**What Style Do I Use?**

Bruce Cannon is the owner of a 5-year-old small plastics company that employs about 20 people. The company consists of three areas: engineering, sales, and production. For each of these areas, there is a single manager. Rick Nakano heads the engineering crew. He is a seasoned engineer and is the oldest employee in the company (he is 55 years old). Rick was hired because of his engineering ability and experience. Before joining the company, Rick worked for 20 years as an engineer for Ford Motor Company. His coworkers perceive him as very competent, even-tempered, and interested in the company. Rick has been spending most of his time in recent weeks on developing a long-range plan for the company. His goal is to develop a creative model for making decisions about future expenditures for materials, equipment, plant development, and personnel. Rick feels good about the way upper management has reacted to the first drafts of his plans. Beth Edwards heads the sales force, which is the smallest unit in the company. Beth is the most recent hire in the company and has 15 years of sales experience in a different product area. Beth’s peers see her as highly motivated but not too knowledgeable about the company’s products. Beth’s goal is to increase the company’s annual sales by 30%. However, the first quarter sales figures indicate the rate of growth to be only 2%. Although Beth has been upbeat since the day she arrived, in recent weeks there have been problems in her department. Her sales staff talks about how little she knows about the plastics industry. In discussions about new products, Beth often is confused. In addition, she has difficulty describing the company’s capabilities to customers because she does not understand fully how a plastics company of this type functions. Steve Lynch is the manager of production and has been with the company since its inception. Steve started out with the company just out of high school, working on the line, and moved up in the company as a result of his hard work. His goal is to streamline production and decrease costs by 10%. He knows production backward and forward but is a bit apprehensive about his new role as production manager. In fact, Steve is afraid he might fail as manager. He does not know whether he is ready to have others depend on him when he has always been the one depending on others. The owner, Bruce, has great faith in Steve and has had several meetings with him to clarify his role and reassure him that he can do the work. He is certain that Steve will be an outstanding production manager. Bruce meets weekly with each of his managers to talk about how their groups are fitting in with the overall company goals. In his upcoming weekly conference, he wants to discuss with them what new procedures they could implement within their departments to improve their long-term performance. Bruce is wondering how he should approach each of his managers.

**Questions**

**1.** If you were Bruce, would you act the same toward each of the three managers?

**2.** Which conference would be the hardest for you, and which would be the easiest? Why?