Leadership for India INC Practical Concepts and Constructs
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Week - 02
Leadership Theories
Lecture - 08
Situational Theory

Hi Friends, welcome to the NPTEL course on Leadership for India Inc. Practical Concepts and Constructs. We are in week 2 discussing Leadership Theories. This lecture discusses Situational Theory. We discussed two other theories of leadership the trait theory and the behavioural theory. Both those theories focus on the qualities of the leader and the behaviours of the leader, respectively.

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The situational leadership theory is different in the context that it brings the followers into the picture. The situational approach hypothesizes that different situations require different kinds of leadership. The situational approach focuses on leadership in situations and it recommends leaders to modify their styles according to situations.

Situational leadership theory was developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard while working on management of organizational behaviour. First introduced in 1969 as life

cycle theory of leadership, during the mid-1970's it was converted into situational leadership theory.

The fundamental principle of the situational leadership theory is that there is no single best style of leadership and the style of leadership needs to be adaptive to the situations the leader encounters. Effective leader is one who is task relevant. Effective leadership is task relevant and the most successful leaders are those who focus on the competency and commitment of their followers that is the ability and willingness of the followers to work along with the leader.

Effective leadership however, varies not only with the leader and the followers, but also with the firm, the industry and the economy. Some of these aspects, however, are not part of the situational leadership theory as proposed and as we discuss now.

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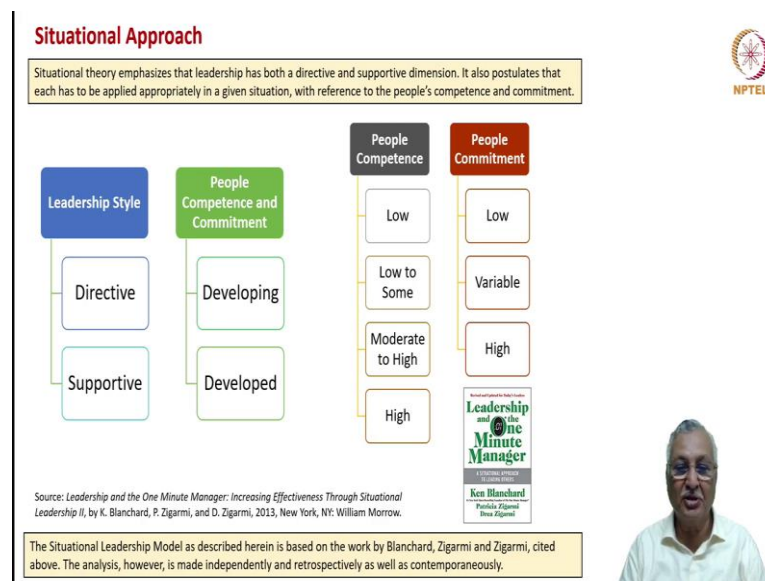
There are two aspects of situational approach as far as leadership is concerned as per the theory. One, leadership style, second, people competence and commitment. Leadership style is seen to be directive or supportive. People competence and commitment is seem to be developing or developed. Within people competence, there are two ends low and high and in between, we have low to some and moderate to high.

With reference to people commitment again between low and high there is variable level of people commitment that is the broad framework of this situational approach and the

theory is that the directive or supportive style of leadership must be adaptive to the type of people competence and the type of people commitment a leader faces, as part of his leadership task. The reference for the theory is cited in this footnote.

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Situational leadership theory talks about three principles steps. One, the leader must evaluate the followers on their capabilities and commitment levels to perform a given goal. Leaders must also analyze how the competence and commitment of followers may vary over time.

And leaders should change the degree to which their style needs to be changed to adapt to the follower's competency and commitment combination. It assumes therefore, that the leaders are able to understand their own leadership styles and also appreciate the commitment and competence levels of the employees.
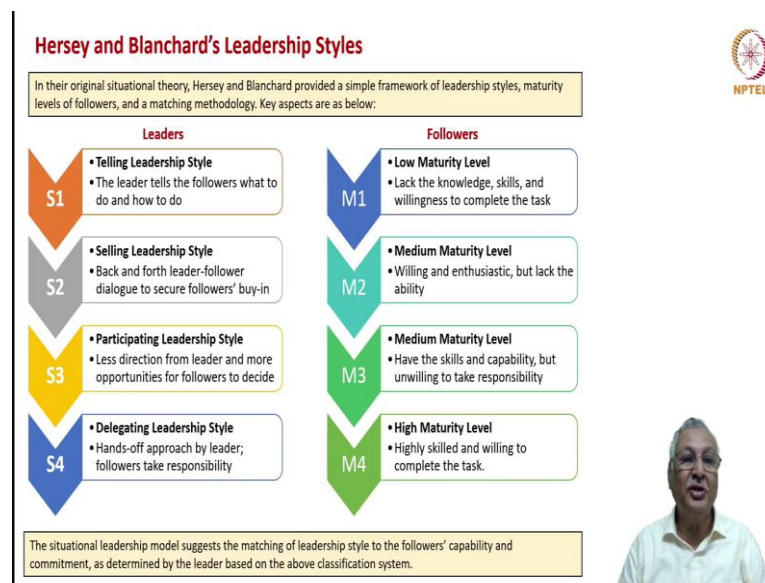
So, the leadership style as per the Hersey and Blanchard's theory is as follows: there are four types of leadership styles and there are four types of followers. The leadership styles vary depending upon the types of followers the leader has in his team. S1 is the telling leadership style. It is akin to the task-oriented leadership style that is the leader tells the followers what to do and how to do.

S2 is the selling leadership style. This style goes back and forth between the leader and the follower in terms of a dialogue to secure followers buy in. S3 is the participating leadership style wherein there is less level of direction from the leader and a greater level of support from the leader for followers to exploit their opportunities. S4 is the delegating leadership style where buy and large the leader follows a hands-off approach that is because the followers take responsibility.

As far as followers are concerned, there are four types of maturity levels that are identified. M1 is the lowest maturity level. Employees are individuals, falling in this group lack the knowledge, skills and willingness to complete the task. In M2 level, which is the medium maturity level, people are willing and enthusiastic, but they lack the competencies to deliver on the task.

In M3, medium maturity level, another medium maturity level, the employees or the individuals will have the skills and capabilities, but they are unwilling to take responsibility. And in M4, which characterizes the high maturity level, people are highly

skilled as also highly committed. The S4 delegating leadership style typically corresponds with the M4 high maturity level of employees. Whereas, S1 telling leadership style corresponds generally to the low maturity level.

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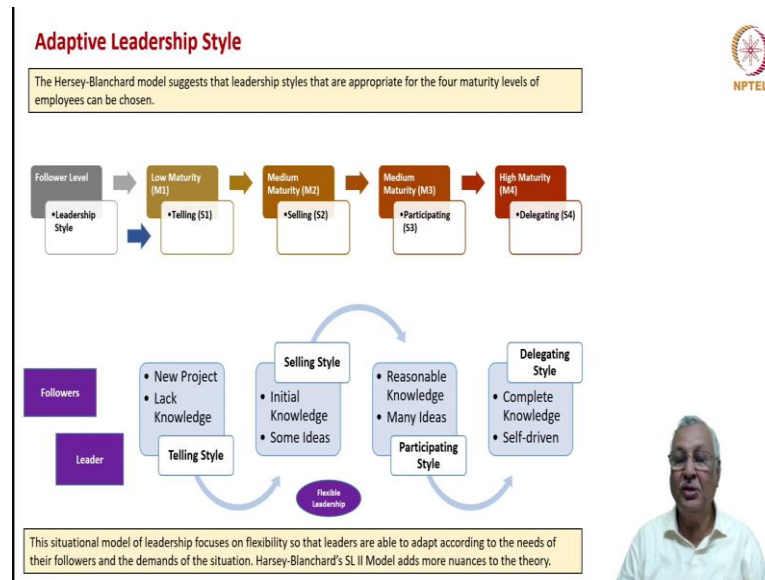
Let us look at this adaptive leadership style. I have shown at the bottom half, the followers and leader were telling style, selling style, participating style and delegating style would be effective. Let us take a project and let us assume the project is new; therefore, the people lack competence or knowledge to handle that task, in which case the leader must have the ability to identify that approach of the people and adopt a telling style.

On the other hand, let us say they have a knowledge level which is adequate to start the project or get on with some aspects of the project and they have some ideas to execute, in which case there could be a dialogue between the leader and the followers as to the applicability of their ideas and how together they could progress the project that is the selling style.

Whereas in case, the people have reasonable knowledge with several ideas, the participating style would be more relevant with the leader allowing the employees or the individuals come up with various ideas in action and finally, in the delegating style, the followers will have complete knowledge of the project, they have the ability to execute

and they also exhibit high level of enthusiasm and commitment so, the leader would adapt that delegating style.

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The Hersey and Blanchard have also developed a more evolved SL II model which adds a few more nuances to this. Blanchard's situational leadership II model, SL II model classifies leaders and followers as follows: S1, S2, S3, S4 remain the same in terms of the symbolism, but S1 is defined as a directing leadership style which is very high on directing behaviours and low on supporting behaviours.

S2 is the coaching leadership style which is high on both directing and supporting behaviours. S3 is the supporting leadership style. Previously, it was participative leadership style which is low on directing behaviour and high on supporting behaviours and S4 is the delegating leadership style which is low on both directing and supporting behaviours.

As far as the followers is concerned, this classification does not have the very low maturity categorization at the start. D1 starts with an enthusiastic beginner with high commitment even if with low competence. D2 is the disillusioned learner, some competence, but setbacks lead to low level of commitment. D3 is a capable and cautious performing individual type with increasing level of competence, but the level of commitment varies. D4 is this self-reliant achiever with high competence and high commitment.

I would like to caution that D1 to D4 should not be seen as a gradation. It is not that an employee or an individual start with the D1 and proceeds through D2 and D3 stages to D4. In fact, D1, D2, D3, D4 represent different clusters of individual prototypes. The matching of leadership style with the follower's competence and commitment is the bedrock of situation leadership number II model as well.

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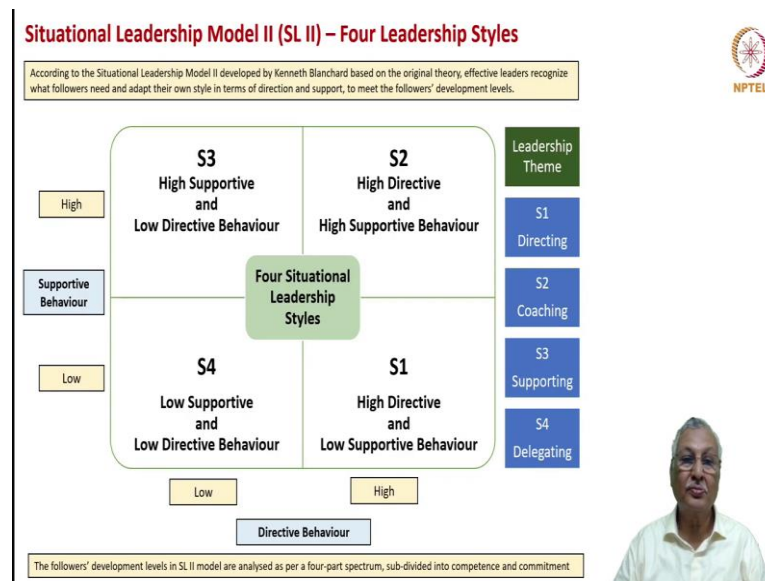
So, if you want to combine directive behaviour and supportive behaviour in terms of S1, S2, S3, S4 styles, high directive and low supportive behaviour classifies as S1 which is overall directing behaviour. S2 behaviour which is the coaching behaviour is a high directive and high supportive behaviour.

S3 which is high supportive and low directive behaviour is the overall supporting behaviour and S4 low supportive and low directive behaviour is the delegating behaviour. Low supportive, low directive behaviour corresponds with high capability and high commitment levels of the employees. It is a four-part spectrum.
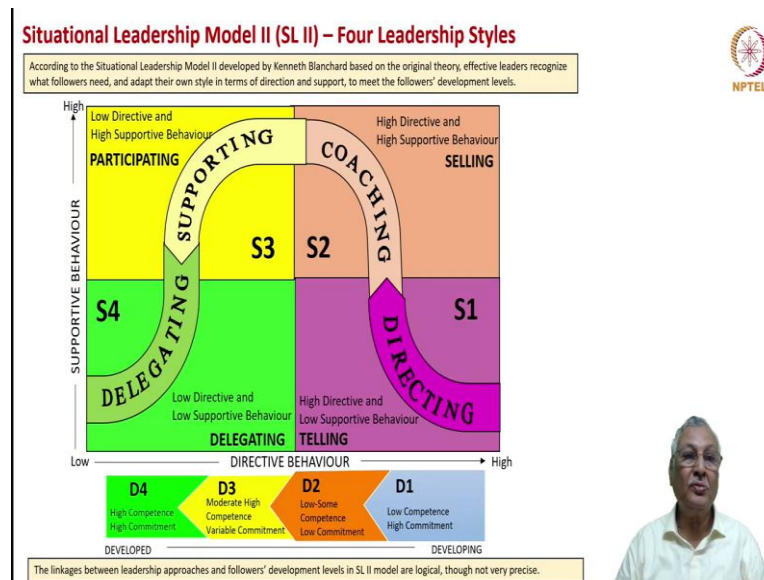
SL II model classifies the leadership styles relating them to the developmental levels of individuals as follows. S1 which is the directing level corresponds to the low competence and high commitment group of individuals. S2 which is the coaching level of leadership and also correspondingly the earlier selling level of leadership, corresponds to low or some level of competence on the part of individuals which is accompanied by low level of commitment.

S3 which is for individuals with moderate, high competence and variable commitment; it is a supporting type of leadership corresponding again to participating leadership style of the original model, which involves low directive and high supportive behaviour.

Finally, S4 which is the delegating type of leadership is concerned with high competence and high commitment on the part of individuals. It is a low directive and low supportive behaviour leadership style. So, this is the four-part leadership quadrant which is relevant for relating the leadership style to the employee competency and commitment mix.

So, we can see it in a more clearer fashion through this. The low leadership direction, low-medium direction, medium-high direction and high leadership direction is a continuum of leadership activities. High leadership direction is worthwhile when there is low competence and high commitment, that is people can be encouraged to learn and deliver on the subject. Medium to high leadership directive level is relevant when there is low to some competence similarly, there is low commitment.

Low to medium directive effort on the part of the leader becomes relevant when there is moderate to high competence and variable commitment and finally, low leadership direction becomes relevant when there is high competence and high commitment on the part of the employee.

Conceptually, I would emphasize that the entire basis of situational leadership model is that the leader has the ability to analyze his own leadership style and also analyze the followers in terms of their competencies and commitments, analyze the employees in terms of their competency and commitment levels.
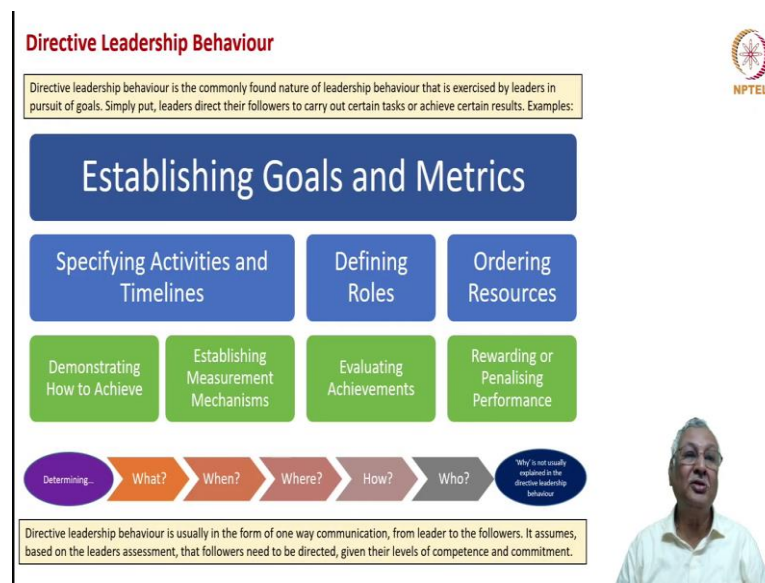
What does directive leadership behaviour mean? It is almost akin to the task leadership behaviour, that is establishing goals and metrics, specifying activities and timelines, defining roles, arranging resources, demonstrating how to achieve, establishing measurement systems, evaluating achievement and rewarding or penalizing performance or non-performance respectively.

So, the directive leadership is focused more on these five questions, what, when, where, how and who. It does not answer the question why, because directive leadership assumes that the employees need to be told what they need to do, and they need not necessarily be explained about the whole concept.

Directive leadership behaviour is usually in the form of one-way communication from the leader to the employees. The leader has to make the correct judgments on the competence levels of the followers. If the competence levels are indeed high, but the leader assumes that the competence levels are low and starts directing them, then the results would be disastrous.

Therefore, it is important for a leader to understand the type of employees he has in terms of the competencies and commitment levels and this is true for all the other three models as well.

Whereas the supportive leadership behaviour which is at the other polarity, emphasizes two-way communication that demonstrate social and emotional support to each other. It asks for input and feedback on directives and modifying the directives as necessary. Even with reference to the supportive leadership, the leader's primary responsibility is to offer directives.

However, those directives will not be dictatorial nor will they be one-sided. There will be feedback that would be sought and then, there would be corrective actions that would be taken. So, and a supportive leader may also seek ideas proactively, he or she will praise the performance of the employees or the individuals concern, council non-performance before taking penal action, constraints and bottlenecks will be eliminated and freedom of action will be provided as appropriate.

The supportive leader takes enough time to explain what, when, where, how and most importantly the why and that is done proactively so that there is a sense of ownership belongingness on the part of the individuals.

It is important to emphasis here that supportive leadership means a two-way communication between the leader and the followers and the leader understands that the employees need support. Because they also have their intrinsic ability to do a few things and they also have an intrinsic enthusiasm to carry out the project.

S1, High Directive-Low Supportive Style: *Directing Approach*

The high directive and low supportive style is applicable when the followers display low competence and high commitment, and hence need to be directed strongly. With high level of commitment, such followers accept high direction and low support.

High Direction to Followers

- High one-way communication on goals, tasks, and need to achieve
- Clear prescription of pathways
- Intense monitoring of how and to what extent goals are achieved
- Emphasis on performance aspect of rewards
- Matters of direction as above taken up most of the time

- Little, if at all any, enquiry on working conditions and employee needs
- No intention to seek ideas and feedback from followers
- No understanding of constraints and bottlenecks faced
- No intention to understand the employee ecosystem
- Small amount of time on supportive matters as above

Low Support to Followers

S1 style is very much dependent on the leader's task orientation. A leader with high task traits, in fact, could bias himself or herself that the followers are less competent and less committed than they actually are.

Let us understand these S1 to S4 in greater detail in terms of the characteristics. The high directive and low support style is applicable when followers display low competence and high commitment.

So, what is the high direction to follower meaning in terms of the actual parameters? One, high one-way communication on the goals, action plans, task and the need to achieve. Two, very clear prescription of pathways. Intense monitoring of how and what extent goals are to be achieved; and emphasis on the performance aspect of rewards as well as the penal aspect of non-performance. Matters of direction as about take most of the time for a directive oriented leader.

On the other hand, the leader spends very little time on matters of working conditions, employee issues. There would be no intention to seek any ideas, there would be no intention to understand the overall employee ecosystem, very little attention is paid to the constraints and problems which the employees face let alone over coming to them, as a result, very little time is spent on the supportive matters as above.

S1 style is very much dependent on the leader himself being task oriented. If the leader is basically non task oriented and highly participative in the personality style, it would be difficult for him to work as a high directive, low supportive style. So, it is also important that the leader understands his basic leadership traits and also his basic leadership behaviour which is natural to him.

It is also necessary to understand that if a leader is highly task oriented, there is also a probability that he would bias himself to think that the employees do not have that level of independence of judgment, that level of competence and they needed to be directed. So, a person should be able to analyze as a leader whether he is getting biased in terms of understanding, whether he is task oriented or non task oriented.

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In the high directive-high supportive style that is the coaching approach, there would be high direction to followers which will also be accompanied by high support to the followers. The high direction to followers will be more or less on the same lines as the high directive S1 behaviour which is high communication on goals, tasks and pathways, emphasis on rewards and penalties, link to performance or non-performance, matters of direction taking up significant amount of time.

However, these are supplemented by seeking feedback on goals, actions and results, involving with the employees in terms of the socio-emotive needs of the followers, understand the working conditions, overcoming the barriers to work, removing the constraints and spending enough time on the supportive ecosystem.

So, again here, the leaders must understand the kind of natural intrinsic traits and the behavioural style which he or she possesses, so that, it could be properly adapted to the type of employees he is having in his group.

S3 is a high supportive-low directive style. In this supporting approach, high supportive behaviour clearly rings out in terms of bringing the followers capability to accomplish goals. This supportive approach includes listening to the feedback, seeking ideas, providing suggestions, receiving suggestions and praising good performance.

In supportive system, leaders work on the task along with the followers as and when required. There is also significant emphasis on debottlenecking, providing appropriate working conditions for employees and spending enough time on developing a supportive ecosystem.

On the low direction to followers, the accompaniment is in terms of high level of two-way communication on goals, actions and results, certainly not one-way communication. Putting a lot of power and control in the hands of the followers to plan and execute on a day-to-day basis. The supportive leader gives lot of freedom, but at the same time retains the overall responsibility and accountability to accomplish the results.

So, along with the focus on task, efforts are made to resolve the constraints and bottlenecks and making sure that the individuals are on the course to achieve the targets. Less time on directive actions and instructions relative to S1 and S2 approaches characterizes the supporting approach leaders.

S4 leaders or delegating type as I said, they completely believe in their leader's capability and commitment. They provide low support to the followers also they provide low direction to followers. Very less task input, very high supportive input. Building the favorable and positive working climate for employees extremely important for the delegating approach.

The leader does not question what is being done either at the micro level or at the macro level. This does not mean that the leader who believes in the delegate approach does not set the overall goals or describe the overall strategy. The leader's responsibility whatever be the approach taken S1 to S4, is primarily in terms of setting the goals and defining the strategy.

Inner freedom is given in the delegating approach for people to come up with their strategic approaches, so that the leader can select an appropriate strategic approach and delegation also involves keeping a track from behind at least as to what is happening and eventually owning up the results both from the employers perspective as well as the employees perspective, this is very important.

The S4 leader lessens the involvement with direction significantly. Again, it is dependent on the leader's ability to down regulate both the supportive approaches and the task approaches which may be inherently present as traits as well as behavioural approaches in the leadership personality.

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So, to summarize, S1 to S4 leadership styles, what do they mean. S1 is directing approach, high direction and low support. S2 coaching, high direction and high support. S3 supporting that is high support and low direction. S4 delegating, low support and low direction; these four approaches are very much dependent on the follower's competence and commitment.

The entire situation leadership style model collapses if there is imperfection in understanding what the employees represent, what the individuals represent. So, the building blocks for the situation leadership theory come from understanding the employee capabilities and employee motivations and also the leader's ability to up regulate or down regulate his task or support behaviours accordingly.

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So, typically in any organization, you have a number of followers and a leader, he has the primary responsibility to give a task and to establish a relationship and the leader style is determined by the development level and leader approach combination. One can say the employee force is completely developed when they know how to undertake the task all by themselves, so that, the goals can be achieved and when they have the interest and confidence in the work.

We can say that the employees are at a developing level when they are collecting the knowledge bits to take on the project, they have therefore, low skill or knowledge for the task and goal. Whenever we say low skill or low competence in situational theory, it does not mean lack of competence; it is all the level of competence relative to the task or the project on hand.

Have the motivation and commitment to accomplish the task and goal is also another important aspect of developing level of the individuals.

So, skills and capabilities are on one hand, commitment and enthusiasm on the other. These are the important parameters of the employee development level and if you are able to combine competence and commitment in a synergistic fashion, then the workforce would be very productive and very helpful to the leader.

So, to summarize the development level 1, D1 is low in competence and high in commitment. The followers are new to a goal, not quite skilled in accomplishing it, but excited and enthusiastic to learn and accomplish. In D2, which is the development level 2, there is some level of competence, but there is also low level of commitment. They began skilling themselves for the job but are not motivated on the way.

D3 which is the development level 3, displays moderate to high competence, but have only a variable commitment to the job. People are skilled at the job but lack the confidence to accomplish. In D4, which is the development level 4, the employees exhibit high competence and high commitment, but they also are very skilled at the job and self-driven to accomplish the job.

Apparently, it is very difficult to classify employees precisely as D1 or D2 or D3 or D4. Particularly, if a group comprises a large number of individuals, how many D1's are there, how many D2's are there, how many D3's are there or how many D4's are there, it is very difficult to characterize; and even more so whether the group as a whole is D1 or D2, D3 or D4. So, this is the challenge which is involved in the situational leadership theory, but it provides a pathway.
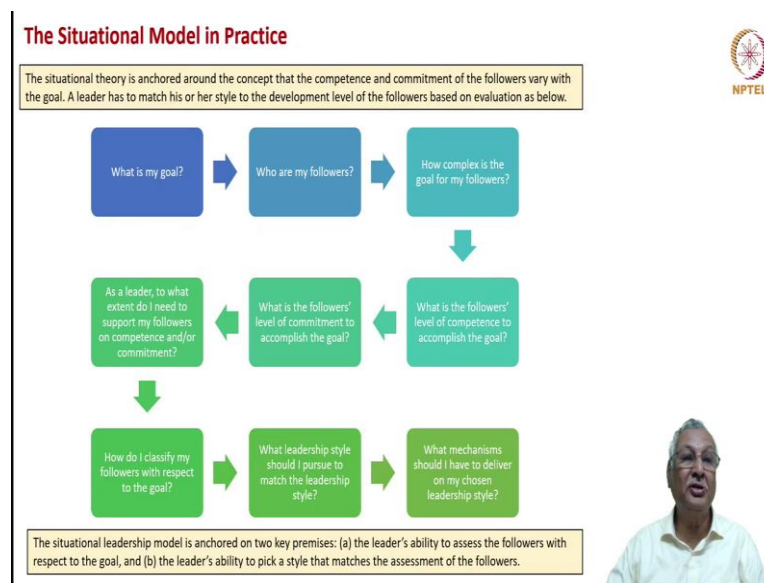
So, how does a leader put a situational model in practice? He starts with asking himself or herself, what is my goal, who are my followers, how complex is the goal for my followers, what is the follower's level of competence to deliver on the task and to accomplish the goal and what is the follower's level of commitment to accomplish the goal. This is the core analysis of the leader's task as well as the follower's capabilities and commitment.

Then, he questions himself, as a leader to what extent do I need to support my followers on competence and or commitment, given that, how do I classify my followers with respect to the goal, that is where the competency and commitment classification comes D1 to D4.

And therefore, what leadership style should I pursue to match the leadership style, that is required for the followers. So, there is a leadership style which is inherent in me, but I need to have leadership style that matches the follower's classification, that is why I say a leadership style that should be pursued to match this leadership style required and what mechanisms should I have to deliver my chosen leadership style; this is the ability.

So, the two key premises here are A: the leader has the ability to assist the followers with respect to the goal and the leader's ability to pick a style that matches the assessment of the followers and this is a variable paradigm, it is not that once certain followers are classified as D1 to D4 in any manner, it would hold good irrespective of the nature of the

project. For a different project, D4 could be D1, and D1 could be D4, or D2, D3 can be inter changed, I mean they the number of permutations and combinations that could arise out of the situational leadership model are immense.

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So, let us take two very simple examples. Let us say house is being constructed. We have a mason, we have a plumber, we have an electrician and options are there for all the three people to work also as the painter because here painter is missing and house requires a painting work to be done.

Let us also assume that the mason is skilled and excited about painting because it is contiguous to his capability, but plumber, he is, who is skilled, but he is not excited is a possibility. Similarly, an electrician who is skilled in painting, but not excited is also a possibility.

So, we can classify these three behavioural approaches and competency approaches as mason being D4, plumber being D3 and electrician being D2. So, if civil engineer wants to choose each of these three to deliver the painting job through each of these persons, the leader needs to apply delegating approach that is the S4 approach to the mason, supporting approach that is the S3 approach to the plumber and coaching approach which is S2 to the electrician.

Let us take the same example from a different perspective. Again, mason, painter, plumber are available and they have all the options to work as the electrician. Let us assume for a change that mason is needing to learn and not excited. Plumber also leading to learn, but excited. Painter to learn, but somewhat excited, which means that mason is in D2 category, plumber is in D1 category and painter in D3 category and unlike the previous classification, nobody is in D4.

The leader then needs to apply a coaching approach which is S2 to mason, directing approach which is S1 to the plumber and supporting approach which is S3 to electrician. So, for the same project with the different perspectives on the part of the individuals, the leader has to apply different classification criteria and different leadership criteria. This is the essence of this situational model.

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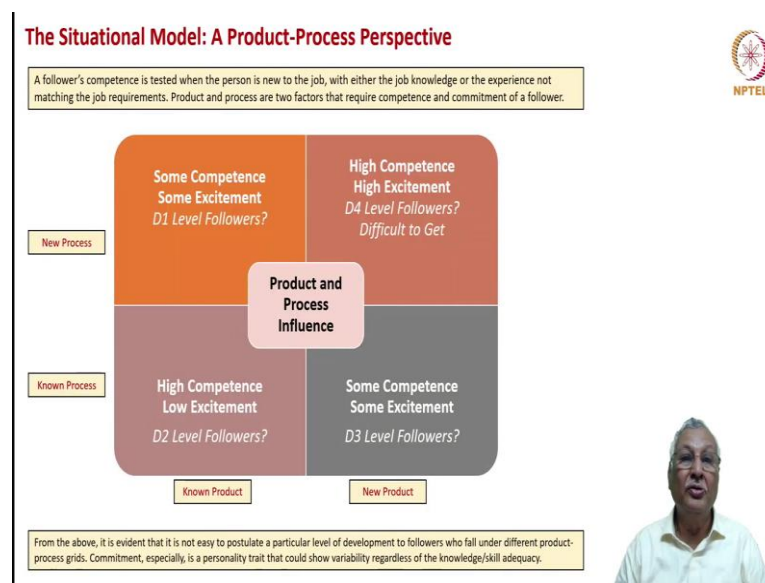
You can amplify this for the firm as a whole. We discuss several ways in which a firm can be seen, for the purpose of the situational leadership theory, let us look at two classifications. One is the product-process classification, that is, the product is known or new. A process by which you manufacture the product is known or is new.

So, if the product is known and also the process is known, there is obviously, a high competence level in the employees or the individuals. They will display high competence accompanied by low excitement. Why do we say low excitement? Because they have been doing it all along and they are not excited anymore to do that repetitively. Are they

D2 level of followers? Maybe. They are certainly not D1 level of followers because they have got high competence and low excitement whereas, D1 level envisages low competence and with enthusiasm so, they are not.

So, there is some level of distinction in classification as far as these combinations are concerned. Similarly, if you have new product which is to be manufactured with a known process, there is some competence because people have worked on the process and there is also some excitement because turning out a new product based on the known process is some challenge, these people typically are the D3 level followers.

Then, you may have a known product which is being manufactured through a new process; there is some competence which is available again because the product is known although the process is unknown and there is some excitement because again you are having some challenge, are they the D1 level followers? Because handling a new process could be a greater challenge to some people so are that they D1 level follower's? Question.

Suppose it is a new product and a new process, you really need. Here, I am not talking about the people available, what is required I am trying to talk about. You really need high competence and high excitement people that is D4 level followers and such followers are difficult to get that is the challenge.

So, it is not merely the job of selecting a leadership style to the follower's competency and commitment matrix, but actually to understand what is the kind of followers do I need.

So, the situational leadership theory is limited in the sense that it only ask the leader to apply a particular leadership style depending upon the particular combination of the competence and capability in the followers. It does not tell the leader as to what to do to get the requisite type of follower classification in his team and obviously, that is a different topic which we will examine as part of this course as we go along.

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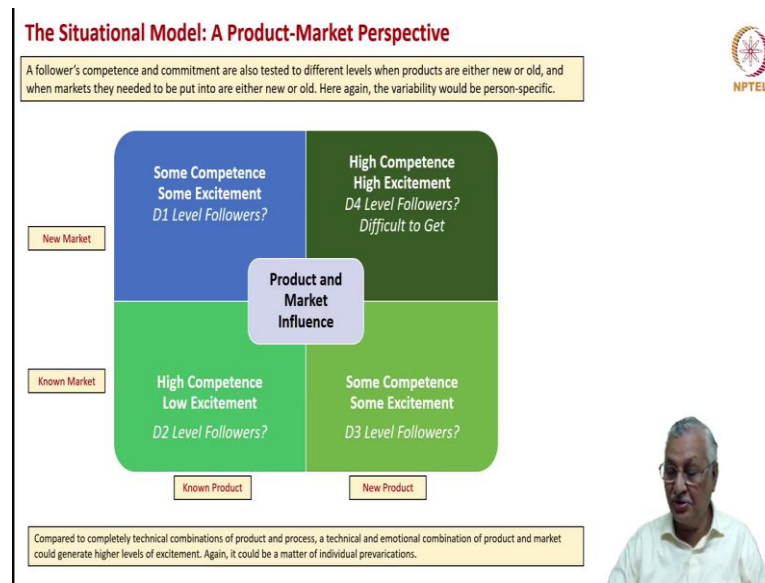
Again, let us look at the situational model from a product-market perspective. Let us think that there is a product which is known to the employees and the leader, there is also a new product. These two types of products are to be sold either in a known market or in a new market. Similarly, known product in a known market leads to high competence high learning effect, but low excitement, D2 level followers question mark.

New product in a known market, some competence, some excitement, D3 level followers a question mark; a known product in a new market, there is going to be some level of competence in some excitement probably D1 level of followers and again we need high competence, high excitement group of people D4 level followers to be able to take the firm to great heights with new product and new markets.

So, you may have a strategy of having a new product and new market as a valid diversification approach, but if the organization is not built to turn out D4 level followers, you are going to have a challenge, that is again an offshoot of the situational leadership theory which is not exactly discussed in detail in the situational leadership model.

We, that is our responsibility to discuss this as we go forward with the case studies and also the theoretical insights as part of our course. So, you focus more in this a technical and emotional combination of followers rather than a technical-technical combination which is another interesting aspect of this situational leadership model.

So, what are the advantages of situational approach? First of all, compared to the previous two theories, it brings the followers into the picture, that is one of the greatest advantages of situational approach. It tells also the leader that there is no one single approach, there are at least four different approaches to manage people because people can be classified in any of the four clusters.

There is also a lot of well-known research available over hundreds of training programs on this situational approach that was conducted fortune 500 companies. The linkage which the approach provides between the leaders on one hand and they followers on the other hand is a valuable contribution. It brings focus on followers as the main instruments for carrying out a particular task and accomplishing the goal.

In a sense, it is practical, intuitive and sensible. It is also a very straightforward definition. If the followers lack commitment, you have to support them and direct them. If the followers have commitment, but lack competency, you have to direct them. So, that way it is practical, intuitive and sensible.

It provides direct advice to the leaders on how to be effective without being far too descriptive, without being far too qualitative. It refuses to straight-jacket leaders and followers into fixed personality sets. It provides adequate number of prisms to classify the employees and the leaders based on the goals and the projects on hand.

It also flags the fact that each project and each follower group is distinct and separate from each other. Therefore, the leadership style has to be customized. Typically, the leader remains the same, but the projects and the followers keep varying that is where the adaptive nature of the situational leadership comes into play. These are the advantages which definitely qualify for serious understanding of the situational approach in a practical context.

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But there are also criticisms is very practical rather than very research based. When we say practical, what we mean is that it is practiced, but the results of this practice have not been enumerated nor validated. Large research base is not available.

Then, the foundation of the model is somewhat ambiguous because the terms are very subjective, what you think is the low level of commitment could be seen as a high-level of commitment by another leader. Similarly, what is seen as a low level of competence for a particular project could be seen as a high level of competence for another kind of project.

Suppose you are developing engines for a commercial vehicle. If you are developing an engine for an IC engine based commercial vehicle, your expertise as an engine developer is high expertise. However, if you are doing that for electric commercial vehicle, your expertise is of no use, you may understand what an engine means, but you do not understand what a powertrain means. Therefore, you are at a loss to adapt your IC

engine-based knowledge into an electric automobile. Therefore, the level of competence varies from project to project.

Another serious limitation of this situational approach is that D1 to D4 is not a natural progression. There is no science behind that, nor there is any art which says that a D1 follower can become a D4 follower by adopting ABCD type of inputs and development mechanisms that is the biggest drawback of this situational approach.

Again, when we try to classify individuals based on commitment and competence, how do we develop a formula which combines these two, somewhat dissimilar dimensions of an individual's spectrum. So, how do you develop a competence measure? How do you develop a commitment measure and how do you combine both of these things and what should be the weightage intersect between these two factors? Again, a big question mark.

And the variability of commitment across the development continuum is by definition in the theory very poor. It just talks about varied level of commitment. What is varied level of commitment mean? Is it 50 percent, 70 percent? What does it mean? Therefore, one could even think that there are more weaknesses than advantages in this situational approach. However, when we think that the situational approach can be adopted relatively more successfully to small organizations than to large organizations, the perspective of this situational approach becomes a little more clearer for us.

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Criticisms of the Situational Approach -2

The situational theory flounders in defining the follower developmental levels and the related logic for leaders to follow different leadership styles.

The theory has been tested only in university, banking and military settings, and that too with limited validity and replicability.

The theory vests the leader with great perspicacity in analysing the followers. In doing so, it ignores the need for the leaders to have certain competencies themselves.

The model does not account for the importance of personal traits, demographic influences, gender diversity or cultural factors on followers.

The questionnaires on work situations are limited in scope with responses sought on the four types of leadership style (directing, coaching, supporting and delegating), leading to forced responses.

By linking the leadership style with individual followers, the model places itself into an unwieldy zone. The importance of group leadership vis-à-vis bilateral leadership is completely ignored.

The research findings related to situational theory are limited to certain specific non-industrial settings and could not present evidence to support the basic prescriptions of the situational approach.

There of course, other criticism of the situational approach that it has been tested only in the university, military and banking settings, therefore, it is not applicable for the wider corporate world and also it expects the leader to be very intelligent, very emotionally stable in understanding the employees both in terms of their technical capabilities and the emotional capabilities. So, the leader must be one who has got a lot of task intelligence as well as emotional intelligence.

The model does not account for the importance of personal traits. The linkage between the leadership style and the personality traits that is ignored; nor, does it account for demographic influences, gender diversity or cultural factors with respect to the follower's profile.

Again, the whole thing is based on questionnaires and those questionnaires are very limited based on trying to understand whether the leadership style is directive, coaching, supporting or delegating. It does not give a more open framework to develop more leadership styles. Therefore, the responses are forced.

By linking the leadership style with individual behaviours, the model places itself into an unwieldy zone. As you can imagine the more the number of employees, the more the number of groups and the more the number of projects, the kind of analysis that is required to cluster the followers and to define the linkages would become correspondingly unwieldy. So, these are the additional criticisms of this approach.

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So, how do we convert this situational leadership theory which is a generally developed for small groups and non-industrial settings to something which is applicable and relevant to an industrial situation. So, I take three particular institutional mechanisms to talk about in this context.

The situational theory may be more suited for leaders and managers who deal with very specific performance situations and very specific team constituencies. Three are described here, for example, the board of directors. In a board of directors, which is the apex governing body of the company charged with the responsibility of overall corporate governance for the company apart from strategic direction and strategic performance.

Directors are usually coming from different backgrounds; all the directors are competent and several of them are having sufficient years or even decades of experience to advise the company's executive management on their tasks. But not necessarily every director would be from the same industry of the firm that is the challenge here. But, because the directors are having a same approach to undertaking the governance tasks because the directors have high level of competence.

And generally, they are likely to be enthusiastic and committed to their task, the situational approach could be very useful and it could also be useful because the chairman or the CEO of the board has the primary responsibility to interface with the various directors and also help in the constitution of the committees and also interact with the reference to the committees working.

Therefore, the situational leadership model could probably be very useful for board of directors to be managed by a chairman or the CEO.

Then, the second institutional apparatus is the senior leadership team. Senior leadership team means CEO and the CXOs. This is the most visible leadership team of the company charged with the strategic and operational responsibility for the growth of the company both revenue, profitability, market share and various other parameters.

SLT members usually are very senior members of the executive management responsible for large functions or businesses or for clusters of functions and clusters of business. They all pursue their own functional or business goals, but they also recognize the need

to be collaborative with each other so that the overall corporate goals or conglomerate goals are achieved.

Many times, the CEO needs to apply multiple leadership styles as the CEO deals with the SLT members. There is no way in which a CEO can deal with the head of HR in the same manner as he deals with the operations head or the R&D head. Therefore, there is a challenge in managing the SLT and this is where probably a situational approach could come in handy.

The third organizational apparatus which will come into being is the cross functional team. Time to time organizations have significant challenges in undertaking special projects for example, when a chemicals company wants to introduce products which are environment friendly, it is a special job which needs to be done along with the day jobs the company does through the regular departments.

So, a cross functional team is constituted to understand whether it is possible for developing environmentally friendly chemicals which are equally effective, but have lower environmental impact that means, that cross functional team should have individuals who have got expertise in the various fields which are involved in the development and manufacture of chemicals.

But at the same time no individual member will have the competence to be able to develop such a chemical and such an individual would also not be able to put that chemical into the operating process or the manufacturing process. Therefore, individuals are competent in a cross functional team, but they lack the competence that is required to deliver on the goal prima facie, they need to develop those competencies.

But at the same time, people who are enrolled for cross functional team are full of energy and enthusiasm because they recognize that the cross functional team is a mechanism for them to deliver something out of box for the company and if they are able to perform exceedingly well, they are likely to be recognized and their leadership capability more often than not rewarded through faster career track. So, that is the importance of a cross functional team.

So, the leader of a cross functional team is likely to be one amongst the equal even if he is not first among the equals, but at the same time, he or she is also expected to possess

some leading-edge knowledge and leading-edge project management experience or superior communication skills so that the entire assemblage of the cross-sectional team members becomes an alchemy which is very powerful.

Again, situational leadership approach may be very useful in talking about the cross functional effectiveness of a CFT. So, if this being the foundation let us look at how these a situational leadership approaches which we have discussed are applicable to each of these things.

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See board of directors typically comprises executive directors that is the whole-time directors usually belonging to the company itself and non-executive directors who come from other companies.

To be a non-executive director is an avocation for such directors and typically they tend to be either independent directors or non-independent directors. Executive directors, needless to say, are usually aligned with the strategies, goals and action paths of the company and they belong to different functions or businesses of the company.

Independent NEDs on the other hand, they come with different perspectives. They have got the capability to run a large company, but they have decided that henceforth their main avocation is to provide that wisdom and the governance perspective rather than provide their day-to-day management or leadership capabilities.

So, it is the seasoned wisdom that comes through the directors for the board; but depending on the backgrounds they come from, the directors may vary both in terms of the competence and commitment again with no disrespect to the classification.

When we say competence, if you are a director on the board of an automobile company and you come from an electronics background, you are not obviously, going to be as competent as a director from full hearted automobile experience, that is the subtle difference of competence as measured in these situational leadership theory models.

Similarly, when we talk about commitment, it does not mean that they are emotionally less committed, because being a director on the board is a full-time avocation for such directors and company law permits a director to be on the board and on the audit committees and other committees of several companies, it is not possible for a director to spend all the time on the work he has taken up.

So, some directors who have got very few directorships may spend a lot of time and display a lot of commitment, whereas, directors who have spread themselves thin, may not be able to provide an equivalent level of commitment and enthusiasm. So, directors also can be classified in terms of their competence and commitment with the reference to the company.

So, the chairman of the board when he looks at these directors and when he interfaces with them and interacts with them, he has the crucial responsibility in interacting in such a manner, that each of those directors who in his own capacity or her own capacity happens to be an industry veteran is appropriately leveraged.

So, the development level that characterizes most directors could be moderate to high competence with reference to the firm and the industry with variable level of commitment, which is strictly related to the time they are able to spend. Therefore, the most appropriate situation leadership style could be one of supporting style that is which reflects high supportive and low directive behaviour on the part of the leader, S3 style.

That is, you should be enabling the directors spend enough time through an innovative committee mechanisms or innovative scheduling of tasks or continuous interface by various means, supporting style. And low directive behaviour, because the directors really need no direction because they themselves have been chairman or managing

directors of other companies or otherwise very well educated in various other fields and very well experienced in various other avocations.

So, boards have crucial responsibility in governing corporations, taking care of the interests of all the stakeholders. It is very important that the board of directors is managed in a manner that the full potential of the seasoned wise directors is brought to the fore for the benefit of the company.

This requires the chairman and the CEO to apply the situational leadership model in a very discriminating manner to the leadership of the board of directors itself. So, very clearly situational leadership model is relevant for the board of directors.

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Now, let us look at this situational leadership style. As I said senior leadership team comprises these CXOs, the CSO, COOs, CFOs, CHRO for example, and at times supported by a very senior chief of staff as well. The CXOs would have very specific goals. They are collaborative because they are part of the larger leadership team which is looked upon for developing the growth of the company.

But at the same time they also have their internal checks and balances, they also have their internal levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, they also have competitive dynamics in case they happen to head functions which are in either disarray or in strong

ascendance or businesses which are doing very well or not doing so well. So, there are various kinds of dynamics which SLT members are subject to.

Nevertheless, in terms of fulfilling CXO goals because there would be variations in the capabilities and commitments based on their experiences inside and outside the company, they are also amenable to some kind of classification.

All CXOs may not process the same level of competence, there have been examples where people came from FMCG background into pharmaceutical companies to run their development process and have not been competent to the desired extent, relative to a pharmacist leader who has grown in the company. Therefore, competence could be a question mark.

Although those people may bring in different level of competence, a supply chain leader in pharmaceutical industry is considered to benefit significantly when the leader has got an FMCG experience or an automobile experience, but that is not applicable as I said in innovative activities of pharmaceutical industry by no means an engine developer can be a pharmaceutical developer.

So, there are limits. So, if the development of CXO team is done without such basic principles or if a CEO inherits a varied CXO team, then there would also be these dynamics of competence as well as commitment. So, how do we classify the CXOs? There could be two types of classifications which CXOs could lend themselves to.

One, high competence-high commitment, D4, absolutely fine that is going to be a firm which is well above the industry average in terms of its growth and sustainability. There could also be moderate to high competence with variable commitment, D3 level and most of the industries have firms which are at industry average level and the firms which are at industry average level typically have D3 level CXOs functioning.

Therefore, the leader must choose a situationally appropriate leadership style to handle his CXO team. It could be a low supportive-low directive behaviour that is the S4 style when the leaders are the D4 type or you can choose an S3 style which is a high supportive and low directive take into account that SLT members are having high competence, but with variable commitment.

So, that is the way in which the situational leadership model gets applied to a senior leadership team. And this is very important for CEO to recognize because SLT's are recognized as the powerhouse of strategy and operational efficiency, they drive strategy and execution for the company ensure growth with sustainability. So, a CEO cannot manage only by personal aura or by personal interfaces with the SLT members.

The CEO should be able to precisely place each of the CXO member on the competency commitment spectrum and adapt a leadership style which brings out the best in terms of the SLT member and eventually the task would be to bring all the SLT members to the D4 level, high commitment and high competency, that is the way in which SLT's can benefit from situational leadership style.

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Then, we get to cross functional teams. As I said, cross functional teams are specially constituted to carry out certain extraordinary task that is beyond the imagination or beyond the capability of existing formal bureaucratic structures. They typically have very specific goals; very specific timelines and the membership is drawn from the best possible talent availability.

And the expectation is that they would deliver out of the box solutions for some problems and each CFT will have an elected head or a designated head who would need to serve both as a subject matter expert and also as a project manager so that ideas are

provided, competencies are reinforced, but at the same time progress is nudged on a continuing basis.

Typically, SFT's will have individuals of high competence because the best of each department is chosen for participating in a CFT usually subject Matter Experts, I said. Their specification is that they should be goal oriented and they should put in their best to ensure that the CFT's work successfully.

Because the goal for the CFT member is new to every member, it is not likely that their high level of competence will automatically translate itself into high level of competence with respect to the project that has been taken. Therefore, there could be shades of competence with reference to the project in mind.

But certainly, every member of the CFT and the CFT as a whole would demonstrate a very high level of commitment to the success of the CFT given the stakes involved and also the visibility that a CFT would enjoy. The leader of a CFT would have several challenges. One challenge would be to ensure that the diversity that is existing in the CFT is managed very well.

If you kind of conceptually look at this challenge, a CFT is almost like a company just as a CEO is managing different functions, a leader of a CFT is expected to manage experts belonging to different functional strength. So, he has to blend multiple backgrounds into a cohesive team that has goals that supersede that functional allegiances.

Given these characteristics and given also that the project is expected to be of a high challenge nature, the development level that characterizes most CFT members would be some competence with varied commitment or low competence with high commitment that is the likely combination in the CFT.

And it is not that these levels will be same throughout the functioning of the CFT, people could start in this fashion and eventually progress towards D4 as they move along in the CFT, because they are high performers, they have high level of learning capability and they are charged with passion and commitment to deliver on the project.

The most appropriate situational leadership style for the head of CFT could therefore, be one of coaching style, which brings a little high direction and a little of high supportive

behaviour in combination, so that the best of the participants is brought in. It could also be directing style when the knowledge gap between the CFT leader and the participants is significantly different.

Let us look at an example. When Tata Motors wanted to enter small cars particularly the Indica type of cars, long ago, they brought in Sumantran, because he had the ability to manufacture passenger cars through an in-house development process and he took a cross functional team which could work on these cars because the knowledge that Sumantran could bring to the table was exceedingly high.

He was in a position to adopt an S1 style up to the point that the team members came up with their own capabilities and commitment levels which are of the D4 category. So, there is a special responsibility on the leader of the CFT to bring in an extra edge in terms of the competency required to deliver on the CFT goal.

CFTs are looked upon in the organizations as deliverers of something miraculous, something which is exceptional, and which is beyond the call of the bureaucratically organized, functional organizations or functional departments. They are brought in to solve specific problems.

The leader of the CFT must therefore, be pass master in CFT management which means that he should understand from a situational leadership style, what should be done to get the best out of the followers that is the challenge which a CFT leader has.

So, having considered the three styles which are applicable in three different settings, let us look at a summary. I have classified here, the board, the senior leadership team and the cross functional team in terms of the following factors: the follower development level, the situational leadership style and the remark.

So, as far as the board of directors is concerned, it is one follower development moderate to high competence with variable commitment and that level is D2 and the situational leadership style that is required is supporting style with high supportive and low directive behaviour, that is because we have a combination of executive and seasoned non-executive directors as part of the board of directors fully capable of leading big corporations.

As far as the senior leadership team is concerned, two types of development levels are possible; one type is high competence-high commitment. It is clearly an industry leading firm, D4 type of follower level. There could also be a mixed bag of SLT members, some from outside the industry, some with different organizational dynamics etcetera.

They could be classified as moderate to high competence leaders with variable commitment and the styles to be adopted in respect of both these follower levels is delegating style as far as the D4 level of SLT members are concerned and supporting style which is high supportive and low directive behaviour in respect of D3 type of SLT members and SLT is nothing but as I said full time senior leaders with the diversity of

corporate responsibilities and also with variation in dynamics both from external induction as well as from internal competition.

Then, we have cross functional team. Again, there would be two types of developmental levels; some competence with varied commitment, D3, and low competence with high commitment, D1, both are at the starting point of the CFT. So, in respect of D3, the CFT leader would need to adopt a coaching style, providing high direction in terms of either technology or manner of doing things and high supportive behaviour.

Because when you look at a project which is a cross functional and across the industry, you need to cut through the bureaucracy, make several resources available across functions and also eliminate bottlenecks and constraints so, you require a high supportive behaviour on the part of the CFT leader.

As far as the CFT team which has D1 type of constitution, again low competence with reference to the new project that is at hand; low competence but with high commitment. The style that is required is directing style, because the leader has the ability to supplement the capabilities of the individual CFT members with his own knowledge.

And then also provide supportive behaviour only to the extent because otherwise the members are capable of developing and executing on themselves given their high level of commitment and enthusiasm. So, for T3 and S2, coaching style and for D1 and S1, directing style is specified.

So, this special grouping of diverse subject matter experts who have stretch goals, challenging targets and fixed tenures require special nurturing situational leadership style which may start with the D3-S2 combination and D1-S1 combination, but eventually aim at D4-S4 combination by the time CFT has matured itself into a delivery vehicle for the company.

So, friends, it is very clear that situational leadership is a clear improvement over either the trait theory or the behavioural theory, this is not to say that trait theory and behavioural theory have no advantage or no relevance for the leadership paradigms, but by including followers in the process of analysis situational leadership has taken both those theories into the realm of practical leadership.

But, what we have seen through situational leadership does not provide a full solution because leadership is far more varied than just leaders and followers or the classifications of followers and developing some matching leadership styles out of the bouquet which is available. So, let us look at many other aspects as we move along.

Thank you.