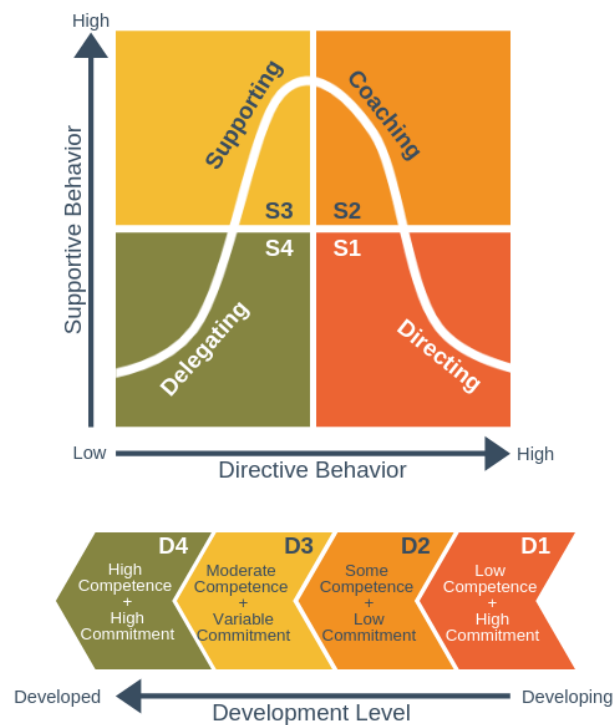


Situational Leadership

Situational Leadership Model



An Introduction

Introduction

Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Model: Adapting the Leadership Style to the Follower

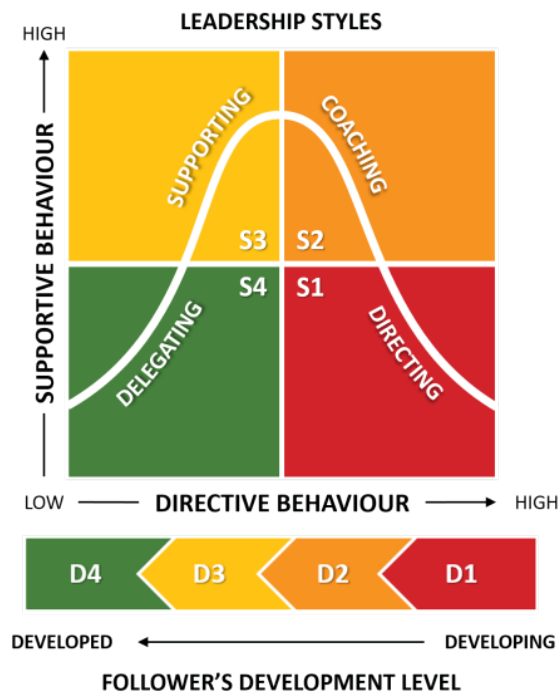
As reaction to behavioural leadership approaches such as Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid, Hersey and Blanchard developed a theory (Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory) that suggests that the most effective leadership style is affected by the circumstances leaders find themselves in.

They argue that a leader's ability to lead depends upon certain situational factors. By understanding, recognizing and adapting to these factors, leaders will be able to influence their surroundings and followers much more successfully than if these factors are ignored.

More specifically, Hersey and Blanchard focused a great part of their research on the characteristics of followers in determining appropriate leadership behaviours. They found that leaders would have to modify their leadership style as their followers changed in terms of their **ability (Task Readiness)** and **willingness (Psychological Readiness)** to perform the required task.

A leader's relationship with followers is therefore likely to go through different stages as these abilities and willingness can change over time. This document will explore the four leadership styles Hersey and Blanchard came up with in order to better deal with these different stages of followers.

1. **Telling / Directing**
2. **Selling / Coaching**
3. **Participating / Support**
4. **Delegating**



An important note about Hersey and Blanchard :

Even though Hersey and Blanchard worked together for years to support the notion that leadership styles should be situational, they decided to go separate ways in 1977 to focus on their own agendas. Hence, the Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Model, which was originally labelled The Life Cycle Theory of Leadership, has developed into two slightly divergent models.

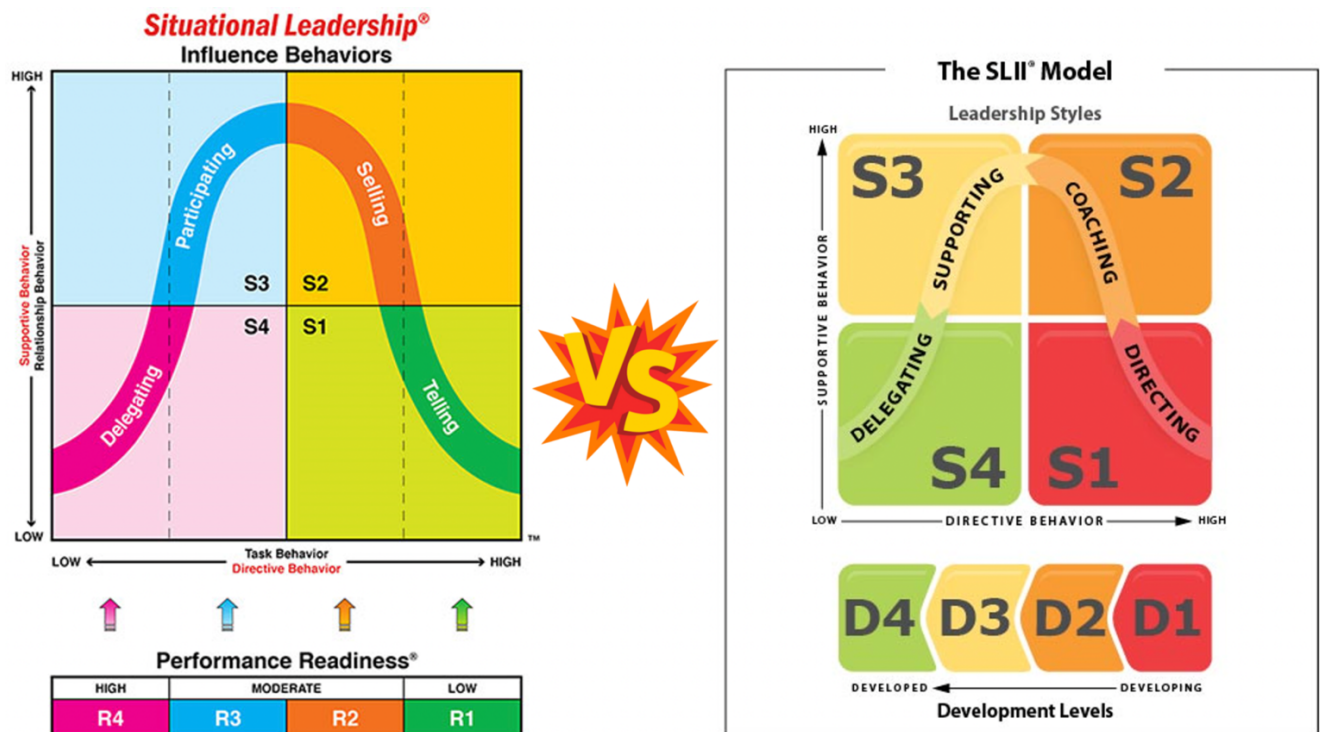
Blanchard decided to call his version of the model The Situational Leadership II Model (or SLII Model).

Figure 2 shows the two different version next to each other.

The major differences are related to semantics: where Hersey used the word 'Readiness (R)', Blanchard preferred to use 'Development (D)'.

And where Hersey used 'Telling', 'Selling' and 'Participating', Blanchard used the words 'Directing', 'Coaching' and 'Supporting' respectively.

Figure 2 :



State of Readiness of the followers

Follower's Task Readiness (Task Development)

A follower's or subordinate's Task Readiness covers their ability to deliver what has been asked of them. Their skills, knowledge, and ability will affect their delivery of a task independently of a leader's guidance. Blanchard preferred to use the word Development instead of Readiness as followers are likely to 'grow' in their abilities throughout time. Moreover, Blanchard used the term **Competence** (meaning: skills, knowledge and abilities) instead of Hersey's term **Ability**.

Follower's Psychological Readiness (Psychological Development)

A follower's or subordinate's Psychological Readiness is the degree to which they are willing to take on responsibility for their actions. This includes aspects such as their motivation, drive, energy and confidence in their own ability. For this, Blanchard used the term **Commitment** (meaning: confidence and motivation) instead of Hersey's term **Willingness**.

R1 (D2): Unable and Unwilling (Low Competence and Low Commitment)

A follower with a R1-status is unable to complete the required task, because they do not possess the necessary set of skills to perform well. Moreover, they are either unwilling to deliver the required task or lack self-confidence. Note that Blanchard labelled this follower style with D2 instead of D1. The reason behind this choice is that Blanchard views this follower style as the second stage in a follower's evolutionary development.

R2 (D1): Unable and Willing (Low Competence and High Commitment)

A R2 follower is just like a R1 follower unable to perform a certain task, but in contrast to a R1 follower, willing to try anyway. In other words: they are motivated to attempt the task even though they lack the skills, knowledge and/or ability to do so. This follower style is often seen with new employees who are keen to impress their supervisor, but still lack the work experience to be productive right from the start. Because of this, Blanchard decided to label this follower style with D1, as it is likely to be the first stage of a follower's development. As followers gain experience they reach development level 2 (D2) and gain some competence, but their commitment drops because the task may be more complex than the follower had originally perceived at the start of the task.

R3 (D3): Able and Unwilling (High Competence and Low Commitment)

R3 followers are likely to be able to perform well on their task, since they have developed the necessary skill set. The problem, however, is that they are unwilling to do so. The reason for this behaviour are twofold: followers could be unmotivated to comply with the leader's request or could (still) be nervous about performing the task without enough support and encouragement from the leader. In Blanchard's vocabulary of the D3 follower style, commitment is variable as it starts off as low, but gradually grows bigger due to more self-esteem and confidence until a follower reaches D4.

R4 (D4): Able and Willing (High Competence and High Commitment)

Lastly, we have the R4 followers: they are ready, able and willing to perform. This means that followers are experienced at the required task and comfortable with their own ability to do it well and independently. They are able and willing to not only do the task, but to take responsibility for it. In this stage, both competence and commitment are considered to be high in terms of Blanchard's version of the Situational Leadership Model.

Leadership Styles

Leader's Directive Behaviour

Based on these different follower styles, leaders should adapt their leadership style in such a way that it meets the needs of their subordinates. They can do so by finding the right balance between Directive and Supportive behaviour. A leader's directive behaviour will fall somewhere on a spectrum from high to low and reflects the '**concern for production**'-dimension of Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid. This implies to what extent a leader puts emphasis on the concern to get the job done by being task-focused. The appropriate level of directive behaviour that leaders will have to choose depends on the readiness or development level of followers.

Leader's Supportive Behaviour

A leader's supportive behaviour reflects the '**concern for people**' dimension of Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid. This means to what extent a leader puts emphasis on building and maintaining a good relationship with subordinates by paying attention to the security, well-being and personal needs of the employees. The appropriate level of this relationship-focused approach is just like the directive behaviour determined by the readiness or development level of followers.

S1: Telling (Directing)

The S1 leadership style in the Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Model puts a high emphasis on directive behaviour and a low emphasis on supportive behaviour. A leader's primary concern lays with the task delivery and less with the personal needs of the subordinates.

Typical behaviour for a S1 leadership style, according to Hersey, is offering step-by-step instructions, clear explanation of the consequences of non-performance and close supervision. In such a situation, it is important that the task is clearly defined and the stages of the process are easy to follow. This is important because the leader believes that the follower (R1) either does not know what to do or is unwilling and requires therefore a certain degree of coercive power.

Blanchard, on the other hand, believes that this style should be used for D1 followers who are highly '**Enthusiastic Beginners**'. They already have the motivation to do the tasks required, which lowers the need for supportive behaviour. But they still lack the competence, which increases their need for directive behaviour.

S2: Selling (Coaching)

The next leadership style is the high directive and high supportive S2 leadership style. Hersey argued that this style is needed for R2 followers who are willing, but not able to perform a task. The leader's style should therefore be concerned with increasing the confidence and skills of followers so that they can ultimately take on more responsibility for their actions. Blanchard, however, believes this style is necessary for D2 followers, who used to be highly enthusiastic in the beginning but who lost confidence because their competences are

failing them. These '**Disillusioned Learners**' therefore need a leader with a higher concern for supportive behaviour that helps them gain confidence and become motivated again.

S3: Participating (Supporting)

The S3 leadership style applies to both R3 and D3 followers. This style (still) shows high supportive behaviours, but low directive behaviours. This may involve listening, praise and a high level of interaction between leader and follower.

In addition, the leader puts a high level of trust in the follower to achieve the day-to-day tasks as the follower's competence has also grown over time. The leader will therefore only encourage and offer feedback when needed to motivate and develop the subordinate, but not as a comment on the task performance.

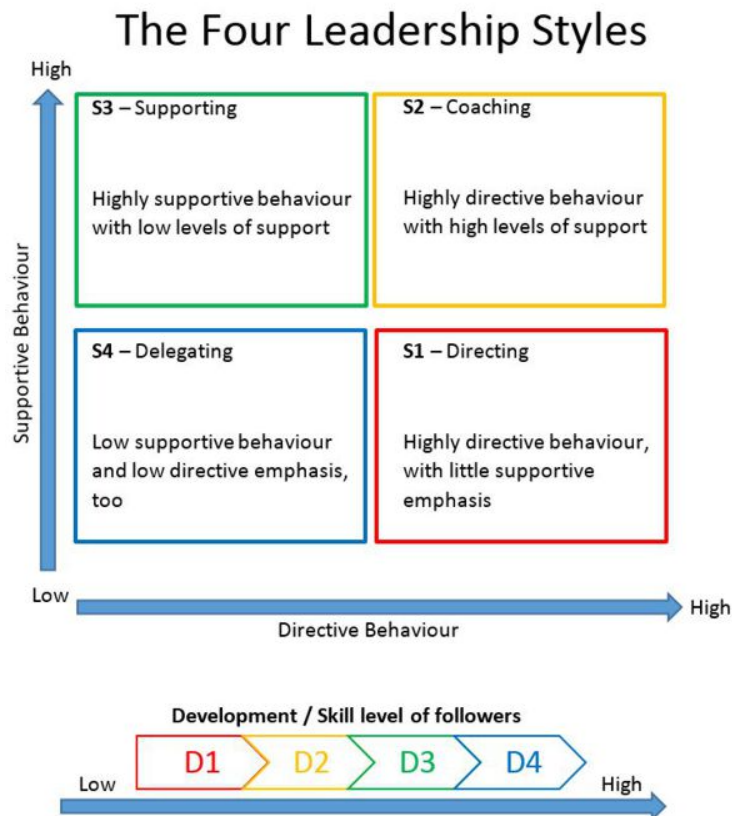
This is because the leader believes that the follower is capable enough of achieving the required tasks largely independently.

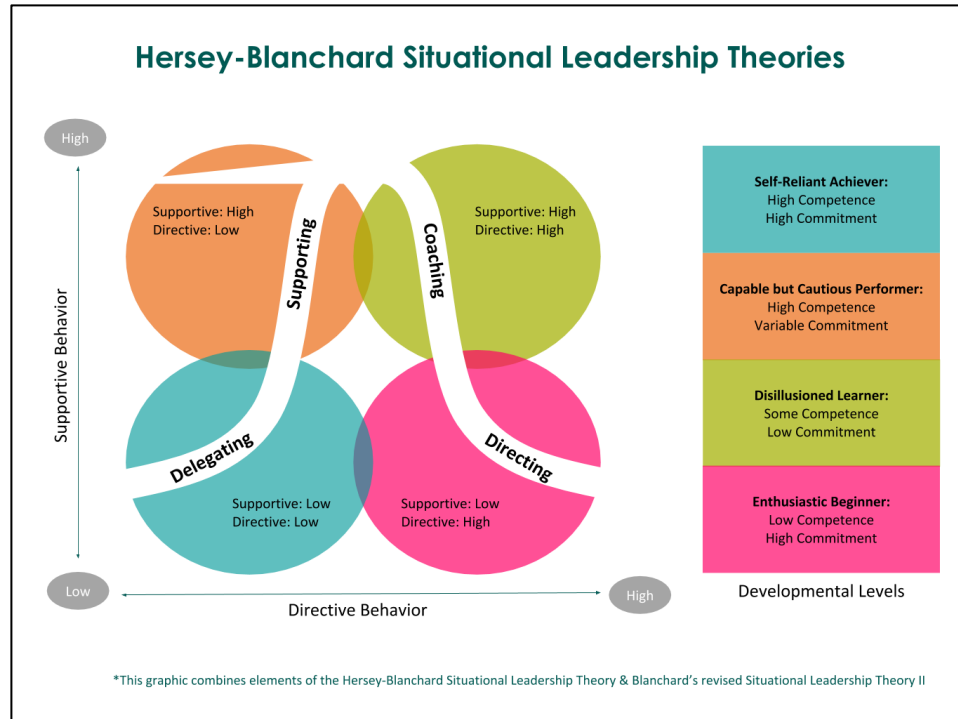
S4: Delegating

The final leadership style assumes a low supportive and a low directive behaviour and applies to R4 and D4 followers.

This is very much a 'hands-off approach' as the subordinate is perfectly able and willing to perform the tasks independently and with great responsibility.

The leader can further encourage autonomy, while keeping an eye on not overloading the follower with responsibility and not withdrawing completely from the follower's proximity. For these type of followers it is thus important as a leader to keep observing and monitoring them (albeit to a far lesser degree), in order to provide the necessary support if needed.





Situational Leadership Self-Evaluations

As part of your pre-workshop preparation, you are also expected to do the Situational Leadership Self-Evaluation.

There are 2 versions of this self-evaluation:

1. For Team Leaders (if you have a team of people reporting to you)
2. For Senior Leaders (if you have more than one team reporting to you)

They are very similar.

You can choose to do the one which most applies to your current situation, or both if you prefer.

Cont/...

Article on Benefits of Situational Leadership on following pages.

Situational Leadership: Benefits and Tips

(IMD article - 2012)

What is Situational Leadership

Previously known as “the life cycle theory of leadership”, the situational leadership model was a concept introduced by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard in Management of Organizational Behaviour

They argued that there isn't just one leadership style that works for all conditions. The situational leadership theory includes four leadership styles: direct, coach, support and delegate; that are adaptive to the employee's range of developmental behaviour.

Successful leaders have the ability to look at situations with different perspectives. They assess the situation and behaviours of the team members in play, after which they determine the type of leadership approach to use to get the best result.

The situational leadership theory and situational leadership model help to ensure business success. Here are some of the key benefits.

The Situational Leadership benefits

- 1. Leadership benefits**
- 2. Human benefits**
- 3. Organizational benefits**
- 4. Problem solving benefits**

Leadership Benefits

1. It is a more flexible approach to leadership

Situational leadership is a relationship-oriented type of leadership. It bases a leader's directives on the readiness and ability of his/her followers. This is why it is seen as a “flexible approach”. The leader does not use a single style of leadership across all his/her team members.

In order for it to work, the leader must have established a relationship with his/her team members in order to understand their state of mind when receiving directions for the tasks they need to complete.

Looking at Ken Blanchard's model for the succeeding examples: a leader will most likely use a directive style of leadership to a new employee as they are still new at learning their task. However, the same leader may delegate the task of training to their most tenured and highly motivated team member.

As Employee 1 gains some tenure and increases their skills, but may get disengaged along the way, the leader may change to a coaching style of leadership towards Employee 1. This means they decrease their task-oriented leadership style and incorporate a relationship-oriented leadership approach.

If it transpires that Employee is also disengaged, they are still highly skilled but demotivated. So the leader will need to use the supportive style of leadership in this kind of situation. The leader uses a different leadership approach to have the best impact to each employee.

Practical Tips:

Tip 1. Know your default leadership style

Look for online leadership or communication style surveys to determine your communication style. Usually, the leadership style you instinctively use during high-stress situations is your default style of leadership, so make sure you are aware of it.

Tip 2. Acknowledge style differences and work to meet half-way

Set expectations when working with people who have different leadership styles. You may start by having everyone identify their default leadership styles and discuss how you all are willing to compromise in order to work harmoniously. Already knowing each other's comfort zones makes it easier to adjust and compromise.

2. It encourages successful collaboration among team members

From the examples given in number 1, we see a situation that creates an opportunity for collaboration. There is interaction amongst team members (as Employee 1 is being taught by Employee 4) when the leader uses situational leadership in dealing with their team.

Technology has made collaboration easier among employees, even across continents. The opportunity is there. The leader merely needs to encourage their team members to collaborate.

Statistics show that 75% of employees rated collaboration as "very important" to their engagement. 86% of executives and employees also say that lack of collaboration accounts for failures in the workplace.

The presence of collaboration increases team productivity and engagement. Successful leaders who use the situational leadership approach influence team members in order to achieve the optimal strength of the team. When the team is optimized, collaboration becomes a means to get creative collectively and make valuable innovations that are beneficial to any business.

Practical Tips:

Tip 1. Get everyone on the same page

Eliminate redundancies in current workflows. Daily team meetings will help pinpoint each member's task/goal for the day. This is especially helpful if some tasks cross-over, or are so similar that they can actually all be achieved by just one person.

Tip 2. Set clear expectations

Communicate the organizational goal to your team so that they understand how their own tasks and objectives connect to the overall picture. Set the individual expectations of your members on what the outcome should be. One on one sessions with your team members usually help set this pace while also providing a forum to review performance/outcome at the end of a project.

Tip 3. Utilize technology

Take advantage of the tech tools that your company allows. A common repository of files will help team members get access to what they need more efficiently. It is important, however, to make sure that access to the documents and files is controlled so changes can be tracked.

Tip 4. Run team meetings that count

Before holding a meeting, make sure that you have a clear agenda and let your team members know the purpose of the meeting and why they need to be present. During the meeting, have someone take minutes in order to ensure that there is follow-up for the tracking of tasks. It is crucial to indicate who is responsible for each task, and when it is due.

3. Adaptability is encouraged to fit past, present & future situations

When a leader is adept at using transformational leadership, they are a situational leader not only in managing employees but also in dealing with different circumstances in the workplace. When faced with a challenge, they know that they must approach it by assessing the impact their solution may bring.

They must assess the history of the problem, what are the present conditions causing the issue, and how their plans to solve the problem will impact the organization in the future.

It is essential to look at strategies that can lead to business process or product transformation so that the same challenge will not recur. This is a way of forward thinking that does not disregard past and present circumstances. One can only be certain that business dynamics will continue to change. Executives need to adapt and stay abreast of all of these changes to ensure business success.

Practical Tip:

Utilize the whole alphabet in planning

Make sure you prepare yourself for possible failures, this way you always have a plan B and C and so on, until you find a plan that works. In a lot of cases, finding the right solution requires trial and error. In each case, always plan for an alternative solution.

Human benefits

4. It assesses maturity levels of people within the organization

In situational leadership, the leader must manage both being very directive and supportive to their team members when they give tasks. They need to be able to read body language and their employees' state of mind.

Situational leaders are charismatic leaders: good communicators who can connect to their employees' emotions. In order to be able to connect deeply with your employees you need to know how to read people's psychological state. You need to know how to assess their professional maturity.

Once you are able to measure your team member's individual maturity, you will know what training development programs they need. It may be that they need more skills training or they might need more soft skills training.

It is important to also use personal evaluations to identify individuals mature enough to be lined up for leadership roles based on their job skill level and engagement level.

When you are providing the right training and development programs, as well as professional support according to their needs, it will result in a highly engaged workforce. There will be higher productivity and lower negative attrition.

5. It encourages socio-emotional support for subordinates

A team or any business organization will be composed of individuals who come from totally different educational, social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Experienced employees also have different work experiences and corporate cultural backgrounds. This puts each individual at a different emotional maturity level when they join the organization.

Psychology Today has listed 5 core socio-emotional skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Together, these skills help an individual face challenges and determine how far they will succeed.

A situational leader needs to be adept at people-oriented leadership to provide socio-emotional support. Successful leaders who use the situational leadership theory know how to influence subordinates because they understand how to support them to succeed.

6. It encourages provision of direction & guidance for subordinates

Employees at different stages in their professional development need the right amount of coaching. They need to set goals and expectations with their bosses and should have frequent one-on-one feedback sessions to check on their progress against their goals.

This is the reason why situational leadership should provide consistent direction and guidance to subordinates because even employee, as highly skilled as they are, may need to improve their soft skills in order to be ready for the next step in their career.

Employees may already be at the stage in their career level, but if they are pursuing a new position, the leader understands that they will most likely go back to the quadrant in their desired position. If a business has situational leaders who can make these kinds of assessments every time, the business will benefit from having very well guided and directed employees.

7. Work productivity can be enhanced with situational leadership

It is clear that situational leadership means a leader has the flexibility to also use transformational leadership. Leaders need to work with their team members to identify what areas of the business or what processes and products need transformation to improve, as well as to add more value and be more competitive.

Once these are identified, the leader works with the team to set the project goals, timeline, and work on a detailed plan to achieve their vision.

When leaders are involved in making positive changes, employees are convinced that they are part of something important. Employees become more committed to their tasks and more trustful in their leaders. They increase their engagement in the workplace and in effect, productivity increases.

When employees are receiving the proper support and feedback from their superiors, they are constantly reminded of their goals. When they veer away from their paths, leaders should be there to redirect them towards their set goals. These principles work no matter the size of the team, as long as the leader is committed to developing their employees to become more productive.

8. It can boost employee motivation within a business organization

The situational leadership approach works well in motivating employees in the organization. When transformational leaders decide to empower their employees by delegating tasks,

Leadership Situationnel

trusting them with responsibilities to develop their skills and providing support throughout to achieve their goals, the result is a strongly motivated team.

It has been proven by studies that motivated teams improve business in terms of productivity and lower attrition rate. Motivated employees are more creative and contribute more ideas to the business.

Importantly, teams benefit from a situational leader who knows how to empower high performing team members by delegating tasks to them, delegating their own responsibilities so they can focus on the employees who need more support from them. Ultimately, the business gets the return on their investment by capitalizing on transformational leaders who use this leadership approach.

Organizational benefits

9. It increases awareness of current organizational situations

When organizations go through transformations, the change is unsettling, and employees become uncertain of their positions in the company. Some may fear that organizational changes could cost them their jobs. Some may see that by embracing certain technological changes their job may become redundant, and the organization will no longer need their skills.

Whatever changes the organization is going through, the situational leadership approach must help ease any fear of the staff regarding their job security.

Since this leadership approach is a people-oriented leadership style, leaders are honest with their teams. They exercise good communication skills and provide their employees with the right information for them to understand all the organizational vision and goals.

Being transparent with the employees makes them trust their leaders and consequently the organizations vision to transform. If you get employees to buy in to your organizational aspirations, the journey towards the goal will be a lot faster, smoother and more successful.

10. Situational Leadership can counter volatility

The media politicizes everything, and with social media in play, any move a government leader does can easily make an economy volatile. People will always have some anxiety when there are political issues that could shake the economy. In the U.S., there are talks of another recession approaching in 2020.

The National Association of Business Economics ran a survey, and 50% of the economists think the recession may happen as early as 2019. News like this is all over social media and makes people anxious about the future. This anxiety can easily manifest in the workplace as people freely discuss current affairs.

A situational leader can help ease tension in the workplace by leading his team to concentrate on their responsibilities at work. He can adjust to the situation by exercising the task-oriented leadership approach and keeping his employees on the right track of achieving organizational goals, despite having different political belief systems.

11. Situational Leadership can counter uncertainty

Economic instability can give people great anxiety and uncertainty. As this translates in the workplace, leaders can expect a decrease in productivity, tension between co-workers, and

possibly an unstable organization too. The organization can be affected by the view of external players such as customers, media and suppliers, or other political and economic factors.

A successful leader should shift into a charismatic leader in times like these. They need to be an influencer to appease their employees that though uncertainty lies outside the workplace, they must continue to fulfil the tasks and responsibilities they signed up for. The American Psychological Association said that workplace stress causes a loss of more than \$500 billion in the U.S. economy.

An effective leader must know how to show empathy to individuals while remaining rational rather than adding to the stress. They should understand how their employees' fear of uncertainty is affecting their job performance, so that they can provide coaching and support accordingly. A good leader must have clarity of vision in order to influence their team to stay focused on the organizational goals. This will ensure business success amidst the turbulent, uncertain economic and political environment.

Problem solving benefits

12. Situational Leadership can decipher situational complexity

Self-awareness is the key to becoming a successful leader. Combined with the use of situational leadership theory, one who is in touch with their own strengths and weaknesses as well as their employees' can be a very effective leader. A well-developed sense of self-awareness allows the leader to quickly adjust to any given situation, no matter how complex.

As a leader looks inward and outward to assess complex situations, they can see from different perspectives and are able to simplify things. Focusing on the simpler things that really matter to solve a complex issue ensures business success. People will continue to be complex. The business environment of tomorrow will continue to be complicated.

The challenges a leader will encounter will be tougher to decipher if they do not employ the right type of leadership for each given situation. The only way to ensure that business remains strong is having committed situational leaders who are willing to adapt to the increasing complexity brought about by advancements and technological transformations.

13. Situational Leadership can beat ambiguity

Situational leaders are agile, strategic thinkers who are able to beat ambiguity. It is part of a concept that originated from the U.S. Army War College framework. This concept is known as VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity).

Ambiguity is experienced by industry leaders; especially so when they are trying to forge ahead of everyone else and create or offer something that no one else has. Some very advanced innovation and transformation ideas can also be vague and ambiguous.

However, successful leaders are trailblazers; always trying to be one step ahead of the game. To ensure business success, you must be a good listener. Your team members may have questions about where you're headed. Make sure you are ready to clarify and address their concerns. Listen to their ideas as well. They may have the next big breakthrough you are looking for. Make sure you empower your team by recognizing their efforts, ideas and cooperation as you try to reach and achieve a new vision. Leading a solid team will make your quest for success achievable.

14. Using Situational Leadership, you can control all possible outcomes

Situational leadership means being able to control outcomes because you are able to effectively influence your organization in all directions: upwards, across and down. You think proactively and consider how your subordinates will react. You formulate scenarios of how to handle every possible reaction.

This is effective leadership at its best. You are self-aware and therefore you use your leadership intuition and back it up with years of experience and academic training. Situational leadership approach allows the leader to look beyond what others see in plain sight.

Like playing chess, the better player is always ten steps ahead in the game. Before making any move, they consider every possible move the opponent can possibly make and plan for a counter move. Being a strategic advanced planner, they can always be on the offense. This is how having situational leaders can greatly benefit businesses. They will always be ahead of the competition because their leaders are successful situational strategic thinkers.

15. Using Situational Leadership, adapt your style to those you lead

It takes a variety of skills to make a great charismatic leader. You will need clarity, focus, and good communication skills in order to be an exceptional influencer. Charismatic leaders understand psychology and know exactly how to convince and influence people. A successful situational leader understands the importance of being charismatic at specific times. When they are trying to sell an idea that they perceive to be a bit more unconventional which may face resistance from superiors, peers or subordinates, they know how to switch on their charisma to gain their buy-in and cooperation.

When you understand how people will respond to the ideas you pitch, you are able to plan how to sell it to them in such a way that they will clearly see the direction which you are leading them towards. They will understand the benefits of your goals just as you foresee them because you sent them a thoughtfully crafted message. Businesses are ensured that their situational leaders know exactly how to deliver messages in such a way that they will be accepted with minimal resistance, even when they are difficult ones.

Situational leadership is adaptive, emotionally intelligent and influential. This people-oriented style of leadership is the preferred leadership approach of successful leaders in different industries because in today's business environment, investing in loyal and committed employees defines the success of a company.

Nathaniel Clinger cited a study in his online article which states that 400 of the Fortune 500 companies include situational leadership theory in their training programs. It just goes to show that big successful organizations value the importance of having flexible, adaptive, relationship-oriented, transformational leaders. The Ken Blanchard companies say that situational leadership delivers up to a 10x return on your training investment. It increases profit and productivity while decreasing employee turnover.