

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Situational Leadership Theory is the short form for "**Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory**" and draws major views from contingency thinking. As the name implies, leadership depends upon each individual situation, and no single leadership style can be considered the best. For Hershey and Blanchard, tasks are different and each type of task requires a different leadership style. Specifically, this theory has to do with the maturity of those who are being led. A good leader will be able to adapt her or his leadership skills to the people and to the goals or objectives to be accomplished.

In the continuation of this theme, we see the "leader" as a mentor and the person that is led, as a trainee or student.

1. THEORY

Four S's and four D's

The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory has two pillars: leadership style and the maturity level of those being led (trainees, students, trainers,...). To Hersey and Blanchard, the leadership styles stem from four basic behaviors, designated with a letter-number combination:

- S-1 Directing: Directing is where the mentor demonstrates high directive behavior and low supportive behavior. The mentor gives specific task directions and supervise the student.
- S-2 Coaching: Coaching is where the leader demonstrates high directive behavior and high supportive behavior. The mentor encourages two-way communication and helps build confidence and motivation on the part of the trainee, although the mentor still has responsibility and "controls" the task.
- S-3 Supporting: Participating is where the leader demonstrates low directive behavior and high supportive behavior. With this style, the mentor and trainees share decision making.
- S-4 Delegating: Delegating is where the leader demonstrates low directive behavior and low supportive behavior. The mentor parcels out tasks to trainees.

Blanchard overlays four permutations of competency-commitment, again, with a letter designation: D1, D2, D3 and D4. This four permutations of competency-commitment, can be related to the leadership styles.

D1 - Low competence and high commitment (S1 Directing):

This leadership style is appropriate in those situations where trainees lack competence, and therefore need to be shown how to do something, but are enthusiastic and committed, and therefore are willing to accept direction. They need direction and supervision to get them started.

The effective mentor in this situation responds by giving lots of direction, such as solving problems, making decisions and providing specific instructions covering the what, why and how of task completion. The mentor can show how to do tasks, gives feedback about the competences so that the trainee can develop. As trainees grow in confidence and competence, mentors should then adapt their style accordingly. Of course, this leadership style should be a little nuanced. A directing leader should not be an authoritarian leader and every student, how confident he is, needs some appreciation and positive feedback.

Note: In this phase, you can see very often beginning students and trainees. Those people have a high commitment, they are very enthusiastic, but they just don't know how to do every single task, they don't know how to start, ... Directing is then an important way of leading them. Obviously, it's important that the mentor respond to the learning styles (Kolb) of a trainee. Some students need a mentor that shows how to do tasks so the trainee can observe first before he act, some students prefer a mentor that let them try before explaining something (trial and error) etc. And of course, this style should be a little nuanced because every student needs some support.

D2 - Low competence and low commitment (S2 Coaching)

The coaching style is appropriate where trainees have some competence but a lower level of commitment. They will need direction and supervision because they are still relatively inexperienced. But they will also need support and praise, to build their confidence, and an involvement in decision-making, to increase their commitment.

The effective mentor responds by continuing to solve the problems and make the decisions, to direct and closely supervise the task accomplishment. However, they will explain decisions, solicit suggestions and supports their trainees learning and progress by giving feedback, compliments, etc. They give both direction and support and it's all about sharing responsibilities.

Low commitment also means that appreciating and support is more and more important.

Note: students and trainees learn a lot, but sometimes they can be disappointed in one of their tasks. At this point, it's possible that they are still struggling with this task and that fact

gives them less energy and motivation to go further in the learning process. At this moment, coaching is very important.

D3 - High competence and low/variable commitment (S3 Supporting / Encouraging):

This style is most appropriate for those trainees who are competent but who still lack confidence or motivation. They do not need much direction, because their skills are at a higher

level, but they do need support and encouragement. This will be particularly so if their commitment is low.

Here the effective mentor responds by sharing responsibility for problem resolution and decision-making with others. While it might be easier for them to make the decisions, instead they facilitate and support their followers' efforts towards task accomplishment. They give less direction but a lot of support.

This is the point where we move away from a directive leadership style to a more facilitative leadership style.

Note: some students and trainees are insecure and need more motivation and support. Compliments and correct feedback are very important here. Some students have a lack of motivation and then it's important that a mentor will search for the reason why they aren't motivated and what they can do about it.

D4 - High competence and high commitment (S4 delegating):

This is the appropriate style for trainees who have high levels of both competence and commitment. Such students are both able and willing to work by themselves with little supervision or intervention.

The wise mentor will provide such trainees with clear objectives and some boundaries, or limits, to their authority. But otherwise followers should be allowed to get on with it.

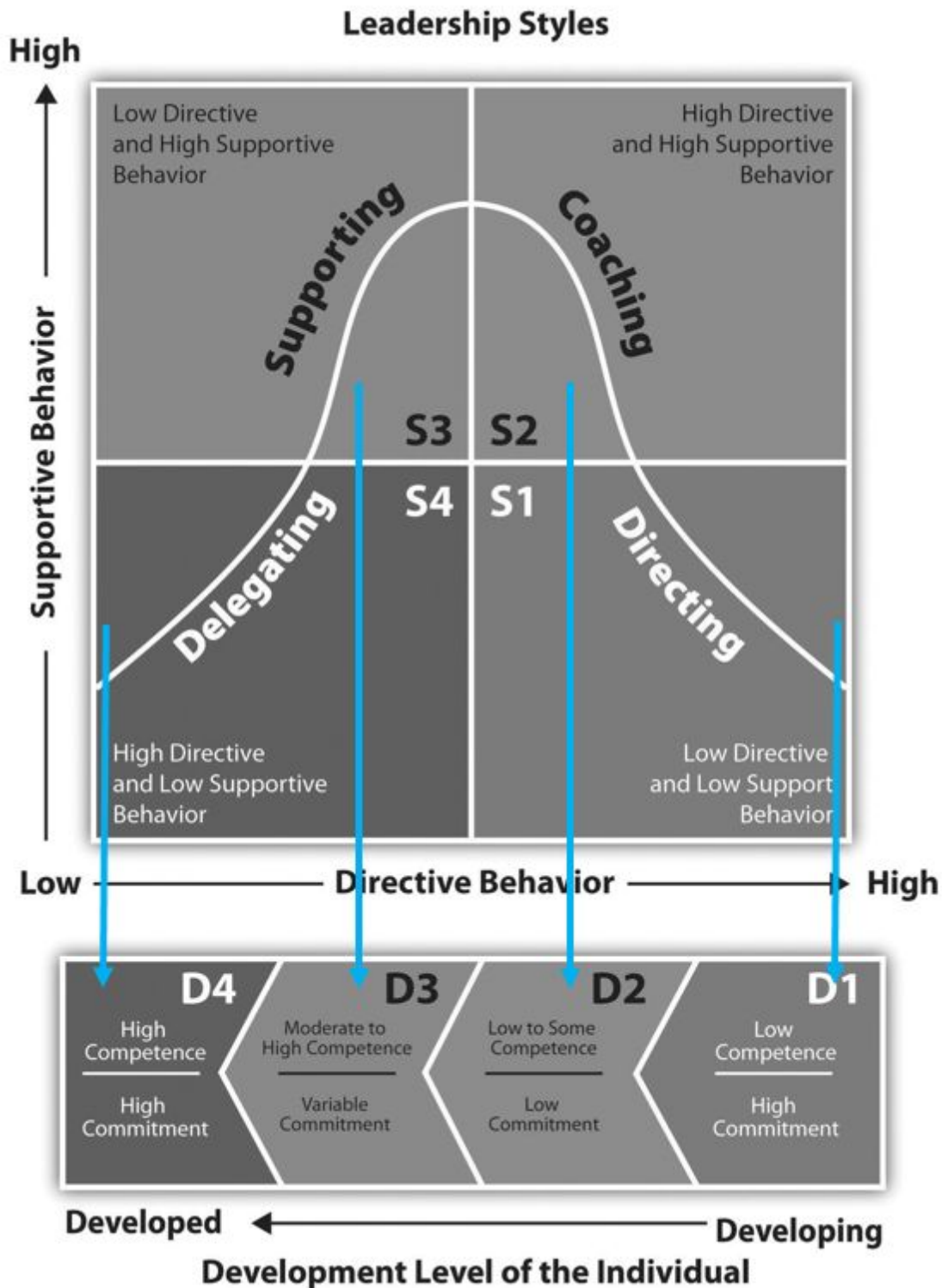
This helps us understand the true meaning of empowerment. It is giving trainees the permission to act and make decisions aligned to goals and within clear boundaries. It is not abdicating responsibility and does not mean that the leader can let his students or trainees alone. Supportive feedback is still crucial

Three steps of the situational leadership model

- 1. Identify the tasks: first of all: you need to identify the goals or, tasks, so what do you want the student to learn?

- 2. Diagnose the readiness level of the trainees: is the student able to do this?
- 3. Decide the matching leadership Sstyle

This theory can be related to the learning styles of Kolb.



2. POSSIBLE WAYS TO BRING THIS THEORY

- Let participants score their own job tasks to see where they fit in the scheme of situational leadership and let them discuss how they will guide themselves if they were the mentor (Appendix 1)
- Case-solving (Appendix 2)
- Self-reflection: test “*what is your leadershipstyle?*” (Appendix 3)

3. TIPS

- Also the participants in the mentor training have to be let. So make sure you don't give too much directions if they already know the theory, etc. If they are not confident enough to do some roleplays, let them first practise in really small groups and give them compliments,...
- ...

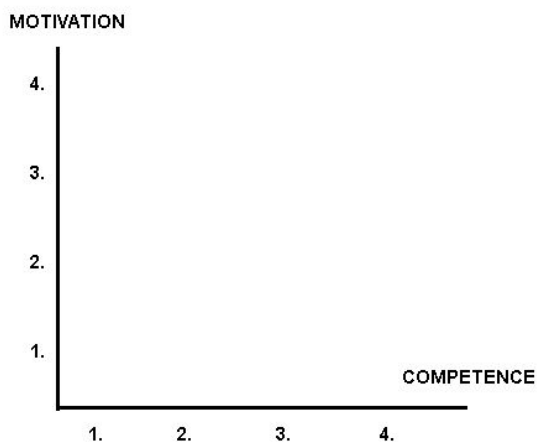
APPENDIX 1

Score your own tasks

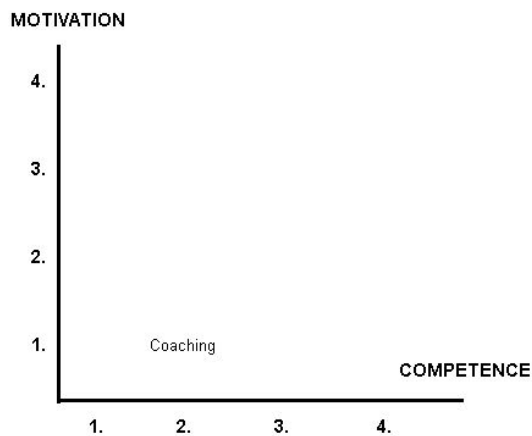
STEP 1: All the participants have to write down two tasks in their own job. They have to score this tasks on two things (how good they are in the task and how motivated they are)

For example: one of my tasks is coaching students: I'm pretty good in that task, so I'll give myself a 2 out of 4 (1= good in that task, 4 is not so good), I also really like that part of my job so I'll give myself a 1.

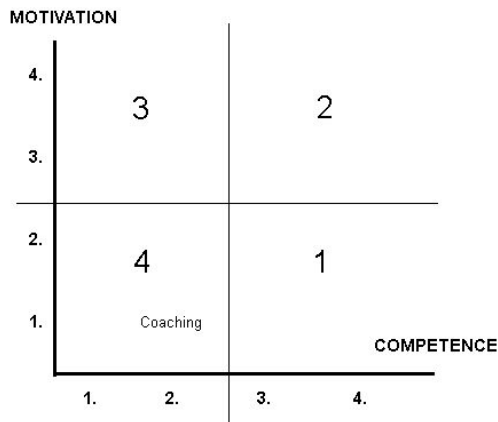
STEP 2: As a teacher, you draw a quadrant on a huge paper or a whiteboard



STEP 3: you write the different tasks in the quadrant.



STEP 4: You draw lines in the raster so you can see 4 places.



STEP 5: You can ask the participants some questions:

- How will you guide yourself if you were your mentor?
- If you have a student and he's good a certain task, but he's not so willing to do that task... How can you (as mentor) deal with that student. (quadrant 3 = supporting)
- If a student is very good in a task and he really likes to do that task, how can you deal with him? (quadrant 4 - delegating)
- ...

APPENDIX 2

Case-solving

In what follows, you can read 4 cases.

- What is the competency level of the students in the cases (D1, D2, D3 or D4)
- What is the leadership style that a mentor had to use?
- Make the situation concrete. If you have to coach this students, how will you do that? (Support, compliments, feedback, conversations,...)

1. *Marie is a nurse trainee. She is uncertain and a little bit silent. She often says "I do not know if I'm able to do this task, I'm quite insecure". Her work is actually really good, her colleagues don't complain and she works well in team.*
2. *Steven is very confident. He is good in taking the initiative and is very enthusiastic. However, he is not good in making contact with clients. He also doesn't ask questions to improve his skills. He need to work on his competences.*
3. *Bea must continue to study. That's at least what her parents want. She already has a degree in childcare and she would rather go to work. She prefer to quit her study to become a nurse. In her internship, she doesn't take any initiative . Her contact with clients is moderate. Bea has no view on the identity of clients.*
4. *Ellen already worked before she started her study in nursing. She takes initiative and responsibility. she will consult her colleagues if necessary. She can handle difficult situations. She is a real teamplayer and she doesn't make any fault during her internship.*
5. *Own cases*

Solution:

Marie (D3 - supporting) - Give her compliments, do some more easy task to increase her confidencelevel,...

Steven (D1 - directing) - He is very willing, but he need some instructions

Bea (D2 - coaching) - She needs a conversation, you can set up goals,..

Ellen (D4 - delegating) - You can delegate some tasks, but feedback is still important