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Tackling a Common Dilemma:

"I" think I'm 9,9—but am I really 5,5?

Confusing the 5,5 style with the 9,9 style is a common problem among Grid users and is an easy mistake to make. But ironically, accurately identifying your dominant Grid Style is the crucial first step in the process of removing self-deception and ensuring ongoing personal growth. Only by accurately identifying your true Grid style can you be successful at step two, recognizing the ingrained habits that reinforce behaviors you may be trying to change. But once Grid has helped you establish an environment for effective critique and feedback with team members and other key players in your life, you have a built-in system for "calling your attention" to behaviors as they occur.

The table below defines "red flag" characteristics for Critique, Decision Making, and Conflict Resolution for the **5,5 Status Quo: Balance and Compromise Style** as opposed to the 9,9 style. Compare the behaviors honestly and see where you "find yourself." If you don't find yourself where you want to be, talk to the people who are most likely to see your behaviors as they occur and ask for their support in helping you shift the behaviors to **9,9 Sound: Contribute and Commit** behaviors.
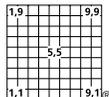
| Status Quo:
Balance & Compromise | **5,5** | OR | **9,9** | Sound:
Contribute & Commit |

Critique: Learning from experience by anticipating and examining how behavior and actions affect results.

- Insulating oneself within a group setting, behind policy, or as bound by "those in authority" to absolve you

- Preferring an established routine with clear guidelines for feedback so discussions don't get out of control

- Reacting to competing ideas by searching for middle ground, comparing them against precedents, expectations, and what the majority favors

- Actively engaging "informal" critique to assure acceptable progress and popularity

- Giving critique based on an objective examination of the facts; critiquing behaviors and their impacts rather than judging people as "right" or "wrong"

- Requesting opinions from others and accepting their comments based on merit, not rank

- Defining criteria for performance and constantly comparing the criteria to actual progress

- Taking responsibility for initiating difficult discussions, even when you know it won't be pleasant

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Decision Making:
Evaluating resources, criteria, and consequences to reach a decision.

- Making decisions based on what those in authority or the majority expect; considering voting as an effective way to arrive at consensus

- Resisting an alternative you know is best because you fear the political fallout that may follow

- Discomfort with "unknowns"; focusing on the negative: "What if's..,"—a tendency to look for ways something won't work instead of looking for ways it could

- Distancing yourself from controversial decisions to avoid personal accountability later: "I want you to know I had nothing to do with this."

- Deliberate effort to selectively involve only those people who can offer a significant contribution to making the soundest decision

- Listening to, hearing, and considering all pertinent points of view (even if you disagree), before making a decision

- Exploring and comparing all possible alternatives against rigorous standards

- Being unafraid of taking one-alone action when necessary and following up immediately if you anticipate problems or repercussions

Conflict Resolution:
Confronting and working through disagreements with others to reach a solution

- Automatically encouraging concessions; negotiating and balancing outcomes so no one goes away empty-handed

- Basing resolution on what is acceptable: "I believe we can all live with that."

- An unwillingness to explore solutions that represent risky or unproven outcomes

- Relying on formal procedures and strict protocol as a way to diffuse emotions and maintain an emotional distance from disagreements

- Basing resolution on *what's right* rather than *who's right.*

- A willingness to confront problems without hesitation when you see a need

- Recognizing that conflict can be a creative and productive source of energy

- Being able to keep conflict resolution focused on objective facts and reach a sound solution, even when emotions flare

Are You Using All Four Types of Critique?

Critique represents the single most valuable relationship skill for increasing effectiveness in the workplace. Critique gets information out into the open and creates opportunities for synergy.

- **Pre-Critique** (before an activity): Make a plan! Ready-*Aim*-Fire: "What are we doing and how are we going to do it?" Instead of Ready-*Fire*-Aim: rushing into work, assuming everything else will fall in place.

- **Periodic Critique** (during an activity): A schedule of critique points set up in pre-critique to stop and evaluate progress. Periodic critique can be attached to time ("Let's stop every 15 minutes and make any adjustments needed.") or to an event or action ("Let's stop after we finish one topic and see how we're doing.").

- **Concurrent Critique** (during an activity): Occurs spontaneously as needed. This step is critical for revealing and resolving problems as they occur and moving on. "Hey, wait a second. Aren't we getting off track?"

- **Post Critique** (after an activity): Objectively comparing results to original goals with a focus on continuous improvement—what *worked* as well as what *didn't* and *why?*

Critiquing Personal Behaviors

Negative comments, or "constructive criticism" as it is most often called, is the most valuable critique for learning and change. It is also potentially the most damaging, and so demands skill and understanding from all those involved.

The key to delivering effective personal critique is to focus on *actions and their impact* without evaluating the person as "good or bad." The following list describes characteristics of sound critique that make it more effective to give and receive.

- **Evaluate actions, not people.** Avoid judgmental language like "should", "never", "always" and starting statements with accusations like, "You always…" Instead, focus on the action and impact with statement like, "When you (specific example), then (describe the impact).

- **Predict consequences.** Focus on predicting consequences rather than making moral judgments that assign acceptance or rejection. Describe the behavior observed and what the consequences would be if the same behavior continues or changes.

- **Focus on the here-and-now.** The most effective comments relate to immediately observable, here-and-now events because the experiences are fresh and vivid. There is also great advantage to capturing feelings while they are fresh to gain a more immediate and timely understanding of how behavior impacts others. Emotions are valuable and should be expressed, but in a way that encourages an open, two-way discussion.

- **Use specific examples.** Use specific examples of actions and impact when discussing behavior so people understand exactly when the negative (or positive) impact is occurring.

- **Establish criteria.** Criteria establish boundaries that keep discussions focused on actions and impact. They also help teams practice critique without feeling threatened. Criteria can center around

  - **inquiry** (we will focus questions on what happened during today's meeting only),

  - **listening** (we commit to suspending judgment until all views are discussed), or

  - **authority** (the team leader's view will be given last to ensure all views are heard).

These are only a few examples, and they may change as teams develop critique skills and build confidence and trust in each other.

What's Your Critique Style?

9,1 Controlling: Forceful comments focused on the negative with and minimal discussion; "drive-by" critique; rigid, narrow criteria. ("You don't know what you're talking about. If you'll just do it this way, there won't be any problems.")

1,9 Accommodating: Tentative; overly focused on the positive with loosely-defined criteria; the social aspect of the discussion itself is most important. ("You're really just so talented. I wouldn't worry about it at all. This is just a small setback.")

5,5 Status Quo: "Sandwich" approach that dilutes or "mixes the message" (couching constructive comments between positive comments); ("Even though there were some key issues overlooked, you worked really hard and it showed. Good effort!")

1,1 Indifferent: Reactive only; has to be acquired by others; non-committal comments; no criteria. ("Sure, we can talk about that if you think it's necessary, but I thought everything went fine.")

Paternalistic: Forceful but persuasive, but "for your own good"; based on reward and punishment. ("I warned you this would happen. Maybe you'll listen to me next time so you won't make the same mistake again.")

Opportunistic: Inconsistent, quality and depth of critique depends on the situation (who or what is being critiqued); vague or varying criteria. (To Tony: "They are really expecting too much from you, Tony." To Tony's supervisor: "It's too bad Tony dropped the ball on this, but I think I can help you out.")

9,9 Sound: Two-way, objective, candid, and helpful; focused on behavior and it's impact. ("When your report was late, I missed my deadline. Can we talk about what happened?")