

Situational Leadership

1 Lippitt (1969) stated, "Leadership must be flexible in style to meet the need of a particular situation . . ." (p. 2). 2 situational leadership the methods to lead an organization are dependent upon the situation or organization. 3 The following four situational approaches are briefly discussed below: Fiedler's Contingency Model, Path-

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Goal Theory, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership, and Leader-Member Exchange Theory.

4 In Fiedler's Contingency Model, three factors determine the influence a leader has over followers. 5 First, *position power* refers to the leader having the power to give reward or punishment. 6 A leader with a higher position power will have greater influence over the follower. 7 Second, *task-structure* refers to the flexibility or lack of flexibility in how a follower performs a task. 8 Third, *leader-member relations* refer to the relationship -- loyalty, affection, trust, and respect -- between the leader and follower (Hackman & Johnson, 2000).

9 The Path-Goal Theory is based upon the intersection of the follower's needs, abilities, values, and personality, with the structure and clarity of the task. 10 The leader determines the proper communication approach in each situation depending on the structure of the task and follower's experience, skill, confidence, and commitment. 11 When an inexperienced or unsure follower must perform an unstructured task, the leader must use a directive communication approach. 12 If the follower is skilled but lacks confidence or commitment while performing a structured task, the leader must use a supportive communication style. 13 Next, if followers are unsure and the task is unstructured, the leader must use a participative communication style designed to elicit ideas from followers. 14 Lastly, if a skilled follower must perform an unstructured task, the leader must use an achievement-oriented communication style designed to show confidence in the follower to perform well (Hackman & Johnson, 2000).

15 Similar to the Path-Goal Theory, 16 Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership looks at the readiness level. In their theory, 17 follower readiness level was the combination

of their skill and motivation. Followers with low readiness who were unskilled or unmotivated require the leader to use *telling*, which is providing specific instructions followed by close supervision. If the follower is willing but does not have the proper skill, the leader must use *selling*, which is explaining then providing opportunity for clarification but requires less supervision. If a follower is skilled and able but has low motivation, the leader should use *participating*, which gets the follower involved in the decision-making creating more motivation. Lastly, if the follower has high skill and motivation, the leader should use *delegating*. In delegating a leader simply gives the follower the responsibility to make decisions and implement the decisions (Hackman & Johnson, 2000).

The Leader-Member Exchange Theory focuses solely on the relationship the leader and follower develop. Near the time followers join an organization, they either become part of the leader's in-group or part of the leader's out-group. Simply stated the

in-group contains followers who are trusted and allowed to participate in decision-making and have input into the organizations future. Members of the out-group are simply expected to perform their duties but are not allowed the autonomy or participation that the members of the in-group are allowed (Hackman & Johnson, 2000).

Transformational Leadership