

# [Organizational behavior – jean lewis at staples case study](https://assignbuster.com/organizational-behavior-jean-lewis-at-staples-case-study/)

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LDP1 July 17, 2007 The interchange between task behavior, relationship behavior, and follower readiness is the foundation of situational leadership. Different focus on relationship or task behavior is applied to followers on different readiness levels. Task behavior is the degree of detailed direction given by a leader to a follower or a group for them to perform a task. Included in these directions are specifics of the methodology to perform the task as well as the place and the parties involved.

Relationship behavior is the grade of interaction between the leader and the follower or group. Readiness is the degree of willingness and capability that a follower demonstrates. “ The two major components of readiness are ability and willingness” (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001) Ability is composed of the follower’s qualifications for a particular task. Hersey (2001) catalogs these qualifications as knowledge, skill and experience. Willingness is the level of confidence, commitment and motivation that someone shows.

Willingness is not a personal attribute as it varies from a task to another.

Confidence is the expressed belief that one is able to perform a task. The fact that an individual is confident does not necessarily make him capable of completing an assignment, as it is a mental state rather than a measure of skills. Commitment is an established dedication to undertake a responsibility, and motivation is the expressed desire to do it. Based on the degree of ability and willingness an individual can be classified into four levels of readiness as follows: R1 – Unable and Unwilling

R2 – Unable but Willing R3 – Able but Unwilling R4 – Able and Willing R1 individuals do not have either the necessary level of skill or the commitment to perform a task. R2 individuals are not qualified, yet have the willingness to undertake the responsibility.

R3 individuals have the ability to perform the task but are reluctant to execute it. Finally, R4 individuals have the ability and the willingness to complete a task. The situational leadership model institutes four different leadership styles to pair with each of the four readiness levels.

These styles are characterized by the different combinations of relationship and task behavior and are defined as follows: Style 1 or S1 – This style of leadership characterized by a high amount of task and low amount of relationship behavior should be used on individuals on the first level of readiness. It is also known as crisis leadership as it is a good practice on a critical situation when the leader doesn’t have the time to explain the “ whys” of the objectives to the followers or research the readiness level of the group.

For instance during a fire the fire department personnel is likely to use this type of leadership to evacuate a building.

Style 2 or S2 – Typified by high levels of both, task and relationship behaviors, this style should be used in individuals on the second level of readiness. These individuals lack the skills to complete a task, therefore a great deal of direction (task behavior) is needed. Since they are trying, it is important to encourage them to continue their progress (relationship behavior).

Style 3 or S3 – Low task and high relationship behavior set this leadership style apart, and should be used on followers on readiness level 3. These individuals have the skill level necessary to complete a task, therefore high amounts of direction are unnecessary.

However, since they are unwilling the leader must spend time participating in bilateral communication to encourage them and facilitate decision making. Style 4 or S4 – Characterized by low levels of both relationship and task behaviors. Hersey (2001) describes this leadership style as delegating.

R4 individuals are able and willing to undertake a task, reducing the leader’s participation to monitoring progress. As we can see in this model, the readiness level of an individual is what determines the leadership style to be applied. Consequently, it is the follower and not the leader that establishes the leadership style.

In her time at Staples, Jeanne Lewis applied different leadership styles to accommodate the different readiness levels of her employees. Until she started working in the marketing department she experienced different levels of rejection from her staff that translated into unwillingness.

Jeanne describes her experience in operations as “ managing a group of people who had ‘ been there, done that’ for years. ” And yet, she continues, “ we had a situation where the stores weren’t performing well, and I had to tell them to make money and grow sales. “(Jeanne Lewis at Staples, Inc, 2001) From her words we can perceive that her staff was in a R1 readiness level.

Unwilling because they did not think Jeanne had the experience necessary to run the department, and unable at some level because the stores were not performing well.

Jeanne used a S1 leadership style to match the readiness level of her staff. This leadership style, characterized by high task and relationship behavior, has been described as crisis leadership. Jeanne made many changes in the department in a short period of time, so abundant clear and concise direction was necessary. Also due to the reluctance of the operations staff, high levels of multi-way communication were needed. This leadership style is used to help followers advance in their readiness levels, and should only be used in times of crisis.

We can presume from her direct report’s description of Jeanne’s management style that she did exactly that. “ She tended to manage tightly at first,” he said, “ then loosened the reins” I think it is safe to assume that her “ loosening the reins”(Jeanne Lewis at Staples, Inc, 2001) was caused by an upwards variation of her staff’s readiness level which in turn we can attribute to her management style, and personal charm, and hard-working attitude to elevate follower’s willingness, and clear direction and new training programs to raise ability.

A similar situation happened in merchandising. We can learn much of Lewis’ progression of management style by her report’s statement that “ at first impression he worried that Lewis might be a micro-manager, but he soon realized that she liked to inspire dialog and debate to ensure that they dug deeply in their decision making” (Jeanne Lewis at Staples, Inc, 2001). We cannot discard that his first impression was correct, and it is not his erception of Jeanne’s personality that changed, but her management style. When Jeanne was transferred to the marketing department, she found a different situation.

She found a talented staff, able and willing to do the job that was requested of them, so she took the passenger sit and leaded them using low task and low relationship behavior (S4). Much to her surprise the followers started experiencing a regressing in their readiness level, going from an able-and-willing group to an able-but-insecure state.

Perhaps the distress of the failed merger caused the insecurity. Jeanne needed to adjust her leadership style to include more participation and multi-directional communication (relationship behavior), but running between floors and “ changing hats” all the time did not leave her enough time thus she insisted that her replacement in merchandising be appointed in order to free her schedule. I think Jeanne Lewis is a perfect example of a situational manager.

During the whole time I spent reading the case study I could not help but see how she adjusted her management style precisely as the situation required it. Works Cited: Hersey, P. , Blanchard, K. H. , & Johnson, D. E.

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