

The hersey blanchard theory

[Business](#), [Management](#)



The paper "Applying Theoretical Situational Approaches in Leadership and Motivation in a Practical Situation" is a breathtaking example of a case study on management. Practically everyone tied with business and management would agree that employees are one of the most important assets of an organization. Due to its importance, many motivation and leadership theories have evolved over the years. This paper reviews the Hersey Blanchard Theory in the backdrop of a case study that involves the motivation levels of two employees working in the same organization.

A brief background of the case:

Alex and Stephanie are students who work in a supermarket (part-time) to supplement their income. Alex is stuck in the produce department (as per his boss, Dan's style and approach), while Stephanie is assigned to different tasks by her boss Jonathan. Moreover, one of Alex's colleagues gets paid more (for the same task) because she pleases her boss by saying complimentary comments to him. Jonathan is friendly, relaxed and easy to work with. Stephanie is highly excited to work in the culinary center where she (and her colleagues) helps customers to create new and innovative recipes for their customers. The end result is that Alex is bored with his job while on the other hand, Stephanie looks forward to her work.

The Hersey Blanchard Theory:

The Hersey Blanchard Theory is a situational approach to leadership. It is indicative of the psychological and job maturity levels of employees. (Muralidharan, 2009, 63). Situational leadership in management circles means, adjusting the approach to employees according to their maturity or readiness levels. The Theory categorizes four types of employees termed as

R1, R2, R3, and R4 according to their attitudes and approach to work (Robbins, & Coulter, 2009, 63). R1 level of maturity indicates low maturity. In this instance, the employee is unwilling or unable to follow orders, or even due to insecurity and lack of confidence in their abilities. In case an employee is categorized as R2, he or she will be willing to follow the leader and have a high level of personal confidence. But they may lack the ability or skill to do a job allotted to them. They will be confident about any task or job they have already mastered but lack the sufficient skills and ability to perform new ones. R3 indicates a situation that is directly opposite to R2. In this instance, the employee has the ability, skill, and confidence to undertake a specific job or task, but is unwilling to follow orders. R4 level employees are confident, willing, and ready to take up responsibility. They have high levels of job and psychological maturity.

These are the four situations that managers (and supervisors) face in the workplace regarding employee attitudes, and the reason why the Hersey Blanchard Theory is referred to as situational. It is up to the manager to identify these traits and manage them according to the situation at hand. The theory then provides four leadership approaches that will be suitable to handle each of these situations referred to as S1, S2, S3, and S4 (DuBrin, 2005, 144).

- S1 - Telling: As the term indicates, the manager simply tells or orders (autocratic) the employee to do a certain job or task.
- S2 - Selling: This is similar to S1, but here the manager uses a persuasive (or selling) approach.
- S3 - Participating: There is a high degree of participation and interaction

between the manager and the employee. Employees are free to voice their opinions and suggestions which will be seriously considered by the manager.

- S4 – Delegating: Here the manager delegates employees to undertake their duties and will not interfere in their activities unless absolutely necessary. All that is required is that the manager is kept informed about the progress or completion of the duties (tasks/jobs) assigned.

Hersey Blanchard Theory applied to the case study:

With regard to Dan, it can be said that he can be categorized as an R3 employee. He appears confident, but not happy in his current position. It could be out of boredom and the difference in pay scales (mentioned in the case study). But there is no mention of his job maturity. Also, his emotional maturity is low because he rubs the sandwich meant for his boss on the floor. He could be happy with an S3 approach, but may not be suitable for an S4, because of his emotional temperament. He is at present being given an S1 approach by his boss. But there are indications that he could graduate from S3 to S4 over a period of time. In the case of Stephanie, it is clear that she is an R1 category employee. To her and her boss's credit, an S4 approach is being implemented which suits them both and also gives Stephanie a high level of job satisfaction.

Conclusion:

The paper was an exercise in applying theoretical situational approaches in leadership and motivation in a practical situation. It clearly states that leadership approaches should be based on the attitude/aptitude of the employees. Dan requires a particular leadership style that could be changed

in the future. For a visionary manager, Stephanie is an ideal employee and a good example of a symbiotic employer/employee relationship.