

# Assessing the Situational Leadership of Managers in the Mobile Service Industry

Himani Bhasin\*

## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to assess the effective leadership as specified in Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory (SLT). This research reviews major theories of leadership. This research presents the application of the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model in the corporate world. With the help of this research, we are able to draw an inference about the leadership style of Area Service Manager (ASM) in the Service department of a mobile company. The nationality of the ASMs, along with their leadership style, was also described for a better understanding. The impact of the leadership styles is also observed and studied in detail.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Situational Leadership Style, Managerial Leadership, Impact of Leadership, Leadership Style

## Introduction

*Leadership:* Leadership is possessed by a leader who has the ability and talent of encouraging a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. A lot of leadership theories describe the characteristics that lead people to turn into leaders. These theories highlight the traits of leaders, and attempt to identify the behaviours that leaders can adopt to improve their own leadership abilities and skills in different nuances. Few debates on the psychology of leadership also focused on the nature versus nurture approach. Moreover, these theories also identified that certain people were simply born leaders as they had the ability in them as a gift.

*Situational Theory of Leadership:* This theory says that the most effective style of leadership changes from situation to situation and is inevitable. A leader must be able to adapt or change his/her style and approach to diverse instances, to be most productive and successful. This theory is also referred to as the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory. It was developed by Dr. Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard. For instance, some employees work properly and lead better under a leader who is more autocratic and directive. For few team members, success will more likely be possible if the leader can step back and trust his/her team members to take decision-making forward and carry out plans without the leader's direct involvement. Similarly, not all types of departments or industries require the same skills and leadership traits in equal measures. Some industries demand a large measure of innovation; whereas in others, personal charisma and relational connection with clients are far more important.

According to the Situational Leadership Theory (SLT), there are four primary leadership styles:

- Telling (S1): The leader tells people what to do and how to do it.
- Selling (S2): This style involves more back and forth between leaders and followers. Leaders "sell" their ideas and messages to get group members to buy into the process.
- Participating (S3): The leader offers less direction and allows members of the group to participate more actively in coming up with ideas and decision-making.
- Delegating (S4): This style is characterized by a less involved, hands-off approach to leadership. Group members tend to make most of the decisions and take most of the responsibility for what happens.

---

\* Learning & Development Manager at OPPO Mobile India Pvt. Ltd. Email: [himani\\_7@outlook.com](mailto:himani_7@outlook.com)

## Objectives of the Study

- To assess the leadership style of Area Service Managers (ASM) as per the SLT.
- To evaluate the leadership style of managers with their nationality.

## Review of Literature

McCleskey (2014) describes three seminal leadership theories and their development. The analysis of a sampling of recent articles in each theory is included here. The manuscript also discusses the concept of leadership development in light of those three seminal theories and offers suggestions for moving forward towards both the academic study of leadership and the practical application of research findings on the field.

Larsson and Vinberg (2010) conducted a study to identify common leadership behaviours at a small group of successful companies and organize those behaviours into suitable categories to discuss theoretical implications of situational aspects of effective leadership. The study attempted to uncover common leadership behaviours as they related to quality, effectiveness, environment, and health perceptions. The research conclude that successful leadership includes both universally applicable elements (task-oriented) and contingency elements (relation and change-oriented). The authors suggest additional research in leadership and quality, and in leadership and follower health outcomes.

Paul and Elder (2008) presented a guide for the analysis of research articles. They suggested that the examination of an article explicitly considers traits such as purpose, questions, information, concepts, assumptions, inferences, point of view, and implications in the study.

Arvidsson, Johansson, Ek, and Askelson (2007) used a situational leadership framework in the study of air traffic control employees. This research investigated how leadership styles and adaptability may vary across different situations in the air traffic control arena. The findings suggest linking leadership and safety and a relationship between leadership and reduced stress levels. The authors' implicit assumptions included a relationship

between effective leadership and workplace safety as well as a relationship between leadership effectiveness and stress, and between stress and poor workplace performance.

Thompson and Vecchio (2007) studied three versions of the leadership dynamics derived from Hersey and Blanchard's SLT. Survey data collected from 357 banking employees and 80 supervisors sampled from 10 Norwegian financial institutions were analyzed for predicted interactions. Results indicated that the 2007 revised theory was a poorer predictor of subordinate performance and attitudes than the original version. The third, alternative version (which predicted an autonomy  $\times$  job experience interaction) offered promise for further exploration of the theory's essential principle that employee outcomes are associated with prescribed leader behaviours in combination with follower developmental level.

Warren, Green, and Weitzel (1990) studied Hersey and Blanchard's SLT (1982) and came up with a mixed empirical validation. This study examines the underlying assumptions regarding the theory's prescriptions that subordinate maturity moderates the relationship of leader task and relationship behaviours with indicants of leader effectiveness. Results of this analysis do not support these assumptions. An examination of the more complex predictions of the theory also shows little support for it.

Yukl (1989) evaluates major theories of leadership and summarizes findings from empirical research on leadership. Major topics and controversies include leadership versus management, leader traits and skills, leader behaviour and activities, leader power and influence, situational determinants of leader behaviour, situational moderator variables, transformational leadership, importance of leadership for organizational effectiveness, and leadership as an attributional process. Methodological issues in leadership research and implications for improving managerial practice are also discussed. An integrating conceptual framework is presented to show how the different theories and lines of research fit together.

Vecchio and Robert P. (1987), in a study of 303 teachers representing 14 high schools, took measures of supervisory style (consideration and initiating structure), follower

maturity, performance, and satisfaction with supervision and quality of leader-member exchange. A variety of statistical tests was conducted to test the prescriptions for effective supervision contained in SLT (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). Results suggest that the theory may hold only for certain types of employees. Specifically, the results imply that more recently hired employees may need and appreciate greater task structuring from their superior.

Kerr & Jermier (1978) conducted a research to test the SLT. Overall, its theoretical robustness and pragmatic utility are challenged because of logical and internal inconsistencies, conceptual ambiguity, incompleteness, and confusion associated with multiple versions of the model. The role of the authors' of Situational Leadership in creating confusion about the theory is detailed.

Fernandez and Vecchio (1993) conducted a research in a replication and extension of prior studies of SLT (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). Data from 332 university employees and 32 supervisors were collected on dimensions of leader behaviour and follower maturity in order to test predictions for the outcomes of employee performance, satisfaction, and quality of leader-member exchange. Further analysis suggested that supervisory monitoring and consideration may interact with job level such that monitoring has a positive impact for lower level employees, while consideration has a more positive impact on higher level employees.

Norris and Vecchio (1992), in a test of Hersey and Blanchard's SLT, engaged 91 full-time nurses and their supervisors who provided data on employee performance, maturity, and affect as well as leader style. Although directional results were obtained that supported the theory in the low- and moderate-maturity conditions, the magnitude of these results was not significant.

## Research Methodology

- Research Design - The research design is descriptive research design.
- Type of Research - The type of research used is primary research.

- Research Area - The research area was OPPO Mobile India Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon.
- Duration of Research - 4 March 2019–27 April 2019
- Sample Size - A sample size of 39 ASMs was taken.
- Sampling selection- 100% of the sample was taken.
- Methods of Data Collection - Standardized Psychometric Questionnaire – Situational Leadership Theory by Hersey & Blanchard.

## Data Analysis

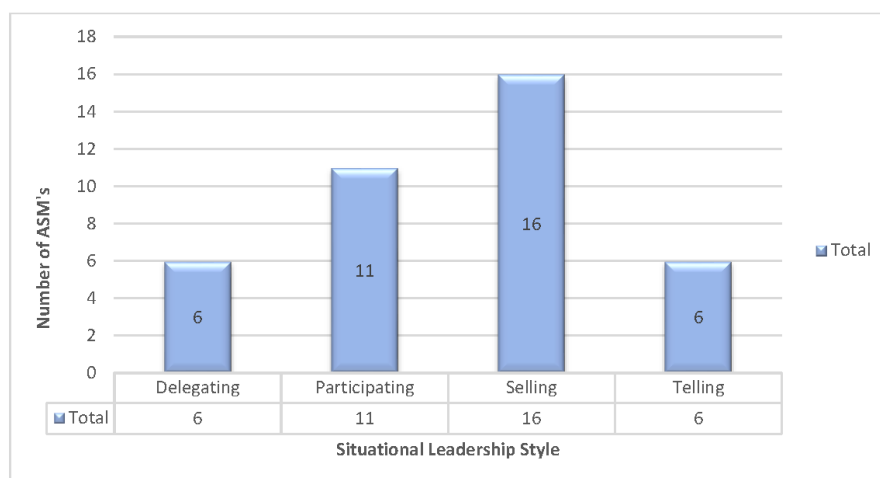
Based on the research conducted on “assessing the situational leadership of managers in the service department of the mobile company”, questionnaires were administered to 39 ASMs and the following observations were made:

### Leadership Style of ASMs

The analysis shows that 16 ASMs out of 39 follow the “selling leadership style”. This shows that the ASMs in the service department sell their ideas and message to get group members to buy into the process. The remaining large proportion of the ASMs follows the participating leadership style. Participative style of leadership or democratic leadership describes the functioning of a leader as a facilitator who simply induces, commands, orders, or offers assignment to each team member. The lesser proportion of ASMs follows the delegating and telling style of leadership.

**Table 1: Data Representation of Leadership Styles of ASMs**

Leadership Style	Count of Leadership Style
Delegating	6
Participating	11
Selling	16
Telling	6
Grand Total	39



**Fig. 1: Graphical Representation of Leadership Styles of ASMs**

### Leadership Style with Nationality of ASMs

The analysis shows the breakdown of leadership styles of the respective ASMs of different locations with their nationality. The analysis shows that 11 Indian ASMs out of 24 follow the “selling leadership style”. This shows that the ASMs in the service department sell their ideas and message to get group members to buy into the process. Remaining six ASMs follow the participating leadership

style followed by six ASMs following telling leadership style. The participative leader offers less direction and more distributive role to the team members to participate and share their insights. He also allows members to take a more active role in coming up with new ideas, insights, and decision-making. Contrary, the telling leader tells people what to do and how to do it. Only one Indian ASM follows delegating style. On the other hand, the Chinese ASMs (15 in number) exhibit selling, participating & delegating leadership style.

**Table 2: Data Representation of Leadership Styles with the Nationality of ASMs**

Count of Leadership Style Row Labels	Nationality		Grand Total
	Chinese	Indian	
Delegating	5	1	6
Participating	5	6	11
Selling	5	11	16
Telling		6	6
Grand Total	15	24	39

**Table 3: Branch Wise Representation of Leadership Styles of ASMs with Their Nationality**

Count of Leadership Style Leadership Style	Branch	Nationality		Grand Total
		Chinese	Indian	
Delegating	Bihar		1	1
	Lucknow	1		1
	Madhya Pradesh	1		1
	Noida	1		1
	South TN	1		1
	West Bengal	1		1
Delegating Total		5	1	6
Participating	Andhra Pradesh	1		1
	Bihar	1		1
	Delhi		1	1

Count of Leadership Style Leadership Style	Branch	Nationality		Grand Total
		Chinese	Indian	
	Jharkhand		1	1
	Lucknow		1	1
	Nagpur		1	1
	Odisha	1	1	2
	South TN	1		1
	Telangana	1		1
	West Bengal		1	1
Participating Total		5	6	11
Selling	Assam	1	1	2
	Chandigarh		1	1
	Gujarat		1	1
	Karnataka		1	1
	Kerala		1	1
	Mumbai		2	2
	Noida	1		1
	Pune	1		1
	Punjab	1	1	2
	Rajasthan		1	1
	Telangana		1	1
	Uttarakhand	1	1	2
Selling Total		5	11	16
Telling	Andhra Pradesh		1	1
	Chhattisgarh		1	1
	Haryana		1	1
	Madhya Pradesh		1	1
	Pune		1	1
Telangana		1	1	
Telling Total			6	6
Grand Total		15	24	39

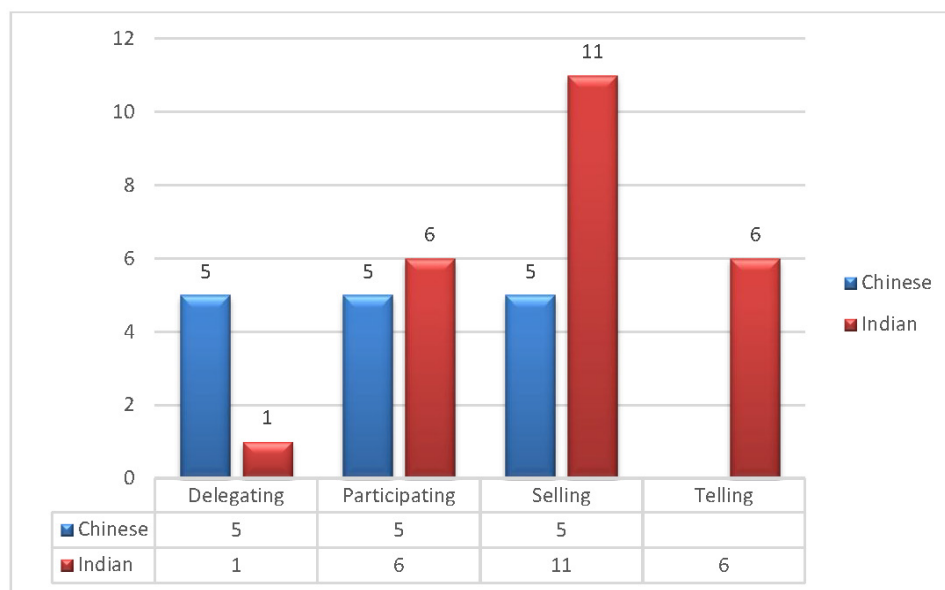


Fig. 2: Graphical Representation of Leadership Styles of ASMs with Their Nationality

## Result & Discussions

From the above data analysis, it can be observed that a majority of ASMs in the service department of the mobile company follow the “selling leadership style”. This leadership style is best used when the final decision is outside the control of the team members; however, the leader may want them to feel empowered about the decision. By selling your team on a decision, you can get their buy-in regarding their views and induce engagement amongst your team. The remaining large proportion of the ASMs follows the participating leadership style. This leadership style is the functioning of a leader as a facilitator who simply induces, commands, orders, or makes assignment for each team member. Best advantage of this leadership style is that it allows to have another possible leader that can boom within the organization in due time and can be best suited for succession planning. Many leaders prefer this leadership style because it involves an active involvement of every team member, which helps them demonstrate their creativity, abilities, and talents. This ensures a team to discover hidden assets or high-potential people that can eventually help the team or organization grow. A leadership environment must encourage other team members to be involved in the process of decision making. The lesser proportion of ASMs follows the delegating and telling style of leadership.

## Conclusions

This also draws us to a conclusion that the Hersey-Blanchard model suggests managers adapt their leadership style to tasks and relationships in the workplace. Henceforth, depending upon the type of followers and the type of industry that you are into, you tend to adopt different styles. The mobile industry is aggressive and one can usually get the work done on time by followers by selling their ideas.

## References

- Arvidsson, M., Johansson, C. R., Ek, Å., & Akselsson, R. (2007). Situational leadership in air traffic control. *Journal of Air Transportation*, 12(1), 67–86.
- Avolio, B. J. (2010). Pursuing authentic leadership development. In N. Nohria, & R. Khurana (Eds.), *Handbook of leadership theory and practice* (pp. 739–765). Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bass, B. M. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. *Organizational Dynamics*, 18(3), 19–31.
- Caza, A., & Jackson, B. (2011). Authentic leadership. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of leadership* (pp. 352–364). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Conger, J. A. (1999). Charismatic and transformational leadership in organizations: An insider’s perspective on these developing streams of research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 145–179. doi:10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00012-0
- Conger, J. A. (2011). Charismatic leadership. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of leadership* (pp. 86–102). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Conger, J. A., & Hunt, J. G. (1999). Charismatic and transformational leadership: Taking stock of the present and future (part i). *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 121–127. doi: 10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00017-X
- Creswell, J. H. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cubero, C. G. (2007). Situational leadership and persons with disabilities. *Work*, 29(4), 351–356.
- Day, D. V. (2009). Executive selection is a process not a decision. *Industrial & Organizational Psychology*, 2(2), 159–162. doi:10.1111/j.1754-9434.2009.01126.x
- Diaz-Saenz, H. R. (2011). Transformational leadership. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson &

- M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of leadership* (pp. 299–310). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Eid, J., Johnsen, B. H., Bartone, P. T., & Nissestad, O. A. (2008). Growing transformational leaders: Exploring the role of personality hardiness. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 29(1), 4–23.
- Glynn, M. A., & DeJordy, R. (2010). Leadership through an organizational behavior lens: A look at the last half-century of research. In N. Nohria, & R. Khurana (Eds.), *Handbook of leadership and practice* (pp. 119–158). Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.
- Graeff, C. L. (1997). Evolution of situational leadership theory: A critical review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 8(2), 153–170. doi:10.1016/S1048-9843(97)90014-X
- Grint, K. (2011). A history of leadership. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of leadership* (pp. 3–14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gronn, P. (2011). Hybrid configurations of leadership. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of leadership* (pp. 437–454). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Groves, K. S., & LaRocca, M. A. (2011). An empirical study of leader ethical values, transformational and transactional leadership, and follower attitudes toward corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 103(4), 511–528.
- Gundersen, G., Hellesoy, B. T., & Raeder, S. (2012). Leading international project teams: The effectiveness of transformational leadership in dynamic work environments. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 19(1), 46–57. doi:10.1177/1548051811429573
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1980). The management of change. *Training & Development Journal*, 34(6), 80.
- Hunt, J. G. (1999). Transformational/charismatic leadership's transformation of the field: An historical essay. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), 129–144. doi:10.1016/S10489843(99)00015-6
- Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: A metaanalytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(5), 755–768. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.89.5.755
- Jung, D., Wu, A., & Chow, C. W. (2008). Towards understanding the direct and indirect effects of CEOs' transformational leadership on firm innovation. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(5), 582–594. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.07.007
- Kirkman, B. L., Chen, G., Farh, J.-L., Chen, Z., & Lowe, K. B. (2009). Individual power distance orientation and follower reactions to transformational leaders: A cross-level, cross-cultural examination. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(4), 744–764.
- Nicholls, J. R. (1985). A new approach to situational leadership. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 6(4).
- Rost, J. C. (1993). Leadership development in the new millennium. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 1(1), 91–110. doi:10.1177/107179199300100109
- Yukl, G. (2011). Contingency theories of effective leadership. In A. Bryman, D. Collinson, K. Grint, B. Jackson & M. Uhl-Bien (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of leadership* (pp. 286–298). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Appendix

### Situational Leadership Style – Hersey and Blanchard

**Self-assessment questions:** Read through the situation questions and please select the statement that you prefer or feel suits you best.

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Alternative Action</i>
1. Your group is not responding lately to your friendly conversation and obvious concern for their welfare. Their performance is declining rapidly.	A. Emphasize the use of uniform procedures and the necessity for task accomplishment. B. Make yourself available for discussion but do not push your involvement. C. Talk with them and then set goals. D. Intentionally do not intervene.
2. The observable performance of your group is increasing. You have been making sure that all members were aware of their responsibilities and expected standards of performance.	A. Engage in friendly interaction, but continue to make sure that all members are aware of their responsibilities and expected standards of performance. B. Take no definite action. C. Do what you can to make the group feel important and involved. D. Emphasize the importance of deadlines and tasks.
3. Members of your group are unable to solve a problem themselves. You have normally left them alone. Group performance and interpersonal relations have been good.	A. Work with the group and together engage in program solving. B. Let the group work it out. C. Act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect. D. Encourage the group to work on the problem and be supportive of their efforts.
4. You are considering a change. Your group has a fine record of accomplishment. They respect the need for change.	A. Allow group involvement in developing the change, but do not be too directive. B. Announce changes and then implement with close supervision. C. Allow the group to formulate its own directive. D. Incorporate group recommendations, but you direct the change.
5. The performance of your group has been dropping during the last few months. Members have been unconcerned with meeting objectives. Redefining roles and responsibilities has helped it the past. They have continually needed reminding to have their tasks done on time.	A. Allow the group to formulate its own direction. B. Incorporate group recommendations, but see that objectives are met. C. Redefine roles and responsibilities and supervise carefully. D. Allow group involvement in determining roles and responsibilities but do not be too directive.
6. You stepped into an efficiently run group. The previous leader tightly controlled the situation. You want to maintain a productive situation, but would like to begin having more time building interpersonal relationships among members.	A. Do what you can do to make the group feel important and involved. B. Emphasize the importance of deadlines and tasks. C. Intentionally do not intervene. D. Get the group involved in decision-making, but see that objectives are met.
7. You are considering changing to a structure that will be new to your group. Members of the group have made suggestions about needed change. The group has been productive and demonstrated flexibility.	A. Define the change and supervise carefully. B. Participate with the group in developing the change but allow members to organize the implementation. C. Be willing to make changes as recommended, but maintain control of the implementation. D. Be supportive in discussing the situation with the group but not too directive.
8. Group performance and interpersonal relations are good. You feel somewhat unsure about your lack of direction in the group.	A. Leave the group alone. B. Discuss the situation with the group and then you initiate necessary changes. C. Redefine goals and supervise carefully. D. Allow group involvement in setting goal, but don't push.

Situation	Alternative Action
9. You have been appointed to give leadership to a study group that is far overdue in making requested recommendations for change. The group is not clear on its goals. Attendance at sessions has been poor. Their meetings have turned into social gatherings. Potentially they have the talent necessary to help.	A. Let the group work out its problems. B. Incorporate group recommendations, but see that objectives are met. C. Redefine goals and supervise carefully. D. Allow group involvement in setting goals, but do not push.
10. Your group, usually able to take responsibility, is not responding to your recent redefining of job responsibilities as a result of one member leaving the city.	A. Allow group involvement in redefining standards but don't take control. B. Redefine standards and supervise carefully. C. Avoid confrontation by not applying pressure, leave situation alone. D. Incorporate group recommendations, but see that new job responsibilities are met.
11. You have been promoted to a leadership position. The previous leader was involved in the affairs of the group. The group has adequately handled its tasks and direction. Interpersonal relationships in the group are good.	A. Take steps to direct the group towards working in a well-defined manner. B. Involve the group in decision-making and reinforce good contributions. C. Discuss past performance with the group and then you examine the need for new practice. D. Continue to leave the group alone.
12. Recent information indicates some internal difficulties among group members. The group has a remarkable record of accomplishment. Members have effectively maintained long range goals. They have worked in harmony for the past year. All are well qualified for the tasks.	A. Try out your solution with the group and examine the need for new procedures. B. Allow group members to work it out themselves. C. Act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect. D. Participate in problem discussion while providing support for group members.

**Scoring Your Self-Assessment:** Circle the responses from your self-assessment Situation questions on the scoring sheet below. Add up each column to determine your preferred leadership style according to the Hersey and Blanchard model.

SITUATIONS	ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS				
	1	A	C	B	D
	2	D	A	C	B
	3	C	A	D	B
	4	B	D	A	C
	5	C	B	D	A
	6	B	D	A	C
	7	A	C	B	D
	8	C	B	D	A
	9	C	B	D	A
	10	B	D	A	C
	11	A	C	B	D
	12	C	A	D	B
	<b>TOTAL</b>				
	<b>LEADERSHIP STYLE</b>	TELLING (DIRECTING)	SELLING (COACHING)	PARTICIPATING (FACILITATING)	DELEGATING (OBSERVING)