

3-Filters Management

Organizational Leadership From 3 Perspectives

Using 3-Filters Technology

Quality is the enemy of innovation, innovation is the enemy of quality, and people get in the way of both. A great organization needs to focus on all three, all the time and a great manager must see from all three perspectives. *3-Filters Technology* offers a way for dealing with these conflicting needs.

- People, Feelings** Effective leaders are in touch with people's feelings. A organization needs talented people committed to team success. Externally, you must consider the feelings of customers, investors, and the community at large. If any significant group of people are against you, you quickly drop from good to not good.
- Security, Quality** Survival of the organization is dependent on quality products and services. Quality is driven by processes and procedures that assure consistency in every product. The goal is predictability and control, so every product meets specifications and every customer gets the required level of service.
- Future, Innovation** To adapt to a changing world you need flexibility and an eye for what is over the horizon. If nothing ever changed, you could stop with people and quality. The economy is constantly changing. Laws change. Technology change is accelerating. High quality but obsolete products are of no value.

To succeed long term as an executive you must manage these three major areas well. Doing two out of three just does not cut it. That would be sort of like a television picture that has one of the colors missing. It is good enough for a while, but it gets old quickly.

Color television builds a full color image from just three colors. If you look through a magnifying glass at a white area on your screen, you will see small dots of red, green and

blue lights. Older television projectors actually had three lenses and you could see the red, green and blue lights. You could hold your hand over one or two of the lenses to get the off color images like the ones you see here. The yellow image in the graphic lacks blue light. You need all 3 colors to get full color. By the way, if your first grade teacher told you the primary 3 colors are something other than red, green and blue, your teacher obviously needed to be watching more TV.

People have a full spectrum of needs, and like the color TV, you can group these needs into several categories that when mixed together create a rich array of



possibilities. A manager leads by meeting these needs among many groups such as developers, business owners, and customers. Within each group are individual people, each with their own filters. You have to make sense to every person in every group if you want to keep your job and lead the organization.

We tend to develop our personalities around our needs and talents as individuals, and we tend to deemphasize other areas. We then follow the golden rule and do unto others as we would have them do unto us. That is perfectly fine if you are in a technical job where you get paid for doing specific things well. Corporate executives do not have that luxury; they have to do the full job and lead everyone, accommodating all needs and personalities. The golden rule is not good enough. Often people who get promoted into leadership positions got there because they did something extraordinarily well, sometimes at the expense of underemphasizing other important things. This can create problems as they grow into their new roles. Managing through 3-Filters helps you to consciously see all 3 perspectives and avoid the pitfalls of being blind to some aspects of the job.

<p>People—Feelings This includes politics, feelings, teamwork, emotional support, and in general, meeting the needs of people as individuals. It is the people filter in each of us that nourishes relationships, with sensitivity to everyone's feelings.</p>	<p>Security—Quality This includes doing things the right way, delivering quality products, following proper procedures, respecting tradition, and in general avoiding failures. It is the Security Filter in each of us that keeps us alive.</p>	<p>Future—Innovation This includes changing things, trying new ideas, risk taking, and in general, getting things done. It is the Future Filter in each of us that calls us to explore new territory, consider new ideas, and look forward to each day with positive anticipation.</p>
<p>To communicate effectively using the people filter emphasize feelings such as trust, caring, and fun. Talk about what other people are doing. You are being measured by your passion and emotional commitment to your job.</p>	<p>To communicate effectively using the security-quality filter, emphasize processes and procedures, along with data and facts. Talk about best practices. Show quantitative proof for what you are saying. You are being measured by your experience and credentials.</p>	<p>To communicate effectively using the future filter, emphasize options and possibilities. Talk about risk and return. Show working prototypes to demonstrate new ideas that might work. By the way, don't bother talking about best practices. Through the future filter they look like plain old common practices.</p>

Management Training Programs:

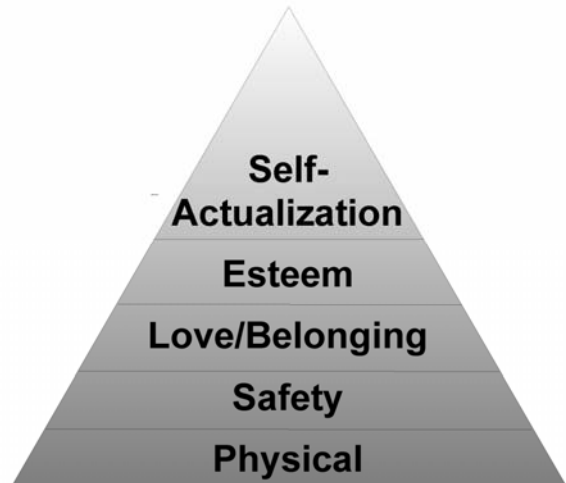
Text books and training programs are written by people who have their own sets of filters. This means two things. First, the information is likely to be colored one way or another rather than full spectrum so you will see an incomplete and misleading picture. Second, you will like the programs that cover the things you like, and you will probably dislike the ones that are incompatible with your filters. The only worthwhile programs are ones that pay proper respect to all three perspectives all the time. Your filters should be validated as essential to success, and your skills should be expanded to cover areas where you could use some help.

Maslow - Hierarchy of Needs

Nearly every management textbook mentions Abraham Maslow and the hierarchy of needs. Here is what [Wikipedia](#), *the free encyclopedia*, has to say about the hierarchy of needs (by the way, people with a strong Security/Quality Filter would not quote Wikipedia because it is subject to the whims of the people who contribute to it, whereas people with a strong Future Filter love Wikipedia because there are always new ideas popping up).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a theory in psychology that Abraham Maslow proposed in his 1943 paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*, which he subsequently extended to include his observations of man's innate curiosity. His theory contended that as humans meet 'basic needs', they seek to satisfy successively 'higher needs' that occupy a set hierarchy.

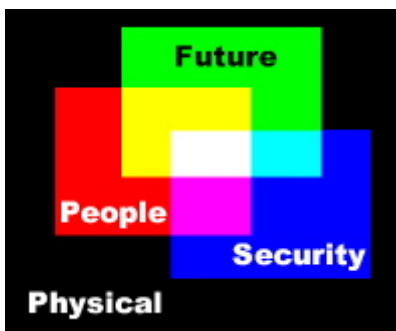
While Maslow's theory was regarded as an improvement over previous theories of personality and motivation, it had its detractors. For example, in their extensive review of research that is dependent on Maslow's theory, Wabha and Bridwell (1976) ***found little evidence for the ranking of needs that Maslow described, or even for the existence of a definite hierarchy at all.***



Maslow is interesting, but what does a manager do with it anyway? It is fair to say Maslow identified some of our needs and grouped them together in a useful model. The problem is that not all people are alike. Not all have the same intensity of needs that must be satisfied in the sequence of Maslow's hierarchy. It is more common to see patterns where one or two of the groups of needs are motivators, while other needs are way down on the list. Of course, the first level physical needs take precedence over other needs, but after that the intensity of need varies from person to person and from situation to situation.

Nelson - Viewing Needs Through Filters

Larry Nelson developed a model of needs based behavior by looking at Maslow's hierarchy through filters. He found you could group needs into three major categories: people, security, and future. The three categories are very much in play by every person every day, but in differing degrees of intensity. Like three lights combining to create a full spectrum picture on your TV, the three categories combine to paint a rich and complex picture of needs and behavior. Physical needs are shown as a separate set of needs that surround the 3-Filters needs. Physical needs, of course, are more urgent than non-physical needs and not meeting them is like having filters on a broken camera. The filters really would not matter in that situation.



Nelson states that needs drive actions, but needs are not the sole source of actions. We need to eat, but we want a certain type of food. Actions are the result of complex interaction between our personal needs, values, talents, skills and experiences. No two of us are alike so it entirely useless to get

too structured in a model to predict behavior. It is a much better use of our time and effort to gain a broad understanding of general principals that we can apply to specific situations. Just as we can see a complex set of rich colors on a high definition television that has only 3 colors, we can see complex sets of behavior through 3-Filters.

The filter analogy is useful because it helps you see other people's needs through their filters. Hold up a green filter in front of your eyes, and you will see everything that reflects green light, and everything else will be dark. You will be blind to red and blue. At any one time, only one filter is in play and we are blind to important things. If you switch filters, you see the blind spots. If you spin them quickly enough, you will actually see the full spectrum of colors.

3-Filter Bias

In the digital world colors are precise but we live in an analog world where everything is relative. If you lean toward one color, you are seen as that color, even though you have all three colors present all the time. Consider the following hot/cold water experiment. You put one hand in warm water and the other hand in cold water. Take them out and put both hands in room temperature water. What will you feel? To the cold hand the room temperature water will feel warm and to the warm hand it will feel cold. Warm and cold are relative to our skin temperature, and when we say water is warm, we are really saying the water is warmer than our skin's current temperature. So it is with 3-Filters. Everything I perceive is relative to my current perspective.

If you have taken digital photographs and worked with color balance on the computer, you have worked with the red, green, and blue layers of the image, adjusting the relative amount of each to get the correct color. Back when photographers used color film, they had to choose either daylight or indoor film because electric light bulbs are much more yellow than sunlight. If you used indoor film outside the pictures would be too blue. The camera records what is there whereas we see things relative to the color of the lighting. In our brain we do the color correction when we move from sunlight to electric light and we are not even aware of the light shift. The images shown here demonstrate this color shift. The top picture was shot with outdoor film in daylight. The bottom picture is too blue because indoor film was used in daylight. This could have been corrected with a yellow filter on the camera to compensate for the blue color bias.



Outdoor Film—Outside



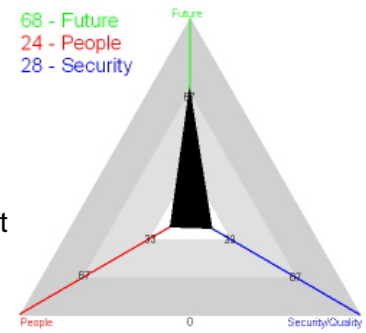
Indoor Film—Outside

Consider our relative positions. You and I may be somewhere in the middle on the security/future continuum, but you lean toward security and I may lean toward future, so I see you as security oriented. A third person may be even more oriented toward security, and would see you as future oriented. We would call this a 3-Filter Bias. Everyone has a comfortable position on the chart and it is perceived by others according to their relative positions. Thus we start to label people according to the bias we see.

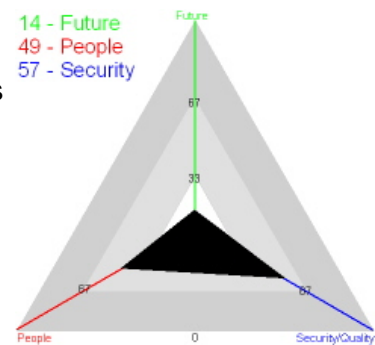
Every executive has a natural 3-Filter Bias, too, but to be successful working with other people, he or she must consciously think and speak the language of all 3-Filters all the time. By switching from filter to filter, the perception will be full color as seen in the center of the chart. Note that you don't have to give up your 3-Filter Bias. You are still you and there is no need to change. All you have to do is switch filters to see the other perspectives and use your brain to act intelligently. Let's take a look at some contrasting examples of a 3-Filter Bias.

Examples of 3-Filter Bias

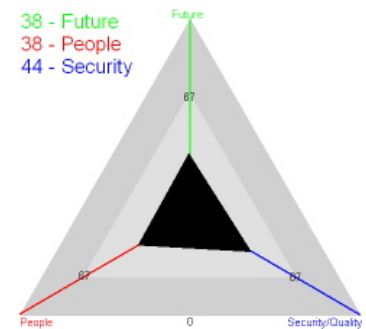
Fred has a strong leaning to the future side of our chart. In his career, Fred has been known as a change agent. When things were tough and companies need a new direction Fred got promoted. Fred has also had some downturns in his career. When companies were not looking for change, they didn't want him around, even though he had a solid track record of success. Using the 3-Filters profile, Fred has learned to look through the other filters and this has served him well. He can at least speak their languages and make sense to them. His time to shine always shows up sooner or later because there will always be activities that absolutely require a strong future filter.



Elizabeth has a strong leaning on the Security and People side of the chart. She is a critical care nurse in a trauma unit that receives serious injuries. She must do things the right way or people die. While she takes care of physical injuries, she must also deal with the patient as a person, along with family and friends who are dealing with a very difficult and emotional situation. Elizabeth is tired when she gets home from work, but feels a real sense of satisfaction from what she does.












Rob is evenly split in his use of the 3-Filters. He has an interesting career in that he is a musician and a web programmer. He can be somewhere in the world performing on stage with his trombone at night and working on the World Wide Web during the day. His adaptability serves him well.



If these people were on the same team it would be useful to map the team high and low points. If the person with the highest Future Filter score did Future Filter activities, the team will be more productive than if the person with the lowest score did it. The same is true for each Filter. Unfortunately, we often focus on people's weaknesses rather than strengths, causing low performance and predictable conflict. The astute manager emphasizes strengths with work assignments and performance reviews. Of course we need to learn to switch Filters, but we don't need to stay there. We are most effective doing what we do well, letting others do what they do well.



Nelson goes on to make the point that our 3-Filter Bias changes depending on the situation. He found that people commonly use different sets of filters in their personal space, group space, and in their day-to-day work. For example when spending your own money, your people filter may be dominant in that you want to spend your money on fun things that you share with friends and family. At work you might find your future filter dominates in that you want to invest money on things that have potential future value. From this Nelson comes up with nine roles:

People Filter	Personal Space	Team Space	Day-to-Day Work	
				
	Communicator	Conductor	Producer	
	Strength	Being able to talk with anyone	Achieving synergism	Delivering the desired results
	Don't Like	Strong opinions	To be left out	To make decisions
Like To Do Most	Get others to agree	Be an active member	Be part of the action	
Desired Reward	Recognition	Self-esteem	Appreciation	
Security Filter	Personal Space	Team Space	Day-to-Day work	
				
	Thinker	Protector	Manager	
	Strength	Reading & understanding directions before proceeding	Being absolutely dependable	Solving complex problems
	Don't Like	Unnecessary change	Boat rockers	Rushing into things
Like To Do Most	Prevent mistakes	Avoid loss	Save the day	
Desired Reward	Zero defects	Stability	Quality production	
Future Filter	Personal Space	Team Space	Day-to-Day Work	
				
	Pioneer	Innovator	Leader	
	Strength	Forging new paths	Creating new ways	Envisioning a new future
	Don't Like	Paper work	Belabored discussions	Slow decisions
Like To Do Most	Get there first	Invent things/ideas	Inspire others	
Desired Reward	Expansion	Achievement	Winning	

There are times to consider security, times to consider feelings, and there are times to step out and move forward. An effective manager spends a lot of time on processes, procedures, quality, and in general, avoiding failure. An effective manager also has to keep a close eye on the future. If we don't innovate, we fall behind. New opportunities are coming our way every day. In addition, an effective manager is also very good on the people side. In the early 1900s, scientific management was all about optimizing processes. Scientific management hit a wall with the famous Hawthorn experiment where environmental factors like the lighting in the factory were selectively modified to produce measurable productivity improvement. The trouble was, any change, up or down, improved productivity, suggesting that people responded in complex and unpredictable ways. Out of this came the birth of people oriented management. It makes a difference if you create a sense of belonging among the workers. They want to get paid and they want to produce a product, but they also have social needs. Human relations oriented management, however, does not replace the need for scientific management. You just need to step back once in a while and see through a different filter.

Single Filter Blindness

Take note of color names in these photos. When you view the world through a green filter, "green" is invisible because green and white are equal. When you view the world through one filter, you are not aware of it because everything becomes that color, or it becomes a mysterious shadow of the missing color. If you have the people filter on, you see everything people related, while security and future become strange dark matter making no sense. The only way to make sense of the whole picture is to spin the filters and build the whole image in your mind.

Sometimes we spin the filter part way and see through two Filters. This better than one, but there are still blind spots. Notice how yellow becomes invisible in the yellow photo, but you can read red and green while blue is still a dark shadow. The danger of stopping with two Filters is you can mistakenly think you are seeing the whole picture because it looks better than the one Filter picture. The only way to see everything is to spin all three filters.

There is great risk to an organization if it emphasizes one Filter to exclusion of another, even if things are looking good through that Filter. In the year 2000, 3M, a company known for innovation, adopted a new strategy emphasizing quality and efficiency. They hired new CEO, James McNearney, from General Electric, to lead the charge for Six Sigma, a quality management program that emphasizes process improvement. Initially, profits jumped 22% a year. They made \$1.4 billion in profits on \$23 billion in sales. Less than 5 years later, McNearney needed to leave because 3M had lost its innovative edge and business was faltering. The new CEO, George Buckley turned back the clock on Six Sigma to give 3M a chance at bringing back innovation. According to a Business Week article (June 11, 2007), 3M paid a long term price dropping innovation as a core focus. The Business Week article had a headline, "**Six Sigma: So Yesterday?**" Our take on this is the Security—Quality Filter had wonderful impact at first, but when



used to the exclusion of the Future Filter, the company lost its place in the world. Consider a similar article in another business publication, CIO Insight:

The Conflict Between Six Sigma and Innovation

Where conflict occurs, it's often about the definition of unnecessary sources of variability. Many Six Sigma black belts (certified experts in the application of Six Sigma principles) tend to apply the principles as doctrine without regard to context or situational need. People should think outside the box and try different approaches to routine tasks, but the black belts see this as perverting their carefully optimized process by introducing unnecessary sources of variability.

It's tempting to isolate the innovation efforts from the core of the business—and hence from the Six Sigma doctrine—but this is almost always a mistake. It's tempting to force a showdown at the executive level—a sort of sponsor shoot-out—but that's often a mistake as well, because Six Sigma is a good idea and this shouldn't be an either/or outcome. Ultimately, if nothing else works, you may have to change the people who guard the roadblocks, to the benefit of the business's quality improvement and innovation efforts.

John Parkinson, *CIO Insight*, July 23, 2007

If you are starting to see the picture that long term success requires all 3 Filters, try using the filters that are outside your 3-Filter bias. To influence people through a presentation, written document, or Web page, keep in mind that people are filtering out nearly everything you say if it is not compatible with their filters. The only way to get through is to be 3-Filter compliant. This is not easy because our personal vocabularies are consistent with our own filters and it is unnatural to use words that aren't important to us. Force yourself to use at least one word from each of the 3 lists. You can come up with your own formula after you get the hang of it, but to get started try this set of lists.

People	Security	Future
Popular Impress Admire Community Special Debates Join in Accepted We/Us	Proven Avoid Eliminate Thorough Save Listen Resist Solid Reduce	New Win Achieve Quick Speculate Invent Results Growth Powerful
Use Testimony Use Pictures	State Facts Give Guarantees	State Opinions Give Options

Other Models

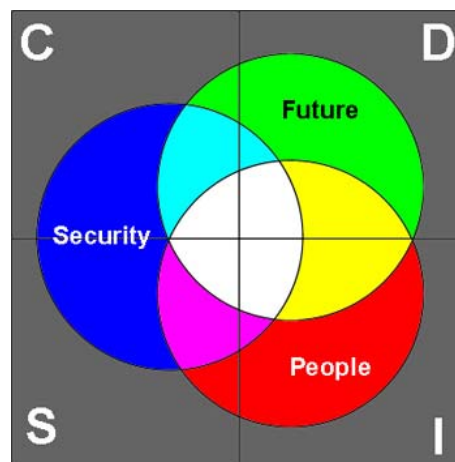
If you have read this far into the paper on 3-Filters, you are probably interested in this type of model and you might be wondering how this fits in within popular 4-Quadrant models. All of these profiles are useful for understanding behavior and the more you use them the more effective you will be with people in multiple situations. The primary difference be-

tween 3-Filters and 4-Quadrant is focus on needs vs. behavior. We all have the same 3 needs all the time. How we meet our needs may be different and can be seen in the 4-Quadrant models that focus on observable behavior.

The following diagram illustrates how 3-Filters can overlay 4-Quadrants.

- The Directing/Driving/Strategize person probably has a strong Future Filter bias, along with a good deal of people and a lesser amount of security.
- The Influencing/Personalize/Expressive person probably has a strong People Filter bias, with a certain amount of Future and a lesser amount of Security.
- The Supportive/Organize/Amiable person probably has a strong Security Filter bias, along with a certain amount of People and a lesser amount of Future.
- The Contemplative/Analyze/Analytical person probably has a strong Security Filter bias, along with a certain amount of Future and a lesser amount of People.

DISC	Whole Brain	Merrill Reid
D Directing	Strategize	Driver
I Influencing	Personalize	Expressive
S Supportive	Organize	Amiable
C Contemplative	Analyze	Analytical



DISC - American Management Association, Center for Applied Research, Inc.
Personal Styles and Effective Performance by David Merrill and Roger Reid
The Whole Brain Business Book by Ned Herman

This gets complicated when you consider that people often show behavior from more than one of the 4-Quadrants. For this reason you should keep the linking of the various models fairly loose rather than seeing it as a direct map. Nevertheless, the patterns are clear and consistent across models. These persistent patterns lend credibility to the idea that there is not a hierarchy of needs, but rather a pattern of needs as represented by overlapping filters.

Situational Leadership

No management text book would be complete without referencing Situational Leadership theory and you may be wondering how 3-Filters overlays that model. According to *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*, the model is as follows:

As a leadership model, the best known example was developed by Paul Hersey, a professor who wrote a well known book *Situational Leader* and Ken Blanchard, the management guru who later became famous for his *One Minute Manager* series. They created a model of situational leadership in the late 1960s in their work *Management of Organizational Behavior* (now in its 9th edition) that allows one to analyze the needs of the situation, then adopt the most appropriate leadership style. It has proved popular with managers over the years because it is simple to understand, and it works in most environments for most people.

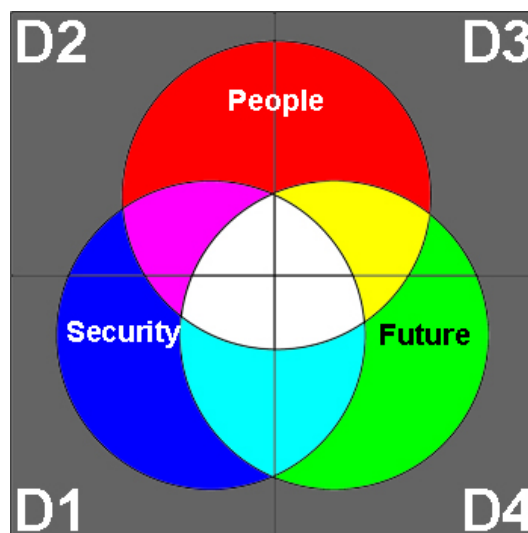
The right leadership style will depend on the person being led - the follower. Blanchard and Hersey extended their model to include the Development Level of

the follower. They stated that the leader's chosen style should be based on the competence and commitment of her followers. They categorized the possible development of followers into four levels, which they named D1 to D4:

- D1: Low Competence, High Commitment - They generally lack the specific skills required for the job in hand. However, they are eager to learn and willing to take direction.
- D2: Some Competence, Low Commitment - They may have some relevant skills, but won't be able to do the job without help. The task or the situation may be new to them.
- D3: High Competence, Variable Commitment - They are experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well or quickly.
- D4: High Competence, High Commitment - They are experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. They may even be more skilled than the leader.

For a manager attempting to see the probable needs of the other person in these situations, you might consider the following application of 3-Filters to these situations:

Situation	Supervision Focus Filter
D1 Low Competence High Commitment	Develop competency by focusing on doing things the right way in the right order and meeting written standards.
D2 Some Competence Low Commitment	As you develop competence, integrate the individual into the team and develop stronger relationships.
D3 High Competence Variable Commitment	As you continue to develop team relationships, start focusing more on the future to develop independence.
D4 High Competence High Commitment	Encourage the person to apply the competency in new ways and allow maximum independence while maintaining quality standards.



Conclusion

3-Filters thinking goes beyond work and is a great tool to use in your personal life, too. It can be fun to see and appreciate the differences among people in our own families. The People Filter brings out the fun in a family and nurtures relationships. The Security Filter keeps a family grounded in reality, avoiding situations that could be harmful. The Future Filter encourages us to explore new territory and prepare for the future with positive anticipation.

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