Situational Leadership

If you want to be a successful supervisor, you need to become expert at achieving through others by means of means directing, delegating, coaching, and/or supporting employees.

To properly direct, delegate, coach or support, you need to know about the skills and abilities of employees and, consequently, adjust your leadership approach. This adjustment is called ‘situational leadership.’

A Model

According to a leading model of leadership your leadership style is determined by the amount of Direction you provide to staff as well as the amount of Support. This is called “situational leadership” because you vary your leadership style depending on the situation (task, person, or both).

The more Direction you provide, the more structure and ‘hands on’ supervision you do. The more Support you provide, the more you focus on the needs and interests of the people who are getting things done.

In general, provide direction to employees who are lacking in skill and motivation (often beginning employees) and delegation to skilled and motivated employees.

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<th>Support</th>
<th>Coach</th>
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<td>Delegate</td>
<td>Direct</td>
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| Low Direction | High Direction |

About Support

When you adopt a "supporting" leadership style, you focus on the individual and his or her needs.

With a supporting style:

• ask for input
• invite participation from the employee
• put control in the hands of the employee (e.g. decision-making and elements of planning)

Support is similar to delegation except there is more involvement with the employee and his or her developmental needs.

About Direction

The more direction you provide, the more structure and “hands on” supervision you do. Direction is effective when working with inexperienced, unskilled employees.

Some basics of giving direction:

• Step 1: Explain tasks. Be redundant and explicit.
• Step 2: Provide Resources. For example, create partnerships between employees, provide training, answer questions.
• Step 3: Provide Feedback. Be available to discuss progress and answer questions. Be candid, yet constructive.
• Step 4: Evaluate Progress. If the employee is performing well, delegate more and shift your approach to a coaching style. If not, figure out why and take corrective action.
• Step 5: Take corrective Action. The action you take depends on the reason for under-performance: skills deficits suggest more training is needed, lack of ability may require consultation with Human Resources or Personnel, and reluctance signals a performance management problem.
The process of delegation

If you stay in ‘direction’ mode for too long, you risk developing a bad relationship with the employee. Move through it too quickly and you will wind up frustrating the new employee who still needs to learn. Use your judgment to determine how much freedom and discretion you give employees. It all goes back to knowing your people ... what they can do.

Try this 5-step process for delegating tasks:

**Step 1: Prepare.**
- establish the goals of delegation
- specify the task that needs to be accomplished
- determine the appropriate degree of delegation
- choose an appropriate employee to do this task (if possible, make this a developmental experience for them).

**Step 2: Explain.**
- meet the employee and describe the task
- give background information and context (e.g. why this is important, how the task will solve an issue or problem)
- explain why you are delegating the task to them
- ask the employee to devise a plan of action

**Step 3: Discuss.**
- review the objectives of the task and the employee’s plan of action
- identify potential obstacles and ways to avoid/overcome these
- clearly indicate what must be achieved and how success will be measured
- discuss any needed resources to get the job done (e.g. people, equipment, skill acquisition, etc.)
- set a due date

**Step 4: Monitor.**
- monitor progress
- if task is complex, set up ‘check in’ dates for review
- adjust plans on an as-needed basis

**Step 5: Give feedback.**
- accept the completed task
- review the process (particularly if this was a developmental experience)
- ask for feedback on your own performance, use as your own learning
More about Coaching

Coaching helps employees develop skills and the confidence to apply them. There are four fundamental components of effective coaching.

1. Determine what needs to improve (assessment) and communicate this.
2. Set specific goals (goal setting).
3. Develop a plan to accomplish the goals (action plan).
4. Provide ongoing feedback and support (ongoing feedback).

Example

One of your employees, Ernie, lacks skill and confidence in public speaking. You've attended two of his most recent area meetings during which he was the facilitator. Ernie arrived without an agenda, he let participants go off topic, and he ran 35 minutes late.

Assessment

Take notes during the meeting and share these with Ernie. Ask for his perception of the meeting. Offer your observations.

Goal Setting

Through your discussions with Ernie, you collectively determine that Ernie is to: (a) establish an agenda prior to the next meeting, (b) come prepared to lead discussion on the items on the agenda, (c) introduce the agenda at the beginning of the meeting, and (d) stress the importance of concluding the meeting on time. He is also to take a more active role in focusing the meeting. Specifically, he will intervene when participants are taking up too much time or when they wander off topic.

Action Planning

As part of your plan, you loan Ernie a good book on facilitation skills. You suggest that he attend Shirley's next meeting (she's known for her structured approach). He constructs an agenda and you review it with him. You remind him to distribute the agenda ahead of the meeting, start the meeting on time, and to make some introductory comments at the beginning of the meeting to reinforce the agenda and set the tone for adhering to the structure. You reinforce his great work thus far and offer encouragement for the coming meeting.

Ongoing Feedback

Ernie's meeting starts and ends on time and he tries his best to keep attendees focused on the agenda. Afterwards you meet with Ernie and give him feedback.
Coaching top performers

Apart from employees with specific skill deficits, coaching also applies to top performers. They need to be recognized and given opportunities to take the next step.

Apply the coaching model we’ve just reviewed.

Assessment

Assess aspirations and give feedback on what is done and what needs to be developed.

Goal-setting

Help the employee identify their goals and formulate a plan (they may already have one that they want to review with you).

Action planning

Offer the employee the resources you are able to access as their boss. Offer to work with them on an ongoing basis or pair them up with an internal coach who might possess the skills that they want to acquire.

Feedback

Monitor progress and reward success. The top performer may be more interested in advancement than monetary reward so ensure that you understand their motivation.

Coaching ‘difficult’ employees

The saying goes that we spend 90% of our time supervising 10% of our workforce. Who are these 10%? They are called, colloquially, the “difficult” employee.

Coaching the “difficult” employee follows the same coaching model as outlined earlier, but there are some caveats.

Assessment and Feedback. Be prepared to explain how the employee's behavior affects you and the impact it has on others. Point out if their behavior is in any way a contravention of the code of conduct in your organization or may be in violation of any legislation. Clearly explain why their behavior is a performance issue. Document the details of the meeting.

Goal Setting. Don’t expect to change the person, just the behavior. Chances are the “difficult” behavior is a function of personality. Be realistic in setting the time frame and start with smaller, achievable goals and establish consequences for not meeting the goals. Document the details of the goal-setting.

Action Planning. Once the employee commits to change, establish a plan. You’ll probably need to be persistent. If goals are not being achieved despite the resources you have invested (including your own time), then you will need to have a frank discussion regarding progress. Document the details.

Ongoing Feedback. Coaching the “difficult” employee is going to take a significant amount of your time. It’s important that you’ve set a time line for the coaching and a way of measuring progress.

Understand that you’ve taken on a tough assignment and don’t be too tough on yourself if you don’t get the results you hoped for.
Other qualities of effective leadership

In your capacity of supervisor there is more to being a good leader than situational leadership. You need a wide variety of qualities to effectively enact all of your management functions. These qualities include knowledge, and skills, and values.

Knowledge

Knowledge provides you with a context for understanding situations and resolving them. Effective supervisors have:

- an understanding of individual employees, the work unit, the organization as a whole and its relationship to the community in which it functions.
- knowledge of systems and procedures.
- awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses, reactions to particular situations, and intentions (i.e. insight).

Skills

Skills help you translate intentions into action to achieve objectives. Effective supervisors:

- have the ability to lead, communicate, and take action to get results.
- ask for assistance from staff, colleagues, peers, internal or external resources.
- have the ability to analyze problematic situations and events.
- have the ability to work effectively as members of a group and to build cooperative effort in a team.
- set mutually acceptable targets, goals, standards, and deadlines with subordinates and the team.
- communicate effectively, manage conflicts, train subordinates, delegate and appraise the performance of individuals.

Values

Values ensure that skills and knowledge are used for the good of the team or unit, organization, and society. Values are rooted in strong personal clarity about what really matters in your life and in living in the service of your highest aspirations. The values of effective supervisors, include:

- integrity.
- openness to new ideas.
- trust.
- the courage to make tough decisions.
- a passion for the company’s vision, your mandate, and your staff.
Your Action Plan

The information in this session will help you become a ‘situational leader’.

What leadership style should you use?

According to models of situational leadership, you should adapt your style of leadership to the situation and the employee.

Based on the information from this session, answer the following questions to help commit the information to memory. If you are unsure of the answers, review the session content.

1. Under what conditions should you delegate responsibility?

2. Under what conditions should you be directive?

3. Under what conditions should you adopt a coaching style?
Building an effective team

As a supervisor, your leadership abilities are critical for a team's success. The fundamentals of an effective team are presented here. These fundamentals are the goals towards which you need to lead your team, and the measures by which you can judge your team's potential for success.

1. Clarity in team goals. A team works best when everyone understands its purpose and goals.

2. A plan for improvement. The team should have an improvement plan to determine the resources, assistance, materials, etc., that it needs.

3. Clearly defined roles. Teams operate most efficiently if they tap everyone's talents, and all members understand their part and know who is responsible for each issue and task.

4. Clear communication. Team members should speak with clarity and listen actively.

5. Supportive team behavior. Team members should initiate discussion, suggest procedures for reaching goals, compromise, be creative in resolving differences, and test for consensus.

6. Problem-solving/decision-making procedures. A team should discuss how decisions will be made and use factual data as the basis of those decisions.

7. Balanced participation. Everyone should participate in discussions and share commitment to decisions.

8. Effective procedures. Teams should establish procedures and ground rules (or “norms”) for how the group will operate (e.g. attendance, participation, interruptions).

9. Managed conflict and cooperation. Team members should deal with conflicts openly and collaborate to manage conflict and move forward.

10. A focus on objectivity and planning. Team members should seek permanent solutions rather than rely on quick fixes.
Team Performance Inventory

Now that you've reviewed the fundamentals for effective teamwork, we're going to ask you to apply this information to your experience in working on a team. Consider your most recent team experience – good or bad – and complete the following, brief “Team Performance Inventory”.

Consider each of the 10 scales and encircle that number that you feel best represents your team’s current level of functioning.

This exercise will indicate areas in need of development on the team.

To get the most out of this exercise, print copies and distribute to team members. Ask them to complete the inventory, individually, and summarize the results on each scale.

Instructions

Assess your team by circling the number on each scale (1-7) that you feel is most descriptive of your team, at present.

There is no formal interpretation for this measure. The challenge is to interpret the results in the context of your team and how that team is perceived by its members. Each scale may suggest to you areas for improvement.

Step 1:

Collect the results. Ideally, all members will complete the inventory separately.

Step 2:

Summarize the results on each scale.

Step 3:

Review the scales. What do these results indicate to you about the team? What areas need improvement? What are the team strengths?

Consider sharing the results with the team and discuss each scale separately with the intent of creating an action plan to improve team performance.
### Team Performance Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Purposes</th>
<th>The team lacks a common mission, goals, or vision of success</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</th>
<th>Team members understand goals and agree on team goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation/Development Plan</td>
<td>The team lacks procedures and a continuous development plan</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>The team evaluates its own success and plans further development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Definition</td>
<td>Roles on the team are unclear</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Team members understand their shared and individual roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication between members is closed and guarded</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Communication between members is open and participative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Support</td>
<td>Members detract from the ability of the team to achieve</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>Each member adds value to the team’s achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Solving/Decision-Making</td>
<td>The team does not routinely use agreed upon processes for problem-solving/decision-making</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>The team uses agreed upon processes for problem-solving/decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>There is unequal participation and lack of use of each member’s resources</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>There is balanced participation and use of each member’s resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>Procedures are confusing or there are no procedures to guide team functioning</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>The team has effective procedures and the team uses them to guide itself accordingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict and Cooperation</td>
<td>There is limited trust, and conflict is entrenched, diminishing cooperation</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>The team deals with conflict openly and collaborates to manage it and move on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity and Planning</td>
<td>There are no established planning or data collection processes</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>The team follows a planning process and works with objective data, not hunches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Team building: Your Action Plan

Based on the results of the Team Performance Inventory, what areas of team effectiveness need improvement and what can be done to improve them?

1. Team Purpose (common mission, goals, vision of success)

2. Evaluation /development plan (evaluation procedures, related continuous development plan).

3. Roles (definition and clarity).

4. Communication (open and participative).

5. Team support (each member adds value to the team's achievement).

6. Problem-solving and decision-making (processes are agreed upon).

7. Participation (balanced, uses each member's resources).

8. Procedures (effective, used to guide the team accordingly).

9. Conflict and cooperation (trusting and collaborative environment).

10. Objectivity and planning (processes are followed, objective data used).