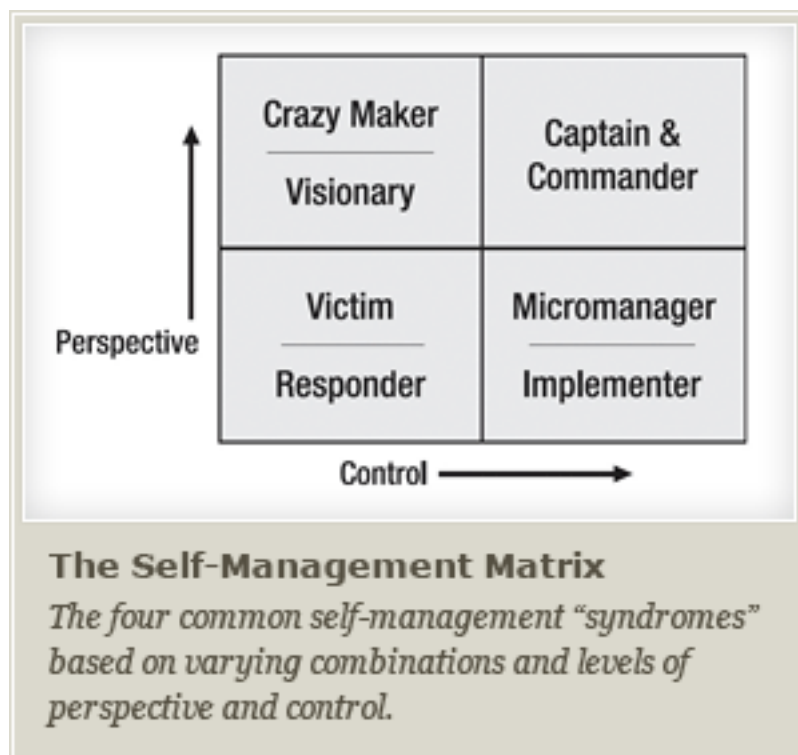


The Matrix Is Relative, Situational, and Fluid

By David Allen

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How individuals experience these quadrants of control and perspective are not cast in stone. You may, because of the nature of your temperament and personality, find yourself more frequently in one pattern than another. But you can easily move into a different quadrant depending on what you're doing and the level at which you are doing it.

For instance, you may have certain areas and projects under control, but not others. You may have a clear perspective on your finances but you're not sure where you're going in a relationship. Your desk is organized but your gym locker is a mess. Your personal life could be humming along nicely, but your professional situation could be in turmoil.

Your profile could also vary by horizon. You might have a clear set of goals for the following year and still have ambiguity about your job description. Your daily calendar and action lists could all be in order, and yet you might not be sure if the job you have is the right one for where you'd ultimately like to be in your career. You may be clear about your life purpose but uncertain about all the projects that you have commitments to complete in the near future. You could have a fulfilling set of personal affirmations and aspirations and still have three thousand unprocessed e-mails yelling at you in your inbox.

Not only can you be a Crazy Maker in your garden and a Micromanager in your golf game, but you can also move from one quadrant to another very quickly within one particular area of your life. You get on top of your workload and your job (Captain and Commander) and get so inspired that you wreak havoc by taking on a huge and ambiguous new project (Crazy Maker). So you run around playing whack-a-mole to patch up the cracks (Micromanager) and then fall down exhausted, feeling like you've gone backward instead of forward (Victim). The next morning you get a grip (Responder), focus on where you're going again (Visionary), integrate your project's plan and actions into your total work inventory (Implementer), and take your partner to dinner because life is good and you're on track again (Captain and Commander).

So what? Our lives are full of an almost infinite number of situations and moments in which we could get more control or get a better viewpoint, or both. The first step in improving what's going on is acceptance of what *is* going on. If you try to resist or refuse to recognize current reality, you'll never find the handlebars. If you seriously try to make things work, it will be very useful to have an awareness of your own position in this matrix. If you want to advance to the level of Captain and Commander, or ensure that you stay there, it is important to understand that there will be different strategies to adopt, depending on the situation in which you find yourself and your relationship to it. You may need more control, or more perspective, or both. And to achieve either of those, you may need to focus on different components of the prescriptive models. The secret to accomplishing all of this will be to notice what is most noticeable to you.

Adapted from "Making It All Work" by David Allen, by arrangement with Viking, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.