



Toolkit Page 71 Theory X and Y Assessment

I encourage you to review Chapter 5, Consider the Context, in *Beyond the Wall of Resistance* (2010) before completing this assessment.

Two questions:

- Where is my organization on a continuum from Theory X to Theory Y?
- What do I believe? (Do I believe Theory X describes most human behavior or do I believe that Theory Y is a better description of people where I work?)

What to Look For

Here are some things to consider as you decide if you and your organization lean toward Theory X or Theory Y.

1. *Exclusive to Inclusive Decision Making.*
2. *Micromanage to Delegation.*
3. *Fear to Trust.*
4. *Hold Critical Information Close to Opening the Books.*
5. *Paternalism to Adult/Adult Relationships.*

Needless to say, the first word in each of these categories defines Theory X: exclusive decision making, micromanage, fear, hold information close, and paternalism. And Theory Y is marked by the terms: inclusive, delegation, trust, open the books, and adult to adult relationships.

The first question: Where is your organization? Making your best assessment or guess, indicate with a check where you would place your organization on this X to Y continuum. The five items listed above should help you determine where to place your check.



Second question: Where are you with regard to your belief about what motivates people? Do you believe in Theory X, Theory Y, or are you somewhere in the middle? Use a “T” (for theory) to indicate what you believe.

Interpreting the Scores

X/X (Your organization values X and so do you.) Not likely that you’d be reading this book if you scored yourself an X who works in an X environment. But just in case you are still reading, it looks like you’ve found a perfect home. Your values match the organization’s. Unfortunately, it will be very difficult to build support for change since people will be suspicious of any effort to involve them. The best you probably can hope for is compliance. Don’t expect commitment. People are not likely to go the extra miles needed to make a project a success.

Both X&Y/Both X&Y (Your organization is mixed and so are you.) You and the organization probably pigeonhole people into boxes. Maybe certain groups get Theory Y treatment, others get Theory X. Some old union-management organizations considered the union to be Theory X and management to be Theory Y. I have seen class, race, gender, what college you went to, rank in the military (even if you were in a civilian organization today) be the grounds for making Theory X or Y assumptions about groups of people. If you find an X/Y split, it will be difficult to build support throughout the organization because you won’t trust what you hear from the groups you believe are Theory X.

Y/Y This is ideal for the types of change that engage people. You believe in people’s intrinsic motivation and the organization encourages practices that get the best from people. So, why are you wasting time reading this book? Go out and do something with these people!

X/Y (The organization values X, you value Y.) This is a very common and very difficult split. This chapter on context is written for you. You've got to know the territory that you are working in. You can't assume support for your ideas. You must do everything you can to demonstrate to those in power that your efforts to involve people really make sense. You may need to do small pilot tests so they can see for themselves. Maybe conduct a single Kaizen or some other quality improvement event, perhaps on a lesser issue where success seems likely. You need to be strategic. You can't afford to make a mistake. Your bosses and sponsors probably won't forgive you and give you a second chance.

Ask yourself, can I shine—do my best work—in this environment? If not, it may be time to leave. Though it is possible, it is unlikely that one person (unless you have amazing credibility and power) will be able to turn a Theory X organization around.

Y/X (The organization is Y and you are X.) You poor little puppy, life has got to be tough on you. All these touchy-feely get-people-involved initiatives just take away from getting the work done, right? Who are these people? You probably agree with the comedian Emo Philips who once said, "real men don't have souls." You are working in the wrong organization. Even if you are successful at forcing a change through, you very well could develop a bad reputation in the process. Unless you want to dramatically change your mindset to one that gives people more of a chance to act like self-motivated adults, you will be pushing a rock and career uphill.

© 2010 Rick Maurer. Rick uses his Change without Migraines™ to advise organizations on how to lead change effectively. He is author of many books including *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*. In 2009, he created the Change Management Open Source Project, a free resource for people interested in change in organizations. You can access the open source project as well as many free articles and tools from his web site: www.rickmaurer.com