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Development Discussions – the Personality of Subordinates in Relation to the Experiences of the Discussions

Development discussions have been much talked about and they occur very frequently in Finnish enterprises. Studies of this topic are rare, and theoretical knowledge of the subject has also remained practically the same during the whole period of the history of development discussions in Finland. This study is concerned with the effect of the subordinates' personality on the experiences of the discussions. Accordingly, the research problem is: Does the subordinate's cognitive style influence the experience of the development discussions? The aim of the study is not only to answer the research question but also to produce additional information about the development discussions. Personality is studied on the basis of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and is fo-

cused on its definition of cognitive style. These four cognitive styles are ST (sensing–thinking), SF (sensing–feeling), NF (intuitive–feeling) and NT (intuitive–thinking). The responses of subordinates to leaders with the same cognitive style (ST, sensing–thinking) were compared. STs are on the average the most general superiors and therefore they were chosen.

The sample was collected in 2000–2002 from a big multinational organization. The number of leaders who belonged to the same cognitive category (ST) was 12. Their subordinates, who had taken part in the discussions and had answered the questions were 61.

The results showed that the subordinates' responses regarding the progress of the development discussions varied depending on the personality of the subordinates. The evaluations of the NTs (intuitive–thinking) differed most from the rest of the cognitive style responses. The results suggest that the intuitive–thinking (NT) subordinates estimate their leaders the most positively in the development discussions. Surprising was, that subordinates with same preferences than their leaders (sensing–thinking ST) did not experience discussions as most positively of all. The intuitive–feeling (NF) subordinates experienced discussions in the most negative way of all. In the results it is to be taken into consideration that although some of the cognitive styles gave lower and higher values to the statements, in all cases where differences occurred, the emphasis of the results were on the positive side. The development discussions are thus, judging by these results, useful.

With an increase in the amount of sample it will be possible to draw more powerful conclusions. In spite of the smallness of the present sample, it can be concluded that personality influences the experience of development dis-

cussions, and further research in this subject would be important. On the basis of these results, leaders as well as subordinates can better

than previously prepare for discussions by taking into account their own and the other party's personality. ■