Adaptive Leadership: A Targeted Approach to Motivating Subordinates & Followers

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Adaptive Leadership:

The best leader recognizes that to help their people perform to a maximum level, they (the leaders) themselves have to adapt their leadership style(s) to their people, rather than expecting their people to adapt to the styles of the leaders.
Situational Leadership

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Leader Approach (S)
Follower Readiness (R)

HIGH

S1
Provide specific instructions and closely supervise performance
Leader Behaviors
- Guiding
- Directing
- Establishing

S2
Explain decisions and provide the opportunity for clarification
Leader Behaviors
- Explaining
- Clarifying
- Persuading

S3
Share ideas and facilitate in decision making
Leader Behaviors
- Encouraging
- Collaborating
- Committing

S4
Turn over responsibility for decisions and implementation
Leader Behaviors
- Observing
- Resourcing
- Clearing Space

LOW

TASK EMPHASIS
(Guidance)

HIGH

DIRECTING
Leader/Follower made decisions with dialogue and/or exposition with/to follower

COACHING
Follower Readiness (Moderate)
- R1
  Low Ability
  Low Willingness

SUPPORTING
Follower Readiness (High)
- R2
  Low Ability
  High Willingness

DELEGATING
Follower made decision or follower made decision with leader encouragement
- R3
  High Ability
  Low Willingness

- R4
  High Ability
  High Willingness (High)
Situational Leadership

The R1 Quadrant

R1
Low Ability
Low Willingness

(Low)

S1
Provide specific instructions and closely supervise performance

Leader Behaviors
- Guiding
- Directing
- Establishing
Situational Leadership

The R2 Quadrant

**Leader Behaviors**
- Explaining
- Clarifying
- Persuading

**S2**
Explain decisions and provide the opportunity for clarification

**Follower Readiness (Moderate)**

**R2**
Low Ability High Willingness

Leader made decisions with dialogue and/or explanation with/to follower
Situational Leadership

The R3 Quadrant

**S3**
Share ideas and facilitate in decision making

**Leader Behaviors**
- Encouraging
- Collaborating
- Committing

**Leader/Follower**
Made decision or follower made decision with leader encouragement

**Follower Readiness (Moderate)**
R3
High Ability Low Willingness
Situational Leadership

The R4 Quadrant

R4
High Ability
High Willingness

(High)

S4
Turn over responsibility for decisions and implementation

Leader Behaviors
- Observing
- Resourcing
- Clearing Space

Follower-mad decision

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Maximizing the performance of organizations and teams...
Situational Leadership: Leadership Style Descriptions

Directing
When a task is difficult, or if those performing it are inexperienced or have low commitment or maturity levels, it may be necessary to give instructions as to how the task should be done.

Coaching
When a task is difficult, and the skill level of the individual is relatively low, for whatever reason. Perhaps they are inexperienced, perhaps just not very competent. However, they are willing – maybe even excited - about contributing.

Selling
The individual’s competence in performing the tasks is adequate – maybe even more than adequate, but their willingness and commitment may be problematic.

Delegating
There is high competence and commitment as it relates to the individual. The individual is able and willing to work on a project by themselves with little supervision or support.
Reasons Leaders May Not Delegate Very Well....
1) Desire to maintain **CONTROL** – ‘I have to do this myself…’

The Reality: Usually - no you don’t. You may be taking up the time your team needs for you to lead, by doing the work others should be doing. We, as humans, generally like to be in control. We probably have insecurities that drive in us the need to control. The appeal is that have control makes us feel more significance.
2) **PERFECTIONISM** – ‘No one can do this as well as I can, so I need to do it….’

The Reality: That may be true, but it’s important to balance what is ‘good enough’ with the fact that your team needs you to have the time and capacity to provide leadership. In addition the stuff you do yourself is stuff that someone else could be ‘learning on’.
3) **COMPASSION** – ‘They already have so much to do – how can I give them any more…’

The Reality: It may be that your people need to better delegate themselves. Or perhaps your team needs to figure out what NOT to do anymore.
4) Concentrated, or Skewed COMPETENCIES – There is strong competency with subordinates, but that competency is concentrated in a narrow range of subordinates: – ‘I’m so glad I have __________ on my team, I can really rely on them.’

The Reality: While it’s really nice to have that person you can really rely on, there are some potentially negative implications….

- The first is obvious – possibility of burnout
- Perception of favoritism / partiality toward that person.
- Frustrating others who could be competently doing that work
- We may also drive away those ‘best’ employees because of an excessive workload.
Leader Delegation

5) **COMPETENCY** Deficit - Lack of competency in subordinates: ‘My people just don’t have the abilities to do it…’

The Reality: This could be true, but if it is, you have deeper problems that require immediate attention in terms of employee development and maybe discipline.
‘Leaders that don’t delegate well…’ is really an oxymoron. Delegating well is one of the fundamental leadership practices. In other words, one has to do it well in order to BE a good leader.