



Module 9.2 Situational Leadership Reading

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Organization/Group Development Level

Similar to the styles of a leader – task vs. people, the team member needs to be competent as well as committed to their assigned tasks. The two major components of the developmental levels are:

1. **Ability:** the job related knowledge, experience, and proficiency of individual or group.
 - a. Knowledge represents the theoretical understanding
 - b. Experience is the application of the knowledge to accomplish the task.
 - c. Proficiency is measure of quality and timeliness of the task, both knowledge and experience aids proficiency.

2. **Willingness:** the confidence, commitment and motivation demonstrated for the assigned task. Willingness is not independent of ability but rather closely related, lack of experience leads to lack of confidence, which in turn might lower the commitment level. However, the excitement to do something new might heighten the motivation.

Supported by the two components above, there are four possible developmental levels

1. Low: (*low ability & low willingness*). The group or individual are new to the task, they lack experience, unclear about directions, unwilling and insecure due to lack of confidence in completing the task.
2. Low-Moderate (*low ability – high willingness*). The group or individual have begun to be productive, but mostly due to being given proper directions. Their initial success in task completion makes them more enthusiastic and confident. Their dependence on the leader makes them good listeners who are eager to seek clarity; they began to open up with their leader in a two-way communication.
3. Moderate-High (*high ability- low willingness*). The group or individual have attained sufficient proficiency in their job, but their willingness towards task accomplishment reduces suddenly. Once the followers become productive in their assignments, the leaders automatically reduce the amount of directions they generally provide, putting the burden of taking decisions on the followers. Hence there is a shift from “leader-directed decisions” to “self-directed decisions”; this shift results in reduced confidence and thereby willingness on the part of followers.
4. High (*high ability-high willingness*). The group or individual has attained required proficiency in the task and they are able to take decisions independently, they

perform to highest standards and keep the leader informed of their progress.

The SL Model incorporates the two dimensions in the leadership grid - task vs. competence. The model premise is that leaders enhance the development level of other team members by assessing competency levels in the context of the task that is to be accomplished. If the developmental level is low, leader must exhibit higher task concern, or should be directing the team member.

Task-oriented behavior can be considered as “directive”, implying giving directions on how to proceed with the task, establishing goals, setting timelines etc. represents a one-way communication with the leader directing while the team member follows the directions.

Similarly, people oriented behavior can be considered as “supportive”, implying a two way communication with the leader contributing social and emotional support. The team members actively participate with leader in discussions, with the leader actively listening and praising the team members.

The SL Model has four distinct situational leadership styles:

Directing: (*high directive- low supportive*): leader gives instructions about what and how task goals are to be achieved by other team members and supervises them. There is little “supported” behavior exhibited by the leader, most interactions are constraint to achieving the task.

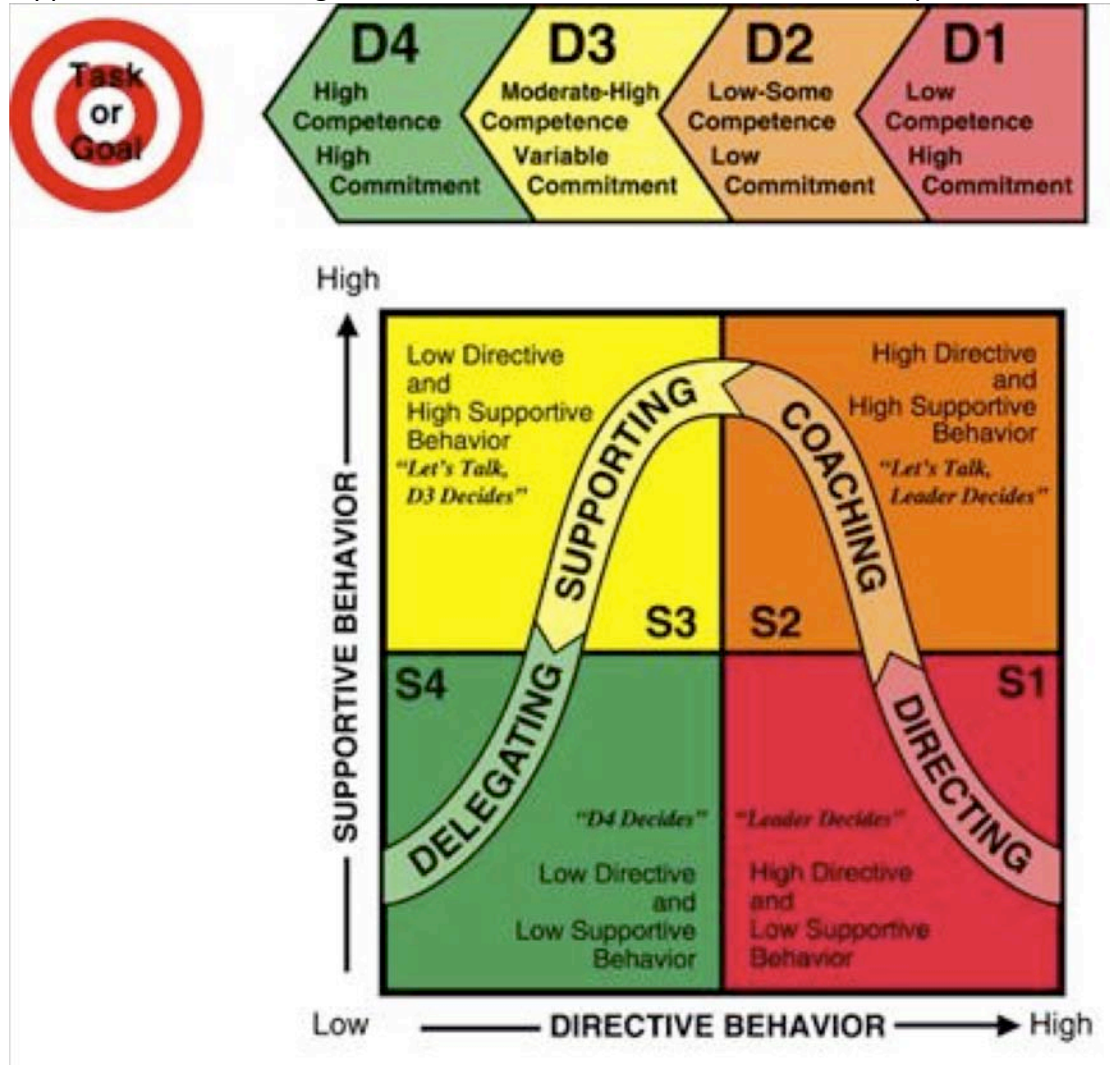
Coaching: (*high directive-high supportive*): an extension of directive style. Leader still provides detailed directions and makes the decisions. The leader focuses on giving encouragement, explaining the reasons for decisions, and solicits inputs from the team members. In this style, the leader acts like a *coach* for the followers.

Participating: (*low directive-high supportive*): leader tries to make the team member more independent in achieving their task, allowing them to take routine decisions while still trying to facilitate high level problem solving. The leader shares the ideas with the team while refraining from taking final decisions. However, the leader still maintains a high level of supportive behavior by quickly giving recognitions and providing necessary social support. In this style, the leader acts as a *sincere friend* for the team member.

Delegating: (*low directive-low supportive*): the leader lessens involvement in the activities of the team members since the team members have attained necessary skills to carry out the assigned tasks independently. Once the details of the tasks and goals are agreed upon, the leader gives complete freedom to the team members on how they want to accomplish and deliver the task. In this style, both leader and team members acts as *independently as possible*.

The Situational Leadership method (K Blanchard & P Hersey) is predicated on team

members' competences in their task areas and commitment to their tasks, leadership style should vary from one person to another. During the life of a project leading the same person one way sometimes, and another way at other times is good leadership because it characterizes leadership style in terms of the amount of direction and of support that the leader gives to his or her followers, and creates a simple matrix.



Leadership Behavior of the Leader

- S1 – Telling / Directing – High task focus, low relationship focus – leaders define the roles and tasks of the team, and supervise them closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one-way. For people who lack competence, but are enthusiastic and committed. They need direction and supervision to get them started.
- S2 – Selling / Coaching – High task focus, high relationship focus – leaders still define roles and tasks, but seeks ideas and suggestions from the follower. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more two-way. For people who have some competence but lack commitment. They need direction

and supervision because they are still relatively inexperienced. They also need support and praise to build their self-esteem, and involvement in decision-making to restore their commitment.

- S3 – Participating / Supporting – Low task focus, high relationship focus – leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the team member. The leader facilitates and takes part in decisions, but control is with the follower. For people who have competence, but lack confidence or motivation. They do not need much direction because of their skills, but support is necessary to bolster their confidence and motivation.
- S4 – Delegating – Low task focus, low relationship focus – leaders are still involved in decisions and problem-solving, but control is with the team member. The team member decides when and how the leader will be involved. For people who have both competence and commitment. They are able and willing to work on a project by themselves with little supervision or support.

Effective leaders are versatile in being able to move around the matrix according to the situation, so there is no style that is always right. However, we tend to have a preferred style, and in applying Situational Leadership you need to know which one that is for you. Likewise, the competence and commitment of the follower can also be distinguished in 4 quadrants.

Development Level of the Team Member

- D4 – High Competence, High Commitment – Experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. May even be more skilled than the leader.
- D3 – High Competence, Variable Commitment – Experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well / quickly.
- D2 – Some Competence, Low Commitment – 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.
- D1 – Low Competence, High Commitment – Generally lacking the specific skills required for the job in hand, but has the confidence and / or motivation to tackle it.

Similar to the leadership styles, the development levels are also situational. A person could be skilled, confident and motivated for one part of his job, but could be less competent for another part of the job.

The Leadership Style (S1 – S4) of the leader must correspond to the Development level (D1 – D4) of the team member – and it's the leader who adapts. By adopting the right style to suit the member's development level, work gets done, relationships are built up, and most importantly, the member's development level will rise to D4, to everyone's benefit. Hersey states that task behavior is the extent to which

a leader engages in one-way communication by explaining what each team member is to do, as well as when, where, and how tasks are to be accomplished. Relationship behavior is the extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication by providing socio-emotional support, "psychological strokes", and facilitating behaviors. Readiness is the ability and willingness of a person to take responsibility for directing their own behavior in relation to a specific task to be performed.

According to Situational Leadership®, as the level of readiness of the team member continues to increase in terms of accomplishing a specific task, the leader should begin to reduce task behavior and increase relationship behavior. This should be the case until the individual or team reaches a moderate level of readiness. As the team member begins to move to an above average level of readiness, it becomes appropriate for the leader to decrease not only task behavior but relationship behavior as well. Now the team member is not only ready in terms of the performance of the task but also is confident and committed. People at this level of readiness see a reduction of close supervision and an increase in delegation by the leader as a positive indication of trust and confidence.

Situational Leadership® Model helpful to managers in diagnosing the demands of their situation has been developed as a result of extensive research. Situational Leadership is based on interplay among the amount of:

Direction (task behavior) a leader gives
Socio-emotional support (relationship behavior) a leader provides
"Readiness" level that team members exhibit on a specific task, function, activity, or objective that the leader is attempting to accomplish through the team

Strengths of the Situational Leadership Model. Benefits

- Easy to understand
- Easy to use

Limitations of the Situational Leadership Model. Disadvantages

- Model fails to distinguish between leadership and management. What is called leadership style is really management style.

Assumptions of Situational Leadership. Conditions

- Leaders should adapt their style to follower 'maturity', based on how ready and willing the follower is to perform required tasks (that is, their competence and motivation).

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