

Leadership

A leader lives in each of us

MODULE GUIDE

Update What are some additional directions in leadership development and research?

- The situational leadership model focuses on the fit of leadership style and follower maturity
- Leader-member exchange theory indicates that leaders develop special relationships with trusted followers

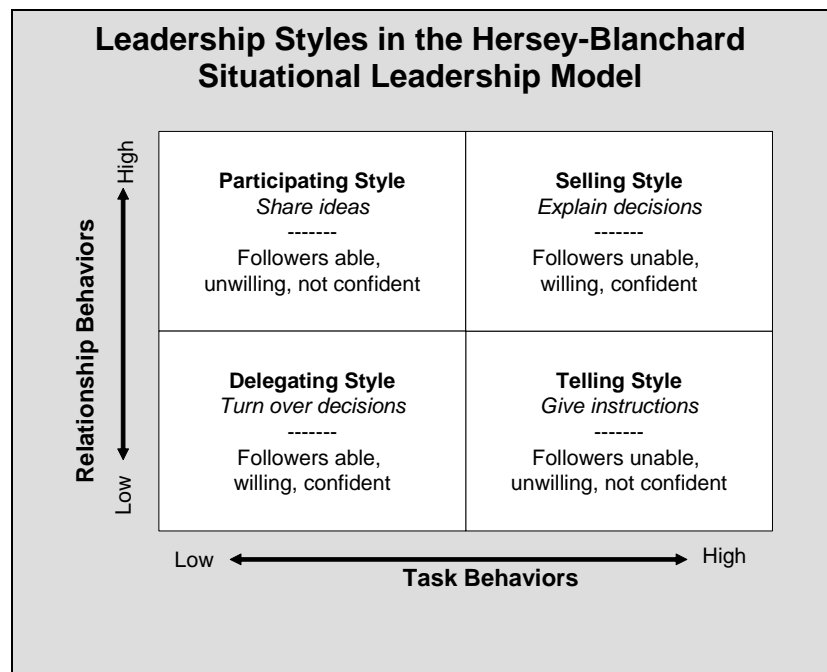
Update What are some additional directions in leadership development and research?

- THE SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL FOCUSES ON THE FIT OF LEADERSHIP STYLE AND FOLLOWER MATURITY

In contrast to Fiedler’s contingency leadership model and its underlying assumption that leadership style is hard to change, the Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership model suggests that successful leaders do adjust their styles. For Hersey and Blanchard the key issue in making these adjustments is **follower maturity**, as indicated by their readiness to perform in a given situation. ¹ “Readiness,” in this sense, is largely based on two major factors – follower ability and follower confidence.

The situational leadership model views leaders as varying their emphasis on task and relationship behaviors to best deal with different levels of follower maturity. ² The two-by-two matrix shown in the small figure indicates that four leadership styles are possible.

- **Delegating Style**—allowing the group to take responsibility for task decisions; this is a low-task, low-relationship style.
- **Participating Style**—emphasizing shared ideas and participative decisions on task directions; this is a low-task, high-relationship style.



- **Selling Style**—explaining task directions in a supportive and persuasive way; this is a high-task, high-relationship style.
- **Telling Style**—giving specific task directions and closely supervising work; this is a high-task, low-relationship style.

Managers using the situational leadership model must be able to implement the alternative leadership styles as needed. To do this, they have to understand the maturity of followers in terms of readiness for task performance and then use the style that best fits. In terms of the appropriate style-situation match ups, the situational leadership model suggests the following.

When follower maturity is high, the situational leadership model calls for a *delegating style* which might be described as offering minimal leadership intervention. The style is one of turning over decisions to followers who have high task readiness based on abilities, willingness and confidence about task accomplishment. When follower maturity is low, by contrast, the model calls for the *telling style* with its emphasis on task directed behaviors. The telling style works best in this situation of low readiness, by giving instructions and bringing structure to a situation where followers lack capability and are unwilling or insecure about their tasks.

The *participating style* is recommended for low-to-moderate readiness situations. Here, followers are capable but also unwilling or insecure about the tasks. As you might expect, this participation style with its emphasis on relationships is supposed to help followers share ideas and thus draw forth understanding and task confidence. The *selling style* is recommended for moderate to high-readiness situations. Here, followers lack capability but are willing or confident about the task. In this case, the selling style and its emphasis on task guidance is designed to facilitate performance through persuasive explanation.

Hersey and Blanchard believe that leaders should be flexible and adjust their styles as followers and situations change over time. The model also implies that if the correct styles are used in lower-readiness situations, followers will mature and grow in their abilities and

confidence. This willingness to understand follower development and respond with flexibility allows the leader to become less directive as followers mature.

The Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership model is intuitively appealing and has been widely used in management development programs.³ Even though empirical research support has been limited, the conclusion seems to be that the basic ideas of the model have merit. Leaders might do well to consider altering styles to achieve the best fits with followers and situations, even as they change with time.⁴ Also, the model reminds leaders that the skill levels and task confidence of followers should be given continuing attention through training and development efforts.⁵

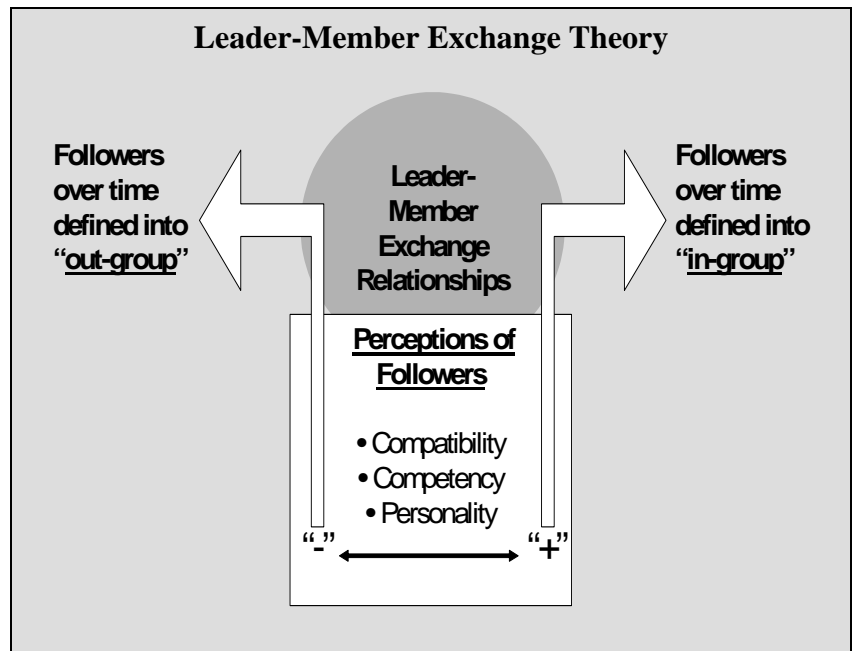
- LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE THEORY INDICATES THAT LEADERS DEVELOP SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH TRUSTED FOLLOWERS

One of the things you may have noticed in your work and study groups is the tendencies of leaders to develop “special” relationships with some team members. This tendency is central to leader-member exchange theory, or **LMX theory** as it is often called.⁶ The theory basically recognizes that in most, or at least many, leadership situations not everyone is treated the same by the leader. Instead, people fall into “in” groups and “out” groups in relationships with their leaders. Obviously, the group you are in can have quite a significant influence on your experience with the leader.

The notion underlying leader-member exchange theory is that as a leader and follower interact over time, their exchanges end up defining the follower’s role.⁷ Whether due to personality similarities or differences, time pressures and interaction opportunities, or the follower’s competencies and accomplishments, this role ends up being defined into a high-exchange or low-exchange relationship with the leader.

You might think of the LMX concept in respect to a leader being more willing to find time to spend relating to and interacting with some followers than others. Those that do get the leader's attention end up forming a special in-group relationship with him or her.

Look around, you're likely to see some example of this in classroom situations between



instructors and certain students and in work situations between bosses and certain subordinates. And as you do consider this tendency, do you see any differences in the way in- and out-group members respond to differences in leader-member exchanges?

One of the implications of the leader-member exchange theory is that the nature of the exchange is determined by the leader based on some presumed characteristics of the follower. A high LMX relationship is usually based on perceived favorable personality, compatibility, and competency; a low LMX relationship is based on just the opposite set of views.

For the follower in a high LMX relationship, being part of the leader's inner circle or in-group can have positive implications in terms of getting rewards, access to information, and other special treatments. Being in the out-group can have negative consequences on the same terms. For the leader, it is nice to be able to call on and depend upon the loyal support of those in the in-group. But the leader may also be missing out on lost opportunities of working more intensely with out-group members.

Research on leader-member exchange theory places most value on its usefulness in describing leader-member relationships.⁸ The notions of high-LMX and low-LMX relationships

seem to make sense and correspond to working realities experienced by many people. Also, members of leaders' in-groups seem to get more positive performance evaluations, report higher levels of job satisfaction, and show less turnover than do members of out-groups. But other than confirming these outcomes, the usefulness of LMX theory in predicting leadership success and performance effectiveness in various situations has not been well substantiated.

STUDY GUIDE

16 (UPDATE) What are some additional directions in leadership development and research?

Be Sure You Can...

- Explain the concept of follower maturity in the situational leadership model.
- Identify the alternative leadership styles in the situational leadership model.
- Illustrate the suggested match-ups of leadership styles and follower maturities in the situational leadership model.
- Use LMX theory to explain how a leader may end up classifying followers into in-groups and out-groups.
- Illustrate how the outcomes for followers in high LMX exchanges with a leader are likely to differ from low LMX exchanges.

Define the Terms

Delegating style

Follower maturity

LMX theory

Participating style

Selling style

Telling style

Rapid Review

- The Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership model identifies four leadership styles – participating, delegating, telling, and selling, with each representing a different combination of task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors.
- In the situational leadership model follower maturity, or readiness, is determined by task competence, ability, and willingness.
- In the situational leadership model, leadership effectiveness requires the correct match of style and follower maturity; the suggested match-ups are: participating style with low-moderate readiness; delegating style with high readiness; telling style with low readiness; and, selling style with moderate-high readiness.
- In leader-member exchange theory, leaders are believed to classify followers into high exchange in-group roles and low exchange out-group roles.
- In-group followers with high LMX relationships tend to be more satisfied, receive higher performance evaluations and show less turnover than do out-group followers having low LMX relationships.

Reflect / React

1. Do the leadership style and follower maturity/readiness match-ups in the situational leadership model make sense based on your personal experiences?
2. If someone is in the out-group and in a low LMX exchange with a leader, what can he or she do to move into the in-group?

16 (UPDATE) TEST PREP

1. Which style-situation match-up is recommended in the Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership model?
(a) telling – high readiness **(b)** selling – low readiness **(c)** delegating – high readiness **(d)** participating – high readiness
2. Another term for the “readiness” of followers as used in the situational leadership model is _____.
(a) personality **(b)** role **(c)** style **(d)** maturity
3. One of the suggested leadership guidelines of the situational leadership model is that leaders should _____.
(a) use one style consistently across all situations **(b)** be flexible in adjusting styles over time as followers develop and change themselves **(c)** exercise caution in treating some followers better than others **(d)** disregard personal style and focus instead on the rewards sought by followers
4. A follower in a high LMX relationship with a leader is likely to _____.
(a) be part of the out-group **(b)** receive low performance ratings **(c)** quit for better job elsewhere **(d)** be satisfied with the leader
5. One of the ways that a leader develops role preferences for followers is her or his perception of the followers’ _____.
(a) age **(b)** past experience **(c)** personality **(d)** career aspirations

Short Response

6. What are the major differences in the ways a delegating style and a participating style leader will behave under the situational leadership model?
7. What are the possible reasons that a follower might end up defined in a low LMX relationship with a leader?

Test Prep Answers

Module 16 (Update)

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. d
5. c
6. The leader using a delegating style basically turns over a decision to group members. The leader using a participating style involves members in the decision, allowing them to share ideas with one another and the leader.
7. A leader's perceptions of followers essentially determines, according to LMX theory, whether the follower ends up classified into an in-group or out-group role. The perceptions most likely to result in an in-group definition are of interpersonal compatibility, a likeable personality, and competence.

Notes

¹ Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard, *Management and Organizational Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988).

² See Paul Hersey, *The Situational Leader* (Escondido, CA: Center for Leadership Studies, 1984).

³ For an interview with Paul Hersey on the origins of the model, see John R. Schermerhorn, Jr., “Situational Leadership: Conversations with Paul Hersey,” *Mid-American Journal of Business* (Fall 1997), pp. 5-12.

⁴ See Claude L. Graeff, “The Situational Leadership Theory: A Critical View,” *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 8 (1983), pp. 285-291, and the research summary in Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations, Sixth Edition* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2006), pp. 223-225.

⁵ Yukl, *op cit.*, p. 225.

⁶ An early presentation of the theory is F. Dansereau, Jr., G. Graen, and W. J. Haga, “A Vertical Dyad Linkage Approach to Leadership Within Formal Organizations: A Longitudinal Investigation of the Role Making Process,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, vol. 13, pp. 46-78.

⁷ This discussion is based on Yukl, *op cit.*, pp. 117-122.

⁸ *Ibid.*