

Followee readiness in the situational leadership model



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The Concept of follower readiness as it relates to the Situational Leadership Model, as defined by Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, “ is the extent to which a follower demonstrates the ability and willingness to accomplish a specific task” (2008 p. 135).

The four levels of follower readiness (R1-R4) are performance readiness level 1 though performance readiness level 4.

- R1 is described as unable, unwilling and or insecure. Followers who are new or who have been given new tasks may lack the knowledge, experience or skill to complete the task. They may also be unwilling to do the task because they lack confidence or desire.
- R2 followers are unable but confident or willing. The follower may not know how to do an assigned task but may have the desire to do the task or have confidence in his or her ability to learn.
- R3 describes the follower as able, but insecure or unwilling. The follower learns new tasks but becomes apprehensive when he or she begins a given task on his or her own.
- Finally, R4 describes the follower as able willing and confident. The follower is experienced at doing the specific tasks and confident in his or her ability (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2008 p. 137).

The four leadership styles (S1-S4) are based on the effective influence of task behavior and relationship behavior of the leader.

Task behavior is defined as the extent to which the leader engages in spelling out the duties and responsibilities of an individual or group. Tasks

behavior tells the individual or group what, how, when and who is to do the task. In essence, the leader is guiding the individual or group.

Relationship behavior is defined as the extent to which a leader engages in two way communication by offering supportive behavior to the follower (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2008 p. 133).

- S1 leadership style places more emphasis on the task behavior and a minimal amount of relationship behavior. The leader is giving the follower precise directions on how to complete a given tasks. The R1 follower receives the guidance for specific tasks and is appropriately matched to leadership style 1.
- S2 leadership style involves an equal but high amount of task behavior and relationship behavior. In this style the leader is persuading or selling the ideas to the follower. The purpose of selling is to allow the leader to guide the direction of the follower. Also, the leader is allowing for two way communication and reinforcing improvements of the R2 follower.
- S3 leadership style on the relationship behavior with a minimal amount of task behavior. The R3 follower may lack motivation or insecure in his or her ability to do a task. The leader's role is to empower the follower through encouragement and communication.
- S4 leadership style involves a minimal amount of both task behavior and relationship behavior. The leader delegates tasks to the R4 follower. The leader does not need to provide the follower with constant direction or encouragement. Rather, he or she delegates the tasks, observes and allows the follower the opportunity to complete

tasks with the greater freedom (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2008 p. 134, 142-146).

Jeanne Lewis moved through Staples management at an incredible rate and her leadership styles and self-reflection assisted her in accomplishing her goals. During Jeanne Lewis's rise through Staples, two leadership styles stand out. In her earlier years, Jeanne Lewis practiced the S1 leadership style. Jeanne Lewis stated that she wanted things to happen quickly and would tell everyone how to go about completing the task. Jeanne realized that this would be counterproductive to improving the organization's bottom line (2000, p. 2).

The S1 leadership style, with some overlap of S2 leadership style, was evident in Jeanne Lewis' management style when she became the director of operations for New England. As stated by her direct report, "...She tended to manage tightly at first, and then loosened the reigns. She challenged..., and invited us to challenge each other". Jeanne also inspired dialogue and debate to ensure that they dug deeply into their decision making (2000, p. 4).

Finally, Jeanne Lewis made a change in her leadership style after noticing her style seemed confrontational to some of the employees, which could lead to an insecurity or unwillingness to complete assigned tasks. Jeanne Lewis' progressed to the S3 leadership style. She had an open door policy, which encourages two-way communication and active listening. The leadership style change gave her direct reports a sense of empowerment and support that they otherwise lacked (2002, p. 7).

In all, Situational Leadership is based on the amount of task behavior and relationship behavior the leader provides and the performance readiness level, ability and willingness, that a follower shows in the performance of his or her task (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2008 p. 156). It is up to the leader to recognize the performance level of his or her followers that leader is attempting influence.