So You Want To Know Your Leadership Style?

measuring how you behave
in a situational leadership framework

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Most management writers agree that leadership is a "process of influencing the activities of an individual or group in efforts toward accomplishing goals in a given situation."[1] It is important to note that this definition makes no mention of any particular type of organization because in any situation where someone is trying to influence the behavior of another individual or group, leadership is occurring. Thus, everyone attempts leadership at one time or another, whether his or her activities are centered around a business, an educational institution, hospital, political organization or family.

If this is true and you are interested in getting some feedback on your own leadership style, read the directions below and respond to the 12 items that follow. These items comprise the Leader Adaptability and Style Inventory (LASI),[2] an instrument that was developed at the Center for Leadership Studies, Ohio University and is now being used in many of the environments mentioned above.

The Inventory

Assume you are involved in each of the following 12 situations. READ each item carefully. THINK about what you would do in each circumstance. Then CIRCLE the letter of the alternative action choice which you think would most closely describe your behavior in the situation presented. Circle only *one choice*. In reading each situation, interpret key concepts in terms of the environment or situation in which you most often think of yourself as assuming a leadership role. For example, when an item mentions subordinates, if you think that you engage in leader behavior most often as an industrial manager then think about your staff as subordinates. If, however, you think of yourself as assuming a leadership role usually as a parent, think about your children as your subordinates. As a teacher, think about your students as subordinates.

Do not change your situational frame of reference from one item to another. Separate LASI instruments may be used to examine your leader behavior in as many

SITUATION	ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS
1 Your subordinates are not responding lately to your friendly conversation and obvious concern for their welfare. Their performance is in a tailspin.	A. Emphasize the use of uniform procedures and the necessity for task accomplishment. B. Make yourself available for discussion but don't push. C. Talk with subordinates and then set goals. D. Intentionally do not intervene.
2 The observable performance of your group is increasing. You have been making sure that all members were aware of their roles and standards.	A. Engage in friendly interaction, but continue to make sure that all members are aware of their roles and standards. B. Take no definite action. C. Do what you can to make the group feel important and involved. D. Emphasize the importance of deadlines and tasks.
3 Members of your group are unable to solve a problem themselves. You have normally left them alone. Group performance and interpersonal relations have been good.	A. Involve the group and together engage in problem-solving. B. Let the group work it out. C. Act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect. D. Encourage group to work on problem and be available for discussion.
4 You are considering a major change. Your subordinates have a fine record of accomplishment. They respect the need for change.	A. Allow group involvement in developing the change, but don't push. B. Announce changes and then implement with close supervision. C. Allow group to formulate its own direction. D. Incorporate group recommendations, but you direct the change.
5 The performance of your group has been dropping during the last few months. Members have been unconcerned with meeting objectives. Redefining roles has helped in the past. They have continually needed reminding to have their tasks done on time.	A. Allow group to formulate its own direction. B. Incorporate group recommendations, but see that objectives are met. C. Redefine goals and supervise carefully. D. Allow group involvement in setting goals, but don't push.
6 You stepped into an efficiently run situation. The previous administrator ran a tight ship. You want to maintain a productive situation, but would like to begin humanizing the enviroment.	A. Do what you can to make group feel important and involved. B. Emphasize the importance of deadlines and tasks. C. Intentionally do not intervene. D. Get group involved in decision-making, but see that objectives are met.

SITUATION	ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS
7 You are considering major changes in your organizational structure. Members of the group have made suggestions about needed change. The group has demonstrated flexibility in its day-to-day operations.	A. Define the change and supervise carefully. B. Acquire group's approval on the change and allow members to organize the implementation. C. Be willing to make changes as recommended, but maintain control of implementation. D. Avoid confrontation; leave things alone.
8 Group performance and interpersonal relations are good. You feel somewhat unsure about your lack of direction of the group.	A. Leave the group alone. B. Discuss the situation with the group and then initiate necessary changes. C. Take steps to direct subordinates toward working in a well-defined manner. D. Be careful of hurting boss-subordinate relations by being too directive.
9 Your superior has appointed you to head a task force that is far overdue in making requested recommendations for change. The group is not clear on its goals. Attendance at sessions has been poor. Their meetings have turned into social gathering. Potentially they have the talent necessary to help.	A. Let the group work it out. B. Incorporate group recommendations, but see that objectives are met. C. Redefine goals and supervise carefully. D. Allow group involvement in setting goals, but don't push.
10 Your subordinates, usually able to take responsibility, are not responding to your recent redefining of standards.	A. Allow group involvement in redefining standards, but don't push. B. Redefine standards and supervise carefully. C. Avoid confrontation by not applying pressure. D. Incorporate group recommendations, but see that new standards are met.
11 You have been promoted to a new position. The previous supervisor was uninvolved in the affairs of the group. The group has adequately handled its tasks and direction. Group inter-relations are good.	A. Take steps to direct subordinates toward working in a well-defined manner. B. Involve subordinates in decision-making and reinforce good contributions. C. Discuss past performance with group and then you examine the need for new practices. D. Continue to leave group alone.
12 Recent information indicates some internal difficulties among subordinates. The group has a remarkable record of accomplishment. Members have effectively maintained long range goals. They have worked in harmony for the past year. All are well qualified for the task.	A. Try out your solution with subordinates and examine the need for new practices. B. Allow group members to work it out themselves. C. Act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect. D. Make yourself available for discussion, but be careful of hurting boss-subordinate relations.

different settings as you think helpful.

You have just completed the LASI-Self. This instrument was developed to help you gain some insight into your perception of how you behave as a leader. It is designed to measure your self perception of three aspects of leader behavior: (1) style, (2) style range and (3) style adaptability. Throughout the remainder of this article you will be given theoretical frameworks and other information about these three aspects of leader behavior in order to help you score and interpret your responses to the LASI-Self.

Style

Your leadership style[3] is the consistent patterns of behavior which you exhibit, as perceived by others, when you are attempting to influence the activities of people. This behavior has been developed over time and is what others learn to recognize as you the leader, your style or leader personality. They expect and can even predict certain kinds of behavior from you. The pattern generally involves either task behavior or relationships behavior or some combination of both. The two types of behavior, task and relationship, which are central to the concept of leadership style, are defined:

Task Behavior– The extent to which a leader is likely to organize and define the roles of the members of his group (followers); to explain what activities each is to do as well as when, where, and how tasks are to be accomplished. It is further characterized by endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting jobs accomplished.

Relationship Behavior– The extent to which a leader is likely to maintain personal relationships

between himself and the members of his group (followers) by opening up channels of communication, delegating responsibility and giving subordinates an opportunity to use their potential. It is characterized by socio-emotional support, friendship and mutual trust.[4]

The recognition of task and relationship as two important dimensions of leader behavior has been an important part of the works of management theorists over the last several decades. These two dimensions have been variously labeled, including terminology such as "autocratic"/ "democratic" and "employee-oriented/"production-oriented."

Considered Either/Or

For some time, it was believed that task and relationship were either/or styles of leader behavior and, therefore, could be depicted on a single dimension, a continuum, moving from very authoritarian (task) leader behavior at one end to very democratic (relationship) leader behavior at the other.[5]

In more recent years, the feeling that task and relationship were either/or leadership styles has been dispelled. In particular, the leadership studies initiated in 1945 by the Bureau of Business Research at Ohio State University questioned this assumption.[6]

Observing the actual behavior of leaders in a wide variety of situations, the Ohio State staff found that leadership styles tended to vary considerably from leader to leader. The behavior of some was characterized mainly by structuring activities of followers in terms of task accomplishments, while others concentrated on providing socio-emotional support in terms of personal relationships between themselves and their followers. Other leaders had styles

characterized by both task and relationship behavior. There were even some individuals in leadership positions whose behavior tended to provide little structure or consideration.

No dominant style appeared. Instead, various combinations were evident. Thus, it was determined that task and relationship are not either/or leadership styles as an authoritarian-democratic continuum suggests. Instead, these patterns of leader behavior can be plotted on two separate axes as shown in Figure 1. (This figure will be used for scoring your self-perceptions of your leadership style and style range from your LASI-Self.)

Determining Leadership Style

Your perception of your leadership style on the LASI-Self can be determined by circling in Table 1 below, the letter of the alternative action you chose for each situation and then totaling the number of times an action was used in each of the four sub-columns. The alternative action choices are not distributed alphabetically but according to what style quadrant a particular action alternative represents.

Sub-column totals from Table 1 (Style Range) can be transferred to the basic leader behavior styles in Figure 1. The column numbers correspond to the quadrant numbers of the model as follows:

Sub-column (1) - alternative action choices describe (Quadrant 1), High Task/Low Relationship Behavior.

Sub-column (2) - alternative action choices describe (Quadrant 2), High Task/High Relationship Behavior.

Sub-column (3) - alternative action choices describe (Quadrant 3), High Relationship/Low Task Behavior.
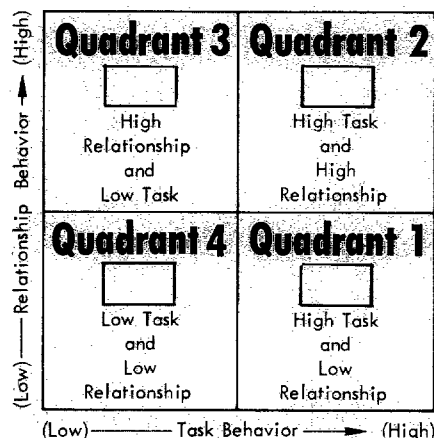
Figure 1.

The Basic Leader Behavior Styles

Quadrant 3 High Relationship and Low Task	**Quadrant 2** High Task and High Relationship
Quadrant 4 Low Task and Low Relationship	**Quadrant 1** High Task and Low Relationship

(High) ↑ Relationship Behavior → (Low)

(Low) ――― Task Behavior ――▶ (High)

Table 1.

Determining Leadership Style and Style Range

		(Style Range) Alternative Actions			
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
S I T U A T I O N S	1	A	C	B	D
	2	D	A	C	B
	3	C	A	D	B
	4	B	D	A	C
	5	C	B	D	A
	6	B	D	A	C
	7	A	C	B	D
	8	C	B	D	A
	9	C	B	D	A
	10	B	D	A	C
	11	A	C	B	D
	12	C	A	D	B
Sub-columns		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

Sub-column (4) - alternative action choices describe (Quadrant 4), Low Task/Low Relationship Behavior.

Enter the totals associated with each of the four basic leadership styles in the boxes provided in Figure 1.

Your *dominant* leadership *style* is defined as the quadrant where the most responses fall. Your *supporting style(s)* is a leadership style which you tend to use on occasion. The frequency of responses in quadrants other than that of your dominant style suggests the number and degree of supporting styles as you perceive them.

Self-Perception Vs. Style

It is important to note that there is a difference between the self-perception of your leadership style (which LASI-Self indicates) and your actual leadership style. As you recall, leadership style was defined as the consistent patterns of behavior which you exhibit, *as perceived by others*, when you are involved in influencing the activities of others. Thus the self-perception of your leadership style may or may not reflect your actual leadership depending on how close your perceptions are to the perceptions of others.

People whom you are attempting to influence will respond to you based on their perception of reality not your own. Therefore, you could think of yourself as a very warm, democratic leader but if the people working with you think you are a hard-nosed autocratic leader, they will respond to you according to that autocratic impression.

It is for this reason that Leader Adaptability Style Inventory (LASI) instruments have also been developed to reflect the perceptions of your subordinates (LASI-Subordinate) and superior(s), and peers or associates (LASI-Other). Comparing one's self-perception of leadership style with the perceptions of others can be very useful.

LASI-Subordinate

This instrument is a way for you to get feedback on how your behavior is perceived by subordinates. These LASI instruments may be distributed to all people reporting directly to you and/or individuals whose behavior you attempt to influence in your everyday interactions. It is recommended that for scoring, LASI-Subordinate instruments be mailed anonymously to someone outside your work group and preferably outside your organization.[7]

Only generalized data should be shared with you. The confidentiality of each individual's responses to the questions could, in this manner, be maintained and still provide you with relevant feedback on how your behavior is preserved by your work group.

LASI-Other

This instrument can be used in a similar fashion to LASI-Subordinate but is intended to gather data for you from your superior as well as key associates or peers. Key associates[8] are people at your level in the organization with whom you interact on a day to day or week to week basis in order to accomplish tasks. For a vice-president for production, key associates would probably be the other vice-presidents, for a school teacher key associates might be other teachers in his or her department.
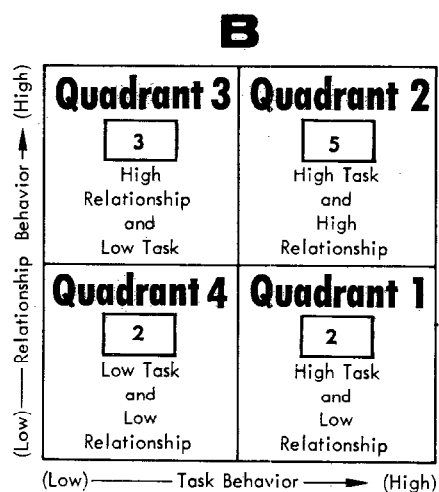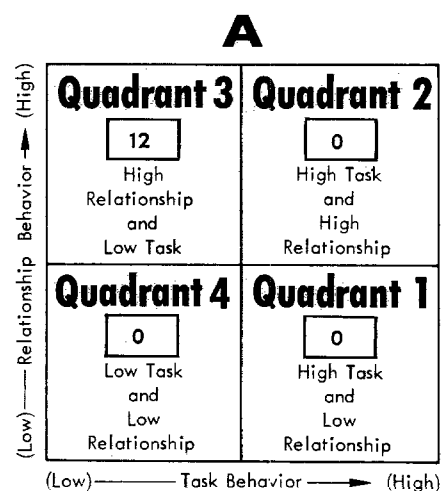
Style Range

Your dominant style plus supporting styles determines your style range.[9] In essence, this is the extent to which you perceive your ability to vary your leadership style.

Your style range can be analyzed by examining which quadrants your responses to the LASI-Self occur in Figure 1 as well as

the frequency of these occurrences. If your responses fall only in one quadrant as in A in Figure 2, then you perceive the range of your behavior as limited; whereas if responses fall in a number of quadrants as in B, you perceive yourself as having a wide range of leader behavior.

Figure 2.

Different Style Ranges

A

Quadrant 3	Quadrant 2
12	0
High Relationship and Low Task	High Task and High Relationship
Quadrant 4	**Quadrant 1**
0	0
Low Task and Low Relationship	High Task and Low Relationship

(Low) ———— Task Behavior ———► (High)

Relationship Behavior ——► (High) / (Low)

B

Quadrant 3	Quadrant 2
3	5
High Relationship and Low Task	High Task and High Relationship
Quadrant 4	**Quadrant 1**
2	2
Low Task and Low Relationship	High Task and Low Relationship

(Low) ———— Task Behavior ———► (High)

Tri-Dimensional Model

After identifying task and relationship as the two central aspects of leader behavior, numerous practitioners and writers tried to determine which of the four basic styles depicted was the "best" style of leadership, that is the one which would be successful in most situations. At one point, high task/high relationship (quadrant 2) was considered the "best" style, while low task/low relationship (quadrant 4) was considered the "worst" style.[10]

Yet, evidence from research in the last decade clearly indicates that there is no single all-purpose leadership style.[11] Successful leaders are those who can adapt their behavior to meet the demands of their own unique environment.

If the effectiveness of a leader behavior style depends on the situation in which it is used, it follows that any of the four basic styles in Figure 1 may be effective or ineffective depending on the situation. *The difference between the effective and the ineffective styles is often not the actual behavior of leader, but the appropriateness of this behavior to the situation in which it is used.* In an attempt to illustrate this concept and build on previous work in leadership, an effectiveness dimension was added to the task and relationship dimensions of earlier leadership models to create the Tri-Dimensional Leader Effectiveness Model[12] presented in Figure 3. (This figure will be used for intergrading your self-perception scores of your leadership style and style range with your perceived style adaptability from your LASI-Self.) This model was developed to help practitioners more accurately diagnose the appropriateness of their leadership style(s) to specific situations.

Figure 3.
The tri-dimensional
leader effectiveness model

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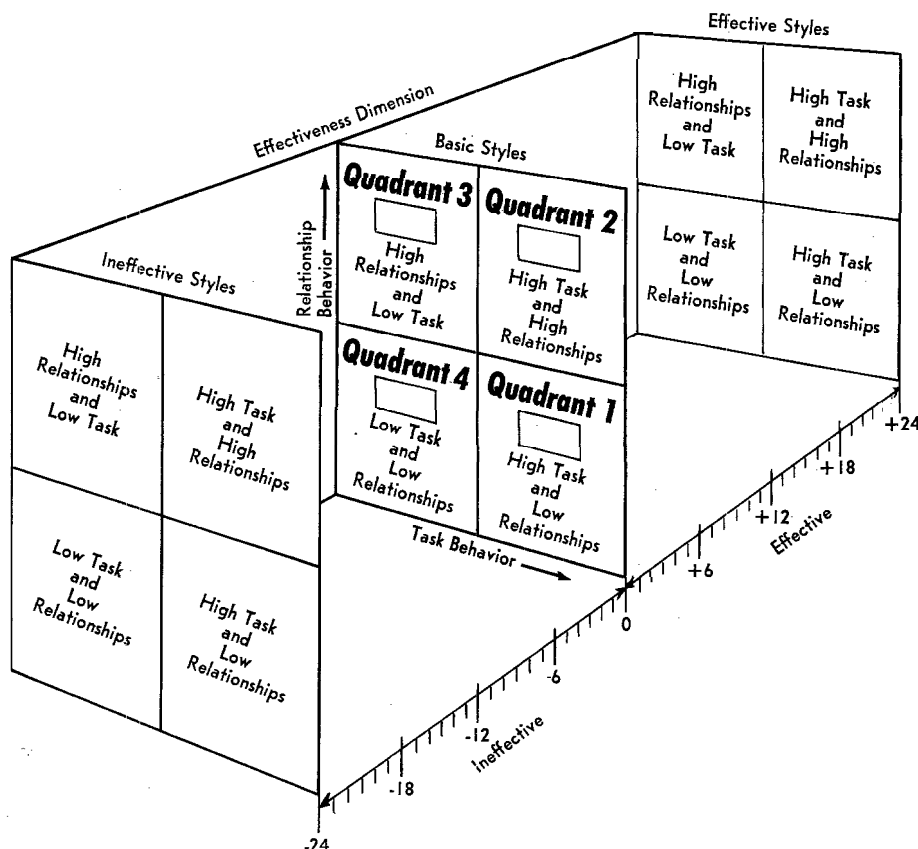
Style Adaptability

Style adaptability[13] is the degree to which leader behavior is appropriate to the demands of a given situation. A person with a narrow style range can be effective over a long period of time if the leader remains in situations in which his or her style has a high probability of success. Conversely a person with a wide range of styles may be ineffective if these behaviors are not consistent with the demands of the situation.

Thus style range is not as relevant to effectiveness as is style adaptability; a wide style range will not guarantee effectiveness. For example, in A in Figure 2, the leader has a dominant relationships style with no flexibility; in B, while the leader has a dominant style of high task and high relationships, three supporting styles which can be used on some occasions are possessed. In this example, A may be effective in situations that demand a relationships-oriented style, such as in coaching or counseling situations. In B, however, the potential to be effective in a wide variety of instances is present. It should be remembered, though, that his style range will not guarantee effectiveness. The B style will be effective only if the leader makes style changes appropriately to fit the situation.

For example, when the group needs some socio-emotional support, the leader may be unavailable; when work groups need some goal setting, B types may be supportive but non-directive; and when followers have their objectives clearly in line, they may exert undue pressure for productivity.

These examples demonstrate that B has a wide range of flexibility, but in each case the behavior used was inappropriate to the environment. This empha-

sizes the importance of a leader's diagnostic skills and the fact that while style range is important, the critical element in determining a leader's effectiveness is his or her style adaptability.

Determining Style Adaptability

The degree of style adaptability or effectiveness which you indicate for yourself as a leader can be theoretically determined by circling on Table 2 the score given each alternative action choice and then calculating the total score as indicated.

Table 2.

Determining Style Adaptability

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

SITUATIONS		A	B	C	D
	1	+2	-1	+1	-2
	2	+2	-2	+1	-1
	3	+1	-1	-2	+2
	4	+1	-2	+2	-1
	5	-2	+1	+2	-1
	6	-1	+1	-2	+2
	7	-2	+2	-1	+1
	8	+2	-1	-2	+1
	9	-2	+1	+2	-1
	10	+1	-2	-1	+2
	11	-2	+2	-1	+1
	12	-1	+2	-2	+1
SUB-TOTAL		+	+	+	

TOTAL =

The weighting of a +2 to −2 is based on behavioral science concepts, theories and empirical research (discussed later). The leader behavior with the highest probability of success of the alternatives offered in the given situation is always weighted a +2. The behavior with the lowest probability of success is always weighted a −2. The second best alternative is

weighted a +1 and the third is −1.

After determining your total score on style adaptability or effectiveness you can integrate this score into The Tri-Dimensional Leader Effectiveness Model by placing an arrow ( ) in Figure 3 along the ineffective (−1 to −24) or effective (+1 to +24) dimension of the leadership model that corresponds to your total score from Table 2. At this time you may also want to transfer your leadership style and style range scores from Figure 1 to the Tri-Dimensional Leader Effectiveness Model (Figure 3) so that all your LASI-Self data are located together.

Life Cycle Theory

What determines effectiveness? The weighting of a +2 to −2 discussed above is based on situational analysis using the Life Cycle Theory of Leadership.[14] This theory is based on a relationship between the amount of direction (task behavior) and the amount of socio-emotional support (relationship behavior) a leader provides, and the followers' level of "maturity."

Followers in any situation are vital, not only because individually they accept or reject the leader, but as a group they actually determine whatever personal power the leader may have.

Followers' Maturity

Maturity is defined in the Life Cycle Theory by the level of achievement-motivation, willingness and ability to take responsibility, and task relevant education and experience of an individual or a group. While age may affect maturity level, it is not directly related to the type of maturity focused on by Life Cycle Theory. The theory is concerned with psychological age, not chronological age.

According to Life Cycle Theory, as the level of maturity of one's followers continues to increase, a leader should begin to reduce task behavior and increase relationship behavior until the point where the individual or group is sufficiently mature that the leader can now decrease relationship behavior (socio-emotional support) as well.

Thus this theory focuses on the appropriateness of effectiveness of leadership styles according to the level of maturity of one's follower or group. This cycle can be illustrated by the bell-shaped curve going through the four leadership quadrants as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4.

Life Cycle
Leadership Theory

EFFECTIVE STYLES
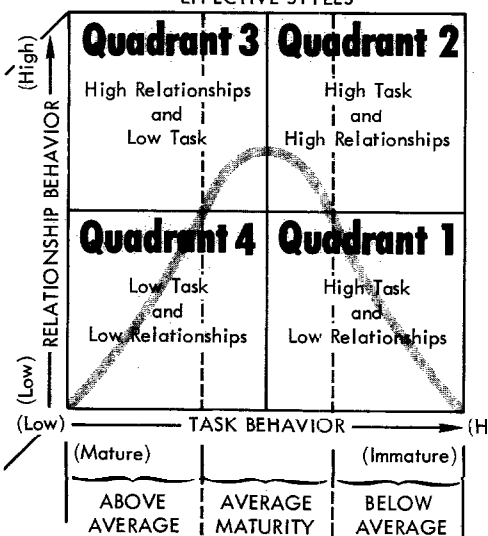
As can be seen in Figure 4, some bench marks or degrees of maturity can be provided for determining appropriate leadership style by dividing the maturity continuum into three categories—below average, average and above average.

This theory of leadership states that when working with people of below average maturity, a high task style (quadrant 1) has the highest probability of success. In dealing with people of average maturity, the style of quadrants 2 and 3 appear to be most appropriate. Quadrant 4 has the highest probability of success working with people of above average maturity.

Modifying Maturity Levels

In attempting to help individuals or groups mature, i.e. to get them to take more and more responsibility, a leader must be careful not to delegate responsibility and/or increase socio-emotional support too rapidly. If this is done, the individual or group may take advantage, viewing the leader as a "soft-touch." Thus the leader must develop them slowly, using less task behavior and more relationship behavior as they mature. When an individual's performance is low, one cannot expect drastic changes overnight. For a desirable behavior to be obtained, a leader must reward as soon as possible the slightest appropriate behavior exhibited by the individual in the desired direction and continue this process as the individual's behavior comes closer and closer to the leader's expectations of good performance. This is a behavior modification concept called *reinforcing positively successive approximations*[15] of a desired behavior.

For example, if a leader wants to move a normally immature individual through the cycle to assume significantly more responsibility, the leader's best bet initially is to reduce some of the structure by giving the individual an opportunity to assume some increased responsibility. If this responsibility is well handled, the leader should reinforce this behavior with increases in socio-emo-

tional support or relationship behavior. This is a two step process: first, reduction in structure, and if adequate performance follows; second, increase socio-emotional support as reinforcement.

This process should continue until the individual is assuming significant responsibility and performing as a mature individual. This does not mean that the individual's work will have less structure, but it will now be internally imposed by the individual rather than externally imposed by the leader or manager. When this happens, the cycle as depicted by Life Cycle Theory of Leadership in Figure 4 begins to become a backward bending curve. Individuals are not only able to structure many of the activities in which they engage, but are also able to provide their own satisfaction for interpersonal and emotional needs.

Positive Reinforcement

At this stage individuals are positively reinforced for accomplishments by the leader not looking over their shoulders and by the leader leaving them more and more on their own. It is not that there is less mutual trust and friendship but it takes less overt behavior to prove it with a mature individual.

Although this theory suggests a basic style for different levels of maturity it is not a one-way street. When people begin to behave less maturely, for whatever reason, i.e. crisis at home, change in work technology etc., it becomes appropriate for the leader to make a behavior adjustment backward through the curve to meet the present maturity level of the group. For example, take the individual who is presently working well alone. Suppose, suddenly, he or she faces a family crisis

which begins to affect job performance. In this situation, it might be appropriate for the manager to moderately increase structure and socio-emotional support until the individual regains composure.

Rationale and Analysis

In the LASI instrument which you completed, each of the 12 situations theoretically called for one of the four basic leadership styles depicted in Figure 1. In each case, the situation described something about the maturity level of a work group you might be working with in your role as a leader. Using Life Cycle Theory of Leadership as the analytical tool, three of the situations demanded a high task/low relationship action (Quadrant 1), three required a high task/high relationship choice (Quadrant 2), three required a high relationship/low task style (Quadrant 3), and finally three asked for a low task/low relationship style (Quadrant 4).

Thus a person who picked the alternative with the highest probability in all 12 situations would have indicated three style choices in each quadrant and a +24 adaptability or effectiveness score.

In this section, the 12 situations and their corresponding alternative actions are analyzed and the rationale for evaluating and weighting alternatives is briefly explained according to Life Cycle Theory of Leadership. This is done to help you get a better idea of your diagnostic ability and provide you with some explanations about the theoretical appropriateness of your alternative action choices on the LASI-Self. It should be noted that since the rationale and analysis would be the same for all three forms of LASI, the situations below are written in the third person. In addition, for each situation discussed the alternative actions are listed in the order of their effectiveness, not in alphabetical order.

Situation #1

Subordinates are not responding lately to the leader's friendly conversation and obvious concern for their welfare. Their performance is in a tailspin.

DIAGNOSIS

The group is rapidly decreasing in maturity as evidenced by the tailspin in productivity. The leader may be perceived as permissive because of the high degree of relationship behavior he or she is displaying. The leader's best bet in the short run is to cut back significantly in developing personal relationships with the group and initiate considerable structure, i.e. explaining what activities group members are to do and when, where, and how tasks are to be accomplished. If the group begins to show some signs of assuming responsibility, the leader can begin to increase relationship behavior and start again to delegate.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .
A. emphasize the use of uniform procedures and the necessity for task accomplishment.
   Rationale
   (+2)This action (HT/LR) provides the

directive leadership needed to increase group productivity in the short run.

C. talk with subordinates and then set goals.
   Rationale
   (+1)This action (HT/HR) may be appropriate if the group begins to mature and demonstrate some ability to meet deadlines and accomplish tasks.

B. be available for discussion, but not push.
   Rationale
   (-1) This action (HR/LT) is appropriate for a group, average in maturity, with reasonable output; one which is taking some responsibility for decisions, searching out the leader only for special situations. At present, this group does not have that level of maturity.

D. intentionally not intervene.
   Rationale
   (-2) This "hands-off" action (LT/LR) will only increase the probability that this behavior will continue.

Situation #2

The observable performance of the group is increasing. The leader has been making sure that all members were aware of their roles and standards.

DIAGNOSIS

The group has been responding well to structured behavior from its leader; the maturity of the group seems to be increasing. The leader, while needing to change his or her style to reflect this increased maturity, must be careful not to increase socio-emotional support too rapidly. Too much socio-emotional support and too little structure may be seen by the group as permissiveness. The best bet, therefore, is to reinforce positively *successive approximations* as the group's behavior comes closer and closer to the leader's expectations of good performance. This is done by a two step process of first reduction in structure (task behavior), and then, if adequate performance follows, an increase in socio-emotional support (relationship behavior).

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .

A. engage in friendly interaction, but continue to make sure that all members are aware of their roles and standards.
   Rationale
   (+2)This action (HT/HR) will best facilitate increased group maturity. While some structure is maintained by seeing that members are aware of their roles and standards, increased consideration is shown by friendly interaction with the group.

C. do what can be done to make the group feel important and involved.
   Rationale
   (+1)While this group is maturing, this action (HL/LT) might be increasing socio-emotional support too rapidly. It would be appropriate if the group continues to take more responsibility.

D. emphasize the importance of deadlines and tasks.
   Rationale
   (-1) This action (HT/LR) reveals no change in leadership style and as a result, no positive reinforcement is given to the group for improved performance. With no increased socio-emotional support or opportunity to take more responsibility, group performance may begin to decline rather than continue to increase.

B. take no definite action.
   Rationale
   (-2) This action (LT/LR) would turn over significant responsibility to this group too rapidly. Structure should be cut back gradually, with incremental increases in socio-emotional support.

Situation #3

Members of the group are unable to solve a problem themselves. Their leader has normally left them alone. Group performance and interpersonal relations have been good.

DIAGNOSIS

The group, above average in maturity in the past as good performance and interpersonal relations suggest, is now unable to solve a problem and needs an intervention from the leader. The leader's best bet is to open up communication channels again by calling the group together and helping to facilitate problem-solving.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .

D. encourage group to work on problem and be available for discussion.
   Rationale
   (+2)This action (HR/LT) allows the group to derive its own solution to the problem, but makes the leader available to act as a facilitator in this process if necessary.

A. involve the group and together engage in problem-solving.
   Rationale
   (+1)This action (HT/HR) might be appropriate if the group continues to be unable to solve the problem.

B. let the group work it out.
   Rationale
   (-1) This action (LT/LR) is no longer appropriate since the group has been unable to solve the problem; some help is needed from the leader.

C. act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect.
Rationale
(-2) This action (HT/LR) is too drastic as the group has demonstrated maturity in the past and the ability to work on its own.

Situation #4

The leader is considering a major change. Subordinates have a fine record of accomplishment. They respect the need for change.

DIAGNOSIS

Since the leader is considering a major change and the members of the group are mature and respect the need for change, the leader's best bet is to keep communication channels open.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .

C. allow the group to formulate its own direction.
Rationale
(+2) This action (LT/LR) would maximize the involvement of this mature group in developing and implementing the change.

A. allow group involvement in developing the change, but would not push.
Rationale
(+1) This action (HR/LT) would demonstrate consideration and allow group involvement in developing the change, and may be appropriate if the change means venturing into areas in which the group has less experience.

D. incorporate group recommendations but direct the change.
Rationale
(-1) This behavior (HT/HR) would not utilize to the fullest the potential which is inherent in this group.

B. announce changes and then implement with close supervision.
Rationale
(-2) This action (HT/LR) would be inappropriate with a mature group that has the potential to contribute to the development of the change.

Situation #5

The performance of the leader's group has been dropping during the last few months. Members have been unconcerned with meeting objectives. Redefining roles has helped in the past. They have continually needed reminding to have their tasks done on time.

DIAGNOSIS

The group is relatively immature, not only in terms of willingness to take responsibility but also in experience; productivity is decreasing. Initiating structure has helped in the past. The leader's best bet in the short run, will be to engage in task behavior, i.e., defining roles, spelling out tasks.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .

C. redefine goals and supervise carefully.
Rationale
(+2) This action (HT/LR) provides the directive leadership needed to increase group productivity in the short run.

B. incorporate group recommendations, but see that objectives are met.
Rationale
(+1) This action (HT/HR) is appropriate for working with people of average maturity, but at present this group does not have the ability or experience to make significant recommendations. As the group begins to mature, this may become a more appropriate style.

D. allow group involvement in goal setting, but would not push.
Rationale
(-1) This action (HR/LT) would tend to reinforce the group's present inappropriate behavior and in the future the leader may find members engaging in work restriction or other disruptive behavior to gain attention.

A. allow the group to formulate its own direction.
Rationale
(-2) This "hands-off" action (LT/LR) would increase the probability that this behavior will continue and productivity will further decline.

Situation #6

The leader stepped into an efficiently run situation. The previous administrator ran a tight ship. The leader wants to maintain a productive situation, but would like to begin humanizing the environment.

DIAGNOSIS

The group has responded well in the past to task behavior as evidenced by the smoothly running situation left by the last administrator. If the new leader wants to maintain a productive situation, but would like to begin humanizing the environment, the best bet is to maintain some structure but give the group opportunities to take some increase in responsibility; if this responsibility is well handled, this behavior should be reinforced by increases in socio-emotional support. This process should continue until the group is assuming significant responsibility and performing as a more mature group.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .

D. get the group involved in decision-making, but see that the objectives are met.
   Rationale
   (+2) This action (HT/HR) best facilitates beginning to humanize the environment. While some structure and direction from the leader are maintained, socio-emotional support and group responsibility are gradually increased by moderate involvement in decision-making. If the group handles this involvement well, further increases in socio-emotional support become more appropriate.

B. emphasize the importance of deadlines and tasks.
   Rationale
   (+1) While this style (HT/LR) would not begin to humanize the environment, it would tend to be a more appropriate initial action than decreasing structure too rapidly.

A. do what can be done to make group feel important and involved.
   Rationale
   (-1) While the leader wants to begin to humanize the environment, this much

relationship behavior might be too early; as the group begins to demonstrate some ability to take responsibility, this action (HR/LT) could be more appropriate.

C. intentionally not intervene.
   Rationale
   (-2) This "hands-off" action (LT/LR) would be too drastic a change from the tight ship run by the last administrator and would probably be perceived as permissiveness. This action is only appropriate for very mature, responsible groups which have demonstrated ability to structure their own activities and provide their own socio-emotional support.

Situation #7

The leader is considering major changes in the group structure. Members of the group have made suggestions about needed change. The group has demonstrated flexibility in its day-to-day operations.

DIAGNOSIS

The group seems to be above average in maturity as flexibility in day-to-day operations suggests. Since the leader is considering making major changes in structure and the members of the group have already made suggestions about needed change, the leader's best bet is to continue to keep communication channels open with the group. Some structure, however, might be needed because the change may be venturing into areas in which the group has less experience.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .

B. acquire group's approval on the change and allow them to organize its implementation.
   Rationale
   (+2) This action (HR/LT) would demonstrate consideration and focus group involvement on developing the change.

D. avoid confrontation; leave things alone.
   Rationale
   (+1) Once the strategy for the change has been developed and implemented with group involvement, this "hands-off"

action (LT/LR) would be appropriate for working with this kind of mature group on a day-to-day basis.

C. be willing to make changes as recommended but maintain control of implementation.
Rationale
(-1) This behavior (HT/HR) would not utilize to the fullest the potential which is inherent in this group.

A. define the change and supervise carefully.
Rationale
(-2) This action (HT/LR) would be inappropriate with a mature group that has demonstrated flexibility in day-to-day operations. The problem is one of implementing a major change, not with initiating structure.

Situation #8

Group performance and interpersonal relations are good. The leader feels somewhat unsure about the lack of direction given to the group.

DIAGNOSIS

The group is above average in maturity, as can be seen from good productivity and group relations. While the leader feels somewhat unsure about lack of direction of the group, this problem lies within the leader rather than within the group. Therefore the leader's best action is to continue to let the group provide much of its own structure and socio-emotional support.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .
A. leave the group alone.
Rationale
(+2) This action (LT/LR) best allows the group to continue to provide its own structure and socio-emotional support.

D. be careful of hurting boss-subordinate relations by being too directive.
Rationale
(+1) At the present time, boss-subordinate relations are not in danger; however, if an intervention is made, the leader should be careful of its impact on interpersonal relations, (HR/LT).

B. discuss the situation with the group and then initiate necessary changes.
Rationale
(-1) At this point there is no indication of a need for change with the group. The problem is one of leader insecurity. No leader intervention is needed.

C. take steps to direct subordinates toward working in a well-defined manner.
Rationale
(-2) This action (HT/LR) would be inappropriate as the group has demonstrated ability in working in a well-defined manner; the problem is one of leader insecurity.

Situation #9

The leader has been appointed by a superior to head a task force that is far overdue in making requested recommendations for change. The group is not clear on its goals. Attendance at sessions has been poor. Meetings have turned into social gatherings. Potentially the group has the talent necessary to help.

DIAGNOSIS

This group is below average in maturity as can be seen by tardiness in making requested recommendations, poor attendance at meetings and low concern for task accomplishment. While members potentially have the talent to help, the leader's best bet in the short run will be to initiate structure with this group, i.e., organize and define the roles of the members of the task force.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .
C. redefine goals and supervise carefully.
Rationale
(+2) This action (HT/LR) provides the directive leadership needed for this group to begin accomplishing its goals.

B. incorporate group recommendations, but see that objectives are met.
Rationale
(+1) This action (HT/HR) is appropriate for working with people of average maturity but at present this group has not demonstrated the commitment or willingness to take responsibility to make significant recommendations.

D. allow group involvement in goal setting, but would not push.
Rationale
(-1) This action (HR/LT) would tend to reinforce the group's present inappropriate behavior.

A. let the group work it out.
Rationale
(-2) This "hands-off" action (LT/LR) will only increase the probability that this inappropriate behavior will continue and requested recommendations will be further delayed.

Situation #10

Subordinates, usually able to take responsibility, are not responding to the leader's recent redefining of standards.

DIAGNOSIS

This group, usually able to take responsibility, is becoming less mature. This may be partly because the leader has recently structured the group's environment. The leader's best bet now is to keep communication channels open and to delegate more responsibility, but also be sure that the goals and objectives of the organization are maintained by a moderate degree of structure. Reinforcing positively the group's recent decrease in maturity may only increase the probability that this kind of behavior may continue in the future.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .
D. incorporate group recommendations, but see that new standards are met.
Rationale
(+2) This action (HT/HR) best handles the recent decline in maturity of this normally responsible group. While communication channels are kept open, structure is maintained by seeing that new standards are met.

A. allow group involvement in goal setting, but would not push.
Rationale
(+1) This action may become more appropriate as the group resumes its previous responsibility.

C. avoid confrontation by not applying pressure.

Rationale
(-1) This "hands-off" action (LT/LR) will only increase the probability that this behavior will recur in the future.

B. redefine standards and supervise carefully.
Rationale
(-2) This action (HT/LR) would be inappropriate because of the maturity level of the group. While some structure must be initiated, this action appears to be too drastic for a group usually able to take responsibility.

Situation #11

The leader has been promoted to a new position. The previous administrator was uninvolved in the affairs of the group. The group has adequately handled its tasks and direction. Group inter-relations are good.

DIAGNOSIS

The previous administrator left the group alone. Members responded in a relatively mature manner with average output and good intervening variables. The new leader's best bet is to continue to let the group structure much of its own activities, but provide for some focus on improving what is now adequate output. It is also necessary to open up communication channels to establish the position of the leader and gain rapport with this group. As trust and commitment are developed, movement toward leaving the group more on its own again becomes appropriate.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .
B. involve subordinates in decision-making and reinforce good contributions.
Rationale
(+2) This action (HR/LT) best allows the group to derive its own solution to the problem but does not turn this responsibility over to members completely. While communication channels are kept open, some structure is provided by bringing the group together and focusing on increasing productivity.

D. continue to leave the group alone.
Rationale
(+1) This "hands-off" action (LT/LR) may

be appropriate in working with this relatively mature group on a day-to-day basis. If, however, the leader wants to improve the group's handling of tasks and direction, some additional structure may be needed.

C. discuss past performance with group and then examine the need for new practices.
Rationale
(-1) This action (HT/HR) might be appropriate if a significant problem develops in the handling of tasks and direction. At this point, there is no urgent problem with performance.

A. take steps to direct subordinates toward working in a well-defined manner.
Rationale
(-2) This action (HT/LR) would be inappropriate as the group has demonstrated its ability in working in a well-defined manner. There is no significant problem, only a change in leadership.

Situation #12

Recent information indicates some internal difficulties among subordinates. The group has a remarkable record of accomplishment. Members have effectively maintained long range goals. They have worked in harmony for the past year. All are well qualified for the task.

DIAGNOSIS

The group is well above average in maturity, as can be seen from its record of accomplishment and ability to maintain long-term goals. The leader's best bet in the short run will be to let group members solve their own problem: however, if the difficulties continue or intensify, alternative leadership styles could be considered.

Alternative Actions

The leader would . . .
B. allow group members to work it out themselves.
Rationale
(+2) This action (LT/LR) best allows the group to derive its own solution to the problem.

D. be available for discussion, but be careful of hurting boss-subordinate relations.
Rationale
(†1) This action (HR/LT) would be more appropriate if the problem persists or intensifies since it involves interpersonal relationships.

A. try out solution with subordinates and examine the need for new practices.
Rationale
(-1) This action (HT/HR) is not appropriate at this time since the group has the maturity to solve the problem.

C. act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect.
Rationale
(-2) This action (HT/LR) would be too abrupt with such a mature group. The problem is one of interpersonal relationships, not direction and task accomplishment.

Concluding Remarks

The hope in this article was that you would gain some insight into your perception of how you behave as a leader and be able to integrate that perception into a situational leadership framework. It is worth re-emphasizing though, that while it is useful for you to have insight about your leadership style, it is even more important that you know how consistent this perception is with how your behavior is perceived by others.

The closer and closer to reality a leader's perception is to the perception of others, i.e., subordinates, superior(s) and associates (peers) the higher the probability that the leader will be able to cope effectively with that reality. Thus, while LASI-Self scores are interesting in themselves, combined with LASI-subordinate and LASI-other scores they become powerful data which can have a significant impact on the leader and the individual or group he or she is attempting to lead.

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References

1. Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*, 2nd Edition, (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1972).
2. The development of LASI is based on the theoretical framework presented in Hersey and Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior*. For more detail on these frameworks than is given in this

article, particular attention should be given to chapters 4-7. Specific page references throughout the article.

3. Hersey and Blanchard, pp. 82-83 and 110-112.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83. Since our model is an outgrowth of the Ohio State Leadership Studies these definitions have been adapted from their definitions of "Initiating Structure" (task) and "Consideration" (relationships), Ralph M. Stogdell and Alvin E. Coons, eds., *Leader Behavior: Its Description and Measurement*, Research Monograph No. 88 (Columbus, Ohio: Bureau of Business Research, The Ohio State University, 1957), pp. 42-43.

5. Tannenbaum, Robert and Warren H. Schmidt, "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern," *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1957, pp. 95-101.

6. Stogdill and Coons, *Leadership Behavior: Its Description and Measurement*.

7. This service is available through the Center for Leadership Studies, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701.

8. Hersey and Blanchard, p. 118.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

10. See Andrew W. Halpin, *The Leadership Behavior of School Superintendents* (Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, the University of Chicago, 1959); Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton, *The Managerial Grid* (Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing, 1964); and Rensis Likert, *New Patterns of Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961).

11. As examples see, A. K. Korman, "'Consideration,' 'Initiating Structure,' and Organizational Criteria—A Review," *Personnel Psychology: A Journal of Applied Research*, XIX, No. 4 (Winter 1966), pp. 349-61; and Fred E. Fiedler, *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967).

12. Hersey and Blanchard, pp. 81-87. For a discussion of an early attempt to add an effectiveness dimension to the task and relationships dimensions see William J. Reddin, "The 3-D Management Style Theory," *Training and Development Journal*, April 1967, pp. 8-17; see also Reddin, *Management Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970).

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-123.

14. Life Cycle Theory of Leadership was developed at the Center for Leadership Studies, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. It was first published in Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard, "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership," *Training and Development Journal*, May 1969.

15. The most classic discussions of behavior modification, or operant conditioning, have been done by B. F. Skinner. See Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953).

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