

Situational Leadership - Hersey-Blanchard

The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory was created by Dr Paul Hersey, a professor and author of "The Situational Leader," and Ken Blanchard, author of the best selling "One-Minute Manager," among others.

The theory states that instead of using just one style, successful leaders should change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they're leading and the details of the task. Using this theory, leaders should be able to place more or less emphasis on the task, and more or less emphasis on the relationships with the people they're leading, depending on what's needed to get the job done successfully.

Leadership Styles

According to Hersey and Blanchard, there are four main leadership styles:

- Telling/Directing (S1) – Leaders tell their people what to do and how to do it.
- Selling/Coaching (S2) – Leaders provide information and direction, but there's more communication with followers. Leaders "sell" their message to get people on board.
- Participating/Consulting (S3) – Leaders focus more on the relationship and less on direction.

The leader works with the team, and shares decision-making responsibilities.

- Delegating (S4) – Leaders pass most of the responsibility onto the follower or group.

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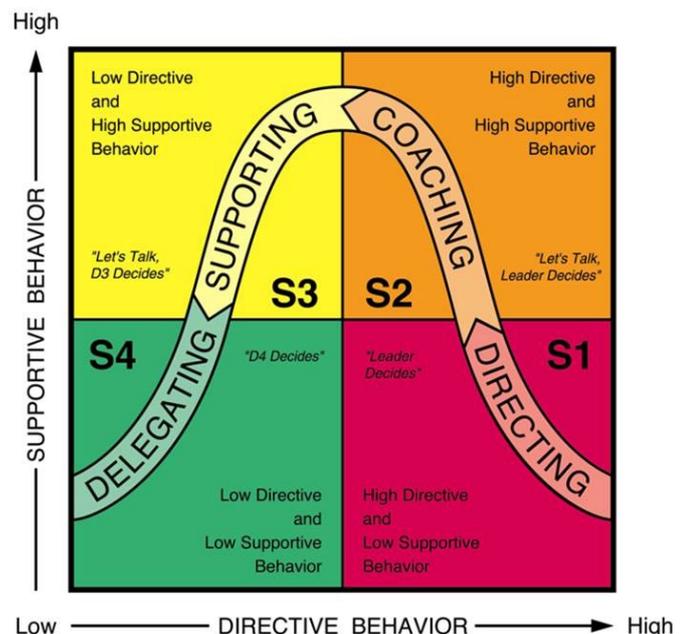
leaders still monitor progress, but they're less involved in decisions.

As you can see, styles S1 and S2 are focused on getting the task done. Styles S3 and S4 are more concerned with developing team members' abilities to work independently.

Maturity Levels

According to Hersey and Blanchard, knowing when to use each style is largely dependent on the maturity of the person or group you're leading. They break maturity down into four different levels:

- M1 – People at this level of maturity are at the bottom level of the scale. They lack the knowledge, skills, or confidence to work on their own, and they often need to be pushed to take the task on.
- M2 – at this level, followers might be willing to work on the task, but they still don't have the skills to complete it successfully.
- M3 – Here, followers are ready and willing to help with the task. They have more skills than the M2 group, but they're still not confident in their abilities.
- M4 – These followers are able to work on their own. They have high confidence and strong skills, and they're committed to the task.



The Hersey-Blanchard model maps each leadership style to each maturity level:

Maturity Level	Appropriate Leadership Style
M1: Low maturity	S1: Telling/directing
M2: Medium maturity, limited skills	S2: Selling/coaching
M3: Medium maturity, higher skills but lacking confidence	S3: Participating/supporting
M4: High maturity	S4: Delegating

To use this model, reflect on the maturity of individuals within your team. The table above shows which leadership style Hersey and Blanchard recommend for people with that level of maturity.

Key Points

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

Start by identifying whom you're leading. Are your followers knowledgeable about 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 that's appropriate for that rating.

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