

# Team Leadership Case Studies

*Read each case study and determine what action you think would be most appropriate for the leader to take in the situation. Rank your answers from 1-4 with #1 being the most appropriate leadership response and #4 the least appropriate leadership response.*

- 1. You serve as the Project Director and have been assigned responsibility to design and implement a new initiative. You have hired/recruited a Project Team that is eager to begin work with you in developing and implementing the new initiative. You have scheduled a series of planning meetings with your Team. At these first meetings of the Team, YOU WOULD. . .**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a) Make sure that you define the responsibilities of the team, present an overview of the design process you are going to use, direct the work of the team in developing the new project, and closely monitor progress in implementing the project.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b) Direct the work of the team in designing and implementing the new project and encourage team members to work together by recommending ideas, making decisions on the final design, and implementing the project.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c) Facilitate the work of the team by encouraging cooperation and involvement of all team members as they design and implement the new project.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d) Allow the team to design and implement the project on their own with your support and with the resources that you have given them.
  
- 2. The Team that you coordinate as Project Director has been working well together over the past year to design and implement the organization's plans and projects with your input and facilitation. As the new year begins a number of new projects are being introduced and several new members are being added to the team who do not have previous experience with your projects. YOU WOULD. . .**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a) Use several Team meetings to direct the work of the team in creating the new programs, while teaching the new members about the organization's work and their new role. Then work to closely monitor the performance of the entire team as they introduce the new projects.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b) Guide the entire team in creating the new projects, incorporate the ideas and suggestions of all team members, encourage effective teamwork, and take time to introduce the new team members.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c) Welcome the new members to the team, put them with other members of the team who can help them learn how to design and implement the organization's projects, while you facilitate team development and teamwork.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d) Ask if there is anything you can do to help the new members and support their excitement about being new team members.

**3. As Project Director you have worked closely with one of your teams for several years. Their work is excellent and the team gets along well together. Recognizing their abilities, you feel they can now work more on their own. You have begun this year to redirect your energies to other projects and teams, and they have continued to work effectively. You must now ask them to accept additional tasks and responsibilities. YOU WOULD. . .**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) Assign them the new responsibility, make sure they know what to do, and supervise them closely.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b) Give them the new responsibility. Tell them that you are pleased with their past performance and that you are sure they will do well with this new responsibility. Facilitate the team's meetings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c) Make sure they know what you want them to do, but incorporate any helpful suggestions they have.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d) Let them determine how to complete the new responsibility and be available to support them and provide the information and resources that will be needed.

**4. You have just been appointed Project Director. One of the teams that you are about to lead has worked together for several months. You have found that the team is beginning to perform effectively on the tasks assigned to them but somewhat overwhelmed by the project and the demands of working together as a team. You are unsure about how you fit into the group and what your role should be. YOU WOULD. . .**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) Assume the leadership of the team, direct the design and implementation of its projects and tasks, and closely monitor their performance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b) Facilitate the planning and implementation of the team's work and develop the ability of team members to work together.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c) Do what you can to make the team feel important and involved, and support their continued work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d) Attend the team meetings, but let the team continue to work as it has in the past year.

## Analysis of Teams I Lead

| Teams I lead | Development level of team | My current leadership style with this team and its match with the team's development | Changes you might make in your leadership style and practices: things to stop doing, things to start doing |
|--------------|---------------------------|--|--|
|              |                           |  |  |
|              |                           |  |  |
|              |                           |  |  |

## Analysis of Individuals I Lead

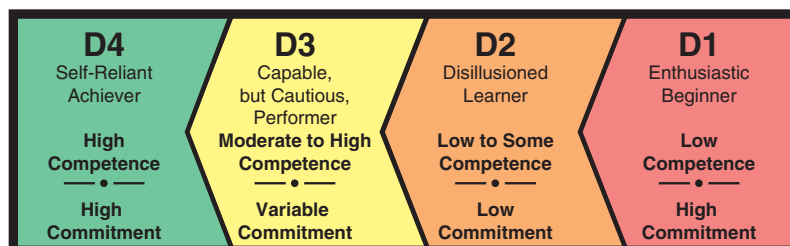
| Individuals I lead or supervise | Development level | My current leadership style with this person and its match with his or her development | Changes you might make in your leadership style and practices: things to stop doing, things to start doing |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--|--|
|                                 |                   |  |  |
|                                 |                   |  |  |
|                                 |                   |  |  |

## The Three Skills of a Situational Leader

- 1 **Diagnosis**—Assessing an individual’s need (development level) for direction and support
- 2 **Flexibility**—Using a variety of leadership styles comfortably
- 3 **Partnering for Performance**—Reaching agreements on what the leader and the individual need from each other as they work together

## Diagnosing Development Level

Development level is a combination of two factors: **Competence**—the individual’s demonstrated task-specific and transferable knowledge and skills on a goal or task; and **Commitment**—the individual’s motivation and confidence on a goal or task. Development level is *goal or task specific*. It is not an overall rating of an individual’s skills or attitude. There are four development levels.



### Development Level Descriptors

#### D4

- Justifiably confident
- Consistently competent
- Inspired/inspires others
- Expert
- Autonomous
- Self-assured
- Accomplished
- Self-reliant/self-directed

#### D3

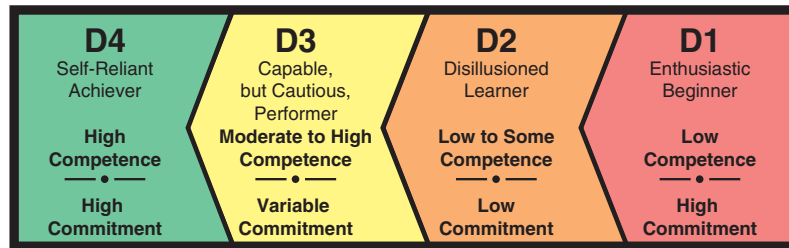
- Self-critical
- Cautious
- Doubtful
- Capable
- Contributing
- Insecure
- Tentative/unsure
- Bored/apathetic

#### D2

- Overwhelmed
- Confused
- Demotivated
- Demoralized
- Frustrated
- Disillusioned
- Discouraged
- Flashes of competence

#### D1

- Hopeful
- Inexperienced
- Curious
- New/unskilled
- Optimistic
- Excited
- Eager
- Enthusiastic



**D4  
Self-Reliant  
Achiever**

- Recognized by others as an expert
- Consistently competent; justifiably confident
- Trusts own ability to work independently; self-assured
- Inspired; inspires others
- Proactive; may be asked to do too much

**D3  
Capable,  
but Cautious, Performer**

- Is generally self-directed but needs opportunities to test ideas with others
- Sometimes hesitant, unsure, tentative
- Not always confident; self-critical; may need help in looking at skills objectively
- May be bored with goal or task
- Makes productive contributions

**D2  
Disillusioned  
Learner**

- Has some knowledge and skills; not competent yet
- Frustrated; may be ready to quit
- Discouraged, overwhelmed, confused
- Developing and learning; needs reassurance that mistakes are part of the learning process
- Unreliable, inconsistent

**D1  
Enthusiastic  
Beginner**

- New to the goal or task; inexperienced
- Eager to learn; willing to take direction
- Enthusiastic, excited, optimistic
- Don't know what they don't know, so they may do the wrong thing
- Confidence based on hopes and transferable skills, not reality

**The Five Key Diagnosis Questions**

1. What is the specific goal or task?
2. How strong or good are the individual's demonstrated task knowledge and skills on the goal or task?
3. How strong or good are the individual's transferable skills?
4. How motivated, interested, or enthusiastic is the individual?
5. How confident or self-assured is the individual?

**KEY LEARNING**

**Development level is goal or task specific!**

## Choosing the Appropriate Leadership Style

Leadership style is a pattern of behaviors leaders use, over time, as perceived by others. There are two basic leadership style behaviors: **Directive Behavior**—telling and showing people what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and providing frequent feedback on results; and **Supportive Behavior**—listening, facilitating self-reliant problem solving, encouraging, praising, and involving others in decision making. There are four leadership styles consisting of four different combinations of Directive and Supportive Behaviors.

### **S1** Style 1—Directing—High Directive Behavior and Low Supportive Behavior

The leader provides specific direction about goals, shows and tells how, and closely tracks the individual's performance in order to provide frequent feedback on results.

### **S2** Style 2—Coaching—High Directive Behavior and High Supportive Behavior

The leader explains why, solicits suggestions, praises behaviors that are approximately right, and continues to direct goal or task accomplishment.

### **S3** Style 3—Supporting—Low Directive Behavior and High Supportive Behavior

The leader and the individual make decisions together. The role of the leader is to facilitate, listen, draw out, encourage, and support.

### **S4** Style 4—Delegating—Low Directive Behavior and Low Supportive Behavior

The leader empowers the individual to act independently with appropriate resources to get the job done.

### Leadership Style Descriptors

#### **S4** Allowing/trusting

- Confirming
- Empowering
- Affirming
- Acknowledging
- Challenging

#### **S3** Asking/listening

- Reassuring
- Facilitating self-reliant problem solving
- Collaborating
- Encouraging feedback
- Appreciating
- Exploring/asking

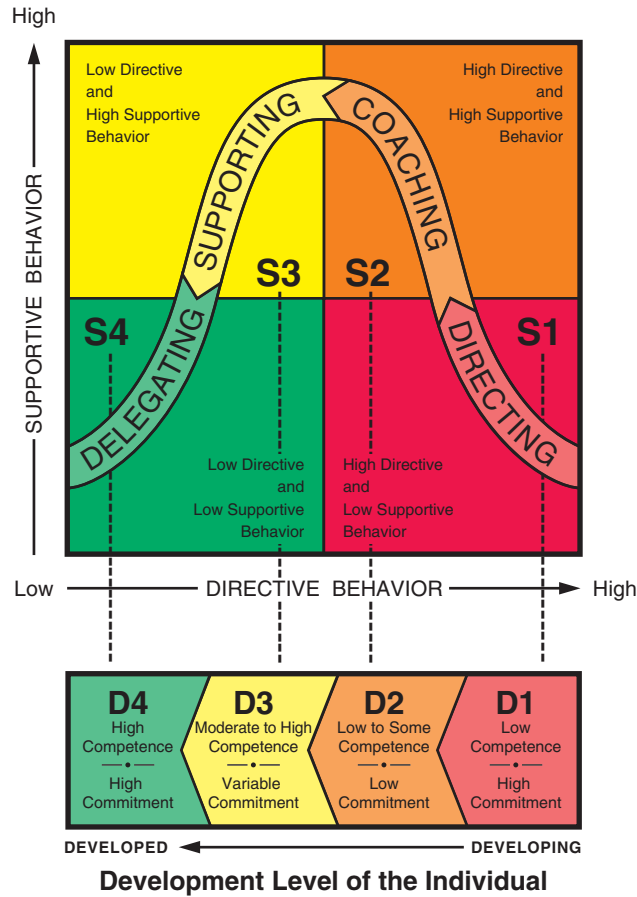
#### **S2** Explaining/clarifying

- Redirecting
- Sharing feedback
- Encouraging
- Praising
- Defining

#### **S1** Planning/prioritizing

- Orienting
- Teaching/showing and telling how
- Checking/monitoring
- Giving feedback

# The Situational Leadership® II Model



**The goal is a MATCH**

S1 → D1  
 S2 → D2  
 S3 → D3  
 S4 → D4

Over time, with a match, individuals learn to provide their own direction and support.

**Two types of MISMATCH**

Oversupervision  
 S1/S2 with D3/D4

Undersupervision  
 S3/S4 with D1/D2



# Team Performance

- In your experience why do teams fail? List several reasons.
  
- Which of the following of the following reasons why teams fail do you think are the most important or significant? Place a check in the box.
  - lack of a sufficient charter that defines the team's purpose and how it will work together to achieve that purpose
  - inability to decide what constitutes the work for which they are interdependent and mutually accountable
  - lack of mutual accountability
  - lack of resources to do the job, including time
  - lack of effective leadership and lack of shared leadership
  - lack of norms that foster creativity and excellence
  - lack of planning
  - lack of management support
  - inability to deal with conflict
  - lack of training on all levels on group skills
  
- Identify several characteristics of high performing teams from your own personal experience and knowledge. Then read the next article and the PERFORM chart describing high performing teams. How does your own knowledge and experience compare to information from Ken Blanchard and Associates.
  
- Develop several practical strategies that you can use to apply the PERFORM model to your team leadership?

# PERFORM ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

|  | INDIVIDUAL LEVEL   | TEAM LEVEL  | MANAGEMENT LEVEL  | ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL   |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Purpose and Values</i>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies clear goals, aligned with team purpose</li> <li>Lives by team values and norms</li> <li>Commits to team purpose</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops a common team purpose, aligned with the organizational purpose</li> <li>Develops clear goals and standards</li> <li>Shares common values</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides appropriate direction and resources to enhance team's purpose</li> <li>Articulates 'big picture' to help link daily tasks to organizational purpose</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has articulated clear vision, values, and critical success factors</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Empowerment</i>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commits to continuous improvement and development of skills and knowledge</li> <li>Offers new ideas and seeks out necessary resources</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows practices that support participation and risk taking</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides opportunities for team to perform</li> <li>Provides resources and training for individual and team</li> <li>Rewards informed risk taking and creativity</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readily shares information</li> <li>Supports teams through policies and procedures</li> <li>Has orientation, training systems, and management support that foster learning and growth of individuals and teams</li> </ul>                             |
| <i>Relationships and Communication</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shares knowledge and skills</li> <li>Listens for understanding</li> <li>Values differences</li> <li>Values well-being of others</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages different perspectives</li> <li>Encourages open feedback</li> <li>Openly discusses how the team is working together</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values individual and team contributions</li> <li>Fosters a climate of trust</li> <li>Shares all relevant information</li> <li>Models open communication and feedback</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes all information available</li> <li>Values differences</li> <li>Advocates open communication systems</li> </ul>  |
| <i>Flexibility</i>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides leadership when appropriate</li> <li>Considers a variety of approaches</li> <li>Focuses on task as well as team development</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages variety of approaches</li> <li>Shares leadership</li> <li>Encourages cross-training</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports new or different ideas</li> <li>Advocates flexibility within the organization</li> <li>Provides leadership for strong team culture</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages creativity and innovation</li> <li>Seeks individual and team ideas</li> <li>Is highly responsive, has flexible and adaptive systems</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Optimal Productivity</i>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commits to high standards and to measuring progress</li> <li>Understands and uses effective problem solving and decision making</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets goals and standards</li> <li>Uses systematic problem solving and decision making practices</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides linkage with organizational outcomes</li> <li>Monitors progress</li> <li>Establishes boundaries and supports team decisions</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articulates critical success factors clearly</li> <li>Makes technical and material resources available</li> <li>Aligns systems, policies, and practices with vision, values, and desired outcomes</li> <li>Clarifies performance standards</li> </ul> |
| <i>Recognition and Appreciation</i>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values and recognizes others' contributions</li> <li>Recognizes and appreciates team efforts</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebrates individual and team contributions</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values and recognizes individual and team accomplishments</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rewards and celebrates team successes</li> <li>Ensures that recognition, performance management, and compensation systems support teamwork</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Morale</i>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feels valued and respected</li> <li>Is enthusiastic about being on team</li> <li>Has pride in contributing</li> <li>Is committed to continuous improvement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebrates successes</li> <li>Searches for continuous improvement</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports continuous improvement</li> <li>Celebrates accomplishments</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizes success</li> <li>Provides resources</li> <li>Encourages continuous improvement and renewal</li> </ul>  |

# Putting PERFORM to Work

*Use the PERFORM model as a checklist for determining the strengths of your leadership. Review the PERFORM chart, rate your overall effectiveness on each element from 1=low effectiveness to 5=high effectiveness, identify the specific areas for improvement, and then develop strategies for development in the areas you need to strengthen.*

## 1. Purpose and Values 1   2   3   4   5

### Areas for Improvement

| Individual Level | Team Level | Management Level | Organizational Level |
|------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                  |            |                  |                      |

## 2. Empowerment 1   2   3   4   5

### Areas for Improvement

| Individual Level | Team Level | Management Level | Organizational Level |
|------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                  |            |                  |                      |

## 3. Relationships and Communication 1   2   3   4   5

### Areas for Improvement

| Individual Level | Team Level | Management Level | Organizational Level |
|------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                  |            |                  |                      |

## 4. Flexibility 1   2   3   4   5

### Areas for Improvement

| Individual Level | Team Level | Management Level | Organizational Level |
|------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                  |            |                  |                      |

## 5. Optimal Productivity 1   2   3   4   5

**Areas for Improvement**

| Individual Level | Team Level | Management Level | Organizational Level |
|------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                  |            |                  |                      |

**6. Recognition and Appreciation**

1 2 3 4 5

**Areas for Improvement**

| Individual Level | Team Level | Management Level | Organizational Level |
|------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                  |            |                  |                      |

**7. Morale**

1 2 3 4 5

**Areas for Improvement**

| Individual Level | Team Level | Management Level | Organizational Level |
|------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                  |            |                  |                      |

**Strategies for Improvement**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

# Ignite!

November 2006

## Why Teams Fail

Teams fail for a number of reasons, including poor planning for the implementation of teams and a lack of training. Research by The Ken Blanchard Companies® has identified the top 10 reasons for a team failing to reach its potential.

1. Lack of a sufficient charter
2. Unsure of what requires team effort
3. Lack of mutual accountability
4. Lack of resources
5. Lack of effective and/or shared leadership
6. Lack of planning
7. Lack of management support
8. Inability to deal with conflict
9. Lack of focus on creativity and excellence
10. Lack of training

How do you avoid these pitfalls?

Here are seven key characteristics (represented by the acronym PERFORM) to look for in the teams you are a part of:

1. **Purpose and values.** A high performing team shares a strong sense of purpose and a common set of values. They have a compelling vision.
2. **Empowerment.** Members of a high performing team have authority to act and make decisions and choices with clear boundaries. They have the autonomy, opportunity, and ability to experience their personal and collective power.
3. **Relationships and communication.** A high performing team is committed to open communication. People feel they can take risks and share their thoughts, opinions, and feelings without fear.
4. **Flexibility.** High performing team members are interdependent and realize that all are responsible for team performance, development, and leadership. Members recognize the inevitability of change and adapt to changing conditions.
5. **Optimal productivity.** High performing teams generate optimal productivity, reflected in the amount and quality of the work they accomplish. There is a commitment to high standards and quality. Team members hold each other accountable and strive for continual improvement.

6. **Recognition and appreciation.** A high performing team experiences continual positive feedback and recognition on the part of team members, the team leader, and the organization. Recognition reinforces behavior, builds esteem, and enhances a feeling of value and accomplishment.
7. **Morale.** Morale is the result of all of the above. If the other PERFORM elements are in place, morale is high. Members are enthusiastic about their work; they are proud of their results and feel pride in belonging to the team.

## The Journey to High Performance

Just calling together a team and giving it a clear charge does not mean the team will be high performing. High performance is a journey—a predictable progression from a collection of individuals to a well-oiled system where all the PERFORM characteristics are evident.

To make this journey it is essential that team members adopt community building attitudes and perspectives. These attitudes and perspectives are:

- Team members must develop a learning attitude. Everything that happens in the team is “grist for the mill.” There are no failures—only learning opportunities.
- The team must build a trust-based environment. Trust is built by sharing information, ideas, and skills. Building trust requires that team members cooperate rather than compete, judge, or blame. Trust is also built when team members follow through on their commitments. It is critical that team members communicate openly and honestly and demonstrate respect for others.
- The team must value differences. Team members should encourage and honor differences. Different viewpoints are the heart of creativity.
- People must view the team as a whole. By seeing the team as a living system rather than a collection of individuals, team members begin to think in terms of “we” rather than “you” and “me.”
- Team members must become participant observers. To work well in a team environment, members should develop the skill of participating and, at the same time, observing. This practice, akin to being in a movie at the same time you are watching the movie, can give team members valuable perspective.

All teams are unique and complex living systems. Knowing the characteristics and needs of a high performing team is critical. It gives people a target to shoot for as they progress from a collection of individuals to a smoothly functioning, high performing team.



*Ignite!* Newsletter—March 2007 Article

**LEADING HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS**

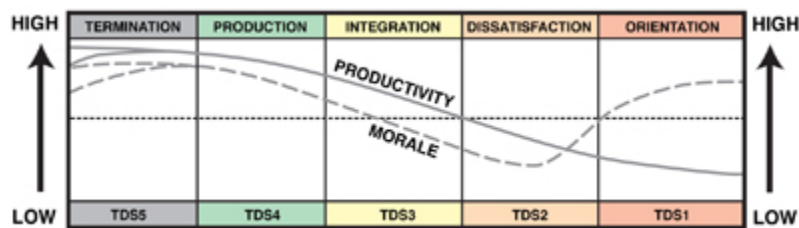
Research over the past sixty years has consistently demonstrated that regardless of their purpose, teams go through predictable stages on their path to high performance. After a comprehensive review of more than 200 studies on group development, R. B. Lencioni in 1980 identified five stages of team development.\*

1. Orientation
2. Dissatisfaction
3. Integration
4. Production
5. Termination

**The Stages of Team Development Model**

Two variables determine the team development stage: productivity and morale. *Productivity* is the amount and quality of the work accomplished. It depends on members' ability to collaborate, their knowledge and skills, clear goals, and access to needed resources. *Morale* is the team's confidence, motivation, and unity in achieving the purpose.

The Stages of Team Development Model below shows how Productivity and Morale vary as a team progresses (reading right to left) through the stages of development.



The challenge for anyone tasked with leading a team is to be able to recognize the team's current stage of development and then provide the direction and support needed for the team to grow.

Let's look at this a little more in depth for each stage of development.

**Team Development Stage 1 (TDS1): Orientation**

At this stage, most team members, unless coerced, are fairly eager to be on the team. However, they often come with high, unrealistic expectations. These expectations are accompanied by some anxiety about how they will fit in, how much they can trust others, and what demands will be placed on them. Team members are also unclear about norms, roles, goals, and timelines.

In this stage, there is high dependence on the leadership figure for purpose and direction. The challenge at the orientation stage is to get the team off on the right foot by developing a strong team charter and building relationships and trust.

The duration of this stage depends on the clarity and difficulty of the task, as well as clarity about how the team will work together. With simple, easily defined tasks, the orientation stage may be relatively short—5 to 10 percent of the team's life. On the other hand, with complex goals and tasks, the team may spend 30 to 60 percent of its time in this stage.

**Team Development Stage 2 (TDS2): Dissatisfaction**

As the team gets some experience working together under its belt, morale dips as team members experience a discrepancy between their initial expectations and reality. The difficulties in accomplishing the task and in working together lead to confusion and frustration as well as a growing dissatisfaction with dependence on the leader.

The challenge for team leaders during the dissatisfaction stage is helping the team manage issues of power, control, and conflict and to begin to work together effectively. The length of time spent in this stage depends on how quickly issues can be resolved. It is possible for the team to get stuck at the dissatisfaction stage and continue to be both demoralized and relatively unproductive.

**Team Development Stage 3 (TDS3): Integration**

Moderate to high productivity and variable or improving morale characterize a team at the integration stage. As issues encountered in the dissatisfaction stage are addressed and resolved, morale begins to rise. The team develops practices that allow members to work together more easily. Task accomplishment and technical skills increase, which contributes to

positive feelings. Because the newly developed feelings of trust and cohesion are fragile, team members tend to avoid conflict for fear of losing the positive climate. This reluctance to deal with conflict can slow progress and lead to less effective decisions.

Learning to share leadership and getting past the tendency to agree in order to avoid conflict are the challenges for team leaders at the integration stage. It's important for team leaders at this stage to remember that they will never, never, never have a high performing team unless leadership and control are shared. The integration stage can be quite short, depending on the ease of resolving feelings of dissatisfaction and integrating new skills. If members prolong conflict avoidance, there is a possibility that the team could return to the dissatisfaction stage.

#### **Team Development Stage 4 (TDS4): Production**

At this stage, both productivity and morale are high and reinforce one another. There is a sense of pride and excitement in being part of a high performing team. The primary focus is on performance. Purpose, roles, and goals are clear. Standards are high, and there is a commitment not only to meeting standards but also to ongoing continuous improvement.

The challenge for leaders in the production stage is sustaining the team's performance through new challenges and continued growth. This stage is likely to continue—with moderate fluctuations in feelings of satisfaction—throughout the life of the team.

#### **Team Development Stage 5 (TDS5): Termination**

With ongoing teams, this stage is not reached unless a drastic reorganization occurs. Termination, however, does occur in ad hoc teams or temporary task forces, so team members need to be prepared for it. Productivity and morale may increase or decrease as the end of the experience draws near. Team members may feel sadness or loss—or, on the other hand, rush to meet deadlines.

The challenge at the termination stage is to maintain necessary productivity and morale while managing closure, recognition, and celebration. This stage may vary in duration from a small part of the last meeting to a significant portion of the last several meetings, depending on the length and quality of the team experience.

#### **Conclusion**

The team stages of development outline a team's needs at any point in its life cycle. Understanding these needs is critically important because it allows team leaders or members to provide leadership behaviors that will respond to those needs.

Building a high performing team requires a leader who can manage the journey from dependence to interdependence. When a great team leader's job is done, team members will say, "We did it ourselves." Intervening with the appropriate leadership style at each stage will help the team progress to or maintain high performance.

\*R. B. Lacoursiere, *The Life Cycle of Groups: Group Development Stage Theory* (New York, NY: Human Science Press, 1980).

### **Would You Like to Learn More about Leading High Performing Teams?**

Join Dr. Eunice Parisi-Carew for a complimentary webinar on how to create high performing teams in your organization.

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*Ignite!* Newsletter—April 2007 Article

**MANAGE AND DEVELOP PEOPLE TO BE THEIR BEST**

Only over a period of time, by receiving the appropriate leadership styles, do employees reach the levels of confidence and competence that enable them to increase their productivity and effectiveness on given goals and tasks. Without the proper leadership styles, most employees end up achieving only a moderate level of performance on key tasks instead of pushing through to the highest level possible. The challenge then is for organizations to develop their employees to reach higher levels as quickly and efficiently as possible, thus improving productivity and overall corporate performance.

**It All Begins with Better Leadership**

Today's best leaders provide an environment where people can stretch, learn, and share their talents. Great leaders focus on efficiently and effectively helping to transform beginners and learners into peak performers. The three main skills that successful leaders must employ are the following:

1. Diagnosing the employee's current development level on the task at hand
2. Being flexible in offering the right amount of direction and support that matches the employee's development level
3. Partnering with employees to clearly identify what they are responsible for and how the leader will help them achieve it

**Diagnosis: The First Skill**

To be an effective leader, you must determine the development level of your direct report. But how, exactly, do you do that? The key is to look at two factors— competence and commitment.

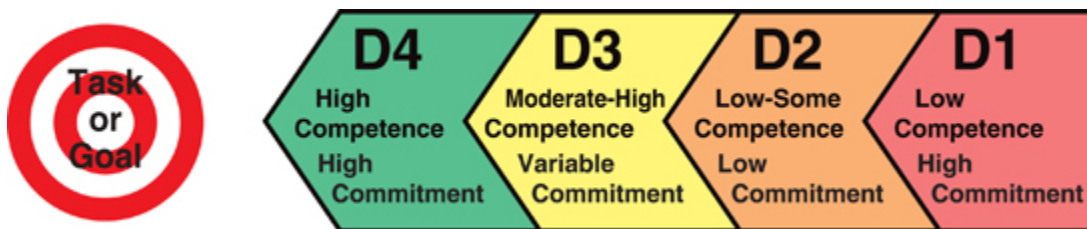
Competence is the sum of knowledge and skills that an individual brings to a goal or task. The best way to determine competence is to look at a person's performance. How well are your direct reports able to plan, organize, problem solve, and communicate?

Can they accomplish the stated goals accurately and on time? Competence can be gained through formal education, on-the-job training, and experience, and it can be developed over time with appropriate direction and support.

The second factor to look for when diagnosing development level is commitment. Commitment is a person's motivation and confidence about a goal or task. How interested and enthusiastic are your direct reports about doing a particular job? Are they self-assured? Do they trust their own ability to accomplish the goal? If their motivation and confidence are high, your direct reports are committed.

Depending on the direct reports' levels of competence and commitment you'll find that they will fall into one of four stages of development with that particular goal or task.

- D1—Enthusiastic Beginner
- D2—Disillusioned Learner
- D3—Capable, but Cautious, Performer
- D4—Self-Reliant Achiever



**Flexibility: The Second Skill**

For a long time, people thought there were only two leadership styles—autocratic and democratic. In fact, people used to shout at each other from these two extremes, insisting that one style was better than the other. Democratic managers were accused of being too soft and easy, while their autocratic counterparts were often called too tough and domineering.

We believe that managers who restrict themselves to either extreme are bound to be ineffective "half managers." Whole managers are flexible and able to adapt their leadership style to the situation. Is the direct report new and inexperienced about the task at hand—a D1 Enthusiastic Beginner? Then more guidance and direction are called for. Is the direct report experienced and skilled—a D4 Self-Reliant Achiever? That person requires less hands-on supervision.

To bring out the best in others, leadership must match the development level of the person being led. As your direct



reports move from one development level to the next, your style should change accordingly. Yet our research shows that most leaders have a preferred leadership style. In fact, 54 percent of leaders tend to use only one style; 34 percent tend to use two styles; 11 percent tend to use three styles; only 1 percent use all four styles. To be effective, leaders must be able to use all four leadership styles.

### **Partnering for Performance: The Third Skill**

The third skill great leaders need to master is Partnering for Performance.

Partnering opens up communication between you and your direct reports and increases the quality and frequency of your conversations. When we first started to teach Situational Leadership® II, managers would leave our training excited and ready to apply and use the concepts. Yet, we found that problems developed because the people who managers were applying the model to didn't understand what the managers were doing and often misinterpreted their intentions.

For example, suppose that you diagnosed one of your people on a particular task as a Self-Reliant Achiever. As a result, you decided to leave that person alone, but you didn't tell her why.

After a while—after never seeing you anymore—she could become confused. "I wonder what I've done wrong," she might think. "I never see my manager anymore."

Suppose another one of your people is new and you decide that person needs, at a minimum, a coaching style. As a result, you're in his office all the time. After a while, he might start to wonder, "Why doesn't my boss trust me? He's always looking over my shoulder."

In both cases, you might have made the right diagnosis, but since your people didn't understand your rationale, they misinterpreted your intentions. Through these kinds of experiences, we realized this:

Leadership is not something you do *to* people, but something you do *with* people.

That's where Partnering for Performance comes in. This skill is about gaining your direct reports' permission to use the leadership style that is a match for their development level.

### **Getting Permission to Use a Leadership Style**

The purpose of getting permission to use a leadership style is twofold. First, it creates clarity. Second, getting permission ensures the direct report's buy in on the use of that style and increases his or her commitment. For example, if a direct report is an Enthusiastic Beginner who does not have much in the way of task knowledge and skill but is excited about taking on the task, this person obviously needs a directing leadership style.

The leader might say, "How would it be if I set a goal that I believe will stretch you but is attainable, and then develop an action plan for you that will enable you to reach that goal? Then, I'd like to meet with you on a regular basis to discuss your progress and provide any help you need as you get started. Does this make sense as a way for you to get up to speed as quickly as possible?"

If the direct report agrees, they are off and running.

On the other hand, suppose a direct report is a Self-Reliant Achiever on a particular goal and, therefore, can handle a delegating leadership style.

The leader might say, "OK. The ball is in your court, but keep me in the information loop. If you have any concerns, give me a call. Unless I hear from you, or the information I receive tells me otherwise, I'll assume everything is fine. If it isn't, call early. Don't wait until the monkey is a gorilla. Does that work for you?"

If the direct report says yes, he or she can take action until his or her performance or communication suggests differently. If, in either of the two examples—the Enthusiastic Beginner or the Self-Reliant Achiever—the direct report doesn't agree, what should happen? Further discussion should take place until a leadership approach is agreed on.

### **Impact on the Bottom Line**

With better leadership, people become more skillful, adaptable, and open to new challenges and change. Without appropriate leadership, the development levels of employees can stagnate or even regress. Since people's development levels can migrate anywhere from beginner to peak performer depending on the task at hand, the ability to utilize the appropriate leadership style is critical to maximizing productivity, morale, and long-term results. A look at recent Blanchard® work with clients bears this out. For example:

- At a large U.S. government agency, an improved and measurable performance management system was established, thereby creating an environment of collaboration, cooperation, and commitment.
- At one of the world's largest banking institutions, earnings were up across the board, employee turnover was down, and the bank was ranked first among major U.S. financial institutions in overall satisfaction by Consumer Reports.
- At one of the largest privately owned, family-run specialty coffee and tea retailers in the world, impact studies show improved store sales, improved retention, dramatically improved working relationships, and cost savings of \$500,000.

Through effective leadership, successful organizations are showing that they can increase overall productivity, positively influence other key metrics, and directly impact the bottom line.

Leaders looking to improve their effectiveness with their direct reports should evaluate the way they diagnose development level, adjust their leadership style, and reach agreements with direct reports about using these leadership styles in day-to-day management situations. All people have peak performance potential—you just need to know where they are coming from and meet them there.

Would you like to learn more about managing and developing people to be their best?

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# Ignite!

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## Use a Coaching Approach to Improve Feedback

In today's work environment, managers are being asked to be more coach-like when working with their direct reports. They are being asked to develop new capabilities around coaching for performance, coaching for development, and coaching to build skills. With practice, the managers we work with in our coaching skills program develop quickly in all three of these areas. But one aspect of managing using coaching concepts has proven to be a big challenge for most of the people we work with—giving feedback.

## Why Is Giving Feedback So Challenging?

In studying this issue, we've found that there are three primary reasons why managers find delivering feedback to be difficult. Managers are

- afraid to de-motivate people who drive results
- worried about damaging the relationship
- concerned that the feedback will not generate the desired results

To help managers get past these fears and develop the skills they need to succeed, The Ken Blanchard Companies® approach to better feedback begins by reminding participants of the importance of keeping the development of people and the desired results in mind at the same time.

This means that managers looking to improve their feedback skills must commit to shifting their thinking so that they are

- Aware of style differences and choosing the best language when speaking with team members or direct reports
- Clear about their own judgments and can keep these separate from the job requirements and best interests of the team member or direct report
- Always working to increase trust in the relationship

Successfully accomplishing this allows managers to share delicate or difficult feedback because they have already built awareness, trust, and respect into the relationship.

## Crucial Distinctions When Giving Feedback

Delivering feedback well begins by identifying your desired outcome from the feedback session. Typically, there are three types of outcomes that correspond to three different types of feedback.

1. Informative feedback—This is information for the person's awareness and/or growth. This type of feedback is optional and at the employee's discretion to implement. The manager asks for permission to share this kind of feedback and should expect no specific outcome from sharing this.

Example: "You might make more of an impact if you used your voice more powerfully in your presentations."

2. Feedback that includes a request—This is information that would benefit the person, but it is not a demand. The manager gives feedback and makes a request—but it is clearly a suggestion and negotiable.

Example: "You might make more of an impact if you use your voice more powerfully. Would you be willing to practice with me before the next presentation to the committee?"

3. Feedback that addresses a requirement and/or demand—This is information about something that is considered part of the job and needs immediate attention.

Example: "The presentation to the board has to be flawless. Your presentation is not quite as powerful as it needs to be. You need coaching and practice, let's figure out how to make it happen right away."

## Guidelines for Giving Feedback

In addition to identifying what type of outcome is desired, a manager also has to be aware of several other best practice keys to feedback success.

- Before giving feedback, be sure that there were clear agreements about goals, norms, roles, and expectations established.
- Make sure that the relationship has sufficient trust. Ask for permission to give feedback, or at least prepare the direct report if you need to share something that might be delicate or hard to hear.
- Use a neutral demeanor to eliminate blame and judgment. Be aware of your nonverbal communication and tone. Practice using neutral language if this is a challenge.
- Be timely and give feedback immediately or as quickly as possible, but not in the heat of the moment. If you cannot control your emotions, wait until you can before giving feedback.
- Be relevant. Feedback needs to be focused on moving forward, not about something in past that will never happen again. Giving feedback about past events which are unlikely to recur serves no purpose and can damage trust.
- Focus on behaviors that are within the employee's control. Beating people up for things outside of their control is unreasonable.
- Be specific and descriptive. Describe the behaviors or data rather than giving generalizations. Do not drag in third-party observations and do not give into demands for "what other people think." Remember you are the manager, and what matters is what you think.
- Be open and ready for a variety of outcomes. If you are just giving feedback to be helpful, don't expect gratitude or enthusiasm. If there is a request, hopefully, the feedback will be received and acted upon. If so, pay attention to efforts and be ready to endorse and praise. If there is a demand and/or requirement that needs to be acted upon, be ready to work with the person to ensure compliance. Be ready to discuss structure (when and how they will do what is needed), accountability (how you and others will know they are on track) and support (how you and others can help). Finally, be ready to follow up with consequences for failure.

## Feedback Doesn't Have to Be Scary

Giving feedback is a critical job responsibility of any manager. It doesn't have to be scary, and with some practice using a coaching style approach it will get less uncomfortable. Remember that as a manager you earn the right to give feedback by building trust and respect. Then you must be crystal clear on your motives for giving feedback and what you want to achieve. The good news is that the more thoughtful you are with feedback, the less of it you'll have to give!

*"Delivering feedback well begins by identifying your desired outcome"*