

Situational Leadership®

Instructions: Look at the following four leadership situations and indicate what the development level is in each situation, which leadership style each response represents, and which leadership style is needed in the situation (i.e., action A, B, C, or D).

Situation 1

Because of budget restrictions imposed on your department, it is necessary to consolidate. You are thinking of asking a highly capable and experienced member of your department to take charge of the consolidation. This person has worked in all areas of your department and has the trust and respect of most of the staff. She is very willing to help with the consolidation.

- A. Assign the project to her and let her determine how to accomplish it.
- B. Assign the task to her, indicate to her precisely what must be done, and supervise her work closely.
- C. Assign the task to her and provide support and encouragement as needed.
- D. Assign the task to her and indicate to her precisely what needs to be done but make sure you incorporate her suggestions.

Development level 4 Action A

Situation 2

You have recently been made a department head of the new regional office. In getting to know your departmental staff, you have noticed that one of your inexperienced employees is not following through on assigned tasks. She is enthusiastic about her new job and wants to get ahead in the organization.

- A. Discuss the lack of follow-through with her and explore the alternative ways this problem can be solved.
- B. Specify what she must do to complete the tasks but incorporate any suggestions she may have.
- C. Define the steps necessary for her to complete the assigned tasks and monitor her performance frequently.
- D. Let her know about the lack of follow-through and give her more time to improve her performance.

Development level 1 Action C

Situation 3

Because of a new and very important unit project, for the past 3 months you have made sure that your staff members understood their responsibilities and expected level of performance, and you have supervised them closely. Due to some recent project setbacks, your staff members have become somewhat discouraged. Their morale has dropped, and so has their performance.

- A. Continue to direct and closely supervise their performance.
- B. Give the group members more time to overcome the setbacks but occasionally check their progress.
- C. Continue to define group activities but involve the group members more in decision making and incorporate their ideas.
- D. Participate in the group members' problem-solving activities and encourage and support their efforts to overcome the project setbacks.

Development level B Action B

Situation 4

As a director of the sales department, you have asked a member of your staff to take charge of a new sales campaign. You have worked with this person on other sales campaigns, and you know he has the job knowledge and experience to be successful at new assignments. However, he seems a little unsure about his ability to do the job.

- A. Assign the new sales campaign to him and let him function on his own.
- B. Set goals and objectives for this new assignment but consider his suggestions and involve him in decision making.
- C. Listen to his concerns but assure him he can do the job and support his efforts.
- D. Tell him exactly what the new campaign involves and what you expect of him, and supervise his performance closely.

Development level D Action B

SOURCE: Adapted from *Game Plan for Leadership and the One Minute Manager* (Figure 5.20, Learning Activity, p. 5), by K. Blanchard, P. Zigarmi, and D. Zigarmi, 1992, Escondido, CA: Blanchard Training and Development (phone 760-489-5005). Used with permission.

Scoring Interpretation

A short discussion of the correct answers to the brief questionnaire will help to explain the nature of Situational Leadership® questionnaires.

Situation 1 in the brief questionnaire describes a common problem faced by organizations during downsizing: the need to consolidate. In this particular situation, the leader has identified a person to direct the downsizing project who appears to be highly competent, experienced, and motivated. According to the SLII® model, this person is at Developmental Level 4, which calls for a delegative approach. Of the four response alternatives, it is the (A) response, "Assign the project to her and let her determine how to accomplish it," that best represents delegating (S4): low supportive–low directive leadership.

Situation 2 describes a problem familiar to leaders at all levels in nearly all organizations: lack of follow-through by an enthusiastic follower. In the given example, the follower falls in Developmental Level 1 because she lacks the experience to do the job even though she is highly motivated to succeed. The SLII® approach prescribes directing (S1) leadership for this type of follower. She needs to be told when and how to do her specific job. After she is given directions, her performance should be supervised closely. The correct response is (C), "Define the steps necessary to complete the assigned tasks and monitor her performance frequently."

Situation 3 describes a very different circumstance. In this situation, the followers seem to have developed some experience and an understanding of what is required of them, but they have lost some of their motivation to complete the goal. Their performance and commitment have stalled because of recent setbacks, even though the leader has been directing them closely. According to SLII®, the correct response for the leader is to shift to a more supportive coaching style (S2) of leadership. The action response that reflects coaching is (C), "Continue to define group activities but involve the group members more in decision making and incorporate their ideas."

Situation 4 describes some of the concerns that arise for a director attempting to identify the correct person to head a new sales campaign. The person identified for the position obviously has the skills necessary to do a good job with the new sales campaign, but he appears apprehensive about his own abilities. In this context, SLII® suggests that the director should use a supportive style (S3), which is consistent with leading followers who are competent but lacking a certain degree of confidence. A supportive style is represented by action response (C), "Listen to his concerns but assure him he can do the job and support his efforts."

Now select two of your own followers. Diagnose their current development level on three different goals and your style of leadership in each situation. Is there a match? If not, what specifically can you do for them as a leader to ensure that they have what they need to succeed?

Path-Goal Leadership Questionnaire

Instructions: This questionnaire contains questions about different styles of path-goal leadership. Indicate how often each statement is true of your own behavior.

Key: 1 = Never 2 = Hardly ever 3 = Seldom 4 = Occasionally 5 = Often
6 = Usually 7 = Always

1. I let followers know what is expected of them. 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7
2. I maintain a friendly working relationship with followers. 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7**
3. I consult with followers when facing a problem. 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7
4. I listen receptively to followers' ideas and suggestions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7**
5. I inform followers about what needs to be done and how it needs to be done. 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7
6. I let followers know that I expect them to perform at their highest level. 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7**
7. I act without consulting my followers. 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7
8. I do little things to make it pleasant to be a member of the group. 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7
9. I ask followers to follow standard rules and regulations. 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7**
10. I set goals for followers' performance that are quite challenging. 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7
11. I say things that hurt followers' personal feelings. **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I ask for suggestions from followers concerning how to carry out assignments. 1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7
13. I encourage continual improvement in followers' performance. 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7**
14. I explain the level of performance that is expected of followers. 1 2 3 4 5 **6** 7
15. I help followers overcome problems that stop them from carrying out their tasks. 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7**
16. I show that I have doubts about followers' ability to meet most objectives. 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7
17. I ask followers for suggestions on what assignments should be made. 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7
18. I give vague explanations of what is expected of followers on the job. 1 **2** 3 4 5 6 7
19. I consistently set challenging goals for followers to attain. 1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7
20. I behave in a manner that is thoughtful of followers' personal needs. 1 2 3 4 5 6 **7**

Scoring

1. Reverse the scores for Items 7, 11, 16, and 18.
2. Directive style: Sum of scores on Items 1, 5, 9, 14, and 18.
3. Supportive style: Sum of scores on Items 2, 8, 11, 15, and 20.
4. Participative style: Sum of scores on Items 3, 4, 7, 12, and 17.
5. Achievement-oriented style: Sum of scores on Items 6, 10, 13, 16, and 19.

Scoring Interpretation

- Directive style: A common score is 23, scores above 28 are considered high, and scores below 18 are considered low.
- Supportive style: A common score is 28, scores above 33 are considered high, and scores below 23 are considered low.
- Participative style: A common score is 21, scores above 26 are considered high, and scores below 16 are considered low.
- Achievement-oriented style: A common score is 19, scores above 24 are considered high, and scores below 14 are considered low.

The scores you received on the Path–Goal Leadership Questionnaire provide information about which styles of leadership you use most often and which you use less often. In addition, you can use these scores to assess your use of each style relative to your use of the other styles.

SOURCES: Adapted from *A Path–Goal Theory Investigation of Superior–Subordinate Relationships*, by J. Indvik, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1985; and Indvik (1988). Based on the work of House and Dessler (1974) and House (1977) cited in Fulk and Wendler (1982). Used by permission.