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Featured Book Review

LEADERSHIP AND THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER **Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Leadership® II**

by Ken Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi and Drea Zigarmi

© 2013 Harper Collins, 143 pages

Ken Blanchard first developed the concept of Situational Leadership® in collaboration with the late Paul Hersey at Ohio University in the late 1960's. Additional research combined with feedback from practicing leaders led to the development of a revised model — Situational Leadership® II — in the 1980's that was presented in the first edition of *Leadership and the One Minute Manager* in 1985, co-authored with fellow founding associates of The Ken Blanchard Companies, Patricia and Drea Zigarmi. The first edition featured the One Minute Manager as part of a series of books and training materials designed to teach effective management and leadership skills. This newly revised and updated edition, released in 2013, presents the Situational Leadership® II model in the form of a business parable featuring an entrepreneur who is eager to improve her leadership abilities and an organizational leadership team, led by the One Minute Manager (OMM), who guide her through the principles and tenets of the model.

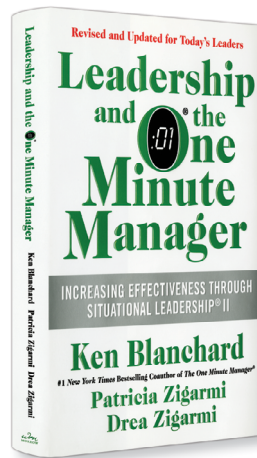
The entrepreneur, who is never named, is over-worked and frustrated by her apparent inability to find leadership team members who were “willing to work as hard as she was.” As a result, she finds herself unable or unwilling to delegate tasks because she doesn't have the confidence in her direct reports to complete those tasks to the same high level of quality that she could deliver if she did them herself. Through a series of conversations with the OMM and individual members of his leadership team (each one representing a specific

leadership model component), the entrepreneur is introduced to a leadership philosophy that challenges her own preconceptions and presents alternative methodologies to better manage her people. In place of distinct chapters, the story is told primarily through dialog vignettes, interspersed with quotes and motivational aide-mémoires.

Different Strokes for Different Folks

The writers introduce the foundational concept of Situational Leadership® by inverting the traditional top-down organizational pyramid in favor of a bottom-up leadership approach. From this vantage point, the entrepreneur is challenged to consider leadership as a position of service rather than of responsibility. Rather than having employees responsible for helping leaders to achieve their goals for the areas for which they are held accountable — “planning, organizing, and evaluating everything that happens in the organization” — effective leaders should, it is argued, focus on providing those employees with the skills and resources needed to achieve the goals that are agreed between them. Since those goals will be agreed with individual employees, leaders will then need to be responsive to the specific needs of each employee, rather than just enforcing company-wide command-and-control policies that are more concerned with catching employees doing something wrong.

The entrepreneur is understandably reticent to embrace the concept of being responsive to each individual member of her team — “I don't have time to be responsive to the needs of all my people.” — but the OMM quickly clarifies that each of those team members will need varying levels of direction and support to be effective, and that by following a model of Situational Leadership®, those varying levels can be identified, prepared for, and managed in a more efficient manner than her current frustrations with simple task delegation.



Leadership Styles

The first conversation between the entrepreneur and the OMM reverses her perception of leadership from consistent enforcement of policies and procedures to: “how you behave over time, when you’re trying to influence others, as perceived by them.” How your team perceives your leadership style can be very different from your intent, and the larger the disconnect, the more likely it is that your communication and your team will struggle.

The writers extrapolate this point by having the OMM make members of his leadership team available for one-on-one conversations with the entrepreneur. She meets the first three as a means of reviewing different leadership styles:

- Larry McKenzie, recently appointed VP for people and talent development for the OMM’s company, benefits from a directive leadership style from the OMM. Since “people development is [the OMM’s] baby,” Larry expects a direct approach from his boss and is happy for his expert input. Since Larry was promoted from compensation and benefits, he is appreciative of the OMM’s willingness to trust Larry’s knowledge and experience in those areas.

- Cindy Liu, director of finance, describes a very collaborative leadership style from the OMM with a lot of support and encouragement in recognition of her more than fifteen years of experience in finance.

- John DaLapa, director of operations, describes a less definitive leadership style from the OMM, where the approach varies according to different aspects of John’s complex role in the company. Areas where John is left alone with minimal oversight are, from his perspective, reflective of trust, respect and confidence in him based on proven performance. In areas where John has less expertise and confidence, the OMM takes a more supportive role and can be directive if needed.

The Skills of a Situational Leader

Once the entrepreneur has been introduced to Situational Leadership® in action, the OMM simplifies the model into three skills:

1. Goal Setting (as part of an overall performance management system).
2. Diagnosis of the individual development needs of your team members.

3. Matching — learning to use the appropriate style of leadership for individual team members in providing specific combinations of direction and support in multiple scenarios.

Performance Management

The writers introduce the entrepreneur to the importance of goal setting through a meeting with a fourth OMM leadership team member – Randy Rodriguez in the people and talent development group, who designed the company’s performance management system. The system is divided into three parts – performance planning, day-to-day coaching, and performance evaluation. He discusses goal setting as a critical component of performance planning and contrasts the emphasis on clear and mutually agreed goals as a foundation for successful performance as being distinct from the traditional approach of formal performance evaluation as a starting point. The former maps out a plan for positive achievement with clear expectations on both sides, whereas the latter tends to emphasize promissory goals that are never agreed upon and usually ignored when, for whatever reason, performance targets aren’t met.

Once goals are agreed upon by both the team member and the leader, performance standards are then set for each goal through an alignment conversation that uses the acronym S.M.A.R.T to ensure that the goals are both attainable and motivational. SMART stands for:

- **Specific** — so that each person knows what they are responsible for and when it needs to be done.
- **Motivating** — so that your people are inspired to do their best work.
- **Attainable** — so that each person feels that the goals can be achieved as opposed to being a de-motivating exercise in futility.
- **Relevant** — ensures that the employee sees his or her role in the greater organizational framework.
- **Trackable** — this element is a critical part of the agreement reached by both employee and leader. Knowing what is expected of you and when depends on regular feedback on your progress, but too frequent feedback using metrics that don’t seem to relate to the goal can be perceived as controlling and even punitive.

The writers address any confusion over the difficulties in reaching agreement on every goal with every

The Four Leadership Styles

Style 1 — Directing

Style 2 — Coaching

Style 3 — Supporting

Style 4 — Delegating

employee by presenting their own Golden Rule — “Whoever owns the gold makes the rules.” In other words, the company is committed to a collaborative goal-setting process but since ultimate responsibility for the achievement of those goals lies with the leader, there has to be a final word.

Diagnosis

The second skill of Situational Leadership[®], diagnosis, underlines the importance of day-to-day coaching in reinforcing the successful achievement of goals. Without the coaching element, the leadership style simply reverts to what the OMM describes as ‘seagull management.’ “After goal setting, seagull managers are never around until you make a mistake. Then they fly in, make a lot of noise, dump on everybody, and fly out.”

In a conversation with a fifth OMM leadership team member, Kathy Gupta, leader of the IT Group, the entrepreneur learns how to diagnose an individual’s development level for a specific goal or task. That level is measured using two factors: skill, experience and past performance are recognized as competence, with a combination of confidence and motivation recognized as commitment. Using these two factors, Kathy outlines four development levels:

1. D1: Low competence and high commitment
2. D2: Low to some competence and low commitment
3. D3: Moderate to high competence and variable commitment
4. D4: High competence and high commitment

The writers flesh out these four development levels with labeled examples of each one:

- D1 (low competence and high commitment) is labeled as an “enthusiastic beginner,” with lots of confidence and motivation but lacking enough skills and experience to know what you don’t know.
- D2 (low to some competence and low commitment) is labeled as a “disillusioned learner,” where you have picked up just enough skills and knowledge to identify just how much more work lies ahead of you, which lessens your motivation.
- D3 (moderate to high competence and variable commitment) is labeled as “capable but cautious contributors,” who have developed some competence

and experience but still lack the confidence to work independently of direction from their leader.

- D4 (high competence and high commitment) represents the “self-reliant achiever,” who is highly motivated and can be counted on to work without direction.

The writers make an important distinction in presenting these levels as a scale. While D4 is aspirational, being a D1 or D2 for a particular task or goal should not be seen as a negative assessment, but rather as a pragmatic acknowledgment that no one can be good at everything and that everyone will be presented with a task for which they have limited experience. Situational Leadership[®] enables leaders to provide the appropriate amount of direction and support for that specific task,

rather than the traditional scenario of leaving the employee to sink or swim. If that employee is already overwhelmed, he may be desperately trying to ‘fake it until he makes it,’ which could have negative consequences for the company. This perspective is summed-up in a simple statement: “Everyone has peak performance potential

— you just need to know where they are coming from and meet them there.”

Matching

The third Situational Leadership[®] style, matching, is introduced in a conversation with the OMM that revisits the entrepreneurs’ meetings with his leadership team as a means of explaining the four leadership styles. In the same way as development levels are a combination of competence and commitment, the four leadership styles represent different combinations of two leadership behaviors: Directive behavior, defined by such terms as “decide, teach, observe and provide frequent feedback”, and Supportive behavior, defined as, “listen, involve, facilitate and encourage”:

1. S1: Directing — High directive and low supportive
2. S2: Coaching — High directive and high supportive
3. S3: Supporting — Low directive and high supportive
4. S4 Delegating — Low directive and low supportive.

The four styles are further explained by demonstrating how three of the OMM’s team members can be seen to align to a specific style:

One Minute

Take a minute out of your day to look into the faces of the people you lead and realize that they are your most important resource.

- Larry McKenzie needs an S1 (Directing) approach because he is self-motivated but lacks the experience in his new role to be fully independent.

- Cindy Liu needs an S3 (Supporting) approach because she is highly competent, needs little direction, and is supported through a collaborative relationship with her leader.

- John DaLapa, by contrast, has a complex role that warrants a combination of styles according to the specific task or goal.

As the conversation between the OMM and the entrepreneur continues, the natural alignment between the four development levels and the four leadership styles is explored:

- The D1 enthusiastic beginners need a S1 (Directing) approach where the high directive style balances their low competence, and the low supportive style allows their high commitment to flourish.

- The D2 disillusioned learners benefit from a S2 (Coaching) approach where the directive involvement continues to support their growing competence, and the high supportive style provides reassurance for their reduced confidence.

- The D3 capable but cautious contributors benefit from a S3 (Supporting) approach where the low directive allows their developed skills and experience to shine, and the high supportive style offers encouragement to test their growing skills.

- The D4 self-reliant achievers benefit from a S4 (Delegating) approach where they have clearly earned your trust and confidence and therefore need a low directive style with a collaborative relationship that makes you available when they need you.

Communication and Transparency

The writers present a clear and logical development of employee competence and commitment managed by a carefully balanced combination of directive and supportive leadership behavior. However, a successful implementation of Situational Leadership® depends

on open communication as to what is happening in the company. As the OMM warns, if a diagnosed D4 employee suddenly sees less of you as you adjust to a S4 leadership style, your perspective on that transition would most likely be positive, since you would be, in effect, delegating more responsibility to that employee. From his perspective, however, your sudden absence could be interpreted as abandonment or abdication rather than increased trust and confidence. At the other end of the scale, a D1 employee might interpret your increased presence as micromanagement and a clear sign of a lack of confidence in him, as opposed to a sincere effort on your part to be more supportive and committed to his success.

One Best Way

The entrepreneur begins her journey in search of one best way of leadership that will accommodate all of her current delegation headaches and basically make her life easier. Situational Leadership® may not be easier, but it clearly delineates a leadership approach that is more representative of her earnest desire to provide clear direction to those who need it while giving greater freedom and opportunity to those who do not. Beneath it all, there is a clear commitment to supporting the success and personal development of her team.

WHY YOU WILL LIKE THIS BOOK

This parable approach to leadership succeeds in presenting a well-traveled topic from a fresh perspective. The use of a practical setting with recognizable business characters facilitates both comprehension and adoption of the material. The Situational Leadership® II content can easily be adapted to graphical presentation for visual learners, and the examples used would resonate with a diverse audience across a range of industry sectors.

The authors: Ken Blanchard is the co-author of *The One Minute Manager*® and over fifty other books. He is the chief spiritual officer of The Ken Blanchard Companies, a full-service global management training and development company that he and his wife, Dr. Marjorie Blanchard, founded in 1979. Patricia Zigarmi is VP for business development at The Ken Blanchard Companies. With her leadership, ongoing initiatives for SLII® training have been implemented with several major corporations. Drea Zigarmi is the president of Zigarmi Associates, Inc., and the director of research and development for The Ken Blanchard Companies. He has co-developed several Blanchard training and development products, including its “Leader Behavior Analysis” instruments.



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