

Situational Leadership Model

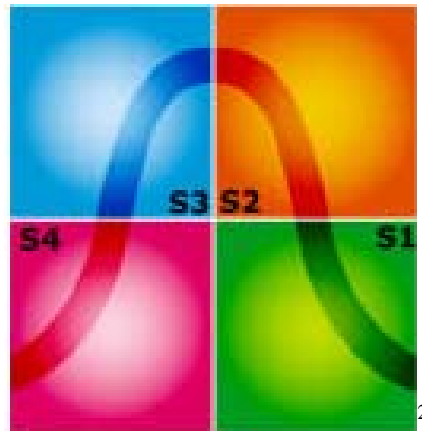
The Situational Leadership® Model is a leadership model that was developed in the late 1960's by Ken Blanchard and Paul Hersey. The model essentially says that the leadership method one employs depends on the situation. Before one selects a leadership style to use, they must first understand the situation and the importance of the possible outcomes. Then the leader may choose one of the four leadership styles and act accordingly.

According to Paul Hersey, "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 followers exhibit on a specific task, function, activity, or objective that the leader is attempting to accomplish through the individual or group

Task behavior is the extent to which a leader engages in one-way communication by explaining what each follower 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 his/her own behavior in relation to a specific task to be performed.”¹

It is most often illustrated by a two by two matrix or graph as follows:



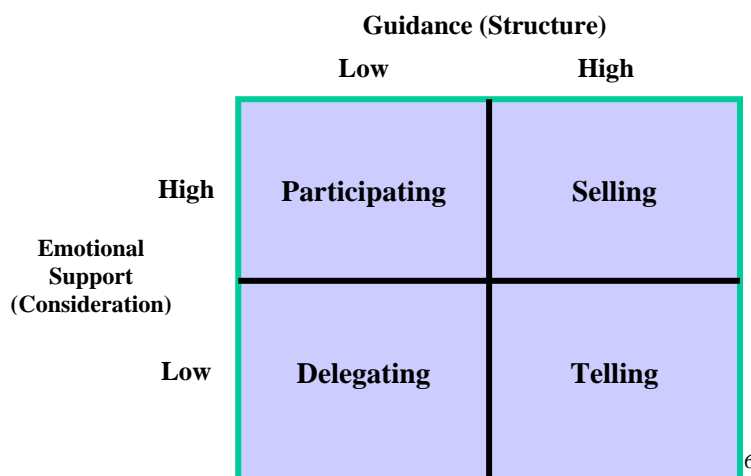
Starting in the bottom right quadrant, S1 is referred to as “Telling” or “Directing”. This style is high task/low relationship and is “characterized by one-way communication in which the leader defines the roles of followers and tells them what, how, when, and where to do various tasks.”³

The upper right quadrant labeled S2 is called “Selling” or “Coaching”. The leader behavior is high task/high relationship because “most of the direction is still provided by the leader. The leader also attempts through two-way communication and socio-emotional support to get the followers psychologically to "buy into" decisions that have to be made.”⁴

In the upper left-hand quadrant, S3 is known as “Participating” or “Supporting”. Here the leader demonstrates high relationship/low task focus and the follower is empowered to make many of the decisions since they have the knowledge to do so. There is a high level of trust and communication between the leader and the follower.

The last quadrant, the lower left-hand, labeled S4 is called “Delegating”. It is considered low relationship/low-task leader behavior “because the style involves letting followers “run their own show.” The leader delegates since the followers are high in readiness, have the ability, and are both willing and able to take responsibility for directing their own behavior.”⁵

Blanchard and Hersey’s figure is often simplified by putting the descriptive titles in the matrix as demonstrated here by Dr. S. Thomas Foster.



The model implies that once a leader learns to diagnose and implement the corresponding leadership style, they will be a more effective leader. An effective leader should be able to execute each of the four techniques and it is important to note that different techniques may be used on the same follower depending on the situation.

This model is easy to understand and easy to implement but is more of a Situational Management Model versus a Situational Leadership® Model.

Additional Resources:

Hersey, P., and Blanchard, K., *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996)

<http://www.situational.com/> : Center for Leadership Studies website. This site is run by Paul Hersey and contains information on training and workshops pertaining to the Situational Leadership® Model.

<http://www.blanchardtraining.com/> : The Ken Blanchard Companies website. This is Ken Blanchard's website where you can find information about workshops, speakers, training materials, and the Ken Blanchard Executive MBA.

¹ Situational Leadership®: Conversations with Paul Hersey, John R. Schermerhorn, 2001, Center for Leadership Studies, Inc., pg. 1-2

² Situational Leadership®: Conversations with Paul Hersey, John R. Schermerhorn, 2001, Center for Leadership Studies, Inc., pg. 2

³ Situational Leadership®: Conversations with Paul Hersey, John R. Schermerhorn, 2001, Center for Leadership Studies, Inc., pg. 2

⁴ Situational Leadership®: Conversations with Paul Hersey, John R. Schermerhorn, 2001, Center for Leadership Studies, Inc., pg. 2

⁵ Situational Leadership®: Conversations with Paul Hersey, John R. Schermerhorn, 2001, Center for Leadership Studies, Inc., pg. 2

⁶ Foster, S. Thomas, *Managing Quality: Integrating the Supply Chain*, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007, Pg. 343, Figure 11-2