

Situational Leadership

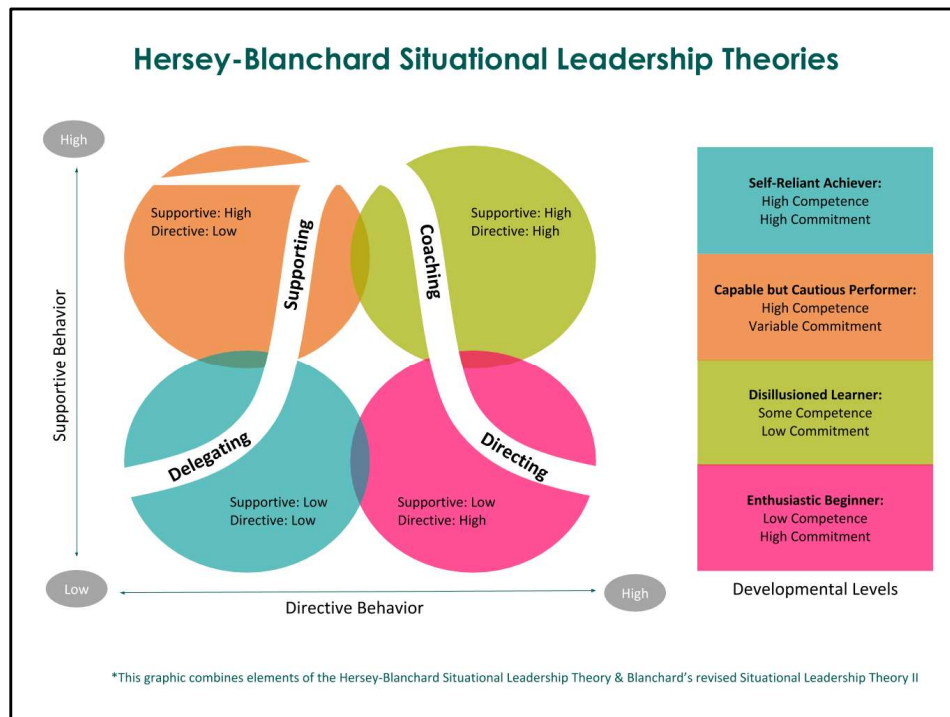


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Situational Leadership – leaders adjust their response based on level of experience/skill, group patterns, or environmental situations

Axes

- Bottom—directive behavior, how much guidance do they need?
- Left—supportive behavior, how much do they need you to “back them up”
- Right—personal motivation, commitment to work/employer/tasks
- Top—person competency, skill level growth over time

DIRECTING:

The Enthusiastic Beginner

"I know what I don't know."



PEOPLE:

- Low Competence
- High Commitment

SETTING:

- Major Crisis

QUESTION:

- What is the assignment?

What do I do? How do I do it?

STORY 1: New hire from unemployment. Commitment high. Starting at ground zero with terminology.

Directing= TELLING – don't know what they don't know

- New Hires, new promotions, new type of work
- People: Think about interactions with new hires
 - There are no dumb questions.
- Setting: emergencies, swift changes, immediate problem-solving

Acknowledging need for guidance.

- Pointed instructions, expectations, and boundaries for scope of work.
- Frequent contact and frequent work reviews.

Question – What is the assignment?

- INTENSIVE Leader-Directed
- Providing individual assignments and deadlines.
- Opportunities to discuss work, feedback whether sought or not, understanding of

immediate needs to be met.

- What other questions could you ask?
 - Can you walk me through your plan?
 - What are your first few steps?
 - When is a good time for our first check-in?

COACHING:

Disillusioned Learner

"I don't know what I don't know."



PEOPLE:

- Some Competence
- Low Commitment

SETTING:

- Structural Re-Org

QUESTION:

- What is most important?

Done! What now?

STORY 2: Specialized training project, SME from last job, no org knowledge or scope/bandwidth/stakeholders.

Coaching = SELLING – don't know, but they THINK they know—confidence is growing

- Passed first couple months/years depending on skills required, working independently with feedback
 - Potential for overconfidence or assumed knowledge.
- People: Think about conversations with staff who are gaining footing.
 - Responding to assumptions. Clarifying expectations.
- Setting: company reorganization, reassigned to different project, dealing with transitions, changes in staffing

Bolstering skill levels to match growing confidence.

- Detailed feedback on technique, best practices, historical knowledge

Question – What is most important?

- CONTINUED Leader-Directed
- Providing bigger picture with assigned tasks as context—understanding of individual contribution within the org.
- Opportunities to stretch independence muscles through YOUR confidence in them
- What other questions could you ask?
 - What has been your biggest challenge so far?
 - What have you already tried?
 - What alternatives could we consider?
 - How can I motivate you?
 - What would you do differently next time?

SUPPORTING:

Capable But Cautious Performer

"I know what I don't know."

PEOPLE:

- High Competence
- Variable Commitment

SETTING:

- Interpersonal Conflict

QUESTION:

- What is YOUR goal?

Why? How did we get here?

STORY 3: Rockstar 2-yr employee, ready to learn more, insecure about stretch goals or expectations to make independent decisions

Supporting = PARTICIPATING – know, but they think they don't know—discovered they don't have it all yet

- Only confidence challenges here would be with unpredictable expectations
- Subject matter expertise and creativity begin to shine
 - High commitment/ownership of work alongside that confidence
- People: Think vetted staff who are independently skilled but not as seasoned with the organization.
 - Providing the “why” rather than the “how.”
- Setting: interpersonal conflict, changes in team dynamics, frustrations with culture

Acknowledging skill, performance, expertise to increase organizational commitment/perceived value—NOTE, VARIABLE commitment
 - Broader feedback on big picture items, historical knowledge, points of contact

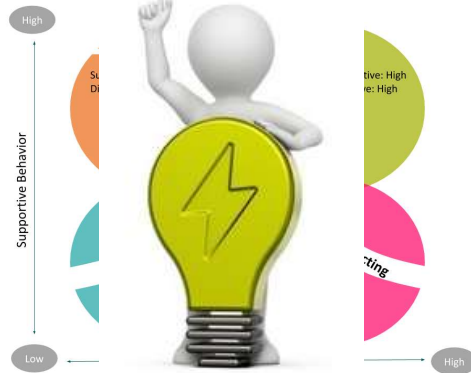
Question – What is YOUR goal?

- SWITCH to Self-Directed, bolstering self-confidence
- Opportunities to stretch independence muscles through YOUR confidence in them
- Reviewing major decision points and providing broader feedback on strategy/approach
- What other questions could you ask?
 - What do you think we should do?
 - What's your take? What are your concerns?
 - How can I help you think through this?
 - What support do you need, and from whom?

DELEGATING:

Self-Reliant Achiever

"I know."



PEOPLE:

- High Competence
- High Commitment

SETTING:

- Innovative Change

QUESTION:

- What is YOUR recommendation?

What now? What's possible?

STORY 4: Lead staff, transitioning away from task-focused work, mentoring teams, leading meetings, asking why questions on behalf of others.

Delegating = LETTING GO –know, AND THEY KNOW IT—discovered they don't have it all yet

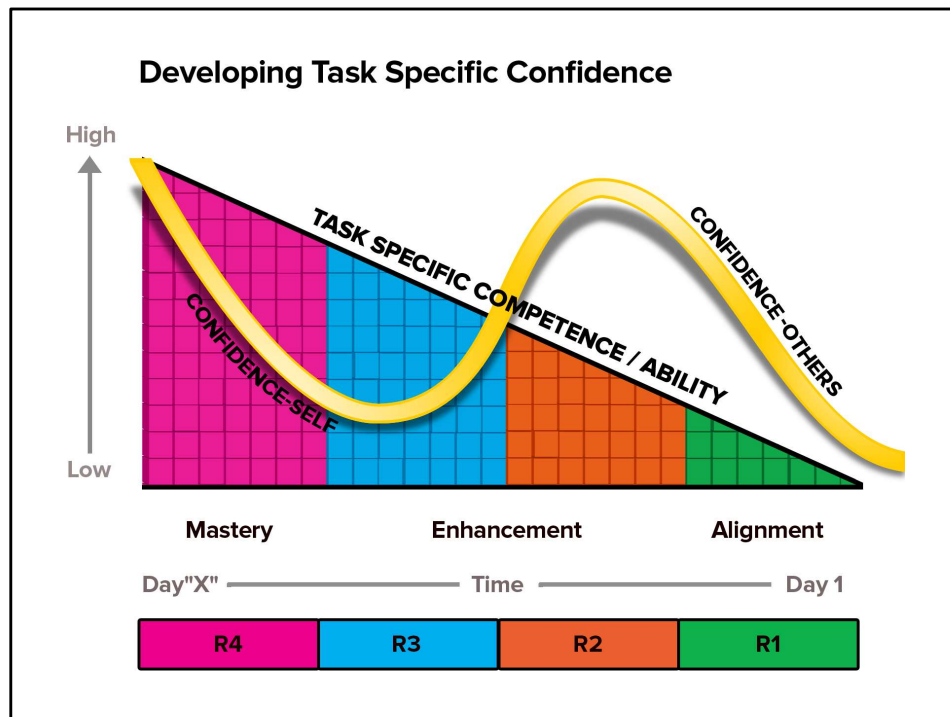
- Keyword: PARTNER
- First-time leads on projects or teams, vetted-but-not-seasoned staff building confidence
 - Often defer to subject matter expert or management for “final say” out of habit or force
- People: Think of leads, senior staff, principals, etc. Work independently and require little to no guidance.
- Setting: Innovative Change, strategic planning, architecture of projects, problem-solving input

Allowing room to create, solve, or mentor others—commitment to work is **high when work value is considered high by self or others**

- Feedback for milestone checks and pivots
- Opportunities to bring others along

Question – What is YOUR recommendation?

- Self-directed, supporting established confidence.
- Leader defers to staff's subject-matter expertise.
- Delegating tasks → delegating projects → delegating decision-making strategy
- What other questions could you ask?
 - How could we improve?
 - What could we be doing differently?
 - How do YOU plan to tackle this?
 - What have you learned that we can apply to other projects?



A more honest visual representation of situational leadership from viewpoint of the follower.

The leader's pattern rises in support and then lowers as the support is not needed.

The follower's pattern of competence is one of steady growth, but the source of expressed confidence from others (support) reaches a peak as he/she transitions from incompetence to competence – midway point.

Support from others becomes less necessary, then self-confidence becomes the continued force drawing competence upward.

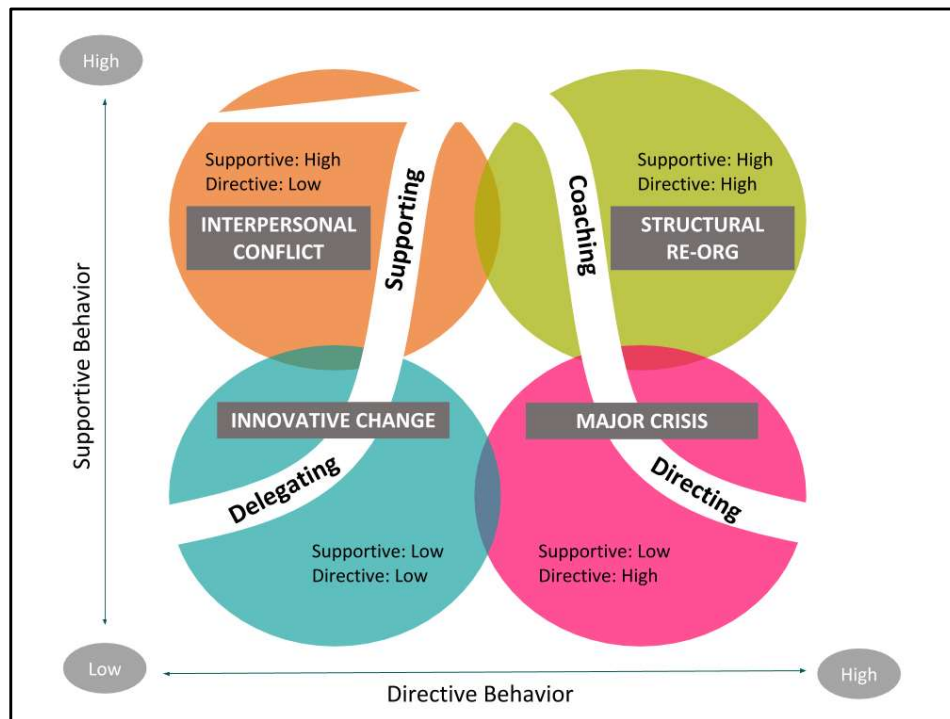
What might cause self-confidence not to kick in? Why? How might that influence the steady growth of competence?

HANDOUT: Use handout to look at the followers in your environment, whether they are direct reports or colleagues.

Based on past behavior, which situation have you placed them in?

Is this the reality of their current task/project?

What actions can you take OR stop taking if you are misaligned with their competence level to correct your past leadership approach?



DISCUSSION:

Can a person be at different points in the model depending on the specific task?
Why?

- Relationships around them
- Maturity—age, time with company, time in role
- Task-specific development—how familiar are they with the skills required?
- Environmental factors—what is the “SITUATION” around them?

Questions?



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