Understanding Leadership

5. LEADERSHIP APPROACHES

5.4 Situational Leadership

The 21st century manager recognises that a 'command and control' approach to leading her or his team is no longer the most effective way of getting the best out of people. Today we seek to practice a style of leadership that relies more on coaching and participation to develop and empower individuals and teams.

The second factor about effective leadership is that it is not a case of 'one size fits all'; the most successful leaders consider each situation before deciding what will be the most appropriate intervention.

This flexible approach to leadership has been developed by Hersey and Blanchard (Hersey, P. and Blanchard, K. 1972) and is known as Situational Leadership. Hersey's model is especially useful because it describes effective leadership in terms of behaviours i.e. how other people **experience** our leadership through the kind of behaviours we demonstrate. We can learn a great deal about effective leadership and how to relate it to performance management of others.

The Situational Leadership model is based on the following principles:

- *the interplay between the amount of guidance and direction (task behaviour) given, and the amount of support (relationship behaviour) provided by the leader*

- *the interaction of two factors which relate to team members; their level of competence; and their levels of confidence and commitment*

- *leadership is a combination of directive (task) and supportive (relationship) behaviour styles*

The model, which appears below, has much to offer the leader in the role of developing individuals and encouraging them to achieve excellent performance. While we each have a preferred leadership style, which can be assessed, Hersey's model enables us to select the most appropriate style for each specific situation, based on the needs for support and direction of the people we lead.

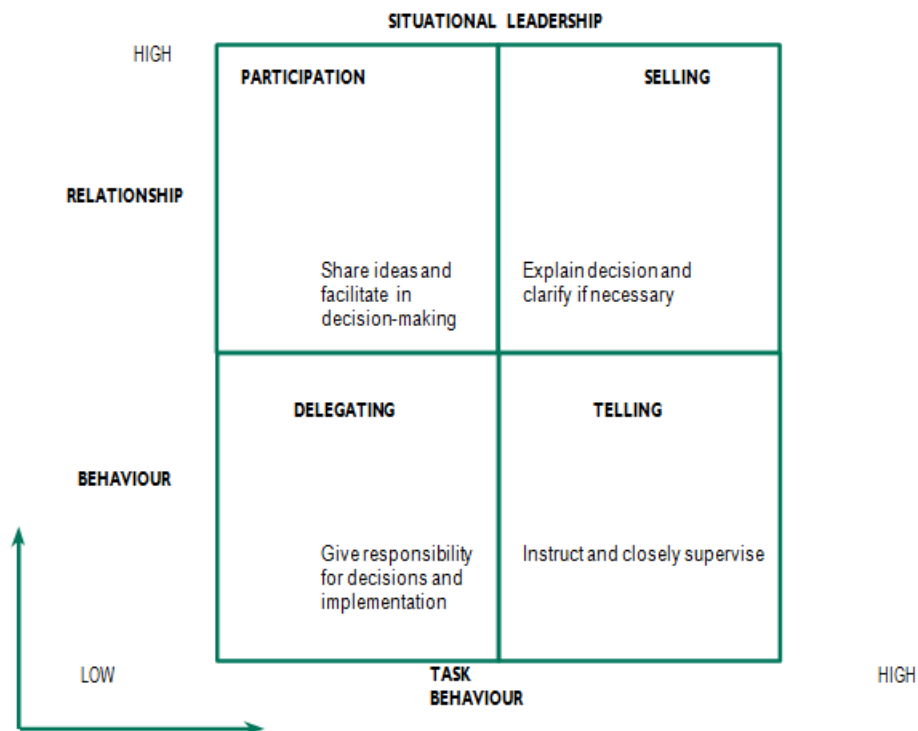| TASK BEHAVIOUR	RELATIONSHIP BEHAVIOUR
The extent to which the leader engages in defining roles, telling 'what', 'how', 'when', 'where', 'who will do what' in:	The extent to which the leader engages in two-way communication and provides encouragement and support in:
• Goal setting • Organizing • Establishing time-frames • Directing • Controlling	• Communicating • Facilitating interactions • Active listening • Providing feedback

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5. LEADERSHIP APPROACHES (Contd)

In this model, we see the two kinds of leadership behaviour described as 'Task' and 'Relationship'. Characteristics of each are listed, where we see that 'Task' behaviour is concerned with the task ('getting the job done'), whereas 'Relationship' behaviour is more about motivating relationships with the team members as well as building and maintaining them.

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

	PARTICIPATION	SELLING
HIGH	Share ideas and facilitate in decision-making	Explain decision and clarify if necessary
	DELEGATING	TELLING
	Give responsibility for decisions and implementation	Instruct and closely supervise

RELATIONSHIP BEHAVIOUR

LOW — TASK BEHAVIOUR — HIGH

Discussion

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN A GIRL GUIDE/GIRL SCOUT GROUP

Share examples of situations in your own Girl Guide/Girl Scout unit or association where the leadership styles that have been mentioned are demonstrated or needed.

Who is performing the leadership role: the (patrol) leader or somebody else in the group?

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5. LEADERSHIP APPROACHES (Contd)

The task approach involves the leader as the 'boss' having been briefed to achieve a specific goal. As leader, you would
then:

- **'tell'** your team members **what** the solution was
- **'tell'** them **what** to do
- **how** to do it, and then
- **control** and **supervise** their performance.

If the team member was also enthusiastic about achieving the goal, but recognised the need for your expertise, direction and supervision to get started, this directive style of leadership would prove successful.

However, if the team member was skilled and knowledgeable, but was anxious about the project, lacked commitment, motivation and possibly, self-confidence, the use of a directive approach would only make the problem worse. In this situation, you would need a different and more supportive approach. This involves listening to people, providing support,   guidance and encouragement for their efforts. It involves facilitating their involvement in the problem-solving and   decision-making.

Depending on the nature of the task and the skill and maturity level of the individual, Hersey identifies that a leader may need to adopt one of the four leadership styles in order to achieve the task:

- **'Telling'**
- **'Selling'**
- **'Participating'**
- **'Delegating'**

Discussion

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP CONTINUUM

Compare the two leadership models Situational Leadership & Leadership Continuum. Which differences and which similarities do you find?

Define the approach of the leader, and that of the group led?

How can you use your knowledge about the leadership models in your daily life, and in your Girl Guide/ Girl Scout life?

Give examples of situations where the leader's attitude is not used to its full advantage. How would you give feedback in such a situation?

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5. LEADERSHIP APPROACHES (Contd)

The table below will help you to identify how these factors interact to enable you to decide on the right leadership approach for your specific situation

Style	Type of approach needed	Level of individual competence	Level of individual commitment	Rationale
Telling	Highly Directive Little support	Low	Variable	Traditional 'expert' role individual needs to be told: • what to do and • how to do it
Selling	Highly directive Highly supportive	Low	Low	Individual will need: • direction and supervision to gain knowledge and experience • support and recognition to build self esteem • involvement in decision making to build commitment and ownership
Participating	Little direction Highly supportive	High	Variable	Individual will need: • support and recognition to build self esteem • involvement in decision making to build commitment and ownership
Delegating	Little direction Little support	High	High	• help is no longer needed • task successfully achieved • need to monitor progress