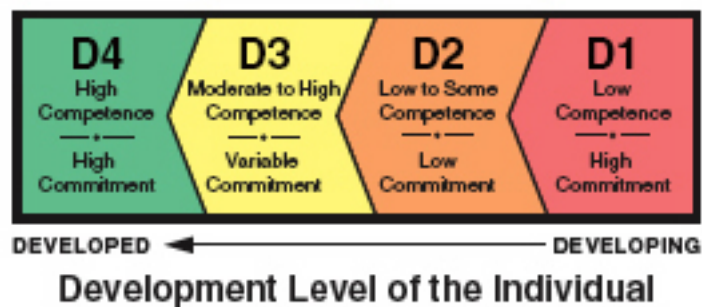


## Situational leadership

Different leadership styles are better in different situations, and leaders must be flexible enough to adapt their style to the situation they are in. A good situational leader is one who can quickly change leadership styles as the situation changes.

Ken Blanchard has created a model of situational leadership allows you to analyse the needs of the situation, then adopt the most appropriate leadership style. It has proved popular with managers over the years because it is simple to understand, and it works in most environments for most people. It works by matching the appropriate leadership style to the current development level of an individual, as well as aiming to improve a person's development level stage-by-stage.



### Leadership styles

Blanchard characterises leadership style in terms of the amount of direction and support that the leader provides to their followers. They categorized all leadership styles into four behavior types, which they named S1 to S4:

**S1: Directing Leaders** define the roles and tasks of the 'follower', and supervise them closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one-way.

**S2: Coaching Leaders** still define roles and tasks, but seeks ideas and suggestions from the follower. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more two-way.

**S3: Supporting Leaders** pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the follower. The leader facilitates and takes part in decisions, but control is with the follower.

**S4: Delegating Leaders** 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.

Of these, no one style is considered optimal or desired for all leaders to possess. Effective leaders need to be flexible, and must adapt themselves according to the situation. However, each leader tends to have a natural style, and in applying Situational Leadership he must know his intrinsic style.

### Development levels

The right leadership style will depend on the person being led - the follower. Blanchard extended his model to include the Development Level of the follower. He stated that the leader's chosen style should be based on the competence and commitment of her followers. They categorized the possible development of followers into four levels, which they named D1 to D4:

**D1: Low Competence, High Commitment** - They generally lack the specific skills required for the job in hand. However, they are eager to learn and willing to take direction.

**D2: Some Competence, Low Commitment** - They 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.

**D3: High Competence, Variable Commitment** - They are experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well or quickly.

**D4: High Competence, High Commitment** - They are experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. They may even be more skilled than the leader.

Development Levels are also situational. I might be generally skilled, confident and motivated in my job, but would still drop into Level D1 when faced, say, with a task requiring skills I don't possess. For example, many managers are D4 when dealing with the day-to-day running of their department, but move to D1 or D2 when dealing with a sensitive employee "issue".

### Leadership/development matching

Blanchard says that the leadership style (S1 - S4) of the leader must correspond to the development level (D1 - D4) of the follower. It is the leader who must adapt, not the follower.

### **Breakdown of leadership styles**

#### **S1 : Direct**

Provide specific instructions and closely supervise performance

Key words : tell, show, be decisive, teach, define roles and tasks, be the expert

#### **S2 : Coach**

Explain your decisions and provide opportunity for clarification

Give limited options/choices and explain why each is best for the group/individual

Key words : guide, test, teach, convince, influence, negotiate, reinforce, get “buy-in”, give praise

#### **S3 : Support**

Share ideas and facilitate in making decisions

Key words : explore, ask, listen, probe, negotiate, give emotional support, praise, share decision-making, be available but wait to be asked

#### **S4 : Delegate**

Turn over responsibility for decisions and implementation

Key words : listen, let them “get on with it”, check in less frequently, let them know you are there if needed