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## Implementing Effective Correctional Management of Offenders in the Community The Likert Survey

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### Background

The National Institute of Correction and the Crime and Justice Institute's initiative *Implementing Effective Correctional Management of Offenders in the Community* is intended to reduce offender recidivism by using an integrated model to implement evidence-based practices in corrections. The model focuses concurrently on evidence-based practices, organizational development and corrections. The Initiative's National Project Team has chosen to conduct Rensis Likert's Organizational Climate Survey with participating organizations as a means to measure organizational productivity and change over time.

Rensis Likert is one of the founders of business management theory and an applied psychologist. He is best remembered for his research in organizational management and the development of the Likert Survey Scale. Likert developed the survey scale as a means of measuring attitudes while completing his thesis work at Columbia University in 1932. In 1967, he published *The Human Organization: Its Management and Value* in which he developed theories of business management.

### The Survey Structure

Likert used his own categorization system, breaking management styles into the four systems described in Figure 1. These four management systems provide the overall structure for the Likert Organizational Climate Survey.

The fourth system, *participative*, is described as the ideal system for human-concerned organizations.<sup>1</sup> In this system, leadership has confidence in their staff, personnel at all levels feel real responsibility for organizational goals, there is strong communication, and a substantial amount of cooperative teamwork.

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<sup>1</sup> Likert, R. (1967). *The Human Organization: Its Management and Value* (New York: Harper and Row).

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<b>Figure 1</b> <b>Organizational and Performance Characteristics of Different Management Systems</b>				
<b>System</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Trust</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Interaction</b>
<b>System 1:</b> <b>Exploitative-Authoritative</b>	Threats from management serve as the motivation to those in the lower levels of the system.	No trust	Fear, threats, punishment	Little interaction, always distrust
<b>System 2:</b> <b>Benevolent-Authoritative</b>	A less tyrannical system than the first, but one in which there is still a significant lack of communication between the lower and upper levels of the system.	Master / Servant	Reward, punishment	Little interaction, always caution
<b>System 3:</b> <b>Consultative</b>	Marked increase in communication between levels from the previous two groups.	Substantial but incomplete trust	Reward, punishment, some involvement	Moderate interaction, some trust
<b>System 4:</b> <b>Participative</b> <i>(This is the system that Likert describes as ideal.)</i>	People on all levels of the system have responsibility and work together to achieve common goals. Value must be placed on each individual and the importance of respect at all levels of the organization.	Complete trust	Goals based on participation and improvements	Extensive interaction, friendly, high trust

Likert emphasized the importance of the informal structure of the organization and suggested some important aspects of the informal structure that can modify, supplement, or replace the more traditional structural designs used in business and government. His suggestions are based on his research into the following organizational and performance characteristics:

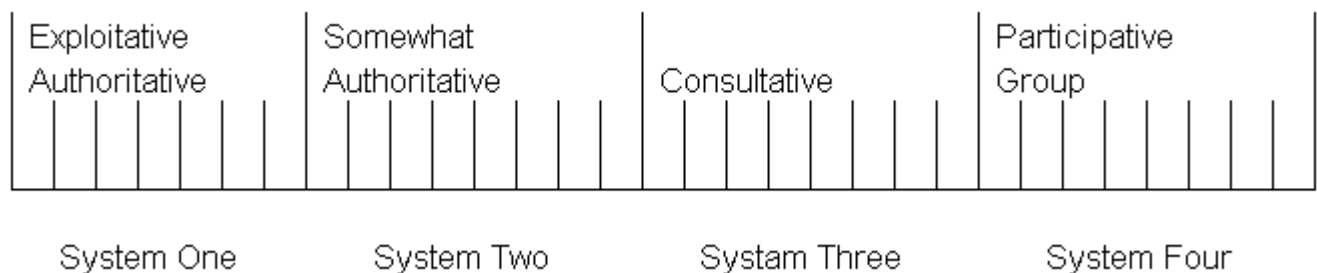
- Leadership processes
- Character of communication process
- Character of motivational forces
- Character of interaction-influence processes
- Character of decision-making processes
- Character of goal setting or ordering
- Character of control process.

These characteristics form the question categories in Likert's Organizational Climate Survey. Each response continuum is divided into four intervals relating to the four management styles / systems (Figure 2). In completing the survey, participants are asked to place an "X" on the

continuum at the point which best describes their organization. Responses which fall to the left of the center of the continuum are indicative of an authoritative system of management while those that fall to the right of center indicate a system which is more participative. Likert found that the lowest productivity organizations fall to the left of the continuum and that the organizations falling to the right of the continuum have the highest productivity.

However, each organization is different and has different productivity indicators. Therefore the assessment is structured so that organizations are measured against their own notion of “ideal” in each of the 18 questions. Each question is answered two ways, first, how things are now and second, the perceived “ideal” for that question. By allowing each organization to set its own benchmark “ideal,” the survey honors the specific needs of the specific correctional agency surveyed.

**Figure 2. Likert's Management Systems**<sup>2</sup>



Survey participants are then asked to place an “O” on the continuum at the point which best describes their ideal organization. There is often a gap between survey participants’ description of their current organization and their ideal organization. This gap can then be used to identify and prioritize areas in which an agency can focus its organizational development efforts. Survey’s conducted at regular intervals can be used to identify trends and measure progress of these organizational development efforts.

<sup>2</sup> Likert, R. *The Human Organization*.