

Introduction

The situational leadership theory, developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard (1977), is based upon two continuums — the required level of supervision and arousal required to coach workers in specific situations so that they develop into great performers:

Ken Blanchard (1985) later refined the model and changed the term Situational Leadership Theory to simply Situational Leadership. In his model, leadership is the act of providing the correct amount of supervision (Directing Behavior) and arousal (Supportive Behavior), which in turn, produces the best learning and developmental environment as shown in the model.

Credits: <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadmodels.html>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Situational_leadership_theory

Supervision (directing)

The employee's skill and knowledge level determines the level of supervision (what the authors call Directing). On one end of the continuum is over-supervision, while the other end is under-supervision. The goal is to hit the sweet-spot. Under-supervision leads to miscommunication, lack of coordination, and the perception by subordinates that the leader does not care.

Over-supervision stifles initiative, breeds resentment, and lowers morale. The goal is to provide the correct amount of supervision that is determined by the employee's skill and knowledge level.

Arousal (supporting)

The employee's skill and knowledge level determines the amount of arousal or emotional support required (what the authors call Supporting). This emotional support raises or lowers the task holder's arousal level (the inner-drive within our self-system). A certain level of arousal motivates us toward change (learning). However, too much or too little will over or under stimulate our behavior. In highly cognitive tasks a low arousal is required as over-stimulation may occur (and vice-versa).

Four Step Model

Situational Leadership is basically is a four-step model, however, depending upon the situation, you can jump into any step as required (depending on how well an employee can perform and is motivated to perform) :

- 1. Directing** - Provide lots of direction (learner does not know how to perform) and a small amount of support..
- 2. Coaching** - Decrease direction (so that learner can learn by trial and error) and increase support (needs emotional support due to some failure).
- 3. Supporting** - Decrease direction even more (so that learner can become self-supporting) and decrease support.
- 4. Delegating** - Provide direction and support on an as-needed basis.

Diagram

Maturity Levels

The right leadership style will depend on the person or group being led. The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory identified four levels of maturity:

■ **M1** - They still lack the specific skills required for the job in hand and are unable and unwilling to do or to take responsibility for this job or task. (According to Ken Blanchard "The honeymoon is over")

■ **M2** - They are unable to take on responsibility for the task being done; however, they are willing to work at the task. They are novice but enthusiastic.

■ **M3** - They are experienced and able to do the task but lack the confidence or the willingness to take on responsibility.

■ **M4** - They are experienced at the task, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. They are able and willing to not only do the task, but to take responsibility for the task.

Maturity Levels are also task-specific. A person might be generally skilled, confident and motivated in their job, but would still have a maturity level M1 when asked to perform a task requiring skills they don't possess.

Developing people and self-motivation

A good leader develops "the competence and commitment of their people so they're self-motivated rather than dependent on others for direction and guidance." According to Hersey a leader's high, realistic expectation causes high performance of followers; a leader's low expectations lead to low performance of followers. According to Ken Blanchard, "Four combinations of competence and commitment make up what we call 'development level.'"

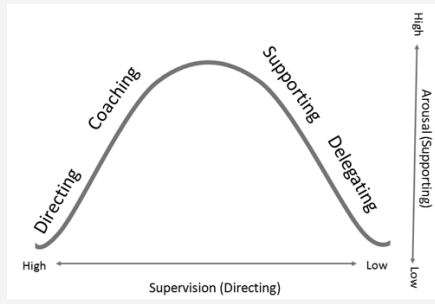
■ **D1** - Low competence and high commitment[5]

■ **D2** - Low competence and low commitment

■ **D3** - High competence and low/variable commitment

■ **D4** - High competence and high commitment

In order to make an effective cycle, a leader needs to motivate followers properly.



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Page 1 of 2.

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