

Situational leadership in organisations: benefits



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This report was commissioned to review the importance of the situational leadership theory in an organization and how it can positively affect the general performance of a company. The article aims to reveal how this method of leadership can prove to be beneficial, if a leader constantly changes his leadership style based on the maturity level of his subordinate groups in relation to the job allotted to them. Situational leadership, if practiced correctly, can help increase employee efficiency and loyalty, reduce employee turnouts and cut down on extra training costs, subsequently putting a company on a profitable ground.

It is often seen though that many leaders make the mistake of practicing a common leadership style across all levels of his subordinate groups, rejecting the need for a change. This misreading often results as one of the major reasons for their failure as a leader or manager. Moreover, it has also been noticed that many leaders, at times, are unable to make the required changes in their leadership, even though they can see the need for the same. This inability is often generated from their personal rigid nature and apprehension towards any kind of change. Fear of failure, losing control or even loss of authority can be considered as significant factors that hinder them from making this change in them and adapting to the situation and people in question. The report aspires to find solutions to eradicate this blockage.

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1. 0 INTRODUCTION

The core of this article is the Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership model which states that there is no single “ best” style of leadership. The effectiveness of a Leadership style is based on the adaptability of the leader towards the maturity of his subordinates and the elements of the task to be done. The theory points out that if a leader does not change his leadership style according to the maturity level of the group he is leading in relation to the task required to be performed, he will inevitably fail in his attempt to extract pleasing results from them.

In this report, I will discuss the positive aspects of this leadership style and exhibit the possible advantages that it can give to an organization.

Furthermore, an acute comprehension will be presented on why some managers avoid applying this theory in their leadership and some possible solutions to this problem.

2: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

2.0 NEED FOR CHANGING LEADERSHIP STYLE

There is a very popular idiom used in India which says “ all five fingers of the hand are not the same”. The ‘ five fingers of the hand’ in this expression, symbolizes people. The phrase talks about how every individual is different from each other in terms of intelligence, personality, strength and capabilities, just as the five fingers are different in size, structure, strength and function. In an organization too, there are various kinds of people or groups of different designation levels, age groups, education, and experience. Thus it is necessary to manage them using a suitable leadership method in accordance to them and the desired output.

2.1 UNDERSTANDING MATURITY LEVELS

When I talk about maturity, I am referring to the willingness, readiness and expertise of an individual or group in relation to a particular task. Let me cite a simpler example closer to my life. When my brother, who is seven years older to me, turned twelve, my mother allowed him to do many things on his own and he did it willingly as it made him feel responsible. On the other hand, I was always helped by my mother in doing things for myself as I was only five years old then. So why did my mother do that? The answer is quite simple. There was a difference in my maturity level and capability compared

to my brother's and my mother understood that well. She knew that being only five, I was not physically or mentally prepared to do some things on my own and thus would require her guidance and support to do some tasks whereas she gave my brother a freehand as he was older and more knowledgeable compared to me. This freedom made him feel more responsible and confident about himself as his maturity was acknowledged by my mother. Now let us imagine my mother handled my brother the same way as me even though he was twelve and a lot more mature. What would it do to my brother? He would definitely feel irritated because he was being treated at the same level as a person seven years younger to him. He would feel stripped of his seniority to his so much younger sister. Moreover, this common treatment could also hinder his personality growth and affect his confidence in himself.

Similarly in an organization, one can find groups of people with different maturity levels, experience and assigned roles. In this situation, if a leader or manager followed a common leadership style throughout all groups, it could cause a lot of problems. His selected mode of leadership could suit one or more groups but not all.

2. 2 CHOOSING THE RIGHT LEADERSHIP STYLE

Situational leadership is directed on 2 major points; " task behavior" and " relationship behavior". When applying the situational leadership theory, leaders will be able to decide whether to give more or less importance to the task or more or less importance to their relationship with the person they are leading, depending on which helps the task to be done more effectively.

In my last office, a new member had joined my colleague's team sometime ago. They were working on a very vital project when my colleague had to leave on an emergency call. She quickly handed over some tasks to this new member and went off. Unfortunately, this new member did not have enough knowledge and understanding of the task and neither did he have the confidence to ask other members about it. As a result, he held on to the tasks and did not work much on them with the apprehension of making a mistake. When my colleague returned after 3 hours, she was furious to see that he had not completed the task. She thought she had given him enough time to do the task and he could have easily completed them on time. But a lot of time was wasted and nothing was done. She scolded him and called him irresponsible and unreliable, not realizing that she was equally to be blamed for this mishap. Considering that he was a new member, she should have given him proper guidance and instructions on how to do the task, instead of just telling him to do the task. The new member was low on the maturity scale (M1) but she made the mistake of using the Delegating style (S4) of leadership with him. The result; there was wastage of valuable time and manpower and the job was still not done.

I faced a similar situation when one of my counterparts was leaving for a holiday and wanted me to take over some of her responsibilities. I was excited and interested in doing the same as I had worked very closely with her and had a good understanding of most of her responsibilities. Though she was aware of this, she still gave me a detailed list of her tasks and a step by step instruction of how to do them. This approach made me feel that she did not trust me with her work and that annoyed me. As a result, my

enthusiasm for the job, dropped. I completed the tasks but not with the best of my ability. She knew that I was high on the maturity scale (M4) but she still opted to use the Telling style (S1) of leadership, as result, she ruined her relationship with me as a colleague due to her lack of trust.

The above examples clearly explain why it is necessary for any leader to adapt his leadership style to the maturity of the person they are leading in relation to a required task.

2. 3 BENEFITS OF CHANGING LEADERSHIP

Following situational leadership can offer several benefits for an organization. It is often seen that the leader who works to understand the unique needs of his or her employees will build loyalty and dedication to both himself and the organization, while achieving a higher level of performance.

2. 3. 1 HIGHER EFFECIENCY AND PERFORMANCE

A greater level of efficiency and performance can be achieved from employees if their leader is able to understand and identify his follower willingness, readiness and mindset towards a task and adjust his leadership approach towards them accordingly. By choosing the right style for them, he will be able to extract the optimum level of performance out of his subordinates in the required time, thus making his workforce more efficient for the company.

2. 3. 2 LOYALTY TO LEADER AND COMPANY

A person's loyalty is always governed by his or her emotions. In an organization, when a leader recognizes, supports, guides, appreciates and <https://assignbuster.com/situational-leadership-in-organisations-benefits/>

trusts his employees or subordinates using the correct method of leadership with them, they feel more bonded towards their leader and the company, as a result offering a stronger loyalty affiliation towards them.

2. 3. 3 REDUCE EMPLOYEE TURNOUTS

One of the major reasons for high employee turnout in an organization is a usually a bad manager. When employees are not guided and supported well by their leaders or not given their due respect, appreciation or trust by their managers, it generally affects their work performance. As a result, they end up feeling frustrated and dejected at work, subsequently leaving the job. A wrong leadership approach towards employees can also hamper the relationship between the management and its subordinate groups. A manager can avoid such issues by selecting the best suited leadership style towards a group based on their maturity and capability levels. Understanding the in-depth need of the subordinate group will help him decide how much intervention and leverage is required from him in the group's activity in relation to a task they are going to perform. By doing this, he will be able to inculcate the correct amount of guidance and support when required or provide the right of independence; as a result employees feel more valued and satisfied in the company, consequently reducing the turnout percentage.

2. 3. 4 COST REDUCTIONS

Situational leadership can cut costs of an organization in a vital way. As illustrated above, following a suitable leadership style reduces employee turnouts. Reduction in employee turnouts means there is a lesser need of bringing in new employees in an organization for the same existing jobs. This

automatically saves the company a lot of extra costs of hiring, training and re-training of new employees. An employee's work efficiency is equally proportionate to the company costs. If an employee is not efficient enough to do a job in a particular time, it costs the company more money to keep him. A leader when following the correct method of leadership as per the readiness of the employee towards a task, he can increase the efficiency and work performance of the employee by providing the correct amount of direction to him and getting the right amount of work done in the required time.

2. 4 AVOIDING SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Even though situational leadership is quite popular with many multinationals today due to its simplistic and easy to use nature, it is often seen that a lot of managers do not want to use it. They either do not consider the requirement of this leadership style or are just apprehensive about using it with their work force.

2. 4. 1 REASONS FOR AVOIDING TO CHANGE LEADERSHIP STYLE

Many managers avoid using situational leadership or changing their leadership because due to personal reasons. The leader is sometimes overpowered by his fear of failure and thus avoids making changes in his style. He is not sure if experimenting with his leadership style would bring him the desired results and so keeps away from it even though he sees the need to do it.

Besides this he also fears losing control over his people and work. The love for extreme power has also been cited as a possible reason behind avoiding to use situational leadership.

Moreover, a manager's inflexible personality also acts as a hindrance to his ability to adapt to his group's needs towards a task. He may be a person who does not like change in general and has a fixed *modus operandi* towards his work and managing people.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

The Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership model is intuitively appealing and has been widely used in management development programs. Leaders should consider altering styles to achieve the best results with followers and situations, even as they change with time. Leaders must give continuous attention to the skill levels and task confidence of his subordinates through training and development programs. If the correct styles are used in lower-readiness situations, followers will mature and grow in their abilities and confidence. This willingness to understand follower development and respond with flexibility allows the leader to become less directive as followers mature.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

All teams, and all team members, are not created equal. Hersey and Blanchard's theory argues that leaders are more effective when they use a leadership style based on the individuals or groups they're leading.

So you should start by identifying whom you're leading. Are your followers knowledgeable & experienced in the task? Are they willing and excited to do

the work? Rate them on the M1-M4 maturity scale, and then use the leadership style from S1 to S4 that's appropriate for that rating.