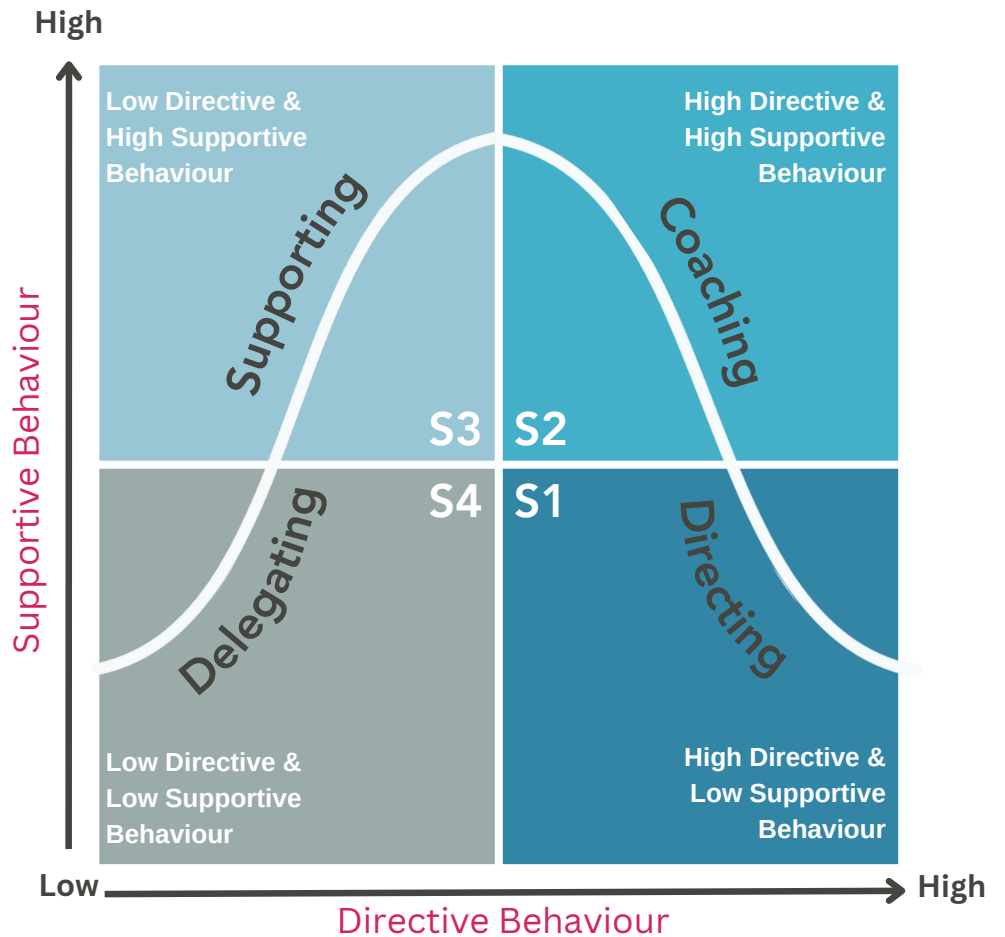




SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR SALES LEADERS

LEADERSHIP STYLES



Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, pioneers in organisational leadership, embarked on a journey in the mid-1970s that eventually led them to create what they initially called the 'life cycle theory of leadership,' a concept later rebranded as 'Situational Leadership'.

This model can be very effective for sales leaders who want to maximise the potential of each member in their sales team.

In a Nutshell:

Situational Leadership reinforces the idea that there is no one-size-fits-all style of leadership.

The key to leadership success lies in the leader's capacity to adapt their leadership style (e.g. Directing, Coaching, Supporting or Delegating) with the unique capabilities and commitment levels of the individuals under their guidance.

The model helpfully guides sales leaders to assess the needs of each team member based on their current level of competence and willingness to improve.



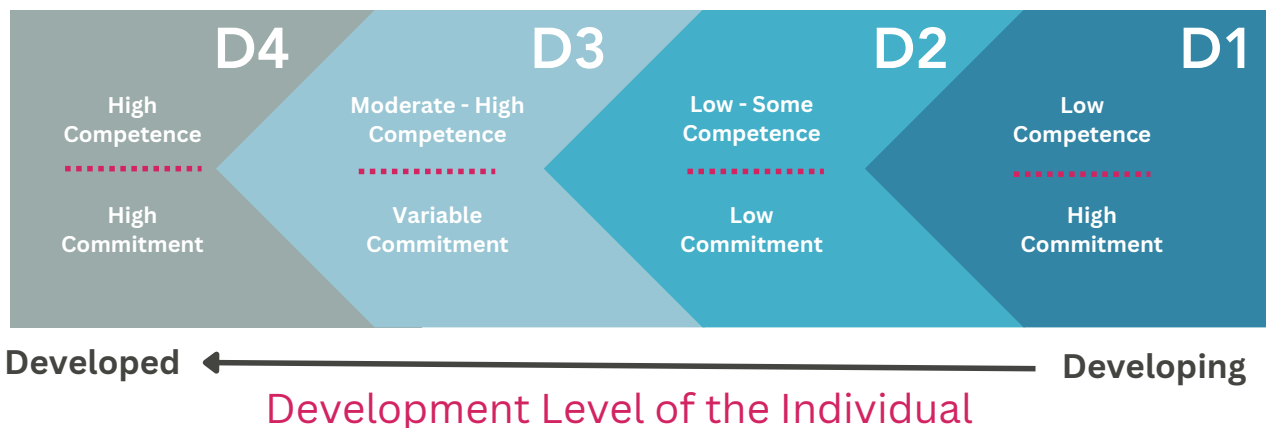
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Key Question for Sales Leaders:

What is the right type of leadership style I need to use with each person in my team, at this time?

Knowing Your Followers

The people you lead (followers) will possess different needs, depending on their level of sales competence and their willingness to improve beyond their comfort zone. Blanchard referred to this willingness as 'commitment' and classified followers as having four types of development needs as follows:



- **(D1) Enthusiastic beginner:** High commitment, low competence.
- **(D2) Disillusioned learner:** Some competence, but setbacks may have led to low commitment. They do what is asked but not more.
- **(D3) Capable but cautious performer:** Competence is growing, but the level of commitment varies although usually improves with confidence.
- **(D4) Self-reliant achiever:** High competence and commitment. Self-motivated and shows initiative.

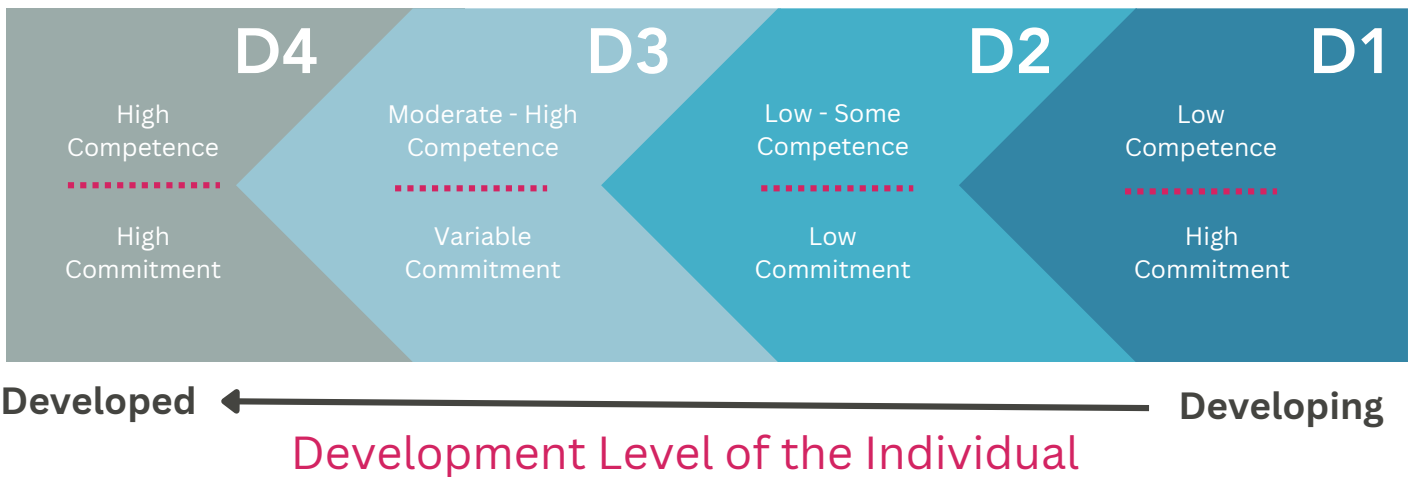


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Flexing Your Approach

We recommend that you make a list of the people in your sales team and assess where they belong on the D1 - D4 scale. This will help you to determine the type of approach you need to take with each individual.

Taking a note of the colour-coding on the scale, you will see how it maps to the recommended situational leadership style (S1-S4) that you will use.



Directive and Supportive Behaviours

The axes of the model refer to both Directive and Supportive behaviours that the leader can adopt. Let's have a closer look at those:

- *Directive*: The extent to which the leader tells the follower what to do, how to do it, where it needs to be done and when it needs to be completed.
- *Supportive*: The extent to which the leader engages in open dialog with the follower, actively listens and provides recognition/reinforcement for progress with the task.



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The Four Leadership Styles

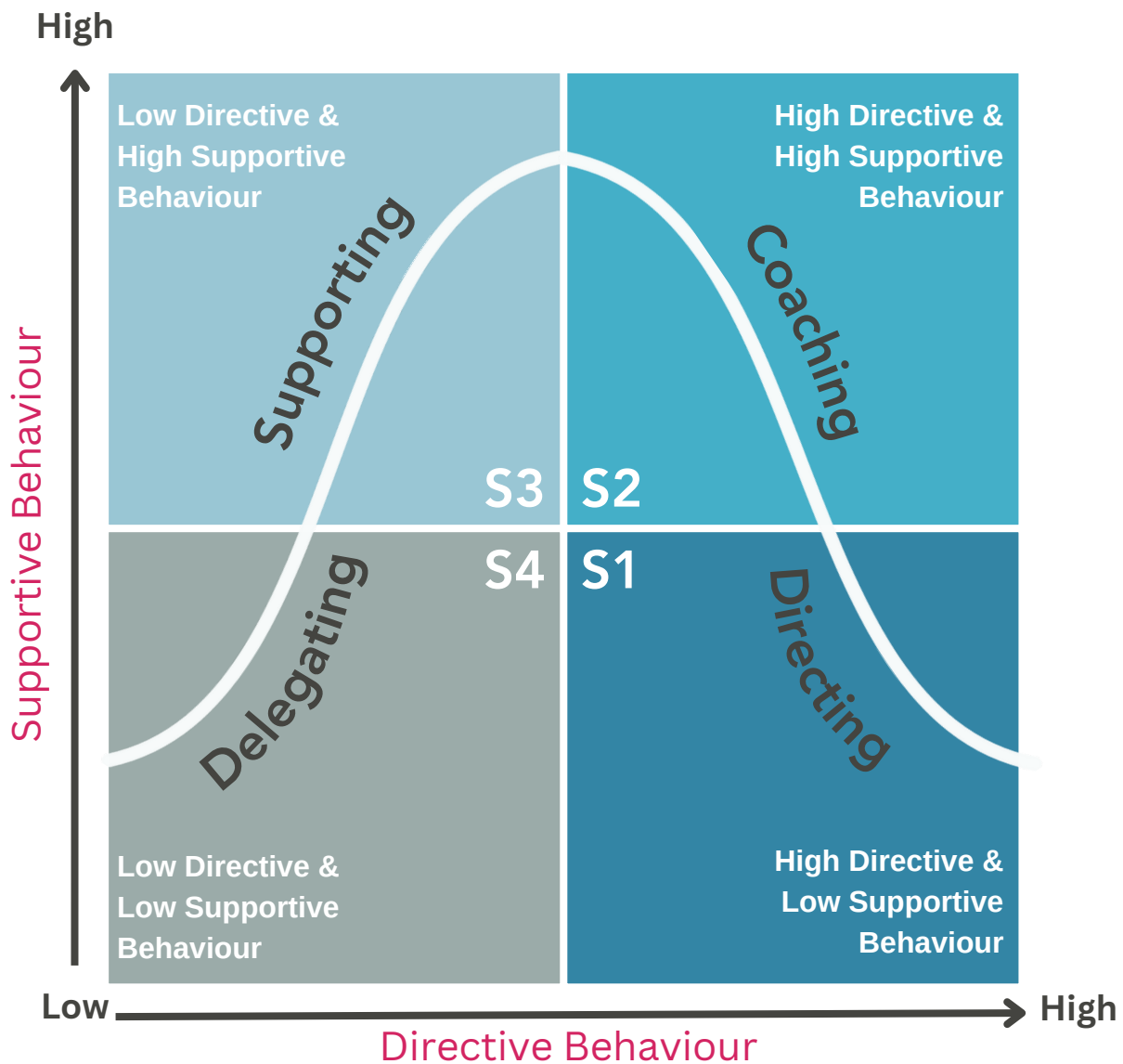
Depending on the individual and their context, you can alternate between these four styles:

(S1) Directing (Telling): Giving step-by-step instructions and close supervision to improve proficiency in the task.

(S2) Coaching (Selling): Providing support and exploring options for improvement to help the follower become more confident and self-motivated.

(S3) Supporting: Offering emotional support, listening, and praise that reflects the leaders growing trust in the competence of the follower.

(S4) Delegating: A hands-off approach, since the follower can operate independently. Observe from more distance and provide occasional motivational support.





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CASE STUDY - How Bob worked with Sarah to develop her potential



Scenario: Bob leads a UK-wide team of 7 salespeople for EcoLyft. The firm manufactures and distributes energy-efficient lifts for residential and commercial buildings. He spent five years with EcoLyft in a sales role before being promoted last year to head up the team.

Bob has excellent product knowledge and a solid sales track record. As a leader he prefers to have a 'hands-off' style but since some of the team are underperforming, he is starting to see the limitations of this approach. One of his team members, Sarah, has been in the team for 18 months. She is missing her targets but Bob believes that she has great potential. He has recently learnt about Situational Leadership and thinks this model could help him to improve Sarah's performance.

Application of Situational Leadership:

- *Assessing Readiness:* Bob has noticed that even though Sarah has acquired good product and market knowledge, her confidence has been dropping and she is struggling to focus on her goals. He would classify her as D2 on the development scale.
- *Selecting Leadership Style:* Based on his assessment, Bob decides to apply the Coaching (S2) leadership style. He believes that her confidence can be turned around if they can both explore what is holding her back.
- *Examples of Actions Taken:*
 - Bob sits down with Sarah and explains that he has noticed her drop in confidence and would like to support her through frequent and focused sessions. She responds well to this.
 - In their first conversation she acknowledges that she has been wasting a lot of time in nurturing low quality leads. She wants to improve her skills at lead qualification and Bob is happy to help.
 - Sarah agrees to have Bob listen to the recordings of her most recent sales meetings. Together they identified that she needed to ask better questions and also to express herself in a more upbeat way.
 - They did some role plays of typical sales meetings which allowed Sarah to practice some new approaches. Her confidence and enthusiasm started to improve.
- *Monitoring and Adjustment:* After one month, Sarah started to achieve some small but significant wins with ideal clients. Bob determines that Sarah requires less direction and he shifts towards a Supporting (S3) style. She knows she can come to him with specific questions but she is operating more independently.
- *Outcome:* Sarah was able to reverse her performance and after a few months she was hitting her targets. More importantly she was enjoying her work a lot more and was keen to support some new joiners in the team.



REFLECTION

Situational Leadership is a highly effective model that has stood the test of time for a reason - it works! We support our clients in dealing with specific situations where the application of the model may not be so easy (e.g. where there is low morale, high stress or relationship tensions in the team). We also support Sales Leaders to develop their own coaching style so they can use the model more effectively.

If you would like to start applying this tool with your team, here are some useful questions you can consider regarding your team context right now.

1. **Assessing Readiness:**

- How capable and motivated are team members in their roles?
- Did they all receive a good knowledge of your products and services as part of their onboarding?

2. **Choosing Leadership Styles:**

- Which style (Directing, Coaching, Supporting, Delegating) suits each team member?
- How can I tailor my approach for each person?

3. **Support and Monitoring:**

- What additional resources or training can I provide?
- Do I need to improve my coaching skills?
- How can I track my team members progress and offer assistance?

4. **Adaptability:**

- Are readiness levels changing? When do I need to adjust my style?
- How quickly can I adapt to evolving needs?

5. **Building Trust:**

- How can I foster trust and open communication in the team?
- What can I do to demonstrate that I genuinely care about my team members success?

NEED MORE HELP?

Helping Sales Leaders Succeed

Wiser Working is an award-winning people development consultancy that specialises in helping businesses to grow, without exhausting their staff.

We are dedicated to assisting sales leaders in reaching their goals through a range of services that include:

- Improving coaching and leadership skills for sales leaders
- Boosting sales skills (sales enablement)
- Improving proposal win-rates
- Reducing stress and preventing burnout in sales teams
- Enhancing team bonding using psychometric evaluations such as DISC and MBTI
- Building personal and team resilience

Contact us via phone or email to discuss your requirements.

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About Wiser Working

Our aim is to help individuals and organisations to perform better under pressure.

We do this by delivering coaching, consulting, and training interventions that focus on leadership development, sales skills, resilience, and wellbeing. We believe in delivering results, and our coaches and facilitators bring experience, knowledge, and passion to our programs.

Wiser Working was honoured with the 'Best Consultancy' award at the prestigious CIPD Awards in 2022.