

## Situational Leadership

A highly recognised and useful model in the field of leadership is the Situational Leadership framework. Put simply, a situational leader is one who can adopt different leadership styles based on the situation.

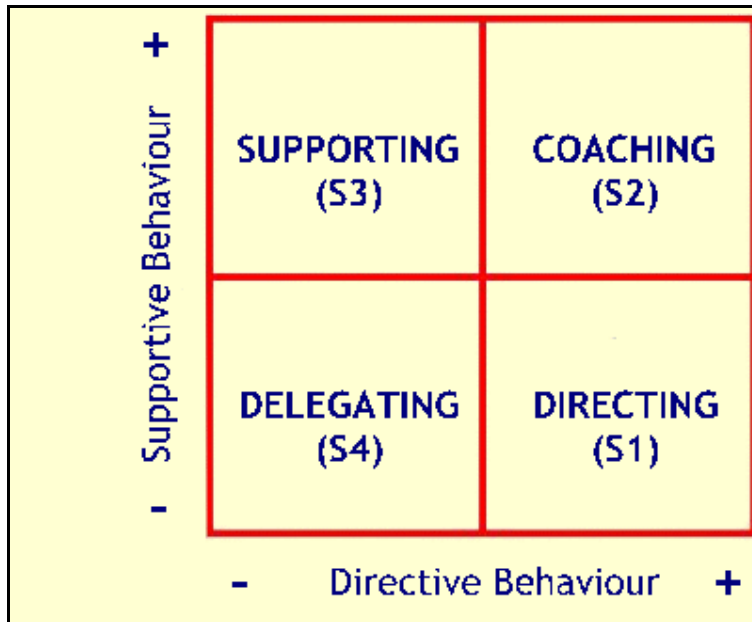
This model is relevant to both the work environment and also in day-to-day personal use as a communication and “self-leadership” tool.

The situational leadership model was developed by Ken Blanchard, who is a management expert and author of many books, including the “One Minute Manager” series, and by Paul Hersey in the late 1960’s and this foundational tool is still used in coaching and leadership development professions today.

This resource allows you to analyse the needs of the situation you’re dealing with so that you can then adopt or use the most appropriate leadership style. It’s simple and easy to understand and works in most environments and for most people.

It is based on the amount of direction and support the leader gives to the individual. This decision is based not only on the situation itself, but the needs of the individuals in the situation.

## Leadership Style and Behaviour



The four quadrants are described below:

- **Directing** – In situations that require this style, the leader defines the roles and tasks of the “follower” (meaning the person following the direction). The supervisor may need to monitor the individual’s performance to the instructions closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one-way.
- **Coaching** – In this situation, the leader still defines roles and tasks, but also seeks ideas and suggestions from the follower. The leader is more often “selling” the idea to the follower, getting their buy-in and agreement, although the leader still maintains the prerogative of making the final decision. This is the first step for the leader to be developing the team member as a leader.
- **Supporting** – Here, leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as allocating tasks and processes to the follower. The leader is facilitating and taking part in discussions but is allowing the follower to be in control. This is an increased opportunity for the followers to become leaders.

- **Delegating** – Finally, leaders in this situation are still involved in decisions and problem solving but control is with the follower. The follower decides when and how the leader will be involved. Here, the leader is working with a developed leader who doesn't consistent monitoring.

Effective leaders are versatile in being able to move around the grid according to the situation, so there is no one right style. However, we tend to have a preferred style, and in applying Situational Leadership you need to know which one that is for you.

This also requires the leader to develop their strengths in each of the styles, and coaches often work with leaders to have them also pass this model on to their developing leaders in their team.

This step can be crucial because the leader often makes their leadership style decision based on what they think the situation requires, but may not be fully aware of the needs of the follower. If the leader and follower share the same language about situational leadership, then both are far more likely to be able to identify the style they each feel is appropriate to the situation. This approach means all members of the team grow in their understanding and application of situational leadership.

## Development Level

Clearly the right leadership style will depend very much on the person being led - the follower - and Blanchard and Hersey extended their model to include the Development Level of the follower.

They said that the leader's style should be driven by the Competence and Commitment of the follower, and came up with four levels:

D4	High Competence High Commitment	Experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. May even be more skilled than the leader.  Delegating supports this individual.
D3	High Competence Variable Commitment	Experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well / quickly  Supporting may be most appropriate for this individual.
D2	Some Competence Low Commitment	May have some relevant skills, but won't be able to do the job without help. The task or the situation may be new to them.  Coaching is the likely style here.
D1	Low Competence Low Commitment	Generally lacking the specific skills required for the job in hand, and lacks any confidence and / or motivation to tackle it.  Directing is most often used for this individual.

Development Levels are also situational.

Even when you have a skilled, confident and motivated individual (D<sub>4</sub>) who you might typically delegate to, when introducing a significant change, new task or when a sensitive situation arises, the leader may adopt a directing or coaching leadership style, because in this situation the individual may be in a D<sub>1</sub> or D<sub>2</sub> development level as related to the change.

## Situational Leadership

So, there is a correlation between Leadership Style (S<sub>1</sub> - S<sub>4</sub>) of the leader and the Development level (D<sub>1</sub> - D<sub>4</sub>) of the follower - and it's the leader who adapts if they are paying attention.

For example, if a new person joins the team, they are likely at a D<sub>1</sub> level and therefore require an S<sub>1</sub> leadership style. As the individual develops within the team, the leader can start to use more advanced leadership styles to match the person's confidence and competence level.

The leader has the opportunity to also look at the individual's need for acknowledgement of their skill. If the individual is still being treated as if their development level is a D<sub>1</sub> and they've been around a while, and the leader continues to use a directing leadership style, the individual may feel unappreciated and therefore becomes less motivated.

The leader can challenge and develop their team members more actively by moving beyond delegating as quickly as is appropriate to do so, and start using more advanced styles to develop the team.

Ultimately, this supports the leader because they will spend less time directing and coaching, and more time supporting and delegating which is often what the leader identifies they need to be

doing. Of course, this requires effective and efficient team development to be the focus of the leader.

By adopting the right style to suit the follower's development level, work gets done, relationships are built up, and most importantly, the follower's development level will rise to D<sub>4</sub>, to everyone's benefit.

To develop your situational leadership skills further, you may wish to either work directly with a qualified leadership coach, or consider looking to the [Blanchard Organisation](#) to seek out some training.

## Disclaimers and Other Important Information

**High Ideals Pty Ltd** is committed to ensuring that all of our services, products and information we share is foremost designed and delivered in a manner which has the potential to support others. Our values are focused on giving, being supportive and making a positive difference in the world. We are also dedicated to ensuring that we are at all times ethical demonstrating integrity at all levels. Therefore this Disclaimers page is necessary to provide clarity on a number of key points, as follows:

- All **High Ideals Pty Ltd** documents are for information purposes only.
- Clients and all who read these documents are responsible for their own decisions and **High Ideals Pty Ltd** will never provide advice or direct you what to do. Our services include sharing these resource documents, which are focused on assisting clients to raise their own awareness, by which they can make their own decisions and be responsible for their own actions. It is the responsibility of anyone who receives an **High Ideals Pty Ltd** resource document, whether they are a direct client of ours or were forwarded this document from a third party, to read our full terms and conditions available on our website: [www.high-ideals.com](http://www.high-ideals.com)
- The client and/or reader of this document are responsible for engaging in their own research, further reading, and exploration. This document is simply an information sharing starting point only.
- All of our **High Ideals Pty Ltd** personnel and members can contribute to our Resource Library, and share the responsibility for writing all of these documents. As a collective, we have a huge range of backgrounds and areas of expertise. We also take great care when sharing information

to ensure it is accurate, useful and a product of sound research as well as our own personal and professional experience. Therefore many of our comments are born out of our many years of experience in a large number of areas of endeavour or interest and the successes of our clients is the evidence behind these strategies and techniques. If we are providing personal opinion, we make that clear, and take care to validate why and/or how this personal opinion may be useful in the total picture of self exploration of the client/reader. When we do share personal opinion, it is typically in the form of sharing from our relevant experience, ideas of strategies we feel may be helpful, and potentially have been helpful for us personally. Personal opinion never includes giving advice or providing specific direction to the client/reader. If we are referencing the work, thoughts or opinions of others, we also make that clear and give full attribution and acknowledgement to those other sources of information. We also share our validation for why we feel this information may be of benefit to the client/reader.

- We adhere to the Harvard Referencing System in providing reference information and acknowledgement for all books, websites and other information sources. We are continually updating our documents to match this standard. If you ever notice a reference which you feel does not meet this standard, please let us know by writing to [info@high-ideals.com](mailto:info@high-ideals.com) with this feedback so we can attend to it immediately.
- **High Ideals Pty Ltd** never makes any endorsement or recommendation of any websites, books, companies, products or services. Instead, we provide ideas for the client/reader to explore certain websites and books in particular. We review and carefully select which websites and books we feel may have some potential value to our clients/readers. Then, when we raise these ideas with the client/reader, we also provide our justification for why we feel the idea may have some merit. For example, if we raise the idea to the client/reader to explore a particular website, we will indicate what it is about that website which we feel has the potential to be useful to the client/reader. It is then the responsibility of the client/reader to make the final assessment as to whether or not it is actually useful.
- We also take no responsibility for the content of any website other than **High Ideals Pty Ltd**. We cannot control the accuracy, security or technical performance of any website other than our own. Similarly, we have no control over the content of any books we raise ideas for exploration about, or the availability of those books. It is the total responsibility of the client/reader to determine whether this information is for them to pursue further.