

SESSION 3

ROLES AND STYLES OF SUPERVISION

OVERVIEW

Session 3 begins with a discussion of the roles you play as AmeriCorps supervisors. We will identify the different "hats" AmeriCorps supervisors wear and acknowledge the diversity of situations in which AmeriCorps supervisors guide and assist members with diverse backgrounds, skills and levels of commitment. Given the different roles you play and the diversity of the people you supervise, we will consider the factors you should take into account in determining how to supervise an individual member and/or a team. Even though supervisors intend to take many factors into account in our decision making and actions, we often revert to the style of supervision which is most comfortable. We'll explore the kinds of assumptions supervisors make in shaping supervisory decisions by discussing a series of scenarios or mini-case studies of common supervisory situations.

We will present "situational supervision" as a way to better understand the different styles used to supervise, direct and support members. Situational supervision is a useful model to help supervisors make purposeful decisions about which supervisory style to adopt in a given situation. Supervisory styles are based on two fundamental types of behaviors: directive and supportive. Supervising members involves giving help to get the job done, but help can take many forms. The key is to provide the right mix of direction and support based on the situation and adapt your style to fit the needs of the situation and the member. Before the end of the session, we will score the Situational Supervision Inventory you completed as your homework assignment last night. The inventory illustrates preferences in how we read and react to typical supervisory situations. There are no right or wrong answers. It will provide insights to help you shape the development of your supervisory skills.

OBJECTIVES

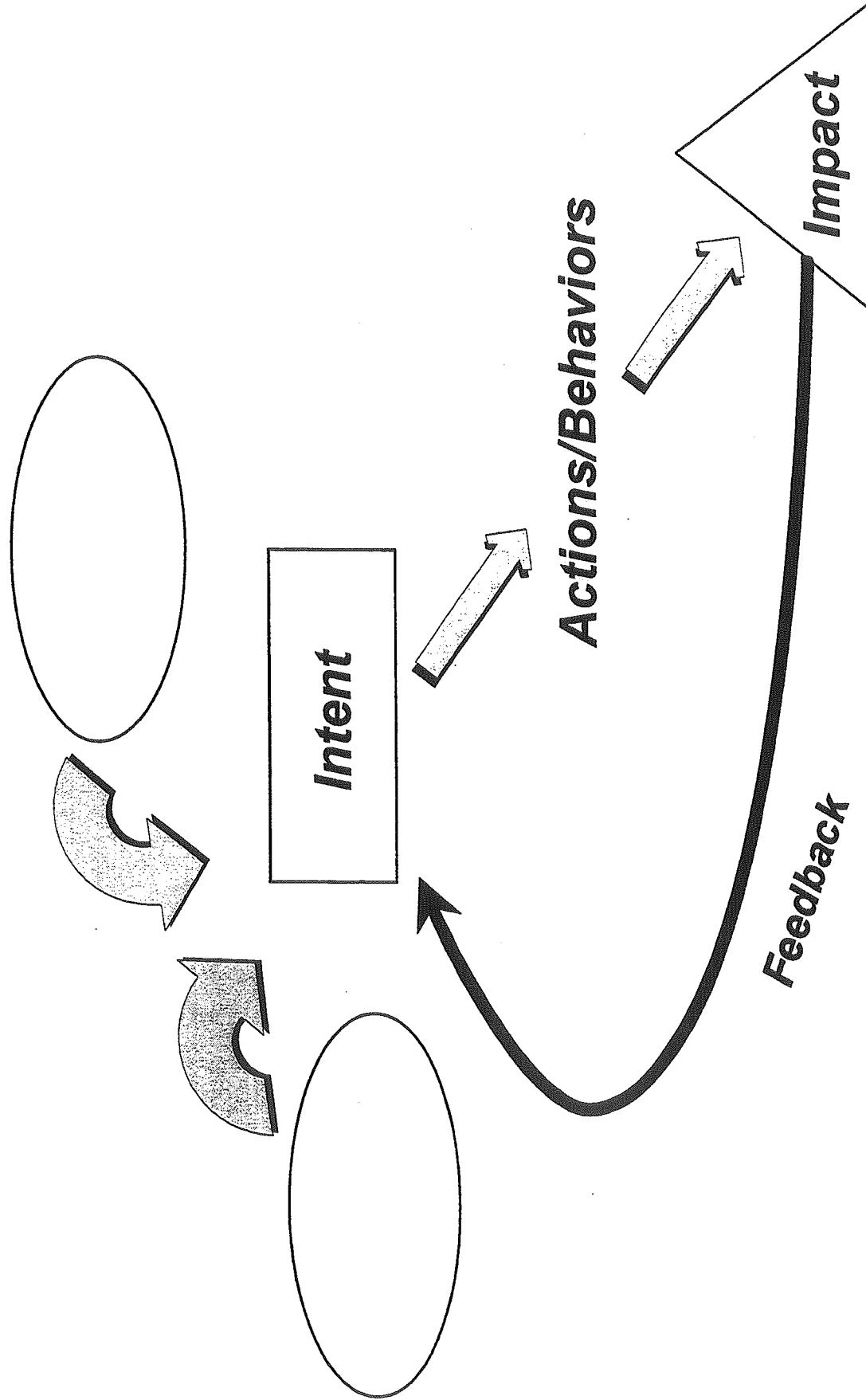
By the end of the session, you will be able to:

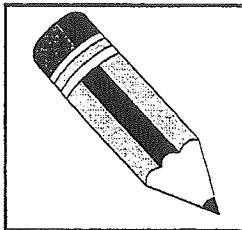
- ▶ Relate the different roles you perform with members in your selection of an appropriate supervisory style (the degree of direction and support that is provided).
- ▶ Describe the concept of situational supervision and the behaviors for key styles.
- ▶ Identify and assess factors that affect the appropriate choice of supervisory styles.
- ▶ Recognize your own preferred style of supervision and assess when it is and is not appropriate to use.

VENUE Home Groups.

When a supervisor

communicates with a member ...





Small Group Task

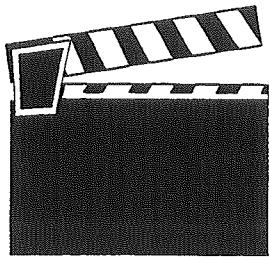
AmeriCorps Scenarios

The following scenarios describe some typical (and perhaps some not so typical) situations you may encounter as an AmeriCorps supervisor. As in the Situational Supervision questionnaire, there are no absolute right answers here, only those that best reflect your likely responses to each situation. Please read each scenario closely, then select the alternative that best describes how you think you would respond. Circle a, b, c, or d.

- 1 You have recently noticed a performance problem with one of the AmeriCorps members you supervise. He seems to show a "don't care" attitude. So far, only your constant prodding has brought about task completion. You suspect he may not have enough expertise to complete the tasks necessary to make it a positive experience for him, or to complete the work that needs to be done. You would...
 - a. Specify the steps he needs to take and the outcomes you want. Clarify the timelines and paperwork requirements. Frequently check to see if the task is progressing as it should.
 - b. Specify the steps he needs to take and the outcomes you want. Ask for his ideas and incorporate them as appropriate. Ask him to share his feelings about this task assignment. Frequently check to see the task is progressing as it should.
 - c. Do joint problem solving with him as tasks arise. Offer your help and encourage him to use his ideas to complete the project. Ask him to share his feelings about the assignment. Frequently check to see that the task is progressing as it should.
 - d. Let him know why the task is important. Ask him to outline his plan for completion and to send you a copy. Frequently check to see that the task is progressing as it should.

- 2 Your team has experienced some attrition. Performance levels have dropped. Projects are not being completed on time and, while on-site, some group members have started to "act out." Your boss has heard about it and is concerned. Others members have talked about wanting to improve group performance, but they need more knowledge and skills. You would...**
- a. Ask the group to develop a plan for improving performance. Be available to help them, if asked. Ask them what training they think they need in order to improve performance and give them the resources they need. Continue to track performance.
 - b. Discuss your plan for improving performance. Ask members for their input and include their ideas in your plan, if possible. Explain the rationale for your plan. Track performance to see how the plan is carried out.
 - c. Outline the specific steps you want the team to follow to address the issues. Be specific about the time needed and the skills you want them to learn. Continue to track performance.
 - d. Help the team determine a plan and encourage them to be creative. Support their plan as you continue to track performance.
- 3 One of your members calls you to tell you about an event at his agency he is in charge of. He says he is feeling insecure. He is highly competent and you think that he has the skills to successfully complete the task. The event is coming up soon. You would...**
- a. Remind him how soon the event is and share your concern about it. Help him explore alternative action steps and encourage him to use his own ideas. Frequently check with him to lend your support.
 - b. Discuss with him your concerns about the closeness of the impending event. Outline an action plan for him to follow and get his reaction to the plan. Modify the plan if possible but make sure he follows your general outline. Frequently check with him to see how things are going.
 - c. Specify the reason it's important to do well at this event. Outline the steps you would like him to start following and ask that they be followed. Frequently check to see how he is progressing.
 - d. Ask him if there are any problems, but let him resolve the issue himself. Without pushing him, ask him questions about the upcoming event, then request an update in a few days.

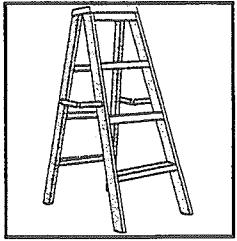
- 4 Your AmeriCorps program had a successful first few months. Members have been enthusiastic, engaged and invested in their projects. But discussions about major cuts in funding for AmeriCorps have come to the forefront. Newspaper articles have been highlighting debates and questioning the value of AmeriCorps. Performance and morale have started to drop. You and your boss are concerned. In a group meeting you would...**
- a. Discuss the recent political debate. Give the team specific steps you want them to follow to improve their performance. Continue to track performance.**
 - b. Ask them how they feel about the threats to AmeriCorps funding. Listen to their concerns and encourage and help them explore their ideas for improving performance. Continue to track performance.**
 - c. Discuss the recent setbacks. Clarify the steps you want them to follow to improve performance. Listen to their ideas and incorporate them if possible. Emphasize results. Encourage them to keep trying. Continue to track performance.**
 - d. Discuss the recent revision plans with the group, being careful not to pressure them. Ask them to set a deadline to improve performance and to support each other -- and their program -- along the way. Continue to track performance.**
- 5 Your team is very competent and works well with little guidance from you. They have done an outstanding job on all the projects they have been assigned so far. Most team members have made suggestions and stepped into leadership roles very naturally. Their enthusiasm is high because of their success. Team performance is at an ideal level. Now you must determine some projects for the remainder of the service year. In a group meeting, you would...**
- a. Praise the team's work to date. Involve them in problem solving and project selection for the duration of the service year. Encourage them to be creative and help them explore suggestions for projects. Track the implementation of their suggestions.**
 - b. Praise them for their efforts so far. Challenge them by announcing the projects for the rest of the year. Outline action steps necessary to accomplish these goals. Track the implementation of your plan.**
 - c. Praise them for the work on the projects so far. Ask them to offer some projects for the rest of the year, and define the action plan needed to accomplish these projects. Be available to contribute when asked. Track the implementation of their suggestions.**
 - d. Praise them for the results they have achieved for the year to date. Inform them of the projects for the remainder of their service term and outline the action steps necessary to accomplish these goals. Solicit their ideas and suggestions and incorporate them if possible. Track the implementation of your plan.**



Styles of Supervision

DIRECTING

- 1 Directing Supervision involves high directive or task communications with low support or relationship behavior. Typical use would involve managing an enthusiastic newcomer to the particular task (motivated, but needs guidance).
- 2 A Directing style makes use of clear, assertive communication behaviors: setting expectations, proposing, reasoning and evaluating, and the use of incentives and pressures (sometimes implied).
- 3 A Directing Supervisor:
 - Identifies problems
 - Sets goals and define roles
 - Develops an action plan to solve problems
 - Controls decision making
 - Provides specific directions
 - Initiates problem solving and decision making
 - Announces solutions and decisions
 - Closely supervises and evaluates work
- 4 Style Strengths and Weaknesses:



Styles of Supervision

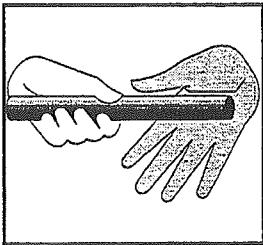
SUPPORTING

- 1 Supportive Supervision involves low directive and high supportive behavior.** Typical use would involve managing a competent but insecure member.
- 2 A Supportive style makes use of bridging or attracting communication behaviors:** involving/drawing out the other person, active listening, disclosing, finding common ground, and visioning (attracting the other person to a course of action).
- 3 A Supportive Supervisor:**
 - Involves the member in identifying problems and setting goals
 - Lets member take the lead in defining how the task is to be done or the problem is to be solved
 - Provides assurance and support, resources and ideas, if requested
 - Shares responsibility with member for problem solving and decision making
 - Listens and facilitates problem solving and decision making by the member
 - Evaluates member's work with the member
- 4 Style Strengths and Weaknesses:**



Styles of Supervision **COACHING**

- 1 Coaching Supervision involves high directive and high supportive behavior. Typical use would involve managing an uncertain or reluctant learner, someone who needs convincing or support along with task guidance.**
- 2 A Coaching style makes use of clear, assertive and supporting communication behaviors.**
- 3 A Coaching Supervisor:**
 - Identifies problems
 - Sets goals
 - Recognizes and praises progress
 - Explains decisions
 - Solicits ideas
 - Makes final decisions after hearing the member's ideas, opinions and feelings
 - Continues to direct work
 - Evaluates work
- 4 Style Strengths and Weaknesses:**



Styles of Supervision

DELEGATING

- 1 Delegating supervision involves low directive or task communications with low supportive behavior. Typical use would involve managing a competent and motivated member -- where the person (or the team) provides much of their own support and guidance.
 - 2 A Delegating style would provide only that degree of task information and support that is appropriate, given the ability and motivation of the member. Delegation is not abdication or "dumping" -- appropriate oversight or monitoring is maintained so that additional guidance or help can be provided as needed.
 - 3 A Delegating Supervisor:
 - Jointly defines problems with member
 - Collaborates with member in setting goals
 - Lets member develop action plan and control decision making about how, when, and with whom the problem should be solved or the task done
 - Accepts member's decisions
 - Evaluates performance only periodically
 - Lets member take responsibility and credit
 - 4 Style Strengths and Weaknesses:
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Situational Supervision

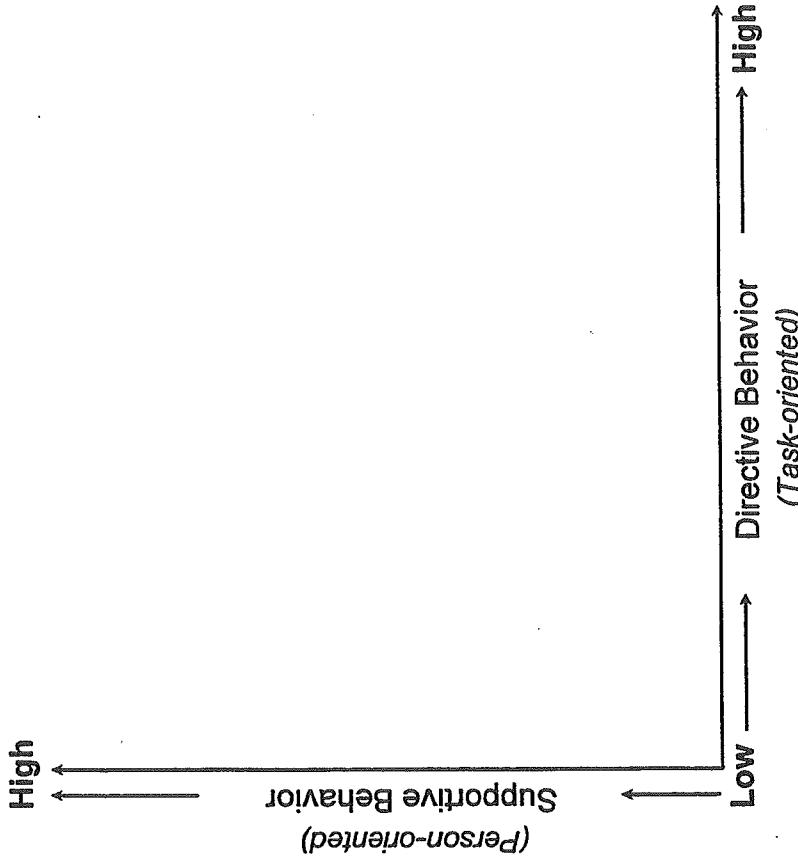
Supervisors relate to their members using two sets of communicative behaviors:

Directive Behavior

The supervisor engages in one-way communication, spells out the member's role and clearly tells the member what to do, where, how and when to do it, and closely supervises the performance.

Supportive Behavior

The supervisor engages in two-way communication, listens, provides support and encouragement, facilitates interaction, and involves the members in decision-making.



Member Development Levels

Developmental level is defined as (1) the member's competence (job knowledge and skills) and (2) the member's commitment (motivation and/or confidence).

The above information is adapted from: *A Situational Approach to Managing People*, a concept developed by Kenneth Blanchard.

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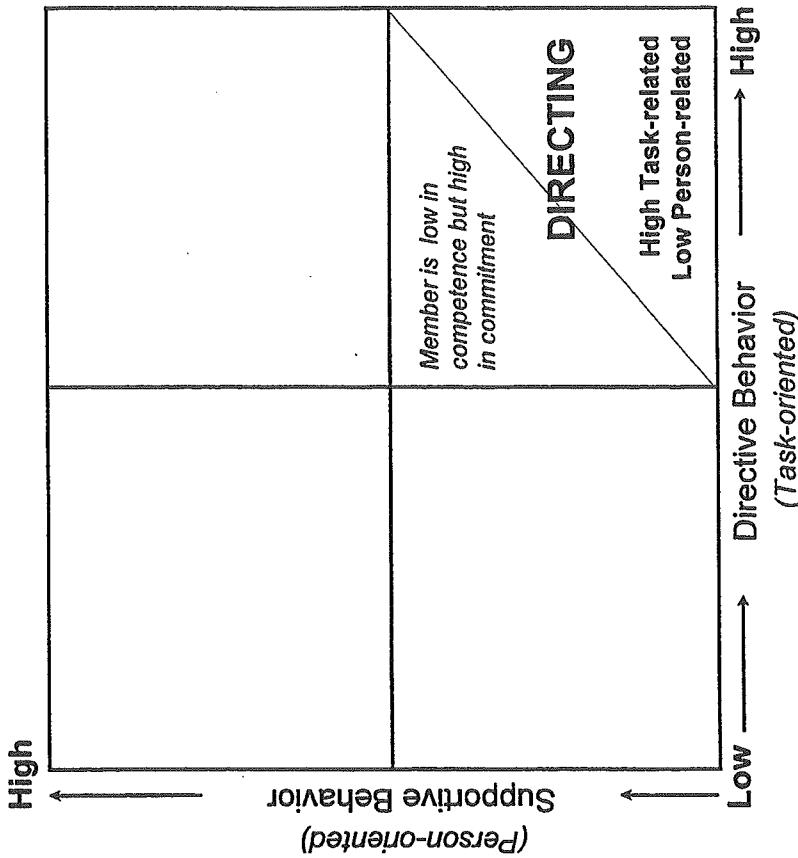
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Supervisory Styles

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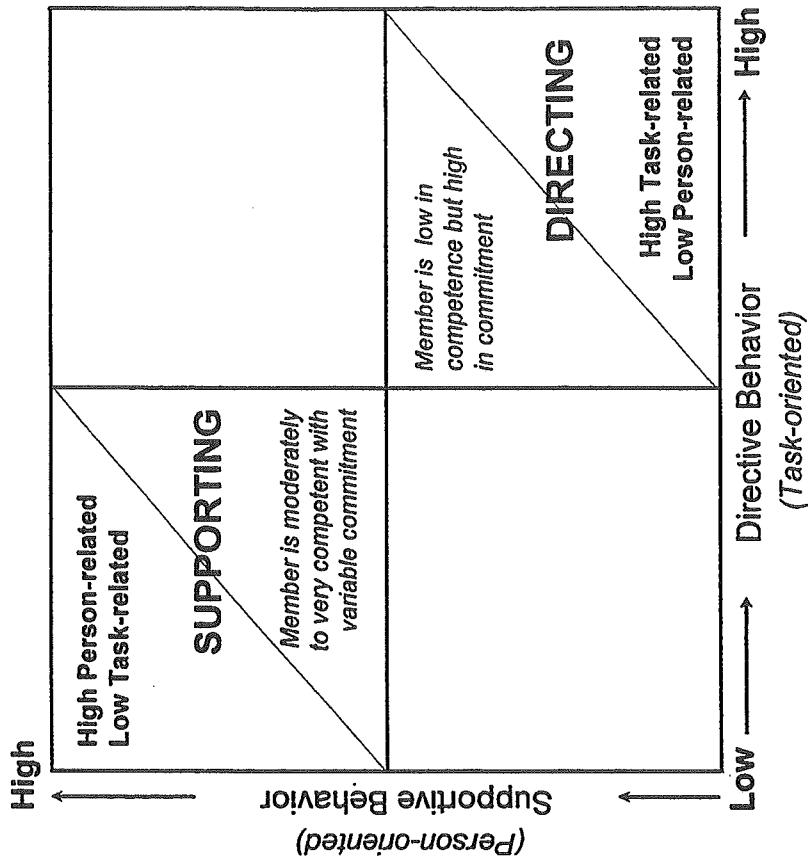
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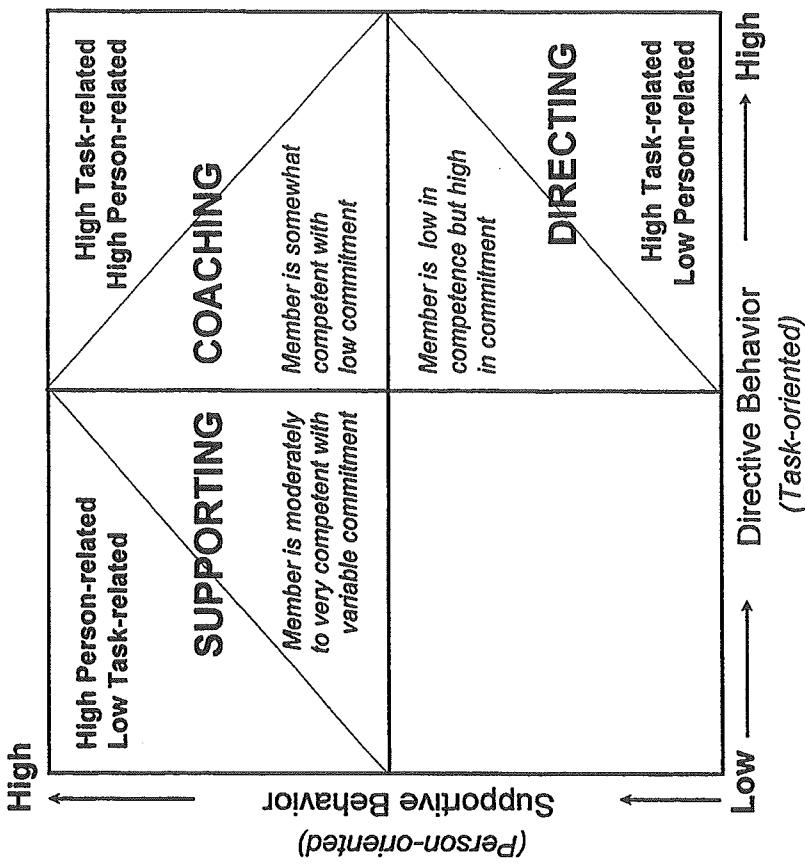
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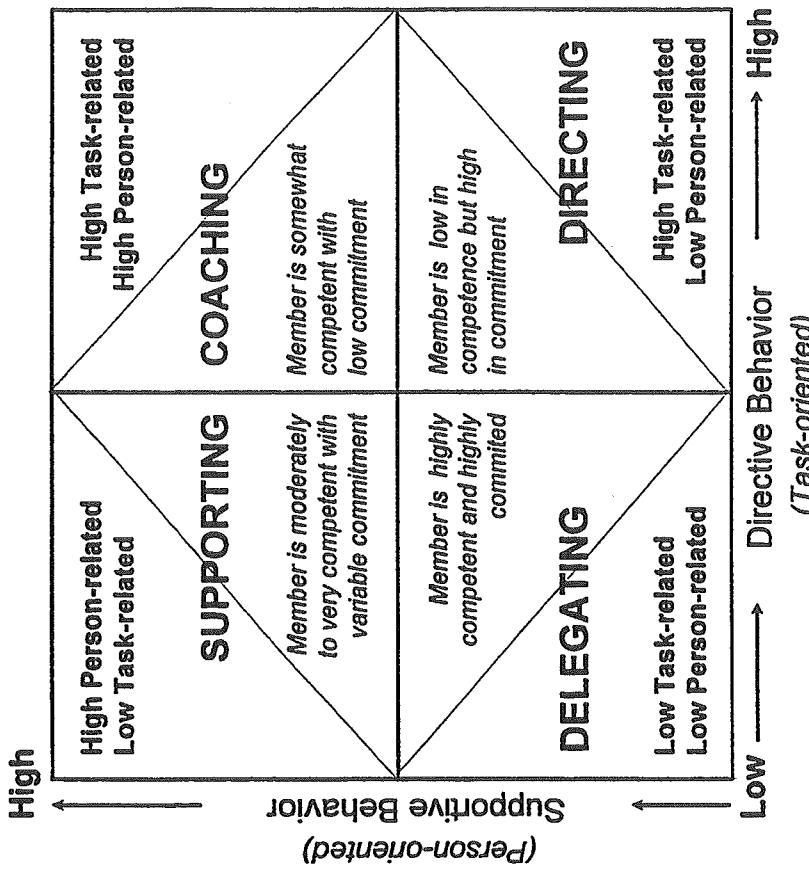
Supervisor makes decisions together with the member(s) and supports efforts toward task accomplishment.

Coaching

Supervisor explains decisions and solicits suggestions from member(s) but continues to direct task accomplishment.

Delegating

Supervisor turns over decisions and responsibility for implementation to member(s).



Member Development Levels

Development level is defined as (1) the member's competence (job knowledge and skills) and (2) the member's commitment (motivation and/or confidence). Adjusting your supervisory style according to the member's developmental stage will assist the member in getting things done while encouraging the member's developmental growth.

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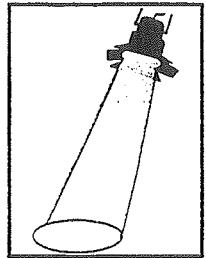
Journal Reflection

Artistic Image



Session 3 - AmeriCorps Supervisory Roles & Styles

Draw a hat to represent the roles you want to play as an excellent AmeriCorps supervisor.



Journal Reflection

Structured Reflection Questions

Session 3 - AmeriCorps Supervisory Roles and Styles

Imagine you've just completed the first year of your AmeriCorps program, and your members are graduating. Answer the following questions concerning where you would like to be at this point in time, and how you *will* be after your experience with AmeriCorps.

1 In what ways have you improved yourself?

2 What new skills have you learned?

3 What changes have you made in how you supervise?

How will you work toward these *now*, while working with your current members?

Journal Reflection

Hmmmmm.....Reflection Sheet



Session 3 - AmeriCorps Supervisory Roles & Styles

★ I learned the following about being a supervisor:

★ In my opinion, an **effective** supervisor does...

★ As I see it, an **ineffective** supervisor does...

★ As an AmeriCorps supervisor, I plan to...



Four Principles of Effective Supervision



Be sure that you understand the overall mission or "big picture" of AmeriCorps.



Know what role your project plays in the accomplishment of the AmeriCorps mission.



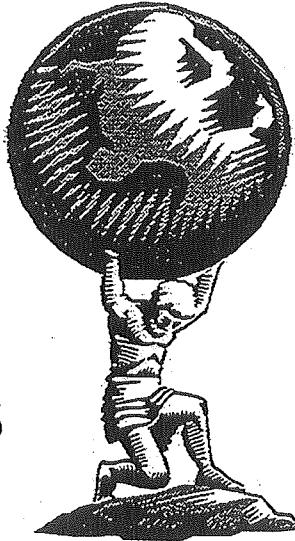
Keep in mind that you have one of the most complex positions in AmeriCorps. You frequently deal with:

- ★ the greatest variety of people
- ★ the largest number of people reporting directly to you
- ★ people who may have been peers now working under your supervision



And, most important, remember that nothing gets done in your project unless you and your people do it!

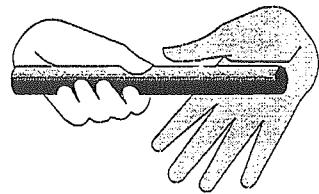
Supervisor Responsibilities



- ★ Get the job done!**
- ★ Be responsive to your team members and your community partners ("You are the glue!").**
- ★ Build a team -- including methods for bringing in new members.**
- ★ Develop a supportive climate within the team.**
- ★ Become a "coach" to the members of your team.**
- ★ Develop the potential of the members of your team.**
- ★ Assess the effectiveness of your team members' performances on a regular basis.**

Delegation

Some Basic Principles



Definition

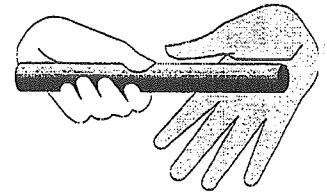
The transfer of part of your responsibility and authority to a person working for you to completely execute a given task.

Principles

- 1** The member must have the skills and technical competence to accomplish the task.
- 2** Dialogue with the member is essential to insure proper understanding of the task and an appreciation of your expectations.
- 3** Levels of authority appropriate to the task must be given to the member. (Avoid turning over "responsibility with no power.")
- 4** The member must know that you are available to address any questions or needs for clarification s/he has.
- 5** Other people who are involved in the task or its product must be informed that you have delegated specific responsibilities and authorities to the member.

Delegation

Some Basic Principles



Rules to Remember

- 1 Once the task has been delegated, don't "hover." Let the member handle it.

Your role changes from "doer" to enabler, clarifier, answer person, resource provider and/or advisor. The more you hover, the less the member feels that s/he truly has the responsibility to do the task his or her way. The member may simply feel that s/he is "just another pair of hands" for you. If you hover, you will still spend time making sure that the task gets done properly (i.e YOUR WAY!) When you hover, the member will not develop self-confidence, you will not perceive her or him as competent (because you are still spending too much time on the task), and you will rightly be perceived as a micro-manager.

- 2 Effective delegation is built on trust.

Trust builds slowly but can be destroyed quickly.

- 3 Effective delegation can be a great developmental tool.

The member must not perceive the delegation as one test after another. A stretch is good, but you have to calibrate the limits of the member carefully. If s/he fails frequently, s/he is likely to remember only the failures and avoid responsibility and authority in the future.

- 4 Abdication of responsibility can occur under the guise of delegation.

This occurs when you give little task definition, unilateral directions with no dialogue, do not make yourself available to the employee, provide no oversight, follow-up and basically forget the task, leaving the member with virtually no support.

- 5 Confidence in an employee allows you to let go of a task.

But good delegation suggests that you never forget about it...only your role in the task completion changes.

And now, a thought based on the Tao Te Ching...

*Supervisors need
to remember
three things:*

Compassion

Simplicity

Patience



Excerpted from:

Managing in the Age of Change

Edited by Roger A. Ritvo, Anne H. Litwin, & Lee Butler

Irwin Professional Publishing Company, New York, New York

Chapter Two

Situational Leadership II

Kenneth H. Blanchard

Executive Summary

Beginning with Douglas McGregor's publication of the famous *Human Side of Enterprise* at the beginning of the 1950s, management literature has been replete with various theories of management styles. Among them were Tannenbaum and Schmidt's "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern," published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1957, and *The Managerial Grid* (1964), written by Robert Blake and Jane S. Mouton. As Kenneth Blanchard observes, all of the discussions of management style prior to his introduction of situational leadership assumed the existence of one best leadership style, one that was democratic and allowed subordinate freedom and participation in decision-making processes. Hence, in McGregor's work there is a definitive bias in favor of Theory Y; in Tannenbaum and Schmidt there is a bias toward "Join"; and in the Blake and Mouton grid there is an arguable bias toward the "balanced" leadership style.

The most lively debate has occurred between the proponents of the Blake-Mouton managerial grid school and the Blanchard school. Sometimes approaching an acerbic tone, this chapter, an update of one prepared by Blanchard for *The NTL Managers' Handbook* (NTL Institute), places great stress on the appropriateness of a given leadership style to the specific situation with which the leader is confronted. The essential element in the situation is the level of skill and confidence possessed by the subordinate. From this standpoint, there is no such thing as one best management style.

Though this model has been an important part of the management style lexicon for close to 25 years, its relevance has not diminished. Indeed, as environmental complexity has increased and words like *chaos* and *white water* have entered the language to describe it, the relevance of situationally-based leadership has increased. Managers

in the decades to come will benefit greatly from a thorough understanding of the ideas presented in this chapter, augmented by consummate skill in their application.

The acceptance of the Situational Leadership model as a practical, easy-to-understand approach to managing and motivating people has been widespread over the last decade and a half. Paul Hersey and I first described Situational Leadership as the "life-cycle theory of leadership" in 1969.¹ Until now, the most extensive presentation of the concept has been our text, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*, now in its fourth edition.²

For those of you familiar with Situational Leadership, you'll see as you read this article that I've made a number of changes to the original model. These changes reflect conversations with my colleagues at Blanchard Training and Development, Inc.—particularly my wife, colleague, and friend, Margie Blanchard; Don Carew; Eunice Parisi-Carew; Fred Finch; Laurie Hawkins; Drea Zigarmi; and Pat Zigarmi³—my own experiences, and the ideas managers all over the world have shared with me. This article and the book *Leadership and the One Minute Manager*, coauthored with Pat Zigarmi and Drea Zigarmi, mark for all of us at Blanchard Training and Development, Inc., a new generation of Situational Leadership thinking, which is why we now call the model Situational Leadership II.⁴

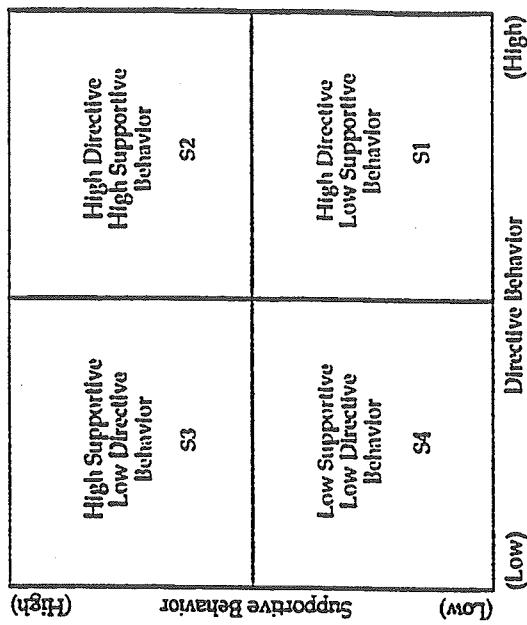
LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

Any time you try to influence the behavior of another person, you are engaging in an act of leadership. Therefore, leadership is an influence process. If you are interested in developing your staff and building motivational climates that result in high levels of productivity, as well as human satisfaction in the short and long run, then you need to think about your leadership style. Leadership style is the pattern of behaviors you use when you are trying to influence the behavior of others, as perceived by them. While your perceptions of your own behavior and its impact on others is interesting and important, it tells you only how you intend to act. Unless

it matches the perceptions of those you are trying to influence, it is not very helpful. For example, if you think you are an empathetic, people-oriented manager, but your people think you are a hard-nosed, task-oriented person, whose perception of reality will they act on—yours or their own? Obviously, their own.

For years, when people talked about leadership style, they identified two extremes—an autocratic (directive) leadership style and a democratic (supportive) leadership style. Autocratic leaders used position power and authority to get results, while democratic leaders used personal power and involved others in participative problem-solving and decision-making processes. Tannenbaum and Schmidt, in their classic *Harvard Business Review* article, "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern," argued that these two leadership styles—autocratic and democratic—were "either/or" styles of leadership.⁵ They described a continuum with very authoritarian leader behavior at one end and very democratic leader behavior at the other end.

FIGURE 2-1
The Four Basic Leadership Styles



Further research, however, showed that leadership styles tend to vary considerably from situation to situation, and that it is not helpful to think of leadership style as an either/or continuum.⁶ While the behavior of some leaders is characterized mainly as directing their followers' activities in terms of task accomplishment (directive behavior), other leaders concentrate on providing socio-emotional support and on building personal relationships between themselves and their followers (supportive behavior). In other situations, various combinations of directive and supportive behavior are evident. Thus, it was determined that directive and supportive leader behaviors are not either/or leadership styles. Instead, these patterns of leader behavior can be plotted on two separate and distinct axes, as shown in Figure 2-1.

Each of the four leadership styles depicted in Figure 2-1 represents a different combination of directive and supportive leadership behaviors.⁷ These combinations differ on three dimensions: (1) the amount of direction the leader provides; (2) the amount

of support and encouragement the leader provides; and (3) the amount of follower involvement in decision making.

Directive and Supportive Leader Behaviors

Directive behavior is defined as:

The extent to which a leader engages in one-way communication; spells out the followers' roles, and tells the followers what to do, where to do it, when to do it, and how to do it; and then closely supervises performance. Three words can be used to define directive behavior: structure, control, and supervise.

Supportive behavior is defined as:

The extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication; listens, provides support and encouragement, facilitates interaction, and involves the followers in decision making. Three words can be used to define supportive behavior: praise, listen, and facilitate.

In style 1 (see S1 in Figure 2-1), a leader is high on direction, low on support. He or she defines roles and goals, provides specific instruction to the followers, and closely supervises task accomplishment. When using style 2, the leader is high on both direction and support. He or she explains decisions and solicits suggestions from the followers but continues to direct task accomplishment. Style 3 leader behavior is characterized by high supportive and low directive behavior. The leader and followers make decisions together and then the leader supports the followers' efforts toward task accomplishment. In style 4, a leader provides low support and direction. He or she turns over decisions and responsibility for implementation to the followers.

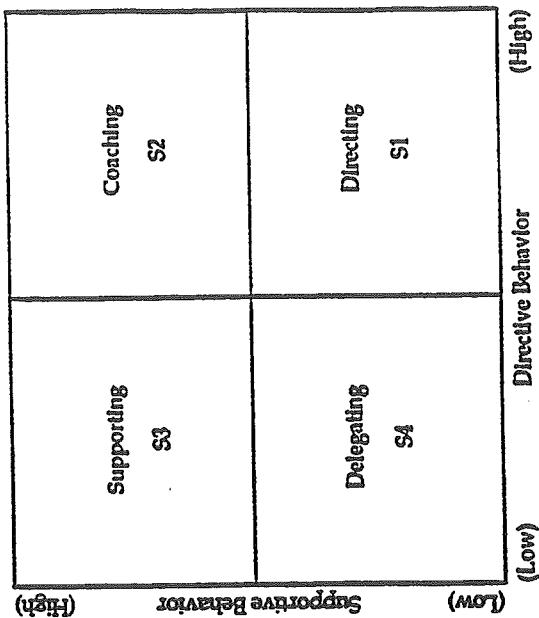
Leadership Behavior as Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Styles

As defined earlier, leadership style is the pattern of behaviors you use when you are trying to influence the behaviors of others, as perceived by them. Since the basic behaviors that subordinates respond to in assessing your leadership style are related to the types of problem-solving and decision-making processes that you use with them, each of the four leadership styles can be identified with a different approach to problem solving and decision making, as illustrated in Figure 2-2.⁸

High directive/low supportive leader behavior (S1) is referred to as *directing*. The leader defines the roles of followers and tells them what tasks to do and how, when, and where to do them. Problem solving and decision making are initiated solely by the manager. Solutions and decisions are announced; communication is largely one-way, and implementation is closely supervised by the leader.

High directive/high supportive behavior (S2) is referred to as *coaching*. In this style the leader still provides a great deal of direction and leads with his or her ideas, but the leader also attempts to hear the followers' feelings about decisions as well as their ideas and suggestions. While two-way communication and support are increased, control over decision making remains with the leader. High supportive/low directive leader behavior (S3) is called sup-

**FIGURE 2-2
The Four Basic Leadership Styles as Types of Problem-solving and Decision-making Processes**



porting. In style 3 the focus of control for day-to-day decision making and problem solving shifts from leader to followers. The leader's role is to provide recognition and to actively listen and facilitate problem solving and decision making on the part of the followers. This is appropriate since the followers have the ability and knowledge to do the task whenever the use of style 3 is warranted. Low supportive/low directive leader behavior (S4) is labeled delegating. In style 4 the leader discusses the problems with subordinates until joint agreement is achieved on problem definition, and then the decision making process is delegated totally to the followers. Now it is the subordinates who have significant control for deciding *how* tasks are to be accomplished. Followers are allowed to "run their own show" because they have both the competence and the confidence to take responsibility for directing their own behavior.

No “One Best” Leadership Style

Once it was generally agreed that there were four basic leadership styles characterized by varying degrees of directive and supportive behavior, some writers argued that there was “one best” style—one that maximized productivity and satisfaction, growth, and development in all situations.⁹ However, research in the last several decades has clearly supported the contention that there is no best leadership style; instead, successful leaders are able to adapt their style to fit the requirements of the situation.¹⁰

While the need for a situational approach to leadership might make sense, it is not very helpful to practicing managers, who have to make leadership decisions every day. If “it all depends on the situation,” they want to know *when* to use which style.

A number of situational variables influence which leadership style will be appropriate in which situations. These variables include time lines, job and task demands, organizational climate, and superiors’, associates/peers’, and subordinates’ skills and expectations. While all these factors and undoubtedly others impact the effectiveness of a particular style, if practicing managers had to examine all the situational variables suggested by theorists before deciding which style to use, they would become immobilized. That is why Hersey and Blanchard based their Situational Leadership approach on the key factor that they found to have the greatest impact on the choice of leadership style—the followers. In particular, it was found that the amount of direction or support that a leader should provide depends on the *development level* that the followers exhibit on a specific task, function, or objective that the leader is attempting to accomplish.¹¹

Development Level

In Situational Leadership II, *development level* is defined as the competence and commitment of your followers to perform a particular task without supervision.¹² We use the word *competence* rather than *ability* because people often equate “ability” with “potential.” They talk about natural ability to describe the skills a person is born with. Competence, on the other hand, can be developed

with appropriate direction and support. It is a function of knowledge or skills that can be gained from education, training, and/or experience. It is not something you either have or don’t have. *Commitment* is a combination of confidence and motivation. Confidence is a measure of a person’s self-assuredness—a feeling of being able to do a task well without much supervision, whereas motivation gauges a person’s interest and enthusiasm in doing a task.

Situational Leadership II identifies four development levels: low (D1), low to moderate (D2), moderate to high (D3), and high (D4). Each of these development levels represents a different combination of competence and commitment as illustrated below:

High Competence • High Commitment	High Competence • Variable Commitment	Some Competence • Low Commitment	Low Competence • High Commitment
D4	D3	D2	D1

Developed ←--

According to Situational Leadership, as the development level of individuals increases from D1 to D4, their competence and commitment fluctuates. When first beginning a new task in which they have little if any prior knowledge or experience, most individuals are enthusiastic and ready to learn (D1). Then when they begin to get into the task, individuals often find it is either more difficult to learn or less interesting than they thought it was going to be. This disillusionment decreases their commitment (D2).¹³ If they overcome this state and learn to perform the task with help from their boss, most individuals then go through a self-doubt stage which they question whether they can perform the task well *on their own*. Their boss says they’re competent but they’re not so sure. These alternating feelings of competence and self-doubt cause the variable commitment associated with D3—commitment that fluctuates from excitement to insecurity. With proper support, individuals can eventually become peak

performers who demonstrate a high level of competence, motivation, and confidence. In other words, given the appropriate amounts of direction and support, individuals move from one level of development to another, from being an *enthusiastic beginner* to a *disillusioned learner* to a *reluctant contributor* to a *peak performer*.

It is important when thinking about someone's development level to remember that people are not "fully developed" or "underdeveloped." In other words, *development level is not a global concept; it is a task-specific concept*. That is, people tend to be at different levels of development depending on the specific task, function, or objective that they are assigned.

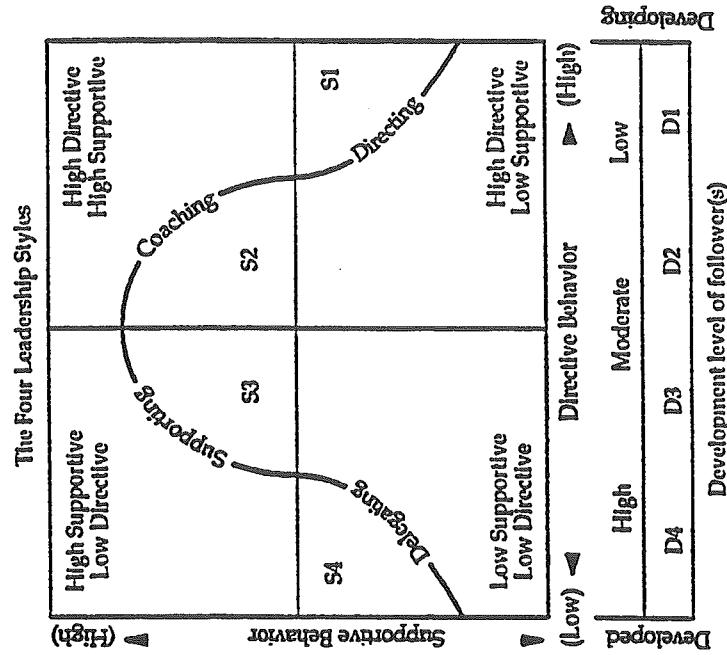
For example, let's say that an engineer might be highly developed (competent and committed) to handle the technical aspects of a job, but has not demonstrated the same degree of development when it comes to working with the budget. As a result, it may be quite appropriate for the engineer's manager to provide little direction or support (S4, delegating) on a technical problem, but a great deal of direction or close supervision (S1, directing or S2, coaching) over the engineer's budget making. Thus, Situational Leadership focuses on the appropriateness or effectiveness of leadership styles according to the task-relevant development level of the followers. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 2-3.

Matching Leadership Style to Development Level

To determine the appropriate leadership style to use with each of the four development levels, draw a vertical line up from a diagonalized development level to the leadership style curve running through the four-quadrant model in Figure 2-3. The appropriate leadership style is the quadrant where the vertical line intersects the curved line. As a result, development level D1 would get a *directing* S1 leadership style. Development level D2 would get a high directive and supportive *coaching* S2 leadership style.

In determining style to use with development level, just remember that leaders need to *provide their people with what they lack at the moment*. Since a D1 has commitment but lacks competence, the leaders need to provide direction (S1 directing); since a D2 lacks both competence and commitment, leaders need to provide both

FIGURE 2-3
Situational Leadership



direction and support (S2, coaching); since a D3 has competence but variable commitment, leaders have to provide support (S3, supporting); and since D4 has both competence and commitment, leaders do not need to provide either direction or support (S4, delegating).

Directing is for the low development level. People who are high on commitment but low on competence (D1) are enthusiastic beginners. They are excited to get started and learn. Thus, a *directing* style (S1) that provides clear, specific direction and close supervision has the highest probability of being effective. Since commitment is high, support is not needed from the leader.

Again, this style is called *directing* because it's characterized by the leader defining roles and telling people what, how, when, and where to do various tasks.

Coaching is for a low to moderate development level. People who have some competence but lack commitment (D2), need both direction and support. Thus, a coaching style (S2), that provides directive behavior (because of their lack of competence) but also supportive behavior to build confidence and enthusiasm is most appropriate with individuals at this development level. This style is called *coaching* because most people know that coaches both direct and support their people. This style, which encourages two-way communication, helps build confidence and motivation on the part of the follower, while keeping responsibility for and control over decision making with the leader.

Supporting is for a moderate to high development level. People of this development level are competent but have variable commitment (D3) toward the assigned task. This is often a function of a lack of confidence. However, if they are confident but uncommitted, their reluctance to perform is more of a motivational problem than a confidence problem. In either case, the leader needs to open up communications through two-way communication and active listening and to support the followers' efforts to use the skills they already have. Thus, a supporting style (S3) has the highest probability of being effective with individuals at this development level. This style is called *supporting*, because the leader and follower share in decision making, with the key roles of the leader being listening and facilitating.

Delegating is for persons at a high development level on a particular task. People at this development level are both competent and motivated (D4) to take responsibility. Thus, a low-profile delegating style (S4) that provides little direction and support has the highest probability of being effective with individuals at this development level. Even though the leader may still identify the problem, the responsibility for carrying out plans is given to these experienced followers. They are permitted to 'run the show' and decide on how, when, and where the task is to be

accomplished. Since they are psychologically mature, they do not need above-average amounts of two-way communication or supportive behavior.

INCREASING PERFORMANCE POTENTIAL

Situational Leadership, as described to this point, is helpful for a practicing manager trying to determine which leadership style to use with followers in a particular situation and on a particular task. Yet suppose you are using a directive style (S1) with an inexperienced person, with good results—the job is getting done—but style 1 is too time consuming to use all the time. Therefore, your goal should be to help your followers increase their competence and commitment to independently accomplish the tasks assigned to them, so that gradually you can begin to use less time-consuming styles (S3 and S4) and still get high-quality results.

As managers, we have two choices with the people who work for us. First, we can hire a "winner"—that is, a person who has the competence and confidence to perform at a desired level with little supervision (D4). Winners are easy to supervise; all they need to know is what the goals, objectives, and time lines are, and then they can be left on their own to do the job.

Since winners are hard to find and cost money, most managers are left with the second alternative—hire "potential winners," and then train them to be winners. In fact, unless managers realize and accept the training function in their jobs, they will be continually frustrated and confused about why their subordinates are not performing well. This frustration often forces managers into the most widely used leadership style, which we refer to as "leave alone—zap." They hire someone to assume certain responsibilities, tell that person what to do (S1), and then "leave them alone" (an ineffective S4) and assume good performance will follow. Unless the person delegated to is a peak performer (D4), that assumption would prove false. When unacceptable performance occurs, or the person does something wrong or does not live up to the manager's expectations, the frustrated manager moves quickly to a punitive S1 style and demands to know why things are not getting done—

the "zap." This change in leadership styles can leave managers frustrated and followers confused and often angry.

To avoid the ill effects of the leave alone—zap leadership style and to ensure productive and satisfied employees, managers need to learn how to increase the performance capacities of their subordinates. There are five steps to training high performers:

1. *Tell them what you want them to do.* You can't manage unless your followers understand what they are being asked to do—what their responsibilities or areas of accountability are.
2. *Show them what you want them to do.* Once people know what their responsibilities are, they need to know what good performance looks like. What are their performance standards? *Show and tell* are both directive behaviors. Thus, training a potential winner (D1 and D2) usually starts with a directing (S1) leadership style. Since the employees do not know how to perform the desired task without direction and supervision, decision making and problem solving are controlled by the leader.
3. *Let them try.* Once people know what to do and know the expected level of performance, the manager must take a risk and let them try to perform on their own. When you do that, you are essentially cutting back on directive behavior, since you are turning over responsibility for doing the task to the follower. The risk here is that the follower might fail, so you don't want to turn over too much responsibility too soon. Make the risk reasonable. Let the person cut his or her teeth on something.
4. *Observe performance.* When you let a follower try to do something, do not go to an "abdicating" style (S4) by leaving them alone. That sets up the leave alone—zap leadership style. Since we know that that style is not helpful in terms of productivity or satisfaction, try to avoid it. Therefore, after you let them try to do what you want them to do, stick around and observe performance. A basic component of a directing (S1) style is close supervision—which means frequently monitoring performance.
5. *Manage the consequences.* The main reason for closely supervising or monitoring performance is to manage the conse-

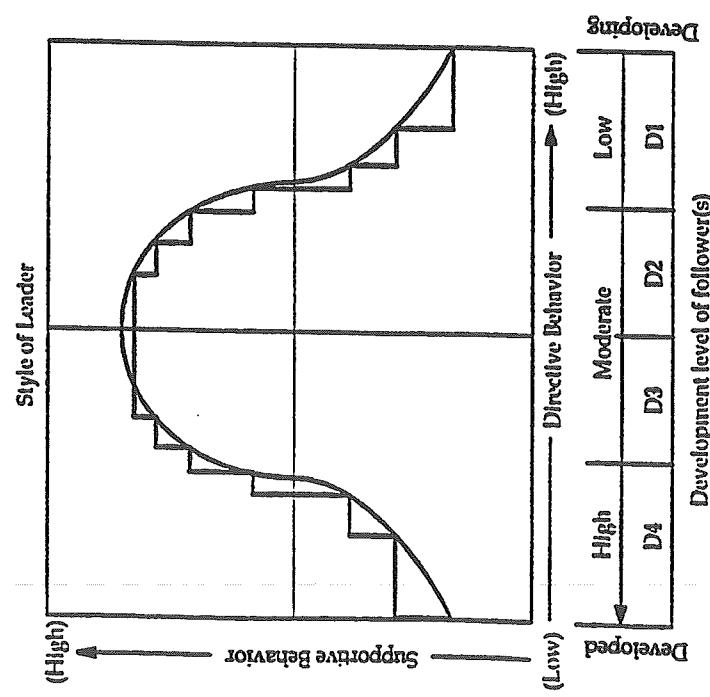
quences. A consequence is anything that follows behavior. There are three basic types of consequences:

- a. A *positive consequence*, or reinforcer. Anything that follows performance that tends to increase the probability of that behavior occurring again, e.g., a praising or promotion.
- b. A *negative consequence*, or punisher. Anything that follows performance that tends to decrease the probability of that behavior occurring again, e.g., a reprimand or demotion.
- c. A *neutral consequence*, or no response. Unless a person is doing something that is intrinsically valuable (they would do it regardless of feedback from others), no response to good performance will gradually decrease the frequency of the good behavior.

As you can see, the only consequence that tends to increase the probability of a behavior occurring again is a positive consequence. Thus, we feel that *the key to developing people is to "catch them doing something right."*¹⁴ Most managers seem to be best at catching their people doing something wrong. You also need to remember that in the beginning, with people you are training to be winners, you should try to catch them doing something *approximately right*, not *exactly right*. Exactly right is made up of a whole series of approximately right behaviors, as the little steps in Figure 2-4 indicate.

As Figure 2-4 suggests, when you let a person try to do something after the "show and tell" stage, you are cutting back on directive behavior. And then, when you observe that person doing something right (or, in the beginning, approximately right), you should recognize the accomplishment by praising progress and increasing your supportive behavior. The little steps moving up the bell-shaped curve suggest that this gradual reduction in directive behavior and increase in supportive behavior should continue until the individual or group reaches a moderate level of development (D2). If this steplike process is done well, a leader can help an individual pass through the *disillusioned learner* stage without much difficulty. As the person begins to move to higher levels of development (D3 and D4), it becomes appropriate for you to decrease not only directive behavior but supportive behavior as well. Now the

FIGURE 2-4
Increasing Performance Potential



trustworthy, and reliable individuals. These are messages that people like to hear; this type of positive feedback builds confidence and motivation.

On the other hand, if you continue to direct and closely supervise people for long periods of time, you are sending your subordinates a different message. You probably don't see them as confident, capable, responsible, trustworthy, or reliable. These underlying messages, in turn, affect performance. Thus, the developmental aspect of Situational Leadership and the need to gradually shift from external direction, control, and support to internal control is crucial for developing and increasing the performance capabilities of people.

In developing high performers, the factor that triggers a change in leadership style is **performance**. Improvements in performance motivate forward shifts in leadership style along the bell-shaped curve from directing to delegating (S1 to S2, S2 to S3, and S3 to S4). In thinking about the importance of performance, you must remember one thing: High levels of performance can be obtained when any of the four leadership styles are used appropriately. That is, an inexperienced person can perform at as high a level as an experienced person if directed and closely supervised by a manager. The question is, at what cost? The cost is time and energy for the manager—both important management resources. Therefore, we feel that the highest performance level is achieved when followers can perform at a desired level with little or no supervision.

person not only is developed in terms of competence but is also able to provide his or her own reinforcement. This does not mean that the individual's work will have less direction but that the direction will now be internally imposed by the person rather than externally imposed by the manager. At this stage, individuals are positively reinforced for their own accomplishments when they are given increased responsibility and left more and more on their own. It is not that there is less mutual trust and respect (in fact, there is more), but it takes less and less effort on the manager's part to prove it with a fully developed person.¹⁵

More than praisings and other supportive behaviors, involvement in problem solving and decision making communicates to employees that you see them as confident, capable, responsible,

STOPPING REGRESSION

Just as improvements in performance motivate forward shifts in style along the curve, decreases in performance require a shift backward in leadership style along the bell-shaped curve, from delegating to directing (S4 to S3, S3 to S2, and S2 to S1). In other words, whenever a follower begins to perform at a lower level, for whatever reason (e.g., crisis at home, change in work, or new technology), it becomes appropriate and necessary for a manager to adjust his or her behavior to respond to the current development level of the person. For example, take a subordinate who is presently working well on his or her own. Suppose that suddenly a

family crisis begins to affect this person's performance on the job. In this situation, it might be very appropriate for the manager to moderately increase both support and even direction until the subordinate regains his or her composure.

Take another example of a person in an individual contributor position who is highly motivated and competent (D4) and therefore can be left on his or her own. Suppose this person is promoted to a supervisory position. While it may have been appropriate to leave the person alone (S4) as an individual contributor, now that he/she is a supervisor, a task for which he/she has little experience, it is certainly appropriate for the manager to change styles by initially providing more support and then increasing the amount of direction and supervision provided (S4 to S3 to S2). This high-directive, high-supportive style should continue until the person is able to grasp all of his/her new responsibilities. At that time, movement from style 2 to style 3 and eventually to style 4 would be appropriate if performance continues to improve. Using the same leadership style that was successful with this person as an individual contributor may prove devastating now because it is inappropriate for the situation.

forward and backward in style that makes Situational Leadership a truly developmental model for both managers and subordinates.

ENDNOTES

1. Paul Hersey and Kenneth H Blanchard, "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership," *Training and Development Journal* (May 1969).
2. Hersey and Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982).
3. Additional Blanchard Training and Development (BTID) associates and colleagues who have been involved with me from time to time in helpful theoretical discussions are Irene Carew, Sylvia Carter, Calla Crafts, John Ferris, Ken Huff, Ralph Jenkins, Bob Lorber, and Kelsey Tyson.
4. Ken Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi, and Drea Zigarmi, *Leadership and the One Minute Manager* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1985).
5. Robert Tannenbaum and Warren H Schmidt, "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern," *Harvard Business Review* (March-April 1957).
6. Roger M Stogdill and Alvin E Coons, eds., *Leader Behavior: Its Description and Measurement*, Bureau of Business Research Monograph no. 83 (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1957).
7. In *Management of Organizational Behavior*, Paul Hersey and I used the terms *task behavior* and *relationship behavior* to describe the two basic leadership style dimensions. We at BTID now use the terms *directive behavior* and *supportive behavior* because we have found them more descriptive and easier for practitioners to identify with.
8. The four leadership styles described in *Management of Organizational Behavior* were called *telling* (S1), *selling* (S2), *participating* (S3), and *delegating* (S4). The first three names were changed to *directing* (S1), *coaching* (S2), and *supporting* (S3) at the urging of Ted Thelander and other practitioners. They felt that the new names better described the styles and eliminated the need to learn a second set of labels for the styles once they understood what was meant by "directive" and "supportive" behavior.
9. Examples often cited of the "one best" theory are Robert R Blake and Jane S Mouton, *The Managerial Grid* (Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing, 1964) and Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1960).

SUMMARY

In summary, effective managers know their staff members well enough to flexibly manage everchanging demands on their organizations. As responsibilities and tasks are assigned to individuals or groups, the development level must be assessed. The manager should then vary his/her leadership style in response to the individual's need for external direction and/or support. It should be remembered that over time, subordinates and subordinate groups develop their own patterns of behavior and ways of operating; that is, their own norms, customs, traditions, and mores. While a manager may use a specific style for the work group as a group, that manager may quite often have to behave differently with individual subordinates because each is at a different level of development. Whether working with a group or an individual, changes in management style forward from S1 to S2, S3, and S4, and backward from S4 to S3, S2 and S1, must be gradual. It is this shifting

10. Examples of the "no one best" approach are Fred E Fielder, *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967); A K Korman, "'Consideration,' 'Initiating Structure,' and Organizational Criteria—A Review," *Personnel Psychology: A Journal of Applied Research XIX* (Winter 1966); and William J Reddin, *Managerial Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970).
11. The term *development level* is now being used instead of *maturity level*, for two reasons. First, the word *maturity* has negative connotations for most people. Second, it was felt that Situational Leadership's real contribution is as a dynamic developmental model that helps managers understand not only how to manage people effectively today but how to "grow them up," so they can eventually manage themselves. Paul Hersey is not using the term *readiness level* in his work with the Situational Leadership model.
12. The names of these two factors used in *Management of Organizational Behavior* have since been changed. "Ability" was changed to "competence," to avoid confusion with an unlearned "natural ability," and "willingness" was changed to "commitment" to suggest a concept broader than motivation.
13. The commitment aspect of both D1 and D2 has been changed significantly from the original M1 and M2 in *Management of Organizational Behavior*. M1 was considered "unable and unwilling," while M2 was thought of as "unable but willing." We now consider a D1 to have high commitment and a D2 to have low commitment. This change was urged by Don Carew and Eunice Parisi-Carew, based on research on stages of group development done by R B Lacoursiere in *The Life Cycle of Groups: Group Development Stage Theory* (New York: Human Services Press, 1980). See Don Carew, Eunice Parisi-Carew, and Ken Blanchard, *Group Development and Situational Leadership: A Model for Managing Groups* (San Diego, CA: Blanchard Training and Development, Inc., 1984).
14. "Catching people doing things right" is a major theme of Spencer Johnson and my best-selling book, *The One Minute Manager* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1982).
15. The gradual developmental process of (1) providing direction, (2) reducing the amount of direction and supervision, and (3) increasing support for adequate performance is known as "positively reinforcing successive approximations." B F Skinner has been most closely identified with this concept over the years; for his classic work in this area, see B F Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1953).

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Kenneth Blanchard, PhD, is an internationally known management consultant and coauthor of the widely read textbook *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*. He received his master's degree from Colgate University and his bachelor's degree and PhD from Cornell. He later became a professor of management at the University of Massachusetts and a member of the NTI Institute.

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