

Situational Leadership: The Answer to the Civil Service Promotion System?

By Eddie Molina

If the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Promotion System is anything- it is fair. But it's certainly not without its flaws.

In most private sector organizations, individuals are promoted based on performance, experience and sometimes the bosses just have a 'gut feeling' an individual will succeed in the new position. A major downside to this merit system is that it sometimes leaves room for interpretation in regards to favoritism and if someone simply

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'knows the right people.'

The CSC aims to eliminate any possibility of favoritism and relies solely on a test score to gauge a

person's ability to manage and supervise others. It focuses on fairness and even credits individuals with more work experience. However this system has its flaws too; it does not take into account a person's experience in supervising others. Additionally, subordinates morale can be negatively affected by inconsistent and inexperienced leadership.

This ultimately leads to one thing- individuals can get promoted to a supervisory position without any formal management or leadership experience.

These newly promoted individuals will make mistakes as they go along and learn from them. They should, however, do a little bit of research into current leadership and management principles that exist today to better equip them with their new roles and responsibilities.



One of the leadership theories that many experts believe can help a supervisor with limited experience is known as the Situation Leadership Theory. In short, the leader adapts him or herself to the situation and adjusts their management style accordingly. To put this in perspective, other theories exist that encourage the leaders to change the environment in which subordinates work, or change the subordinates roles and responsibilities to suit the leader or organizational needs. With situational leadership, the leader is adapting to the current environment- or situation.

The theory works likes this- there are four basic types of subordinates. They are labeled M1 through M4, with the 'M' representing professional 'maturity' level.

- Type M1: A highly committed individual that wants to accomplish all tasks, is motivated to achieve stated goals and has the knowledge, wisdom and experience to successfully complete any mission.

- Type M2: A highly experienced individual that has knowledge and wisdom but has little to no motivation to go beyond the minimum required amount of work. There are often specific reasons for their lack of motivation and can be improved with proper leadership.
- Type M3: A highly committed individual that wants to accomplish all tasks, is motivated to achieve stated goals but lacks the wisdom, knowledge and experience. This person is typically new to the organization and is eager and willing to learn.
- Type M4: An inexperienced person with little to no knowledge or wisdom about the job and shows little to no motivation to improve their knowledge base or gain useful experience. This person ‘just wants to get by.’

These are the four basic types of subordinates. Each person generally falls into each category. It is also important to understand that subordinate level types (M1-M4) can change over time due to their assigned current leader’s skill level, outside influences and/or change in responsibilities.

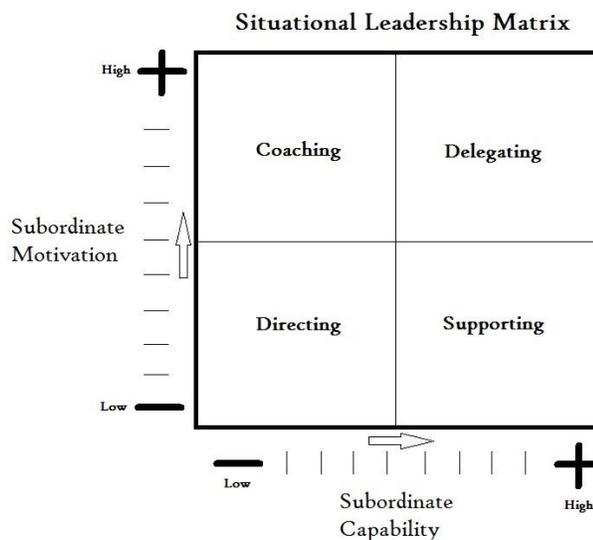
A leader that understands the four subordinate types can then adapt to each person and adjust their management style. The manager will adjust their leadership style depending on the subordinate level type and the task at hand.

Situational Leadership Theory suggests that there are four basic types of leadership styles that will match and suit the four types of subordinates. These four are known as Directing, Coaching, Supporting and Delegating. They are defined as:

Directing: The leader clearly states the directives and primarily uses one-way communication to ensure the subordinates fully understand the goals and the end state.

The manager closely monitors progress and if change is required, solely decides on the type, level and severity of change needed with little to no input from subordinates. The management style is specifically geared towards the M4 type of subordinate that needs close supervision and proper guidance.

Coaching: The leader works closely with the subordinates to develop solutions to meet the stated goals. There is more of a two way communication but the leader makes the decision based on having increased knowledge and experience. This management style is geared to the M3 subordinate that is willing to learn but lacks the skill to accomplish the task without direct oversight.





Supporting: This approach is most appropriate for M2 subordinates that have the knowledge and experience but lack the motivation to go 100%. The leader in this case should focus on motivating the subordinate and finding out the root causes of their lack of motivation. This is significant in the CSC system as many subordinates lose motivation due to routinely working with inexperienced supervisors that often employ micromanagement as a form of leadership. Interpersonal skills are paramount for the supporting leader and requires training and experience to master.

Delegating: This leader has high confidence in the subordinate and need only to state what has to be done with minimal direction and guidance. The subordinate has the experience, knowledge and motivation to fully meet every goal with little oversight from the leader. This approach works best with an M1 type of subordinate. Inexperienced leaders must recognize this type of subordinate and resist the urge to closely monitor and micromanage the subordinate.

Remember that this leadership style is only a theory. But most of us would agree that sometimes a person in a CSC system can make his way to a leadership position with no formal leadership experience. This can prove to be challenging especially for subordinates that are good at what they do, have the experience to achieve any goals and have the motivation to properly finish the task. It is, at the very least, a simple solution to help alleviate some one the weaknesses of the CSC promotional system. It can bring a subordinate that was once motivated to work back to life because of proper leadership.

So if you or someone you know falls into this category then perhaps suggest using a Situational Leadership style. That may serve them well and more importantly, serve subordinates even better.

About the writer: Eddie Molina is an OIF veteran and focuses on leadership. He voluntarily writes articles for the law enforcement, first responder and military community and supports the Law Enforcement Podcast, End of Watch with Bootsy and Sal, links to the podcast can be found on www.eddiemolina.com

