Situational Leadership® II

Situational Leadership® II (SLII) is a model for developing individuals to their highest level of performance on a specific goal or task. SLII is based on the relationship between an individual’s development level (competence and commitment) on a specific goal or task and the leadership style (direction and support) the leader provides. Effective leadership lies in matching the appropriate leadership style to the individual’s development level. When leaders are Situational Leaders, they partner with their people, working side by side to align on goals, development levels, and leadership styles. This “match,” using the common language of SLII, contributes to higher trust, positive intentions, and significant results.

Benefits to Partnering with SLII

When leaders partner with their team members to use Situational Leadership® II, the model will help them to

1. Focus on what’s most important—SMART goals
2. Diagnose competence and commitment
3. Give or get the leadership style needed to increase competence and commitment

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Three Skills of a Situational Leader

To be an effective Situational Leader, you have to master the three skills. If there is effective partnering, the outcomes of SLII are achieved.

1. **Goal Setting**
   - Aligning on what needs to be done, when

2. **Diagnosing**
   - Collaboratively assessing an individual’s competence and commitment on a specific goal or task

3. **Matching**
   - Using a variety of leadership styles, comfortably, to provide individuals with what they need
Six SLII Conversations

Leader-Led Alignment Conversations are used to set SMART goals and tasks and to discuss the leadership style match for development level.

The four Style Conversations are used to develop competence and commitment.

Team Member-Led One on One Conversations help the leader provide team members with the leadership style they want.

In these six conversations, Situational Leaders use the three skills of a Situational Leader to align on goals, development levels, and leadership styles.
Setting SMART Goals

The first step in creating clarity and alignment is setting SMART goals. It’s impossible to assess someone’s competence and commitment unless you know exactly what he or she is expected to do. SMART goals are set during an Alignment Conversation.

SMART goals answer these questions:

**S** = Specific
   - What exactly is the goal or task?
   - What does a good job look like?
   - When does the goal or task need to be accomplished?

**M** = Motivating
   - Is the goal or task meaningful for the individual?
   - Will working on this goal build competence and commitment?
   - Will working on this goal add or drain energy?

**A** = Attainable
   - Is the goal realistic, reasonable, and achievable?
   - Is the goal within the individual’s control?

**R** = Relevant
   - Is the goal or task meaningful work for the organization?
   - Is the goal or task aligned with organization and work team goals?
   - Is the goal or task a high priority in relation to other goals?

**T** = Trackable
   - How will progress and results be measured and tracked?

SMART goals motivate. They get leaders and the people they lead on the same page.

All good performance starts with clear goals.
## 2 Diagnosing Development Level

Once SMART goals are set, it’s possible to diagnose development level. Development level is a combination of two factors: **Competence**—the individual’s demonstrated task-specific and transferable knowledge and skills on a goal or task; and **Commitment**—the individual’s motivation and confidence on a goal or task. Development level is goal or task specific. It is not an overall rating of an individual’s skills or attitude. There are four development levels.

### Development Levels

- **D4**
  - High Competence
  - High Commitment
  - Self-Reliant Achiever

- **D3**
  - Moderate to High Competence
  - Variable Commitment
  - Capable, but Cautious, Contributor

- **D2**
  - Low to Some Competence
  - Low Commitment
  - Disillusioned Learner

- **D1**
  - Low Competence
  - High Commitment
  - Enthusiastic Beginner

### Development Level Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accomplished</td>
<td>Self-reliant; autonomous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistently competent</td>
<td>Justifiably confident; self-assured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized by others as an expert</td>
<td>Inspired; inspires others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Competence Descriptions

- **D4**: Demonstrated competence; experienced
- **D3**: Makes productive contributions
- **D2**: Generally skillful and adept
- **D1**: Does not know how to move forward

### Commitment Descriptions

- **D4**: Self-reliant; autonomous
- **D3**: Justifiably confident; self-assured
- **D2**: Inspired; inspires others

### Development level is goal or task specific!
Diagnosis Chart

Use this chart to identify development level on a specific goal or task.

**Example 1**
On a specific goal or task, an individual has

- **DEMONSTRATED SKILLS** — High
- **TRANSFERABLE SKILLS** — Low
- **MOTIVATION** — High
- **CONFIDENCE** — Low

This individual’s development level is D3/2.

**Example 2**
On a specific goal or task, an individual has

- **DEMONSTRATED SKILLS** — Low
- **TRANSFERABLE SKILLS** — Low
- **MOTIVATION** — High
- **CONFIDENCE** — High

This individual’s development level is D1.
3 Matching Leadership Style

Leadership style is a pattern of behaviors leaders use, over time, as perceived by others. There are two basic leadership style behaviors: **Directive Behavior**—telling and showing people what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and providing frequent feedback on results; and **Supportive Behavior**—listening, facilitating self-reliant problem solving, encouraging, praising, and involving others in decision making. There are four leadership styles consisting of four different combinations of Directive and Supportive Behaviors.

![Diagram of Leadership Styles](image)

**Style 1—Directing**—High Directive Behavior and Low Supportive Behavior
The leader provides specific direction about goals, shows and tells how, and closely tracks the individual’s performance in order to provide frequent feedback on results.

**Style 2—Coaching**—High Directive Behavior and High Supportive Behavior
The leader explains why, solicits suggestions, encourages, and continues to direct goal or task accomplishment.

**Style 3—Supporting**—Low Directive Behavior and High Supportive Behavior
The leader and the individual make decisions together. The role of the leader is to facilitate, listen, draw out, encourage, and support.

**Style 4—Delegating**—Low Directive Behavior and Low Supportive Behavior
The individual makes most of the decisions about what, how, and when. The role of the leader is to value the individual’s contributions and support his or her growth.
Situational Leadership® II Model

Matching Leadership Style to Development Level

In all four styles, the leader
1. Sets goals
2. Stays connected
3. Gives feedback

The goal is a MATCH

S1 → D1
S2 → D2
S3 → D3
S4 → D4

Over time, with a match, individuals learn to provide their own direction and support.

Two types of MISMATCH

Oversupervision
S1/S2 with D3/D4

Undersupervision
S3/S4 with D1/D2

There is no best leadership style; it depends on the situation.

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SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP® II
LEARN THE SLII MODEL

S3 Supporting

S3 Intention
Build confidence in competence

How
1. Ask D3 for input about what and how
2. Listen and encourage
3. Facilitate problem solving by asking open-ended questions

S2 Coaching

S2 Intention
Re-energize and reteach

How
1. Explore concerns and encourage
2. Explain why
3. Redirect and reteach
4. Involve in problem solving

S4 Delegating

S4 Intention
Value Contribution

How
1. Acknowledge expertise
2. Support autonomy
3. Invite innovation and ongoing learning

S1 Directing

S1 Intention
Help others build competence

How
1. Acknowledge transferable skills and/or commitment
2. Give direction about what, how, and when
3. Check in frequently

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Partnering Tools

Situational Leaders work with the people they lead to align on goals, development level, and the matching leadership style. They partner, collaborate, and work side by side to ensure goals are achieved and competence and commitment develop. There are four tools you need to know about if you are going to engage in quality conversations as partners.

SLII Worksheet

The purpose of an Alignment Conversation is to focus the leader and the individual contributor on what is most important. What are the SMART goals the individual needs to achieve? What is the individual’s competence and commitment to achieve those goals independently, without direction or support? What leadership style will help the individual achieve each goal and develop competence and commitment? Alignment Conversations, using the SLII Worksheet, get both the leader and the individual contributor on the same page.
One on One Worksheet

The purpose of a One on One Conversation is for a team member to manage up. The team member decides what to talk about—goals, challenges, questions, concerns—and what response he or she needs from his or her leader/colleague. Once the topics are determined, the team member can choose which leadership style would be a match for his or her development level on each topic, goal, or task. Essentially, it sounds like this …

**D1/S1**—I’m excited and would benefit from knowing more about this (topic). [Or] I’ve never done this before and need some help. I need direction.

**D2/S2**—Since I’m still learning and am a little discouraged (confused, overwhelmed, frustrated), I’d like to share my thoughts and get some direction. I need advice.

**D3/S3**—I need you to be a sounding board so I can feel more confident or re-engaged. I need you to listen.

**D4/S4**—I’ve got this handled; let me keep you informed.
One on One Conversation Starters

Sometimes it's hard to ask for the direction and support you need. The purpose of One on One Conversation Starters is to help a team member to speak up.

SLII® Conversation Starters

Situational Leaders also have a tool—called SLII® Conversation Starters—that will help them to more flexibly use Leadership Styles 1, 2, 3, and 4.


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