

# Leadership

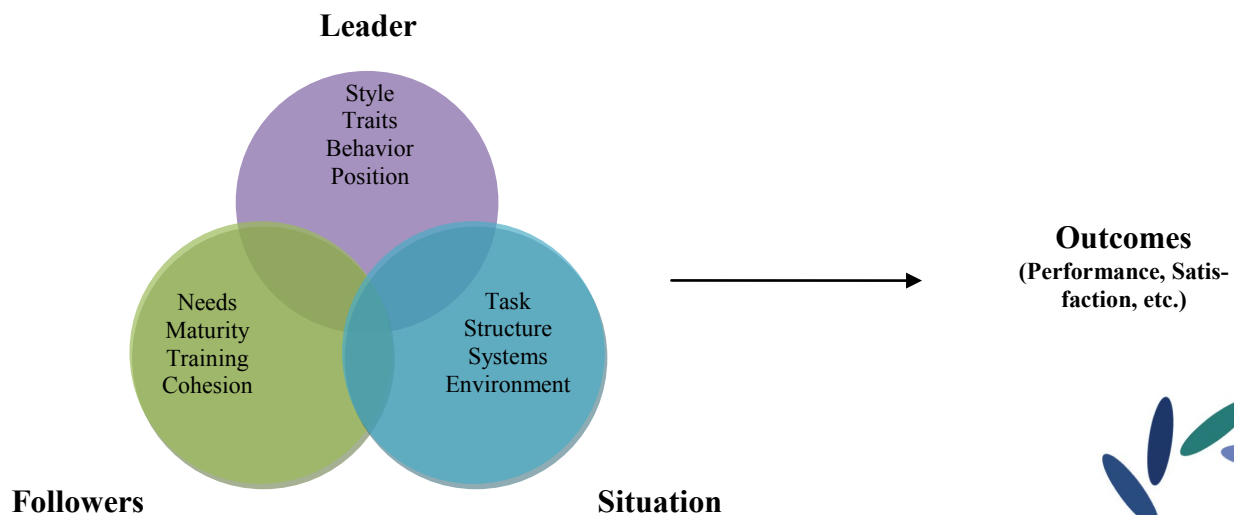
**“Great leadership is a process of motivating people to work together collaboratively to accomplish great things.”**

Vroom, V.H. & Jago, A.G. (2007). The Role of Situation in Leadership. *American Psychologist*. 62. 17-24.

Within the last decade trait and behavioral theories have tried to identify the one best leader or style for all situations. Over time it became apparent that there is no such universal answer. Predicting leadership success involved something more complex than isolating a few traits or preferable behaviors. Now, most agree that leadership effectiveness depends on the leader, the followers, and the situational variables. Leaders in different situations require dynamic interests, values, and skills. A leader in a bank differs from one in a youth-serving non-profit organization. Examples of situational factors include the task, the workplace culture, the political climate, and the overall environment. This approach to leadership is commonly referred to as the Contingency Approach. The contingency approach to leadership (also referred to as situational theories) assumes that there is no universal solution to the leadership questions because organizations, people, and situations vary and change over time. Thus, the right thing to do depends on a complex variety of critical environmental and internal contingencies.

**The Contingency Approach is based on the following assumptions:**

- The appropriate leadership style depends on the requirements of the situation and the characteristics of the followers.
- Leadership is flexible and can be learned which means that anyone can step up in a leadership role.
- Successful leadership involves understanding situational contingencies.
- The match between the leader’s style, personality or behavior, and the situation and/or followers leads to effectiveness in reaching outcomes.



“The Contingency Approach to Leadership,” *The Leadership Experience*, Daft, Robert, 2008, p. 64 (Exhibit 3.1).

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# Contingency Approach

The basic premise of situational leadership is that effective leadership occurs by matching the appropriate leadership style to the appropriate task. The following strategies can assist the leader in engaging the appropriate style in varying situations.

## 1. Diagnosis:

- Assess the follower's development level including motivation, expertise, readiness for the task at hand, confidence, and commitment to results.
- Assess the situation including issue at hand, the political, social, or cultural climate, group dynamics, the organizational structures, and overall threats and strengths to the process.

## 2. Flexibility:

- Using a variety of leadership styles comfortably
- Self-reflection of the leader to understand their own leadership strengths and weaknesses and working to nurture their self-efficacy
- Accessing feedback on style and how to improve to best meet the needs of others

## 3. Partnering for Performance:

- Reaching agreements with individuals about their development level and the leadership style they need to help them achieve individual and organization goal.
- Balancing the focus on people versus task.
- Nurturing others to effectively step up in leadership roles

***Leadership is not something you do to people;  
it is something you do with them.***

## **Practices to Enhance Leadership:**

1. Open up communication - Increase the frequency and quality of conversations about performance and development. Be specific in giving feedback and examples to others. Check for understanding.
2. Help others develop competence and commitment by reinforcing what motivates them and challenging them to work beyond their comfort zone (but also providing support for them to be successful).
3. Teach others how to provide their own direction and support by delegating tasks and trusting them to follow through with quality and timeliness.

“Becoming an effective leader does not occur in a day, a week, a month, or a year. It is a life-long pursuit of acquiring knowledge, raising self-awareness, practicing skills and behaviors, making mistakes, observing others, and constant learning and changing.”

Quote from C. Riordan, Founding Institute for Leadership Advancement (ILA) Director