

ALL IN ONE: the three styles of an effective CHIEF

- Is the word CHIEF or BOSS frightening?
- Very often, a CHIEF is represented as either good or bad!
- The role model CHIEF and the CHIEF to avoid!
- Chiefs who strongly assert their roles and chiefs who keep their distances from the very word CHIEF!
- In order to develop effectiveness, it is crucial to be clear on the word CHIEF and on what it stands for in international organisations.

The organised Retail system needs CHIEFS who are aware of how to play their roles

A widely debated subject in company discussions, consulting services, training sessions and web forums (for instance LinkedIn) is the following:

What does being a CHIEF mean? How can one be an effective CHIEF?

Very often, this role is described by contrasting the Manager's style and the Coach's style, or the Manager's style and the Leader's style. Even if we search "Manager" and "Coach" or "Manager" and "Leader" by images in any search engine, these contrasting styles clearly emerge.

There are images where the Manager is depicted as a tyrant, for example holding a megaphone and shouting at his/her collaborators (who are often the victims of this style) whereas the other two styles are depicted as belonging to very open, supportive and far-sighted people who are willing to listen. The intention, in my opinion, is clearly to create a bias towards styles that "ennoble" the role of the CHIEF.

I am deliberately using this verb because I think the intention is to stress how the Coach's or Leader's styles are more ennobling and, conversely, the Manager' style is by now outdated.

The film **BABY BOSS** depicts this baby born CHIEF as fearsome, impeccable and very determined. In the eyes of his brother, he is someone to fight against!

Is it really so?

Before ranking these three styles in order of importance, I should expand on what I consider as a turning point: **how to restore dignity to the word CHIEF.**

I know many people who struggle to identify themselves in this definition and others who consider it offensive to be defined as CHIEF. Over the years, I have realised how many Store Managers struggle to consider the people they work with as their

collaborators and prefer describing them as “my colleagues”. This attitude restricts effectiveness.

In order to dispel personal - therefore questionable - interpretations, it could be helpful to refer to the word CHIEF (BOSS) in the Cambridge Dictionary: *The person who is in charge of an organization and who tells others what to do.*

CHIEF: why are so many people uncomfortable with this word and this role?

I think much depends on the fact that a commanding role brings with it some undesirable features in those who perform it. Undoubtedly, in our culture, **Commanding** evokes a condition of **Subjection**, which clearly refers to the defeat of those who are commanded.

This weakening parallel negatively affects this role. If I am the CHIEF and act as a Manager, then I command, and other people see me as an overbearing person. If I don't behave as a CHIEF, but as a Coach or as a Leader, the others see me in a much more positive way.

At this stage, the initial theory should be reassessed. Does acting like a CHIEF really mean being overbearing? Is using a Manager's style really that negative? And how can one entrust a collaborator with a task without falling into this trap?

In order to refute a widely shared theory, it is important to expand on the definition of this role to help the persons concerned feel they are CHIEFS without feeling devalued, and try to think and act in a comprehensive dimension that includes the Manager's, Coach's and Leader's style.

In order to do this, I have decided to expand on the above definition of the word CHIEF: a chief is someone who achieves the goals pertaining to his/her job, creating the right conditions to ensure his/her collaborators perform in an effective way.

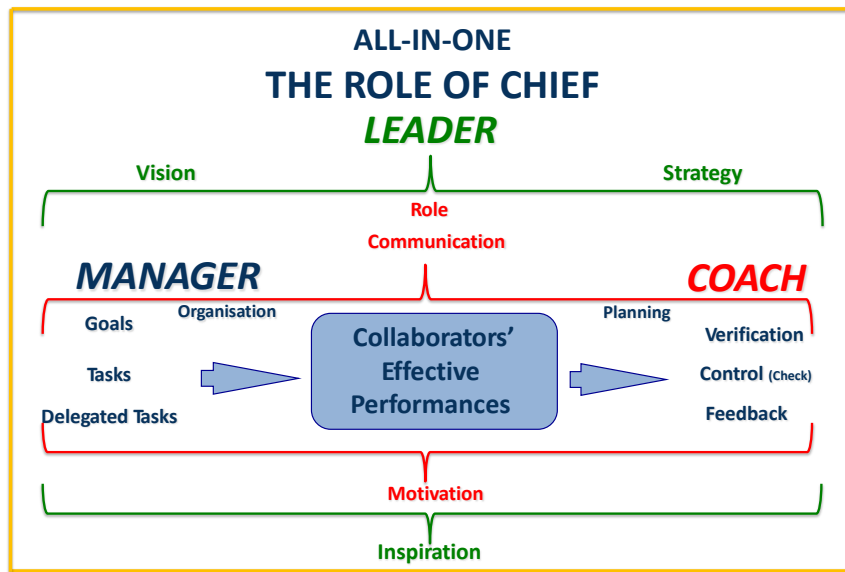
This additional definition inevitably leads to a crucial question.

What can a CHIEF do to create the right conditions to ensure his/her collaborators perform in an effective way?

If we focus on collaborators performing in an effective way, we must answer the following questions in order to decide what style should be used:

- **What do I want to achieve? What is my goal?**
- **What is my collaborator's professional level? What are his/her skills?**

I have prepared the following diagram showing the key steps to follow in order to create the right conditions for effective performances.



The *manu agere* (= to **lead by the hand**) MANAGER'S STYLE

A CHIEF who wants to ask a collaborator to carry out a specific task can use the *manu agere* (= to lead by the hand) Manager's style. In the diagram below, all the activities to be carried out before and after the task are highlighted in blue, including organising and planning each task. While this is a basic style, often (because of the above-mentioned reasons) it is underestimated or not implemented and, as a direct consequence, collaborators do not have clear guidelines on what should be done and how.

Defining the goal clearly, **assigning the task consistently with the** collaborator's skills and **planning** the support organisation will make it more likely for the task to be successfully carried out. **Verifying** behaviours and **checking** results achieved will enable the CHIEF to *confirm* (with positive feedback) or *change* (with constructive feedback) the collaborator's performance. In my experience, this is the most frequently used process to achieve expected goals.

Always keeping in mind this responsibility, and consciously implementing it, is a sound attitude for a CHIEF.

THE COACH'S STYLE = **support, enhancement and development**

Leaving the task to be performed unchanged, a conscious CHIEF can implement the Coach's style before completing all the Manager's style's steps, depending on the answers to these questions: "What do I want to achieve?" - "What is my goal?", "What is my collaborator's professional level?" - "What are his/her skills?" .

Coach= support, enhancement and development.

The Coach's style: the elements to focus on in order to implement this style are highlighted in red in the above diagram. By **communicating** through open questions and active listening, the collaborator's **role** and contribution will be enhanced, as well as his/her **motivation** to do well, also thanks to the Manager's style guidelines.

THE LEADER'S STYLE: Inspire spontaneous behavior

On many occasions, the answers to the questions: “*What do I want to achieve?*” – “*What is my goal?*”, “*What is my collaborator's professional level?*” – “*What are his/her skills?*” may induce the conscious CHIEF to use a Leader's style while keeping the task to be performed unchanged.

The elements to focus on in order to implement this style are shown in green in the above diagram.

Before discussing about an activity (or a task to be performed) we must consider it within a broader **vision**, to enable the collaborators to understand those elements that are not self-evident and that, through a consistent **strategy**, can determine success. This kind of approach to a working relationship will most likely engender a desire to belong to a wider project and create an **inspiring environment within which personal motivation can be put into practice**.

In some cases, using this style may enable you to ask someone to perform a task, without necessarily using the coach's style.

To conclude, we can say that the **Manager's style is crucial** because it determines what to do and why it is important for a CHIEF to use it often. In many cases, however, it may be more effective to use the **Coach's** style because it influences the way in which people contribute to doing things. In specific situations, using the **Leader's style may be a more strategic choice** to explain the reason for certain choices and activities in a wider context, which is not always easily understood.

An effective CHIEF is ALL-IN-ONE, someone who can consciously use the three styles, enhancing his/her contribution in the eyes of the organisation and keeping his/her head high!