

LEADERSHIP & LEARNING



The two of us might never have crossed paths had it not been for Dr. Paul Hersey. We both had the opportunity to work for him decades ago. Recently, we were together at an event and reminisced about our initial exposure to a model and a mentor that literally shaped our careers.

In large part, our reflections converged around the depth of the pioneering research that anchors Situational Leadership®. And in the context of the theme for this issue of Training Industry Magazine, we would offer the competencies that form the foundation of Situational Leadership® have significant crossover effect when considering the objectives of a contemporary learning strategy.

DIAGNOSE

Good leaders have a plan! They analyze the circumstances surrounding their leadership opportunity, cultivate and refine awareness regarding their influence related triggers and impulses, then thoughtfully establish measurable objectives that will ultimately determine the degree of their success and effectiveness.

A successful and effective learning strategy follows a substantially similar path. It is with ever-increasing regularity that strategy challenges traditional convention; is thoughtfully tailored to account for cultural nuance; is tangibly measured by parameters that are joined at the hip with the overall business objectives the organization in question aspires to achieve; and is subject to calibration on the basis of emergent circumstance.

ADAPT

Regardless of what may be most comfortable for them, good leaders adapt their approach based on the particulars of their diagnosis. In that regard, leaders need to be prepared to respond in a variety of different ways (i.e., directive, participative, empowering) based on the details of the situation and individual/team they are attempting to influence.

Likewise, effective learning strategy needs to feature operational flexibility. If content is deemed appropriate (or necessary) for a particular target audience, delivery of that content needs to be readily available in a format that reflects the ever-increasing spectrum of available options without sacrificing the impact of the training message itself. Same goes for pull-through, transfer or reinforcement strategies.

COMMUNICATE

Good leaders develop the ability to deliver an effective message regardless of what that message turns out to be (i.e., “Here’s what I need you to do”; “Let’s discuss what we should do here”). Good leaders also factor in the communication preferences of those they attempt to influence and tailor their delivery to ensure both understanding and acceptance.

Few would argue there is increasing attention in the learning community on the manner in which content needs to be positioned and sustained. Clearly, this is a good thing! By the same token the learning event itself, much like the leadership discussion itself, needs to be both relevant and engaging (regardless

of modality) each and every time. If it isn’t, the probability of transfer is reduced significantly.

ADVANCE

Leaders add value by accelerating the development of those they influence and redirecting any performance related regression that may materialize along the way. One thing we know for sure, both of those dynamics will forever be in play in one way or another! As Dr. Hersey used to say (often): “Things are either getting better, or they are getting worse, nothing stays the same!”

GOOD LEADERS ADAPT THEIR APPROACH BASED ON THE PARTICULARS OF THEIR DIAGNOSIS.

Much the same on the baseline value added by the professional learning community. Learning is both a mechanism for mastery and a process for developing forward-thinking perspective when we experience disappointments, set-backs, or the occasional “bumps in the road.”

So, in conclusion, we would offer that leadership is really all about learning, and learning is really all about leadership. ☺

Marshall Goldsmith is the world authority in helping successful leaders get even better. Sam Shriver is the senior vice president of commercial operations and product development at The Center for Leadership Studies. Email Marshall and Sam.