

Situational Leadership

What is Situational Leadership?

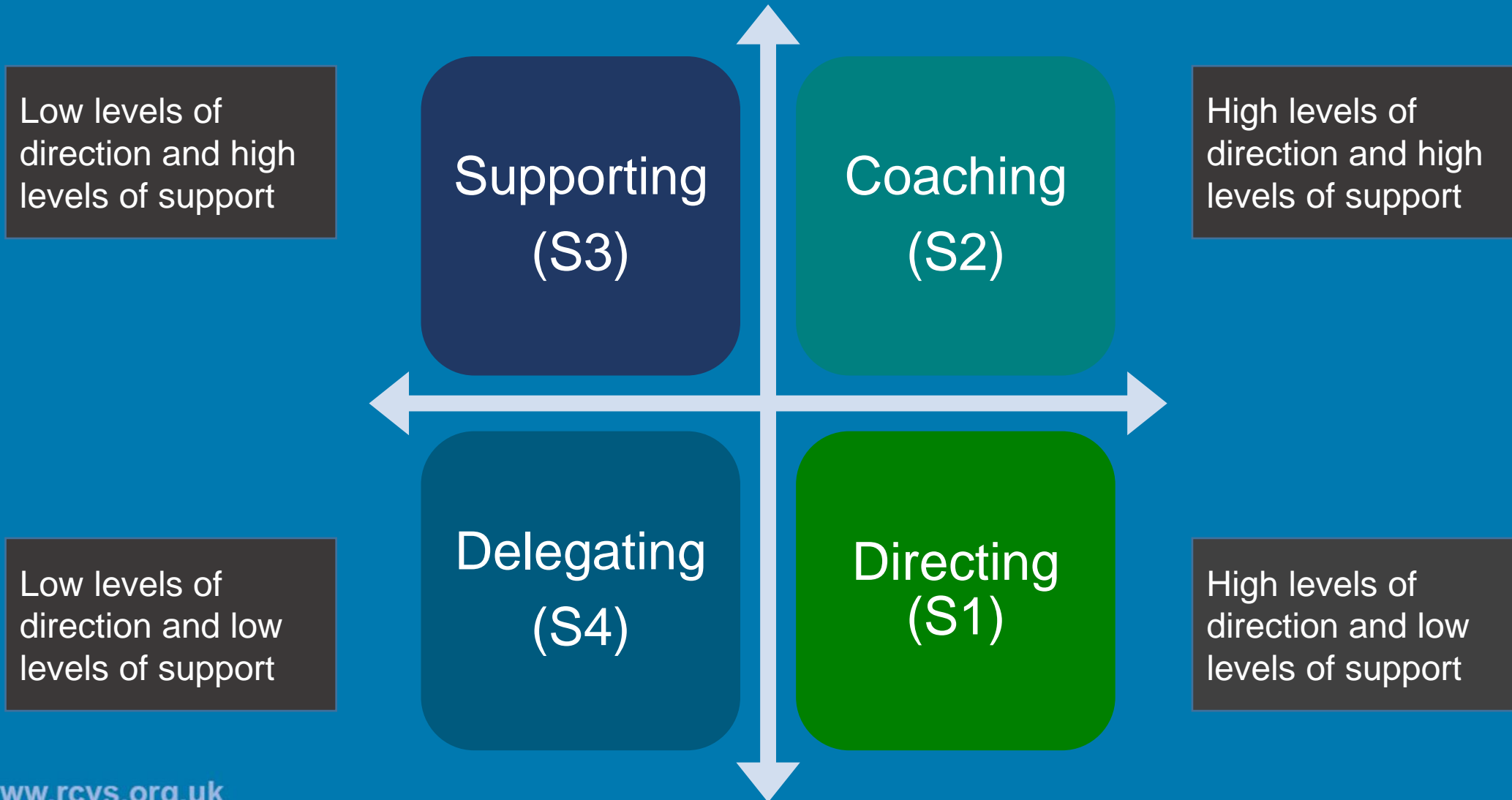
The Situational Leadership model was developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard and is one of the most widely known and accessible leadership models. It provides a clear methodology of how to lead, by matching leadership behaviour with the performance readiness of team members in a given situation.

Key characteristics

Situational Leadership is characterised by a combination of directive and supportive behavioural styles which leaders must adapt depending on the willingness, experience and development level of team members in relation to a specific task, function or objective.

The model identifies 4 leadership styles which offer varying degrees of direction and support. These styles can be mapped to development levels.

The 4 leadership styles



Development levels

Team members will be at different developmental stages depending on levels of competence and commitment. The leader must consider this when choosing an appropriate leadership style:



Competence = level of skills, knowledge, and experience relating to a task
Commitment = motivation to learn and engagement with the task

Matching style to level

Consider the following:

1. Development level is not static. An individual may need a different leadership style for a different task. As team members become more adept at particular tasks, leadership behaviours will also need to change accordingly.
2. When establishing a person's development level, consider the nature of the task, their skills, knowledge and potential, previous relevant experience, and how motivated and confident they are.
3. The consequences of mis-matching style to level can be detrimental, damaging relationships or leading to poorer outcomes. For example, taking an S1 approach with someone at D4, or an S4 approach with an individual at D1.

What is your preference?

Every leader will have a natural tendency towards a particular style and approach. The model is helpful in raising awareness of leadership behaviour, so that you are able to adapt your style appropriately.

What is your natural preference?

When to use each style

Development level	Leadership style
D1 – Enthusiastic beginner Inexperienced and lacking skills but highly motivated and willing to learn.	S1 – Directing Makes decisions without consultation and provides clear goals and instructions. Specifies timelines, outcomes, boundaries and limitations.
D2 – Disillusioned Learner Some competence but lacks enthusiasm or confidence. Unwilling to perform task. Situation may be unfamiliar to them.	S2 – Coaching Receptive to input. Provides clear goals and frequent feedback to help improve performance. Gives praise and recognition for successes.
D3 – Capable but cautious performer High competence but variable commitment. Has the skills but is cautious and may lack confidence.	S3 – Supporting Invites collaboration in decision making and encourages ideas. Supports development of problem solving skills to build self-reliance and confidence.
D4 – Self-reliant achiever Highly competent and committed. Confident in ability and perform the task. Self-motivated expert, reliable and takes responsibility.	S4 – Delegating Minimal direction, guidance and involvement in decision making. Consulted only when necessary. Allows for maximum creativity and autonomy.