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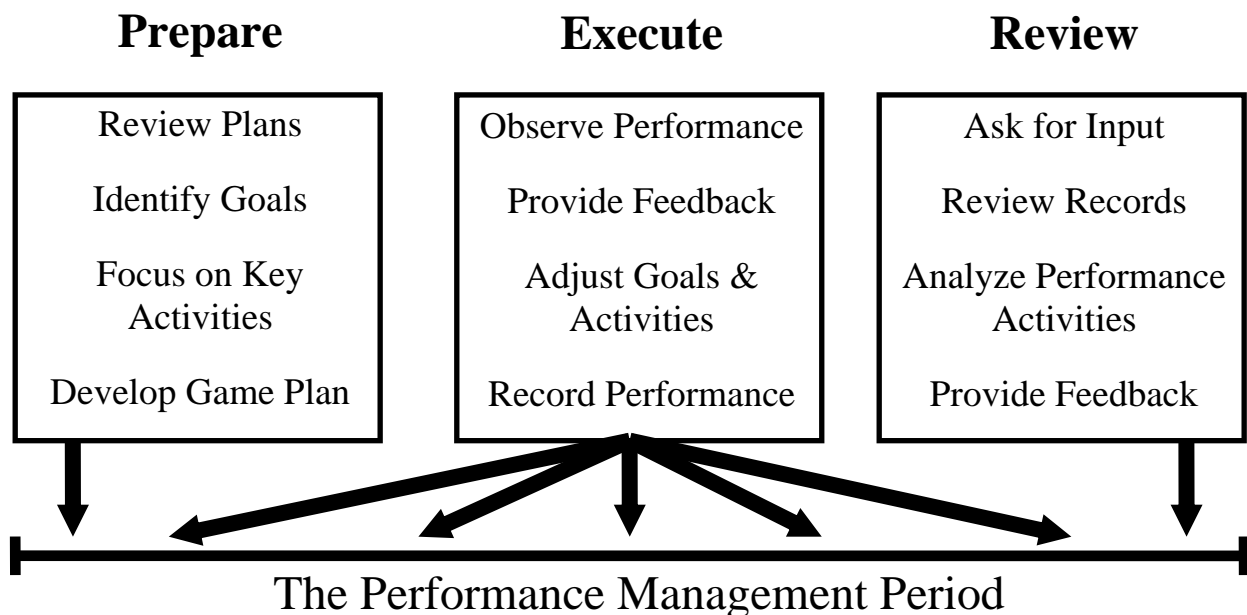
Situational Leadership and Performance Coaching

In many organizations, the performance management process has been reduced to a once a year appraisal session that can best be described as an "end of period autopsy". Very often, supervisors take on judgmental roles that limit their ability to truly improve the performance of their people. Performance management has become a periodic intervention rather than a continuous process.

As a result, performance management has been limited to meeting organizational needs for information with which to make administrative decisions for such things as promotions, terminations, pay raises, bonuses and training. But what about the needs of the individual for clearly communicated expectations and timely feedback on performance?

The roles of executives, managers and supervisors should include performance coaching of their direct reports that includes three distinct phases: preparation, execution and review.

Performance Coaching Cycle



At the beginning of the performance management cycle, people are prepared by clearly defining expectations for the period. Both means (activities) and ends (results) should be identified and discussed with performance standards set.

For a new or poorly performing person, clearly communicate expectations in terms of the activities needed to succeed (such as learning specific skills, working as a team player or treating customers with respect) as well as results (such as projects to be completed, reports to be submitted or specific goals to be met).

For experienced and successful people, focus primarily on the results, allowing the experienced person to participate in defining the activities needed to accomplish the goals and, if possible, in setting the actual goals.

During the performance management period, directly observe performance, get feedback from others who have contact with the individual and review productivity against goals. Provide timely feedback on performance to each person, adjusting their activities and goals if necessary. Focus feedback on the individual's performance and reinforce what is being done right as well as identify what needs to be improved.

Throughout the performance period, adjust goals as necessary. Activities must also be reviewed to ensure that they are contributing to goal accomplishment. Since most managers and supervisors typically have many people reporting directly to them and since the performance cycle can be as long as a year, it is important to keep written files that document performance for each follower.

This final stage of the performance management cycle provides feedback in a counseling session that closes out the period and begins the next. It is helpful to have each person submit a written self-appraisal that identifies accomplishments and shortcomings. This forces them to assess their own performance while providing the leader with insight into how they see the period.

Review all performance results, comparing the person's accomplishments to the goals. Records of direct observations and feedback from other sources should similarly be reviewed. Counsel the person prior to the formal annual performance appraisal is filled out. This will allow the leader to gain greater insight as well as "the other side of the story" prior to making the final assessment. Feedback from participants of our performance training programs has reinforced our belief that the final counseling session should take place before the appraisal is written.

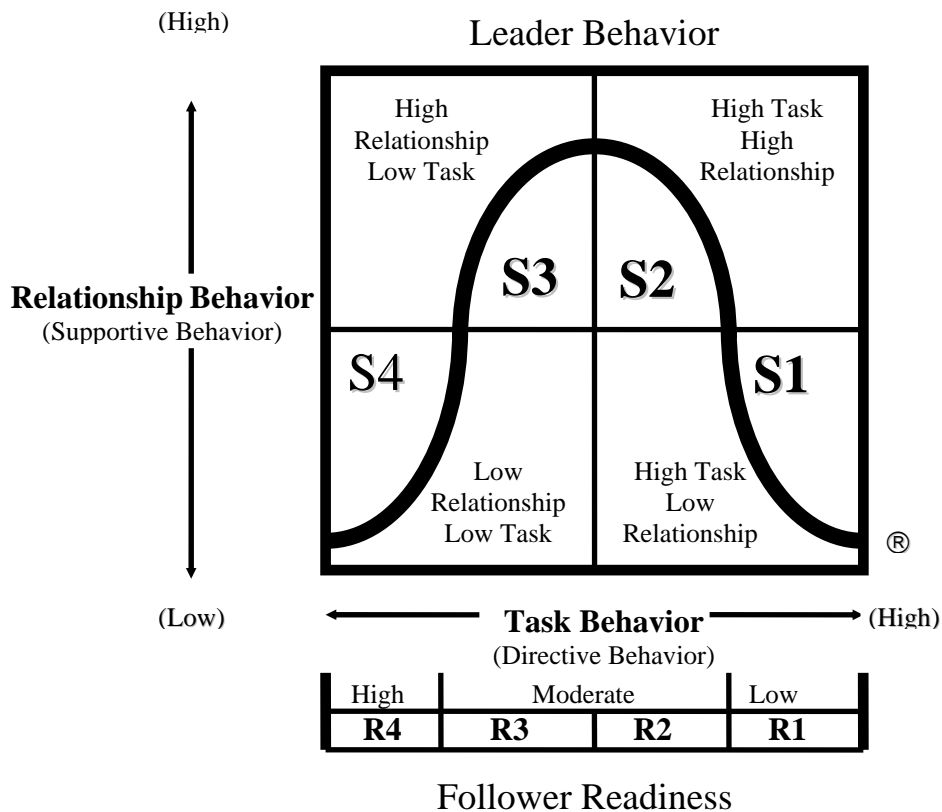
Situational Leadership

Situational Leadership gives leaders the guidance they need to coach their people throughout the performance management period. During the initial meeting, it guides the leader in setting the degree of participation for the planning and goal setting process. During the rest of the period, Situational Leadership guides the leader in each interaction with the follower.

The underlying principle in Situational Leadership is that leaders should adjust their leadership styles to their followers' readiness level (ability and willingness) to perform a given task. Leadership is the amount of task behavior (direction) and relationship behavior (support) given by a leader.

The same principles apply to the leadership roles in performance coaching process. To be effective, leaders must adjust the way in which they counsel their people based on their level of readiness for each task that they are expected to perform. Performance coaching is a unique application of the principles of Situational Leadership that guides leaders in the day-to-day transactions with their followers.

Situational Leadership®



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The lowest readiness level (R1) for a group or individual is described as not willing and not able to do a given task. The appropriate leadership style (S1) is that of providing high amounts of task behavior (direction) and low amounts of relationship behavior (support). The next readiness level (R2) is described as willing but not able. The appropriate leadership style (S2) is that of high amounts of both task and relationship behavior.

The next readiness level (R3) is described as able but unwilling in that the individual lacks confidence or commitment. The appropriate leadership style (S3) is that of high amounts of relationship behavior and low amounts of task behavior. The highest readiness level for a group or individual to do a given task is willing and able (R4). The appropriate leadership style is that of low amounts of both relationship and task behavior.

The Situational Leadership model provides a framework from which to diagnose different situations and prescribes which leadership style will have the highest probability of success in a particular situation. Use of the model will make supervisors more effective in that it illustrates the connection between their choice of leadership styles and the readiness of their people. As such, Situational Leadership is a powerful tool for supervisors to use in the coaching process.

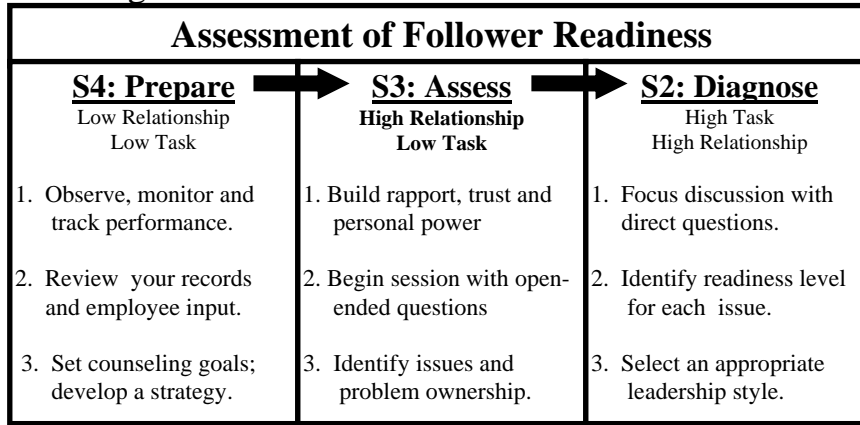
The Performance Coaching Guide

The Performance Coaching Guide© performance aid that follows describes a process that is used in formal interviewing, counseling and coaching situations. The guide is divided into two phases that focus on assessing follower readiness and then choosing an appropriate leadership style. The first phase uses leadership Styles 4, 3 and 2 to prepare, open the lines of communication and diagnose the follower's readiness level for the tasks necessary to be successful.

During the performance period, the follower perceives a Style 4, as the leader observes, monitors and tracks performance. The follower continues to perceive low amounts of direction and support as the leader prepares for counseling sessions by reviewing relevant materials, such as their performance records for the period and, in the case of an end-of-period session, follower input.

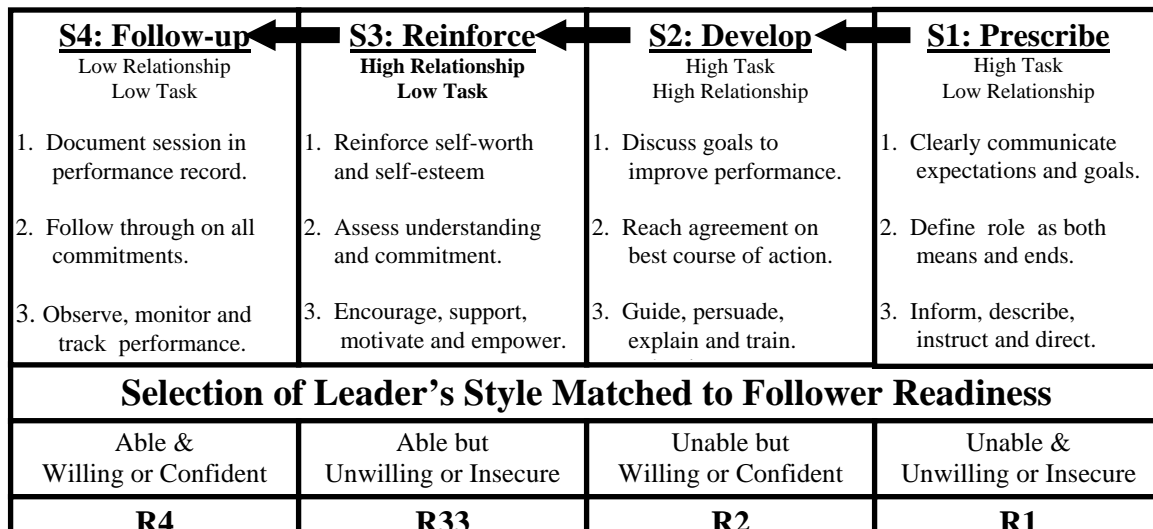
At the beginning of the meeting, the leader moves to a Style 3, increasing support by building rapport, opening up the lines of communication and by reinforcing positive performance or potential. In this step the leader works to assess how the follower sees their performance by asking open-ended questions.

the leader then moves to Style 2 to focus the discussion with directive questions to gain further insight into the follower's perception of performance and identify how they perceive any shortcomings. For each task that is critical for the follower's success, the leader must assess their readiness (ability and willingness) level so that they can chose the best style with which to intervene. The assessment phase is described in the diagram that follows.



After assessing the follower's readiness for each critical task, the leader selects the appropriate leadership style based on the follower's readiness level for a given task from the diagram that follows. As is the case with the Situational Leadership Model, the critical tasks must be clearly defined before a readiness level can be determined.

Follower's can be at several different task relevant readiness levels for the different tasks that make up their job. Once the readiness level is decided, the corresponding high probability leadership style is chosen to begin the intervention. After the initial intervention, if the follower responds appropriately, the leader then moves to the next style to further develop the follower. The selection of the high probability intervention style is shown in the diagram that follows.



The Performance Coaching Guide that follows is a performance aid derived from the Situational Leadership Model and describes the process used to develop people. The performance coaching process follows a pattern that typically includes varying the amount of direction and support given followers as the leader prepares, assesses, diagnose, prescribes, develops, reinforces and follows-up.

The assessment phase is critical to the coaching process in that the leader must prepare, assess and diagnose prior to making the actual intervention. In effect, the leader must "earn the right" to intervene. All too often leaders intervene without taking the time to truly assess the follower's readiness. At this point, the follower will become defensive with little hope for improving performance. While the initial intervention style is chosen based on the follower's readiness for a given task, the goal is to develop the follower by using successive leadership styles as the leader moves from prescribe to develop, to reinforce and then to follow-up.

Performance Coaching Guide©

