Contingency Approach

Even though there was a desire to include situational factors in leadership effectiveness studies, this inclusion did not happen until the 1960s. The Contingency Approach assumes that the effectiveness of the leader’s personality, style and behavior is contingent upon the requirements of the situation. The Contingency Approach further supports the belief that:

- There exists no single best way to lead
- Situational factors determine the most effective style and behaviors
- Leadership behaviors can be taught and learned
- Leaders do impact group or organization effectiveness
- Leadership effectiveness is impacted by the interaction between situational factors and personal characteristics

Modern approaches to leadership effectiveness have a somewhat integrated view of Traits, Behavioral, and Contingency Approaches. Historically, researchers have studied leader behaviors by observing executives in a variety of organizations. However, if we agree with the definition of leadership as “the ability to influence, lead, or guide others so as to accomplish a mission in the manner desired by providing purpose, direction and motivation,” then should we not be looking at the behaviors of anyone who influences others? Are we not ALL leaders in our families, schools, communities, and life?

As a result of these historical perspectives, several approaches to “leadership style” have been identified. Those most common are the “trait approach,” the “situational approach,” the “follower approach” and the “contingency model.”

1. The trait approach maintains that a person either does or does not possess the specific traits that are considered to be the essentials of leadership.

2. The situational approach assumes that certain situations call for specific types of leadership behaviors and that leaders will be those who best fit the requirements of the situation.

3. The follower approach holds that the needs of group members determine who will lead. Leadership, then, is a coincidence between the needs of the group and a person’s abilities.

4. The contingency model maintains that personal styles and situational characteristics combine to determine leadership. A proper match between styles and situations is essential.

What does all this mean to you? To answer this question, let us return to the definition of leadership.

**Leadership is the ability (or process) to influence, lead, or guide others so as to accomplish a mission in the manner desired by providing purpose, direction, and motivation.**
There have been studies over a number of years directed at gaining more understanding about effective leadership. The desire to assist people in the behaviors that effectively influence, lead, and guide others remains a highly regarded search. The more you understand the behaviors that create the desire to follow, the more you will be able to determine the leadership behaviors that will work best for you. And even more important, the ones that do not.

Have you ever wondered how some leaders influence, excite, stimulate, energize others? When you were influenced, excited, stimulated, or energized by someone else to do something you thought impossible, did you reflect on those times so you could copy the behaviors you liked? Think of those teachers you remember most. What was it they did that made you remember them?

**Conclusion**

As researchers continue to study the characteristics of leaders and as the world we live in continues to change through technology and human growth, we are finding that one key ingredient to leading others successfully, is the ability to successfully lead oneself. Leading from the inside out is the foundation to building successful relationships in your family, church, community, and school. Your relationships with others are the foundation of trust! Trust is the foundation to empowerment and alignment of the mission you are leading others to accomplish.

**Lesson Check-up**

1. Differentiate between the traits, behavior and contingency approaches to leadership.

2. Are humans born with the ability to lead or is this a developed trait? Explain your response.

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2. ______________________________________________________________________________________
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