

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A simple explanation of situational leadership

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This is one of the most popular leadership approach developed for the first time by P. Hersey and K.H. Blanchard in the 1969. Though there were many scholars who researched on this theory, Hersey and Blanchard were the first who developed this based on the 3-D management theory by Bill Reddin in the year 1967.

The simple premise of this leadership approach is that every situation in an organization requires different kinds of leadership style. A leader has to adapt his style to deal with the situation at that time.

In this approach the leader should first understand his subordinate's competency and then decide whether he has to take a directive dimension or supportive dimension to his approach to handle the situation.

I have given below the situational leadership model II from by K.H. Blanchard (1985).

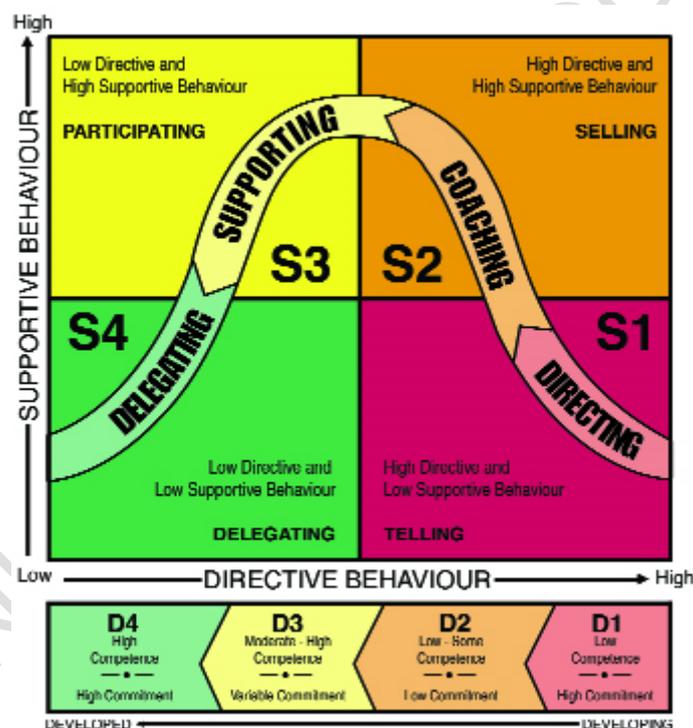


Figure: Situational Leadership Model II

Picture source: <https://changingwinds.wordpress.com/2015/02/15/what-can-situational-leadership-teach-us/>

Explanation of this Situational Leadership Model:

S1 Style:

Given that leadership styles are categorised into four types of behaviours, supportive and directive. The first style is the S1 behaviour, which is called as directing style. In this style the leader is highly directive and less supportive. In this quadrant the leader focusses on establishing goals and giving direction to subordinates, with strong and effective communication. The leaders focus is on goal achievement and

therefore he focusses on encouraging and motivating his subordinates. The leader spends very little time on supporting his subordinates.

S2 Style:

In this leadership style the leader is exhibiting high directive and high supportive behaviour. Here in this approach the leader is focussing equally on achieving goals and also supporting his/her subordinates to meet their needs and problems. The leader goes into a coaching mode to communicate with his subordinates by constantly encouraging them and also take their input when required.

S3 Style:

In this approach the leader takes a highly supportive and low directing style. The leader focusses his time on supporting his subordinates by helping them use their skills to achieve the tasks to be completed. In this process the leader will understand the challenges of his/her subordinates, helping them overcome these challenges, encouraging them, motivating them and giving them feedback on their performance.

S4 style:

This is the low supportive and low directive approach. In this approach the leader focusses more on delegating work. The leader first agrees with his team the task to be completed or the goal to be accomplished and then gives responsibility to the team to complete the work. In this style the control of the work is given to the team. The leader only interferes in the work of the team only if necessary but monitors progress of work.

Development level of subordinates:

The development level of subordinates is degree to which the subordinates are competent to completed work or accomplish a goal. The figure below shows various levels of commitment and competency of subordinates necessary for a given task. Based on these employees can be categorised into four categories: D1, D2, D3 and D4 (shown in figure):

How does this approach work?

First the leader should understand the situation. Then the following question must be answered:

- Are the subordinate sufficiently skilled to accomplish the task?
- What tasks are they being asked to perform?
- What is complexity of the task?
- Do the subordinates have the desire to complete the task after they start?

Based on the answers to these questions the leader can identify the development level of the subordinates. The leader then adapts the leadership style to the style shown in Situational Leadership Model II.

References:

- "Leadership: Theory and Practice", Peter Northouse, 2007, Sage Publications.
- What Can Situational Leadership Teach Us?. Retrieved from <https://changingwinds.wordpress.com/2015/02/15/what-can-situational-leadership-teach-us/>, September 6, 2019