

Assorted Advisor

When it comes to being a leader, I have relied on a few basic axioms to guarantee success: do not appoint yourself as “in charge”, if put in a leadership position don’t act “in charge”, and the best leadership style is having no style. Over the course of Session 1, I have found that these axioms in fact do correlate to defined theories of leadership. We will explore the Transformational Leadership and Situational Leadership styles.

In *World Anew: The Latest Theories of Leadership* the authors state, “Transformational leaders attend to the individualized needs of followers and offer inspiration and motivation to organizations and their constituents by providing meaning to their work rather than just rewards” (p.34). The transformational leader is encouraging and, in my interpretation, aligns themselves and their goals with those for whom they are leading. This resonates with me as an educator. I lead my students by communicating with them that our goals are the same. My purpose is to help them achieve the level of learning they aspire to or the grade they hope to receive. Once students understand that we are on the same team, they are much more open to communication and feedback. Further, I act as a constant cheerleader, inspiring and encouraging students to do their best.

Transformational Leadership has both positive and negative implications as with any theory or style. The strengths of this type of leadership style is that team members choose the transformational leader and give their respect. This can be compared to an authoritative leader whose dictatorship style causes constituents to feel like respect is demanded not earned. Because of this, team members are more motivated to produce their best work and more inclined to receive feedback and apply it. Conversely, being a transformational leader means that you are likely to be appointed to leadership roles, even when you may prefer to be a follower. The ASHE Higher Education Report concurs with my understandings. They state, “[transformational] leaders empower rather than manipulate” and “leaders articulate a clear and appealing vision that is relevant to the needs and values of the followers” (p.37). These statements echo the idea that this “empowerment” and shared vision lead to a more willing workforce.

The Blackboard presentation defines Situational Leadership as a style in which the leader changes their style based on the environment (slide 19). According to the Hersey-Blanchard Model, “successful leaders should change style based on the maturity of the people they are leading [and] the details of the task” (slide 20). This style also represents my leadership methods as I believe that treating people equally, not based on age, garners trust and respect. As I teach adult learners, many are older than myself, so keeping in mind maturity helps develop a much more effective environment. However, I also consider this with my high school students. I find that if you treat them with respect and maturity they rise to the occasion.

The most difficult aspect of Situational Leadership in my opinion is the lack of structure. With a more rigid style, the expectations are clear, followers know what their assignments are, who they must answer to, the rewards and consequences of poor performance, etc. With the situational style, some aspects may be directly explained such as due dates, while others may be more flexible like the amount of responsibility each member takes on. However, this same lack of structure can also be an asset which we would term flexibility. This allows the leader to pass on more responsibility to their teammates when appropriate and give specific instructions when needed. I find that by varying the style of leadership (particularly when combined with Transformational Leadership), the leader can give more freedom to mature members of the team while providing exact direction to others. In addition, Situational Leadership is another style in which respect is earned not taken. Subordinates respect that their leader trusts them enough to accomplish their work without being overbearing. Walter, Caldwell and Marshall found that, "delegating at the appropriate level of group maturity also improves the leader's management of time" (p.621) which offers another strength of this style. Again, this is a double-edged sword as they go on to state, "[the] leader should remain available to intervene if the group's maturity regresses". This supports the idea that the weaknesses and strengths of Situational Leadership are entwined as the same concepts that make it an effective style, also can be its downfall if not handled correctly.

As the title suggests, my leadership style could be classified as an "assorted advisor". This is because I utilize a situational approach in which I give my students more free reign and take on a role that is more synonymous with advisor than leader. Furthermore, I use multiple techniques depending on the student, their maturity, and the task. In teaching Geometry online, I encounter a plethora of different learning types. In my office hour sessions with individual students I must adjust my leadership style depending on the learner. The following are some examples.

Student A is an independent learner. She asks for help often and always wants to do her absolute best. During our first session, I weaved between "telling, selling, and participating". I began by telling the student exactly how to solve a problem, then I worked with her to solve a similar problem allowing her to take the lead on most steps, finally I adopted a selling strategy when confusion arose, having to convince her how and why this was the correct thought process. As we have continued, I have gauged her maturity and came to the conclusion that she was capable of leading the sessions. Now I use a mainly delegating strategy as I allow her to make the decisions and only step in when there is an error. I have found this to be a successful strategy as I can see how this student has grown and is better understanding the material each day. It is clear she respects me as her instructor and this has grown the more I have let go and taken on an advisory role. This also has the added educational benefit of the student problem solving and developing on her own.

Student B is very soft spoken. She generally does very well studying the material herself and is not one to ask questions. As her instructor, I initially began with very little interference, I respected the fact that she wanted to be in control of her learning and let her fall and recover on her own while I monitored her progress. However, when I saw that a particular chapter was presenting problems, I stepped in to help. She is not as mature as Student A and had a hard time formulating questions, thus I had to do a lot of telling and selling. I also utilized transformational style to encourage and inspire. After our session, Student B took the chapter test with a perfect score.

While I am the leader of my class of students, in both of these examples I took both a transformational and situational stance. Transformational in that I worked individually with each student, inspired and encouraged, and showed them that I share their goals. This provides an

environment where they respect me and feel comfortable reaching out for help when needed. I also take a situational style, depending on the student, their maturity and the environment, (for example I would take a different position in an office hour session with multiple students) I adjust my leadership plan. I have found that an amalgam of the two is often a recipe for success.

Overall, I believe that Transformational and Situational Leadership are effective options. While they both have positive and negative aspects, when wielded correctly they can be powerful tools. Being an inspiring leader who respects the group garners that same respect from its members. When we all feel like we are working together to achieve a common goal, we do not win as individuals but as a whole. Thus, I consider myself as the Assorted Advisor, taking on an amalgam of styles and a role that is more aptly a guide as I consider myself one small part of the larger team.

References

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