

# **Situational Leadership and Empowerment**

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To Start with...

For years, when people talked about leadership style, they talked in terms of two extremes – an autocratic (directive) and a democratic (supportive) style. Autocratic leaders used position power and their authority to get results while democratic leaders used personal resources (power) and involved others in participative problem-solving and decision-making.

But then onwards the mode of business, culture exchange, communication, and development changed the corporate world. The modern business is delivering time and mission critical solution in faster pace. People from different background, culture & nature are engaged together in a single platform of solution. The rate of risks, criticalities are higher, which require a change in the style of handling the situation, adopt changed and satisfy the need from parent organization to client organization. Also, experience and further research, however, showed that leadership style tend to vary considerably from situation to situation.

And, that's where leadership style, and leadership model that presumes that different leadership styles are better in different situations, and that leaders must be flexible enough to adapt their style to the situation they are in. We can define it as the relationship between a leader's style and his or her environment to influence the performance of subordinates and empower team with energy and positive mindset.

### **The changes from general leadership style to situational**

We can relate general leadership to two types of behavior, task and relationship. Task behavior is associated with goal attainment while relationship behavior is synonymous with interpersonal relations.

Interpersonal behavior of this sort is generally associated with creating a comfortable psychological environment for subordinates, especially as it relates to how subordinates feel about themselves, other group members, and the general circumstances they find themselves in. Closely related to relationship behaviors are two issues—a leader's concern for production and a leader's concern for people.

Coming to situational approach, the relationship between a leader's style and his or her environment always influence the performance of subordinates. Also, this model allows you to analyze the needs of the situation you are in and then use the most appropriate leadership style; depending on employee competences in their task areas and commitment to their tasks the leadership style will also change from person to person. The overriding assumption is that a leader can adopt an "appropriate" style under certain circumstances.

### **Two fundamental concepts: leadership behavior and development**

The model of support, commitment, and competence which is required at the situation where the leader is in has proved popular with managers over the years because it is simple to understand, and it works in most environments for most people.

## Leadership styles

We can characterize “Leadership style” in terms of the amount of direction and support that the leader provides to his or her followers. This will be counted throughout their interpersonal relation and in organizational engagement. There are four kinds of behavior:

- Directing Leaders define the roles and tasks of the 'follower', and supervise them closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one-way.
- Coaching 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.
- Supporting Leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the follower. The leader facilitates and takes part in decisions, but control is with the follower.
- Delegating Leaders are still involved in decisions and problem-solving, but control is with the follower. The follower decides when and how the leader will be involved.

Of these, no one style is considered optimal or desired for all leaders to possess. Effective leaders need to be flexible, and must adapt themselves according to the situation. However, each leader tends to have a natural style, and in applying Situational Leadership she must know her intrinsic style.

## Development levels

The leader style of working is directly applied on the development of the follower. The above behaviors can be extended to the development level of the follower. Leader's chosen style should be based on the competence and commitment of his/her followers. These can be categorized the possible development of followers into four levels:

1. Low Competence, High Commitment - They generally lack the specific skills required for the job in hand, however, they are eager to learn and willing to take direction.
2. Some Competence, Low Commitment - They 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.
3. High Competence, Variable Commitment - They are experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well or quickly.
4. High Competence, High Commitment - They are experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. They may even be more skilled than the leader.

Development Levels are also situational. A member might be generally skilled, confident and motivated in his/her job, but would still drop into point 1 when faced, say, with a task requiring skills they don't possess. For example, many managers are in point 4 when dealing with the day-to-day running of their department, but move to point 1 or point 2 when dealing with a sensitive employee issue.

### **How you can implement this in your working environment?**

Being a leader you need to

- Adopt a style which is natural to you
- Exercise a set of operation which suits both you and your follower
- Create an environment which is comfortable to execute those operations

Use the simple but “must be” steps, process

- Make an overview of your follower’s tasks
- Assess the employee on each task using the “development level” concept
- Decide on leadership or management style using “leadership style” concept
- Discuss the situation with employee and create environment for execution
- Make a joint plan and milestone
- Follow up, check and correct
- Encourage the follower in every milestone for next one and congratulate

### **Empowerment through leadership**

Empowerment can assist any leader (who is willing to make some key changes) tap the knowledge, skills, experience, and motivation of every person in the company. Leaders who empower people are placing additional responsibility for results on the team members. Empowerment is not soft management. But even though it places high expectations on people, team members embrace empowerment because it leads to the joys of involvement, ownership, and growth. Unfortunately, too few leaders and team members understand how to create a culture of empowerment.

Leader chooses the right work for the right people and for a right reason. The reason should be visible and measurable. The right work may be anything outside of the daily assignment. Leader May have to guide, track the new set of work. Encourage the team member for every small change took place towards the goal/milestone and correct the mistaken area with a positive attitude. Example of great leaders on the same area will encourage the team member more to take up innovative step towards the solution.

### **Leadership Effectiveness**

Leadership effectiveness depends on both the leader's personality and the situation. Certain leaders are effective in one situation but not in others, and it's therefore a situational theory in the meaning that there is no one best way of leading.

Fiedler\* introduced the contingency modeling of leadership to determine the leader personality and the situation and he used three methods:

### **1. Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) Scale**

Fiedler identified the a Least Preferred Co-Worker scoring for leaders by asking them first to think of a person with whom they worked with, whom they would like least to work with again, and then to score the person on arrange of scales between positive factors (friendly, helpful, cheerful, etc.) and negative factors (unfriendly, unhelpful, gloomy, etc.). A high LPC leader generally scores the other person as positive and a low LPC leader scores them as negative.

### **2. Situational Favorableness**

According to Fiedler, there is no ideal leader. Both low-LPC (task-oriented) and high-LPC (relationship-oriented) leaders can be effective if their leadership orientation fits the situation. The contingency theory allows for predicting the characteristics of the appropriate situations for effectiveness. Three situational components determine the favorableness or situational control.

Leader-Member Relations: The extent to which the leader has the support and loyalties of followers and relations with them are friendly and cooperative.

Task structure: The extent, to which tasks are standardized, documented and controlled.

Leader's Position-power: The extent to which the leader has authority to assess follower performance and give reward or punishment.

### **3. Leader-Situation Match and Mismatch**

Since personality is relatively stable, the contingency model suggests that improving effectiveness requires changing the situation to fit the leader. This is called "job engineering". The organization or the leader may increase or decrease task structure and position power, also training and group development may improve leader-member relations.

\* Fred Edward Fiedler (born 1922) was one of the leading scientists in Industrial and Organizational Psychology of the 20th century. He helped this field move from the research on traits and personal characteristics of leaders, to leadership styles and behaviors. In 1967 he introduced the contingency modeling of leadership, with the now-famous Fiedler's contingency model.

## Exceptions

There are few opposing in the LPC theory, as its falls short on flexibility to define actual to rating:

- LPC scores can fail to reflect the personality traits it is supposed to reflect
- LPC method reveals an individual's emotional reaction to people with whom he or she cannot work. Critics point out, that this is not always an accurate measurement.

## Effectiveness in Growing organizations

As a growing up companies, it is very much important to hold the faith and trust of employee and client and move forward towards future goal of becoming a Market leader.

The following area will make any organization motivated till grass root level

- Leadership
- Team building and empowerment
- Innovation

Leadership attitude needs to come from the higher management to project management. By following an effective leadership process our organization can ensure that every employee is able to meet his/her goal of career and satisfaction of being the larger family of company. Large number of employee will feel for taking up more initiative on innovation & encourage others to enrich more on knowledge. These changes will ensure an organization through culture individual responsibility and coaching for better quality.

Organization and employee will hold a win-win relation for a successful future. When an organization is large enough then “culture” which turns to be the key of success. And, leadership is the cream of culture.

## In a Nutshell

Situational Leadership can be used as a framework to give leaders the guidance they need to coach their people throughout the performance coaching cycle. During the initial meeting, Situational Leadership guides the leader in setting the degree of participation for the planning and goal-setting process. During the rest of the period, it guides the leader in each interaction with the follower.

The underlying principle in Situational Leadership is that leaders should adjust their leadership styles to their followers' readiness level (ability and willingness) to perform a given task.

Leadership is the amount of task behavior (direction) and relationship behavior (support) given by a leader. And, a proper leadership can empower the members to come up to a level where they set an example for themselves.

## Reference

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