Do it, or else

The Coercive leadership style

A leader’s behavior is the single biggest factor influencing what it is like to work in a team. Good leadership has the power to energize, engage and motivate staff to go the extra mile for their organization. Poor leadership will have the opposite effect, creating a demotivating atmosphere marked by high turnover and frequent absences.

How does this style work?

Leaders tell staff what to do, and expect them to do it. They then check over employees’ shoulders, and are more likely to criticize what they are getting wrong rather than praise what they are doing right.

The coercive style is most commonly used in Latin America and Asia, often coupled with the affiliative style which is typical of a paternalistic leadership approach. But it has been on the rise in Europe prompted by recession.

When should I use this style?

In a crisis, when undergoing significant change, or when up against the clock on simple tasks with an inexperienced team. Where confusion and chaos reign, the coercive leader takes control of the situation, provides critical information and quickly sets people in the right direction.

The coercive style can also be very effective when setting boundaries and putting a stop to unwanted behaviors.
Health warning

The coercive style is for occasional use only, when stuck in a difficult situation. Think of it as the sand wedge in golf – only used to get out of a specific tight spot. Excessive overuse will result in passive resistance, rebelliousness or even sabotage of organizational goals.

The coercive style erodes innovation, and will be near useless when facing complex tasks requiring creative solutions.

When the time is right – three top tips for developing this style

Be decisive

Choose a course of action and give direct orders that are firm and precise.

This is not the time to be vague, so avoid using tentative or soft statements in order to avoid ill feeling.

Set expectations

Outline clear standards and address underperformance quickly, directly and honestly.

Monitor employees closely

Equip yourself with the tools you need to assess each team member’s activity levels and results.

For more information on developing your skills in each of the six leadership styles, or those of leaders within your organization, please visit www.atrium.haygroup.com