplex the other. “Ts” like to evaluate data objectively, while “Fs” consider a decision’s impact on people. Both types can both make excellent contributions to any team, once they learn to appreciate their differences.

The same is true for judgers (“Js”) and perceivers (“Ps”). Judgers have a passion for planning, while perceivers have a talent for adaptability. Again, both are necessary for a smoothly functioning team.

Family Recovery found this MBTI personality instrument very useful as a team-building tool. Not surprisingly, the organization’s employees proved to be diverse in their preferences for communicating and problem-solving. Their new awareness of personality types enhanced trust and created a new sense of shared mission.

This new spirit of harmony was clear in the Diversity Committee’s first meeting after employees learned their MBTI personality types. Team leaders “talked type” as they resolved problems. Reframing differences in the language of type facilitated a less charged communication. The outcome: fewer disagreements, a more compatible group, and more creative problem-solving. (See “How to Work with Different Types” on page 44).

Workplace problems often have to do with the way information is shared. People become frustrated due to differences in style. The MBTI helps people confront those differences without taking things so personally. The MBTI’s innate respect of differences and its common, easy-to-learn language makes it an ideal way to solidify teams. (See “Four Steps to Effective MBTI Teams” on page 44).

Family Recovery’s teams continued to meet regularly, imbedding the language of type into the organization’s culture. “Talking type” became an effortless way for employees to discuss individual work and leadership styles. It also helped turn all employees into leaders. Introverts are excellent decision-makers, for example, but extroverts may need to coax them to share their ideas and join the problem-solving process. Intuitive-perceivers (“NPs”) abound in creative ideas, but the sensing-judgers (“SJs”) may need to help them reach closure, make a final decision, and move on.

Step 4 ■ Share Information

To reinforce the work of the teams, Family Recovery’s administrator held frequent all-staff meetings. At these gatherings, he discussed the importance of shared leadership and introduced open-book management techniques. For instance, he shared financial information and answered employees’ questions about the organization’s fiscal future. Previously, such topics had been closed to everyone except top management. Now it was clear that employees could not participate in decision-making unless they had complete information.⁶

The Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is founded on Carl Jung’s theory that people’s ways of communicating, problem-solving, and decision-making differ in fundamental ways. Here is a sampling of questions used to determine personality types. (For a more comprehensive list of questions, see the books listed in Footnote 5.)

To determine your MBTI personality type, select your preference in each of the following four categories of opposites:

I. Are you an extrovert (E) or introvert (I)?

If you’re an extrovert (E), you will answer yes to most of these questions:

1. At a party, do you usually interact with many people, including strangers?
2. Do you prefer to generate ideas with a group and bounce your thoughts off others rather than spending time thinking by yourself?
3. At meetings and conferences, do you usually look forward to voicing your opinions?
4. Are you bored and frustrated if you can’t participate actively in a conversation?
5. Do you speak easily and at length with strangers?

If you’re an introvert (I), you will answer yes to most of these questions:

1. Do you enjoy the peace and quiet of time to yourself?
2. Do people think you’re a great listener?
3. Do you prefer to share special occasions with just one other person or a few close friends?
4. When the phone rings, do you hope someone else will answer it?
5. Do you tend to leave parties early, with decreased energy?

II. Are you a sensor (S) or an intuitive (N)?

If you’re a sensor, you will answer yes to most of these questions:

1. Would you rather work with facts and figures than ideas and theories?
2. Do you read magazines and reports from front to back?

What's Your Type?

3. Do you feel frustrated when someone gives you a vague, overall plan rather than clear, detailed instructions?
4. Should writers "say what they mean" rather than express ideas through analogy?
5. Do you like to do things step by step rather than leaping around?

If you're an intuitive, you'll answer yes to most of these questions:

1. Are you drawn more to overtones than fundamentals?
2. Would you rather learn something new than use skills you've already learned?
3. Are you more interested in future possibilities than present-day tasks?
4. Do you find yourself seeking the meaning behind most things rather than accepting them at face value?
5. Do you tend to think about several things at once?

III. Are you a thinker (T) or a feeler (F)?

If you're a thinker, you'll answer yes to most of these questions:

1. Are you calm, cool, and logical even when others are upset?
2. Do you think clarity and reason are more important than harmony?
3. Do you tend to choose truthfulness over tactfulness?
4. Do you pride yourself on your objectivity?
5. Do you think it's more important for a person to have common sense than strong feeling?

If you're a feeler, you'll answer yes to most of these questions:

1. Is your goal usually harmony rather than truth?

2. Do you decide more with your heart than your head?
3. Do you tend to overlook people's negative points, stressing the areas of agreement?
4. Would you quickly take back something you said if it may have offended someone?
5. Do you consider a good decision one that takes everyone's feelings into account?

IV. Are you a judger (J) or a perceiver (P)?

If you're a judger, you'll answer yes to most of these questions:

1. Do you prefer a planned event to an unplanned one?
2. Are you more comfortable after a decision is made than before it is made?
3. Are you always waiting for others, who never seem to be on time?

4. Do you keep (and follow) to-do lists?
5. Do you like to work things through to completion and get them out of the way?

If you're a perceiver, you'll answer yes to most of these questions:

1. Are you more spontaneous than deliberate?
2. Do you like keeping your options open for last-minute changes rather than getting things settled and finished?
3. Are you easily distracted?
4. Do you tend to choose somewhat impulsively rather than very carefully?
5. Do you prefer to "just let things happen" rather than make sure things are arranged?

Based on your answers in each category, you will come up with four letters which define your personality. Here's a brief description of each of the 16 personality types, focusing on the occupation to which each might be most attracted (with the types paired as opposites):

INTP: The conceptualizing architect	.....	ESFJ: The outgoing salesperson
ENTP: The resourceful inventor	.....	ISFJ: The efficient conservator
INTJ: The single-minded scientist	.....	ESFP: The fun-loving entertainer
ENTJ: The take-charge executive	.....	ISFP: The laissez-faire artist
INFP: The questing crusader	.....	ESTJ: The conscientious administrator
ENFP: The curious journalist	.....	ISTJ: The pillar-of-strength trustee
INFJ: The visionary author	.....	ESTP: The by-the-seat-of-the-pants entrepreneur
ENFJ: The catalytic teacher	.....	ISTP: The action-oriented artisan

How to Work with Different Types

I. Hints for Working with Extroverts:

- Give them a chance to talk, share, and “think out loud.”
- Use talking rather than writing to get your point across to them.
- Since they may actually welcome interruptions, they make great trouble-shooters and phone-answers.

Hints for Working with Introverts:

- Give them quiet time for reflection.
- Offer them a chance to put their ideas in writing if possible.
- If you’re an extrovert, stop talking occasionally and ask for the introverts’ input. They may be politely waiting for you to pause and give them a chance to talk.

II. Hints for Working with Sensors:

- Give them facts and clear guidelines to follow.
- Make sure your expectations are clear.
- Be careful they don’t take you literally.

Hints for Working with Intuitives:

- Provide opportunities for them to use their imagination.
- Don’t get bogged down in details; stick to the big picture.
- Appreciate the power of their intuition.

III. Hints for Working with Thinkers:

- Organize your thoughts logically when talking to them.
- Look to them to remind you of the cold, hard consequences of a decision.
- Be objective rather than personalizing your remarks to them.

Hints for Working with Feelers:

- Explain how each decision will affect them and others.
- Always stress the human element.
- Be sensitive to their feelings.

IV. Hints for Working with Judgers:

- Realize they’re not always as sure of themselves as they sound.
- Provide them with schedules, agendas, and time to prepare.
- Be on time for meetings.

Hints for Working with Perceivers:

- Give them the chance to express their opinions, but set a clear deadline by which they must stop talking and make a decision.
- Give them plenty of opportunity to set their own pace.
- Remain open to change.

Step 5 | Form Collaborations

The next shared-leadership step was to unite with like-minded organizations. Family Recovery staff sought out others interested in helping adolescents recover from drug dependency. They met with community leaders to explain how a partnership could help the collaborating organizations as well as chemically-dependent teens and the community as a whole.

As a result of these efforts, Family Recovery formed several successful alliances with African-American churches in the community. Church members visited the recovering teens, offering friendship and support. Members of one church taught a parenting class to the adolescents in treatment. Together, the churches and Family Recovery raised community awareness of teen drug problems.

Family Recovery also formed a partnership with the Asian Community Treatment Alliance. The two organizations worked together to publicize Family Recovery’s services to Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Thai youth and families. This shared outreach resulted in earlier intervention for chemically dependent teens in the Asian community. The successful public-relations campaign also strengthened the image and reputation of both organizations in the community.⁷

Four Steps to Effective MBTI Teams

1. Be sure the personality types on the team are the best ones to get the job done.
2. Be sure the right personality types are assigned to the right tasks.
3. Check your team’s progress frequently. “Js” will help keep you on course, while “Ps” will make sure you change direction if that becomes necessary.
4. Make sure you have enough judgers (“Js”) and extroverts (“Es”) to speak up and tell the rest of the group when the job is done.

Step 6 | Continue the Process

Shared leadership is a process, not a result. Already, however, Family Recovery has seen the benefits of a shared management style. Staff on all levels are more involved in developing treatment plans and planning for the organization’s future. Other benefits include reduced staff turnover, a decline in unplanned absence, and a heightened sense of shared purpose.

The next century will demand such a flattened organizational structure. The rigid management methods of the industrial revolution no longer make sense. The new era is driven by communication and information. To remain competitive, organizations will have to share power among staff. Individuals will have to assume greater responsibility.

ty for their organization's future as well as their own development.

A key to the success of shared leadership is a high tolerance for differences. Another key is an ability to communicate across levels, teams, and even organizations. A shared-leadership organization is always open to sharing with other compatible groups.

Because Family Recovery is committed to building healthy families and healthy work relationships, its management philosophy naturally adapted to the needs of a 21st century organization. Family Recovery sets a standard for the nonprofit community in its heroic efforts to embrace the shared-power model demanded by a new age. ■

Footnotes

¹ Although this is not the organization's real name, it is a real organization. It has a capacity of 50 teens and a staff of 130.

² Meg Wheatley explained in *Leadership and the New Science* (1994) why shared leadership is the approach of the future: "We will need to stop describing tasks and instead facilitate process. We will need to become savvy about how to build relationships . . . and need better skills in listening, communicating, and facilitating groups, because these are the talents that build strong collaborative relationships."

³ For information on eliminating resistance to change, see Rosenberg in "Selected References."

⁴ The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is named after Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother, who created it as a tool for identifying personalities. More information on MBTI is available from Otto Kroeger Associates, 3605-C Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 (703-591-MBTI) and Consulting Psychologists Press, 3803 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, California 94303 (800-624-1765).

⁵ "What's Your Type?" questions and personality descriptions are based on information from Carl Jung, *Psychological Types* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

University Press), David Keirse and Marilyn Bates, *Please Understand Me* (Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis Book Company), and Otto Kroeger, *Type Talk at Work* (New York City: Delacore Press).

⁶ For an excellent description of how sharing financial information can stabilize and empower your organization, see Brinckerhoff in "Selected References."

⁷ See Lauer in "Selected References" for information on enhancing your organization's reputation. See Wilder Foundation in "Selected References" for more on building partnerships.

Selected References

Bedwell, Raymond T., Jr., "Total Quality Management: Making the Decision," *Nonprofit World*, May-June 1993.

Brinckerhoff, Peter, "How to Save Money through Bottoms-Up Budgeting," *Nonprofit World*, January-February 1996.

Eadie, Douglas, "Master Change, Or Change Will Master You," *Nonprofit World*, July-August 1996.

Gooding, Cheryl, "Using Training Strategically," *Nonprofit World*, July-August 1996.

Harrington-Mackin, Deborah, *The Team Building Tool Kit*.

Howick Associates, *The Compleat Facilitator: A Guide*.

Lauer, Larry D., "How to Use a Total Marketing Approach to Renew Your Organization and Make an Impact," *Nonprofit World*, May-June 1995.

Muehrcke, Jill, ed., *Management and Planning, Leadership Series*.

Rosenberg, DeAnne, "Eliminating Resistance to Change: The Magic Formula," *Nonprofit World*, September-October 1992.

Schwartz, Andrew E., "Creative Collaborations: The Art of Negotiating," *Nonprofit World*, July-August 1994.

Vitale, Katherine F., "Teams—the Essence of Quality," *Nonprofit World*, May-June 1995.

Wilder Foundation, *Collaboration Handbook*.

Wilder Foundation, *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*.

These publications are available through the Society for Nonprofit Organizations' Resource Center. Members of the Society receive discount prices on Resource Center books. For more information, contact the Society's Resource Center at 6314 Odana Road, Suite 1, Madison, Wisconsin 53719.