WHAT DIFFERENTIATES
THE SITUATIONAL LEADER?

What Differentiates the Situational Leader?

Business success in our global, dynamic and competitive marketplace requires agile leaders who can skillfully lead through change, drive performance and cultivate a people-first culture of engagement and accountability. These challenges require that leaders demonstrate an unwavering commitment to building trust with those they influence by being transparent, thoughtful and objective.

Situational Leadership® provides a framework that teaches leaders how to create the highest probability of success when it comes to influencing the behavior of others. Situational Leaders recognize that there is no one best approach or leadership style for effectively influencing the behavior of others; they know that the optimal

> "Situational Leaders understand the importance of using the right leadership style for the right people, for the specific task."

leadership approach is entirely dependent on the individual and the situation. These leaders are consistent in their ability to accurately diagnose the performance needs of an individual for a task, as well as their ability to adapt their leadership style to provide the level of support and direction dictated by those needs.

Situational Leaders are uniquely skilled to demonstrate four core competencies: diagnose, adapt, communicate and advance.

Competency	Action
DIAGNOSE Understand the task in need of influence.	Define the task at its lowest common denominator and determine the Performance Readiness® of the individual responsible for performing it.
ADAPT Adjust behavior in response to the situation.	Objectively and intentionally identify the influence approach that aligns with the diagnosis.
COMMUNICATE Interact in a manner that others understand and accept.	Deliver the leadership style with clarity and consistency.
ADVANCE Manage the movement toward higher performance.	Accelerate the development and redirect the regression of others.

The Situational Leadership® Model

Leaders using the Situational Leadership® Model (see Figure 1) start by clearly defining the specific task for the person they are attempting to influence. This is a critical step to ensuring the leader and the individual achieve mindshare on expectations for task performance. The next step is to determine the individual's ability and willingness to perform the task by asking:

· How much task-specific knowledge, experience or skill does this person demonstrate?

· Is this individual confident, committed and motivated to perform this task?

Answers to these questions produce four combinations of ability and willingness that the leader can use to make an initial assessment of Performance Readiness® :

R1 "I don't know what to do and I'm afraid I'm going to make a mistake."

R2 "I'm not sure what to do, but I'm eager to learn."

R3 "I have a good understanding of what to do, I'm just not sure I'm ready to do it on my own."

R4 "I know what I'm doing and truly enjoy doing it."

The leader then determines leadership style as a function of:

Task or directive behavior:
The extent to which a leader engages in defining roles, structuring activity and providing the what, where, when, how and, if more than one person is involved, who is to do what for a particular task.

Relationship or supportive behavior:
The extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication, facilitates interaction and actively listens.

Various combinations of task and relationship behavior define the four leadership styles the leader can employ depending upon the assessment of Performance Readiness® for the specific task.

S1 Structuring or guiding: The leader leverages his or her base of experience to make decisions, provide direction and create movement.

S2 Coaching or explaining: The leader clarifies decisions and recognizes the enthusiasm of the follower in an effort to ensure understanding.

S3 Participating or involving: The leader and follower problem-solve alternatives in an effort to mutually establish alignment.

S4 Delegating or entrusting: The leader trusts the follower to leverage their own base of experience to complete the task.

Situational Leaders are aware of their preferred leadership style behaviors and discipline themselves to ensure they use the matching leadership style, even when the approach may

FIGURE 1

Situational Leadership®
Influence Behaviors
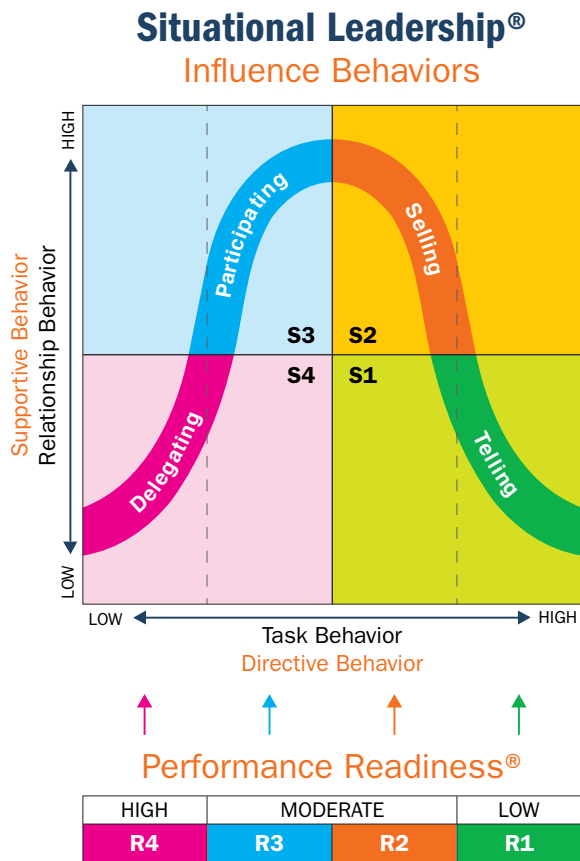
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development is not linear. Employees will need various levels of direction or support as tasks change throughout their career. When change is introduced, existing levels of Performance Readiness® are impacted. As ability develops, confidence may soar. As boredom emerges, performance may dip. Situational Leaders deliver value by accelerating the development and reversing the potential regression of the individuals they influence on a day-to-day basis.

Situational Leaders respond to change by leaning into it. They understand what they need to learn so that they can provide structure and support for others. Situational Leaders recognize

> Situational Leadership® is the language of change and Situational Leaders recognize that if it wasn't for change, there would be nowhere near as much emphasis on leadership.

that when change occurs, regression ultimately follows, and it's their job to consistently monitor and assess situations and adapt to fluctuating circumstances. This resiliency for change allows Situational Leaders to deliver targeted outcomes while sustaining high levels of engagement. Situational Leaders are the beacons of resiliency organizations need to survive in a world that will never stop changing.

not be their natural or preferred style. They understand that leadership is not a one-time, isolated event; effective leadership is ongoing, and employee development is bi-directional, meaning a person's performance can develop forward or regress backward at any time.

Leading Change

Situational Leaders embrace the reality that nothing stays the same. Things are either getting better or they are getting worse, and employee

Driving Performance

Situational Leadership® is also the language of effective performance management. Situational Leaders understand that employees

who feel valued and engaged in their jobs are more productive, committed and accountable for their performance.

Situational Leaders invest in their people and advocate for their growth, accelerating the pace and quality of employee development. Employees receive more personalized coaching tailored to the specific situation or task. This personalization increases speed to proficiency and enhances performance on the job.

Impacting Organizational Culture

High-performing organizations believe that their greatest competitive advantage is not their products or services, it's always their people. This cultural people-first commitment aligns with the Situational Leader's perspective that leadership isn't about them … it's about the individuals they lead.

The research around employee engagement and retention is clear – people leave their boss, not their organization. Leaders at every level of the organization must invest in a culture where people feel valued, supported and empowered to succeed in their role. Situational Leaders cultivate a positive organizational culture by demonstrating their commitment to building trust, transparency and receptivity to feedback and new ideas. They practice what they preach by holding themselves accountable to model the leadership behaviors they expect of others.

> Situational Leaders have the skills to reverse regression and drive behavior change in employees.

Success and Engagement

Some leaders focus on success or results to achieve organizational goals, while others focus on engagement to drive outcomes. The most effective leaders use Situational Leadership® to positively impact the performance of their teams by focusing on both the success and engagement of those they lead. As a result, Situational Leaders successfully enable employees to drive behavior change and seize every business opportunity.

About The Center for Leadership Studies

For more than 45 years, The Center for Leadership Studies, founded by Dr. Paul Hersey, has been the global home of the original Situational Leadership® Model. With over 14 million leaders trained, Situational Leadership® is the most successful and widely adopted leadership model available. Deployed in more than 70 percent of Fortune 500 companies, our Situational Leadership® Model and influence-focused courses enable leaders to engage in effective performance conversations that build trust, increase productivity and drive behavior change.

Contact our team to learn more!

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