

What is your Default Leadership Style?

Effective leaders are versatile and are able to adapt their styles according to the situation.

However, we tend to have a preferred (default) style that we tend to use more often, based on our own characteristics and personality, so it is helpful to know which one that is for you.

Leadership Styles	Description
 <p>Directing / Telling (S1)</p>	<p>Leaders make the decisions and define the roles of the individual or group, telling people the what, how, when, why and where to do the task.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders provide direct, detailed instructions • Leaders give team members specific goals and objectives • Leaders closely supervise and check frequently with team members to keep them on track • Leaders tend to demonstrate the steps involved in doing the job
 <p>Coaching / Selling (S2)</p>	<p>Leaders provide direction, while also using two-way communication, seeking ideas and providing the emotional support to 'sell' the message to get people motivated and on task. The leader provides instructions but is also supportive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders try to motivate people to make decisions • Leaders sell team members in their own ability to do the job • Leaders praise team members for their good work • Leaders provide team members with a lot of feedback on how they are doing
 <p>Facilitating / Supporting / Participating (S3)</p>	<p>Leaders share the decision-making on how tasks can be best accomplished. The leader takes part in the decision making, providing support and guidance, but leaves the control with the people, while maintaining relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders involve team members in making the decisions which will affect their work • Leaders make team members feel free to ask questions and discuss important concerns • Leaders hold frequent staff meetings • Leaders help team members locate and support their own developmental activities • Leaders listen to team members problems and concerns without criticising or judging
 <p>Delegating (S4)</p>	<p>Leaders are involved in the broader decisions; however, they pass the process decisions and responsibilities onto the individual or group. Leaders stay involved to monitor progress but provide little specific, close direction or personal support to individuals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders delegate broad responsibilities to team members and expect them to handle the details • Leaders expect team members to find and correct their own errors

Situational Leadership

When it comes to leadership styles, there is no one-size fits all, according to Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory. The theory states that instead of using just one style, successful leaders should change their leadership styles based on the development level of the people they're leading and the details of the task.

What works well in one situation or with one person or team, may not always achieve the same result if applied to a different situation.

To become a situational leader, you need to be able to diagnose and determine the development level of individuals or team for each situation / task and then adopt the most appropriate leadership style to suit.

To understand how to apply this model, there are two components to the theory that you need to understand first:

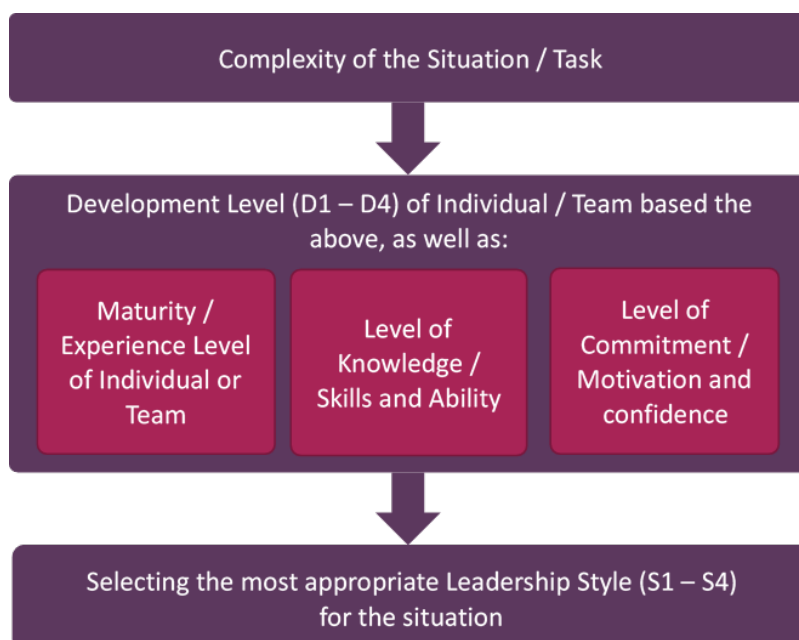
1. The Four Leadership Styles (S1 – S4) (as outlined in your results of the self-assessment)
2. The Four Development Levels that can be applied to the Individual or Team (D1 – D4) (outlined below)

Development Levels of Individuals and Teams

The 'Development Level' of an individual or team is defined as how skilled that person or team is with regards to the job / task, and how confident, able, and willing they are to take on responsibility and perform that task.

This is impacted by the **Complexity of the Situation or Task** and the **readiness and willingness of the person or team**.

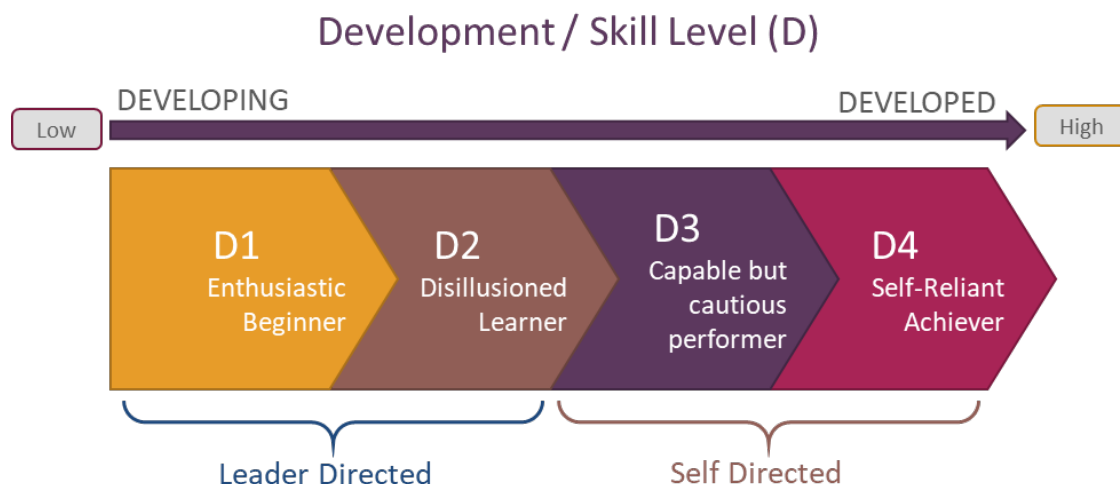
- **Readiness:** The individual's ability – skills, knowledge, experience as well as maturity they bring to a particular task / situation
- **Willingness:** The extent to which the individual has the confidence, commitment and motivation to accomplish the task / situation



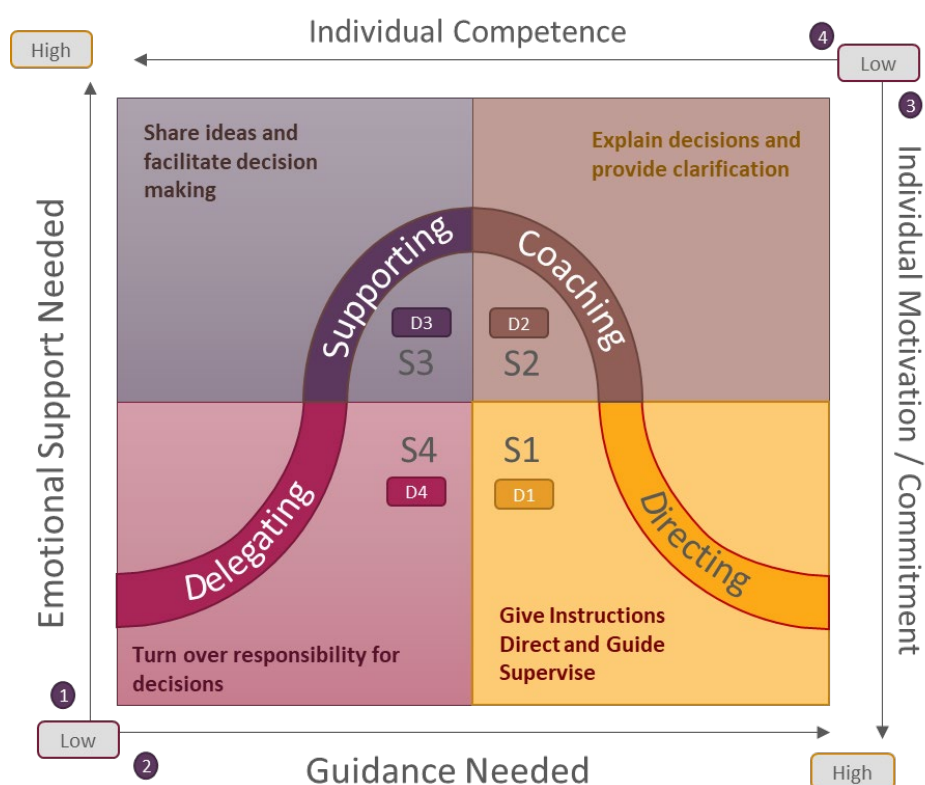
Depending on the situation, you could have an individual or team that are mostly at development level 4 (D4, competent, self-reliant achievers); however with certain tasks, they may drop to level D1 or D2 (beginner, or disillusioned learner), as they don't have the skills or confidence for that specific task.

For example, a lot of managers are in D4 when dealing with the day to day running of their department, however run into D1 or D2 when dealing with sensitive employee issues.



You need to diagnose an individual's or team's performance readiness to complete a specific task in order to determine where they are on the Development / Skill Level Scale, and therefore what leadership style you should use.



The diagram below shows the four leadership styles (within the grid), incorporating the development level of the individual / team (using the axis), to pinpoint the style most appropriate for that situation.



The 4 leadership styles can be aligned to the 4 development levels of the team / individual based on the situation of each task.

Situation / Development Level		Leadership Style to use	How to use this Style
D1 Low competence High commitment	<p>Unable, but willing</p> <p>Generally lacking the necessary skills or knowledge required for the job at hand and lack the confidence to tackle it.</p> <p>Members are new or inexperienced, and need a lot of help, direction and encouragement to get the job done.</p>	 <p>Directing / Telling / Instructing S1</p> <p>High Task, Low Relationship</p>	<p>Take a highly directive role, telling them what to do.</p> <p>Provide a working structure, controls and supervision</p> <p>Emphasise task-orientated behaviour and be very directive and autocratic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the decisions for the individual / team • Define the task • Be task focused • Teach, show and tell how • Check and monitor • Give feedback • Praise
D2 Some competence Low commitment	<p>Unable and unwilling</p> <p>Members are a little more experienced, but are less motivated. They may have some of the relevant skills to complete the task, but will not be able to do the task without help. The task or situation may be new to them.</p>	 <p>Coaching / Selling S2</p> <p>High task, High relationship</p>	<p>Coach them.</p> <p>Provide considerable input about the task, but also emphasise human relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell the message • Listen, explore and ask questions • Explain and clarify • Advise and coach • Share feedback • Encourage and redirect • Praise
D3 Moderate to High Competence Variable commitment	<p>Able, some willingness</p> <p>Members have the ability to do the job but may have varied motivation to start or complete the task.</p> <p>Experienced and capable but may lack the confidence to go it alone so won't take responsibility.</p>	 <p>Facilitating / Supporting / Participating S3</p> <p>Low task, High relationship</p>	<p>Praise, listen and facilitate. Provide less direction and more collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the decision making with the team • Facilitate two-way communication, collaboration • Reassure, praise, encourage and motivate • Facilitate self-reliant problem solving • Encourage feedback
D4 High Competence High Commitment	<p>Able and willing</p> <p>They are self-sufficient and competent.</p> <p>Experienced at the job and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. Able to complete task and take responsibility</p>	 <p>Delegating S4</p> <p>Low task, Low relationship</p>	<p>Turn over responsibility for day-to-day decision making.</p> <p>Delegate responsibility and simply keep informed of progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust / allow team members to work independently • Confirm, empower and acknowledge and challenge

D1 – Enthusiastic Beginner	<p>People that in D1 are generally lacking the specific skills required for the task at hand and lack the confidence to tackle it.</p> <p>These are often the least experienced workers. In this development stage, they will need to be provided with clear direction and detailed instructions on the <i>'how, when, what and why'</i> to do the task they are responsible for. While this usually means a leader is dealing with newer and less experienced employees, it could also be that the employee simply does not have much knowledge or background in the specific task at hand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New to the task or Inexperienced • Optimistic • Eager to learn, willing to take direction
D2 – Disillusioned Learner	<p>Moving up a step, people in D2 may have some relevant skills, but won't be able to do the job without help. The task at hand or the situation may be new to them.</p> <p>These are still inexperienced people who possess only slightly more knowledge and skill than those at the D1 level. At this level employees may have a desire to work independently but they are not capable of doing this yet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have some knowledge / skills but not yet competent • Inconsistent • Can get frustrated, discouraged, overwhelmed or confused • Need reassurance that mistakes are part of learning process
D3 – Capable but cautious performer	<p>Getting close to the top of the scale, D3 have higher skills and are experienced and capable, however may lack the confidence or motivation to take responsibility or go it alone.</p> <p>This development stage would include employees who are excited to work on a job and have most of the skill they need to get it done right. However, may not be able to quite get all of the job done without some help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly self-directed but needs opportunities to test ideas with others • Sometimes hesitant, lacks confidence • May need help to look at things objectively
D4 – Self-reliant achiever	<p>At the top of the scale, D4 are highly experienced, and confident. They have strong skills and are able and willing to take on responsibility, commit to tasks and complete a job competently.</p> <p>At this development stage, individuals are completely capable of handling tasks on their own and can get the job done without the help of a leader.</p> <p>At this level the employees can and want to carry out their tasks independently, they have a high level of task maturity as a result of which they need less support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justifiably confident • Competent in field • Independent • Self-directed and proactive

Hersey, P. and Blanchard, K. H. (1969). *Management of Organizational Behavior – Utilizing Human Resources*. New Jersey/Prentice Hall.