

# Conversation Starters

to develop your leaders

The Situational Leadership® Model enables leaders to engage in effective performance conversations that build trust and drive behavior change.

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Perhaps you have an upcoming performance discussion with a direct report and would like to gain insight into their leadership style and behaviors. Or perhaps you'd like to host a group discussion or simply self-reflect on your own leadership style. Whatever the case, the questions listed in this guide can be used to stimulate insight into the behaviors used to influence others.

As a leader, it's important to recognize that there is no one best approach or leadership style for effectively influencing the behavior of others; the optimal leadership approach is entirely dependent on the individual and the situation. Effective leaders are consistent in their ability to accurately diagnose the performance needs of an individual for a task, as well as their ability to adapt their leadership style to provide the level of support and direction dictated by those needs.

## Leadership Attributes

- Think about senior leaders that you admire in your organization. How would you describe them?
- Do you have peers that you consider effective leaders? If yes, what behaviors do they exhibit that make them so effective?
- When you consider your direct reports that stand out as leaders, what leadership attributes do you feel are their greatest strengths?

## Leading Others: Self-Reflection

- In your opinion, which of your personal skills makes you the most effective when leading others?
- What do you feel are your greatest challenges when leading others?
- When you think about the time you spend influencing others, how is it divided between those above you, at your same level and those who report to you?
- Would you say most of your influencing conversations are in the moment or preplanned?
- What would have the most positive impact on your effectiveness as a leader if you were to address and develop it?
- When you are attempting to lead others, how do you know if you've been successful? How can you tell if the person you are attempting to lead is fully engaged?
- Why is it important to focus on both success and engagement in order to achieve results?

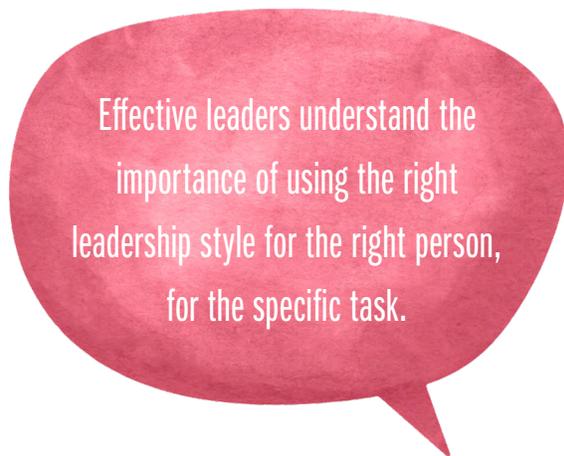


- Influence can be divided into two sets of behaviors: directive behavior and supportive behavior. When you are attempting to influence a follower, when do you focus on directive behavior? Supportive behavior?
- What skills do you feel you could improve in order to become a more influential leader? What steps are you taking to improve them?

## Evaluating a Follower's Performance

- Leadership is follower driven. What does it mean to be follower driven?
- Describe your experiences to date with identifying specific tasks for your peers, direct reports or senior leaders in our organization.
- When assessing a follower's Performance Readiness® for a specific task, how do you assess their ability to do the task? What indicators do you look for?

- Think of a follower you would like to influence. Now identify a specific task that is part of their job or role. Who is the person and what is the task?
- Should you consider a follower's **potential** for completing a specific task? Why or why not?



- Describe any successes or challenges you've experienced while attempting to diagnose the needs of a performer.
- Can you think of a situation in which a follower's performance for a specific task regressed and they were no longer performing at a sustained and acceptable level? What did you do and how did you know when to step in?

### Assessing Your Leadership Style

- How would you describe your leadership style?
- Have you completed a formal assessment of your leadership behaviors (e.g., LEAD Self/LEAD Other)? If yes, how were others' perceptions of your leadership style the same as yours? How were they different? Were you surprised by any of the results?

- Why is it important to match your leadership style to the performance needs of your followers?
- When considering a follower's ability to complete a task, when would you focus on directive behavior vs. supportive behavior?
- Can you think of a situation in which you have underled, giving a follower support, but not enough direction for a specific task? If yes, describe the situation and the result.
- Can you think of a situation in which you have overled, giving a follower too much direction and not enough support for a specific task? If yes, describe the situation and the result.

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#### Situational Leaders learn to demonstrate four core, common and critical leadership competencies:

 **DIAGNOSE** an individual's Performance Readiness® to complete a specific task.

 **ADAPT** leader behavior based on the diagnosis.

 **COMMUNICATE** an influence approach in a manner that followers can both understand and accept.

 **ADVANCE** by managing the movement toward higher performance.

## Adapting Your Leadership Style

- If the task assigned to a follower requires close supervision and accountability, what leadership behaviors would you use to influence them?
- If a follower is willing to complete a task, but is not performing at an acceptable level, what influence behaviors would you use to lead them?
- When attempting to influence a follower, how would you adjust your leadership style if he/she has performed a task at an acceptable level in the past, but now seems unwilling to complete the task?
- If a follower is performing a task at an acceptable level and is motivated to complete the task, what leadership behaviors would you use to influence them?
- With whom might you have the greatest difficulty influencing or coaching performance? What steps will I take to ensure the highest degree of success possible?
- Think of a situation in which a follower's performance was regressing. How did you handle it?
- What do you think it means to be a Situational Leader?



## Want to Learn More?

Situational Leadership® prepares leaders to effectively assess and adapt to situations, opportunities and challenges when leading others and builds the necessary skills for assessing readiness of team members to perform at an optimal level. Become a more effective and influential leader and develop the people within your organization today!

Visit us at [situational.com](http://situational.com) to learn about Situational Leadership® and [join a workshop](#) near you!

“Know when to lead,  
know when to follow.”

– Dr. Paul Hersey