

# Bruce Tuckman's 1965 Forming Storming Norming Performing team-development model

Dr Bruce Tuckman published his Forming Storming Norming Performing model in 1965. He added a fifth stage, Adjourning, in the 1970s. The Forming Storming Norming Performing theory is an elegant and helpful explanation of team development and behaviour (US spelling: behavior). Similarities can be seen with other models, such as Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum and especially with Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership® model, developed about the same time.

Tuckman's model explains that as the team develops maturity and ability, relationships establish, and the leader changes leadership style. Beginning with a directing style, moving through coaching, then participating, finishing delegating and almost detached. At this point the team may produce a successor leader and the previous leader can move on to develop a new team. This progression of team behaviour and leadership style can be seen clearly in the Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum - the authority and freedom extended by the leader to the team increases while the control of the leader reduces. In Tuckman's Forming Storming Norming Performing model, Hersey's and Blanchard's Situational Leadership® model and in Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Continuum, we see the same effect, represented in three ways.

See also leadership tips and leadership theories, both of which relate strongly to understanding and managing groups.

The Conscious Competence learning model, together with Kolb's learning cycle theory, and the JoHari Window model all provide helpful additional ways to learn and to teach others about Tuckman's ideas and their applications.

## **Tuckman's forming storming norming performing four-stage model**

The progression is:

1. **forming**
2. **storming**
3. **norming**
4. **performing**

Here are the features of each phase:

### **forming - stage 1**

High dependence on leader for guidance and direction. Little agreement on team aims other than received from leader. Individual roles and responsibilities are unclear. Leader must be prepared to answer lots of questions about the team's purpose, objectives and external relationships. Processes are often ignored. Members test tolerance of system and leader. Leader directs (similar to Situational Leadership® 'Telling' mode).

## **storming - stage 2**

Decisions don't come easily within group. Team members vie for position as they attempt to establish themselves in relation to other team members and the leader, who might receive challenges from team members. Clarity of purpose increases but plenty of uncertainties persist. Cliques and factions form and there may be power struggles. The team needs to be focused on its goals to avoid becoming distracted by relationships and emotional issues. Compromises may be required to enable progress. Leader coaches (similar to Situational Leadership® 'Selling' mode).

## **norming - stage 3**

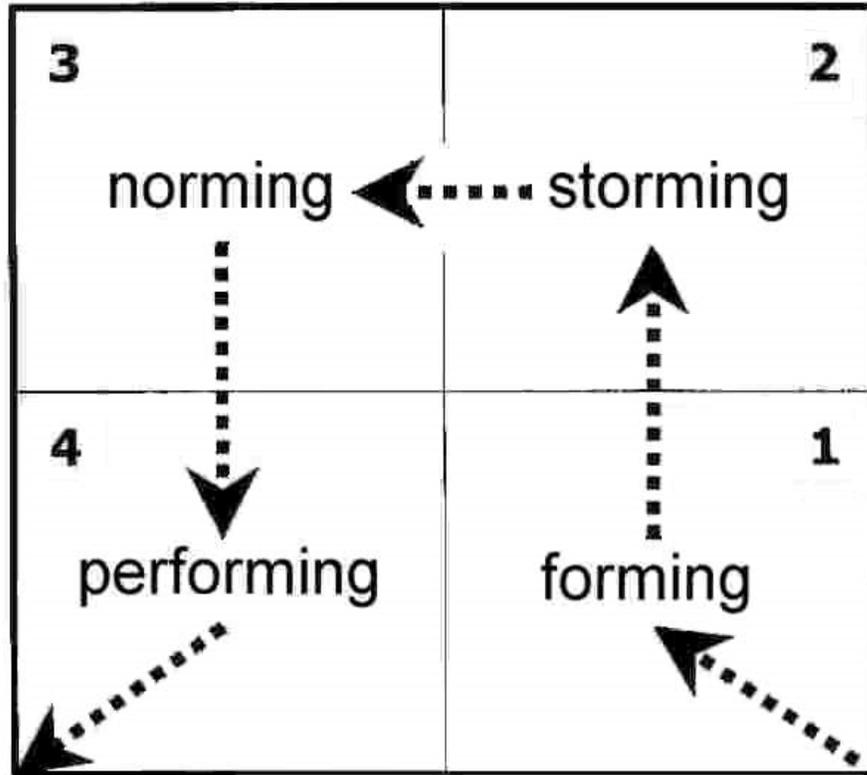
Agreement and consensus largely forms among the team, who respond well to facilitation by leader. Roles and responsibilities are clear and accepted. Big decisions are made by group agreement. Smaller decisions may be delegated to individuals or small teams within group. Commitment and unity is strong. The team may engage in fun and social activities. The team discusses and develops its processes and working style. There is general respect for the leader and some of leadership is more shared by the team. Leader facilitates and enables (similar to the Situational Leadership® 'Participating' mode).

## **performing - stage 4**

The team is more strategically aware; the team knows clearly why it is doing what it is doing. The team has a shared vision and is able to stand on its own feet with no interference or participation from the leader. There is a focus on over-achieving goals, and the team makes most of the decisions against criteria agreed with the leader. The team has a high degree of autonomy. Disagreements occur but now they are resolved within the team positively, and necessary changes to processes and structure are made by the team. The team is able to work towards achieving the goal, and also to attend to relationship, style and process issues along the way. Team members look after each other. The team requires delegated tasks and projects from the leader. The team does not need to be instructed or assisted. Team members might ask for assistance from the leader with personal and interpersonal development. Leader delegates and oversees (similar to the Situational Leadership® 'Delegating' mode).



## Tuckman's forming storming norming performing model:



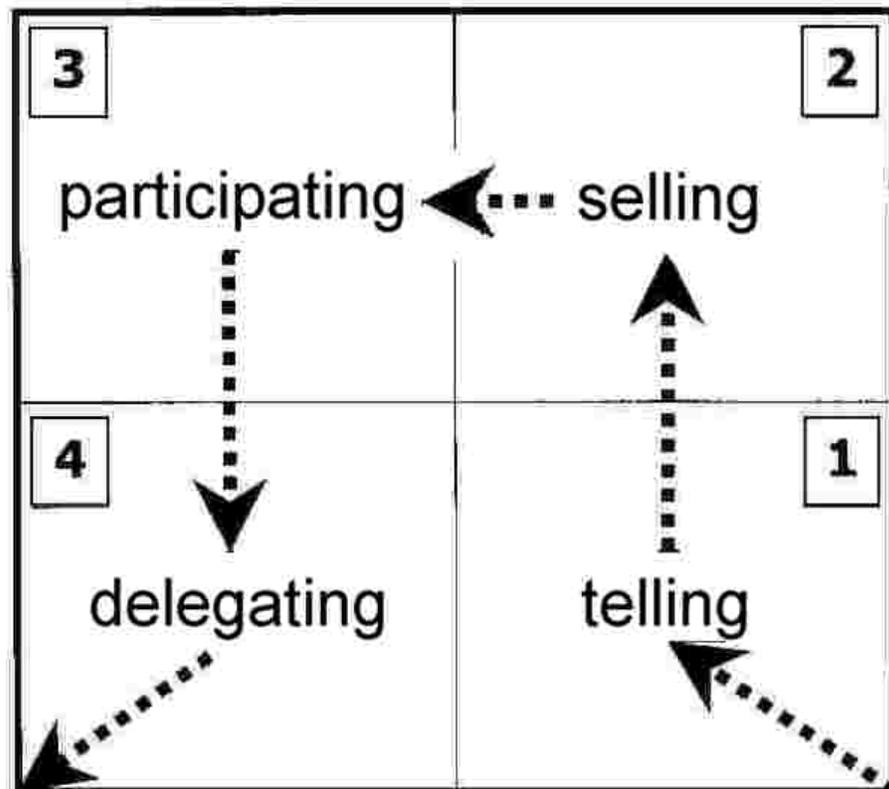
## Tuckman's fifth stage - Adjourning

Bruce Tuckman refined his theory around 1975 and added a fifth stage to the Forming Storming Norming Performing model - he called it Adjourning, which is also referred to as Deforming and Mourning. Adjourning is arguably more of an adjunct to the original four stage model rather than an extension - it views the group from a perspective beyond the purpose of the first four stages. The Adjourning phase is certainly very relevant to the people in the group and their well-being, but not to the main task of managing and developing a team, which is clearly central to the original four stages.

## adjourning - stage 5

Tuckman's fifth stage, Adjourning, is the break-up of the group, hopefully when the task is completed successfully, its purpose fulfilled; everyone can move on to new things, feeling good about what's been achieved. From an organizational perspective, recognition of and sensitivity to people's vulnerabilities in Tuckman's fifth stage is helpful, particularly if members of the group have been closely bonded and feel a sense of insecurity or threat from this change. Feelings of insecurity would be natural for people with high 'steadiness' attributes (as regards the 'four temperaments' or DISC model) and with strong routine and empathy style (as regards the Benziger thinking styles model, right and left basal brain dominance).

## Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership® model



The classic Situational Leadership® model of management and leadership style also illustrates the ideal development of a team from immaturity (stage 1) through to maturity (stage 4) during which management and leadership style progressively develops from relatively detached task-directing (1), through the more managerially-involved stages of explanation (2) and participation (3), to the final stage of relatively detached delegation (4), at which time ideally the team is largely self-managing, and hopefully contains at least one potential management/leadership successor.

The aim of the leader or manager is therefore to develop the team through the four stages, and then to move on to another role.

Ironically this outcome is feared by many managers. However, good organizations place an extremely high value on leaders and managers who can achieve this.

The model also illustrates four main leadership and management styles, which a good leader is able to switch between, depending on the situation (i.e., the team's maturity relating to a particular task, project or challenge.)

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# Kurt Lewin's Three Styles Model

This is the oldest of the situational models. Kurt Lewin, a psychologist, led a research team in 1939 and identified what he called three 'styles' of leadership behaviour in a 1939 article in the Journal of Social Psychology.

Given that Lewin's model is based on three styles of leading, it might arguably also/instead appear in the Leadership Styles section.

We include it here because it can definitely be used as a model; i.e., Lewin's Three Styles theory offers a flexibility so that it can be adapted and applied, like using a toolkit. Refer again to the definitions of models, styles and philosophies above for clarification.

Lewin's three styles were Authoritarian, Participative and Delegative.

- **Authoritarian** - sometimes called the Autocratic style. It is where leaders spell out the goals, deadlines and methods while making decisions on their own without any or much consultation with others. Here, the leader doesn't usually get involved in the group's work. Not surprisingly, researchers have found that you are less likely to see creative decisions under this style of leadership. However, it is a decisive way of leading and can suit high-risk, short-timescale decisions; the kind that surgical teams and fire crews have to take. Lewin noted that leaders who adopt this style can go too far and be seen by others as over-controlling and dictatorial. He also noticed that they often find it hard to move to a Participative style - in other words, they get stuck in one mode of behaviour.
- **Participative** - sometimes called the Democratic style. It is where the leader expresses his or her priorities and values in setting goals and making decisions, but also takes part in the group's work and accepts advice and suggestions from colleagues. However, the leader makes the final decision. This style can produce more creative problem solving and innovation than the Authoritarian approach so it makes sense to adopt it in competitive, non-emergency situations.
- **Delegative** - sometimes called the Laissez-Faire style. Lewin classes this as a leadership style, but some may feel it is non-leadership. The Delegative style means the leader hands over responsibility for results to the group. He or she lets them set goals, decide on work methods, define individuals' roles and set their own pace of work. It is very much a hands-off approach. It can work well provided the group shares the same overall intent and direction as the leader and if he or she trusts all members of the group. However, there is always a risk that individuals may become dissatisfied with their roles or the group's goals and lose motivation.

In summary, Lewin outlined three distinct modes of behaviour for leaders. If they were merely descriptive, they wouldn't help leaders wanting to become better at what they do. But if you bear in mind the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, you can match them to your circumstances - provided, of course, you can flex your behaviour. This is when the Three Styles model becomes a guide to more effective leadership.

# Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Leadership Behaviour/Behavior Continuum

Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Continuum has featured separately for many years on this website, because it is a highly significant body of work in the field of management and leadership.

The material below offers a different perspective to the earlier narrative. It explores the model in the context of other leadership theories.

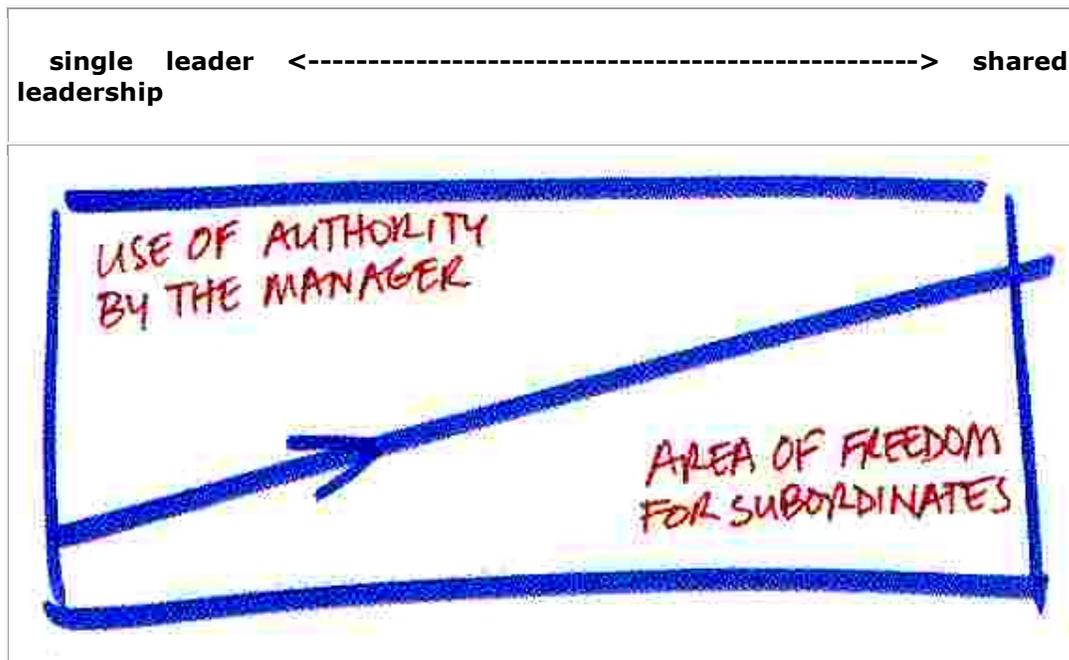
The earlier separate Tannenbaum and Schmidt article explains the model more in terms of its progressive ideals, especially relating to personal development and management succession. Read both summaries ideally.

Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt first presented their Leadership Behaviour Continuum in a 1958 article in the Harvard Business Review, titled 'How to Choose a Leadership Pattern'.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt explained the choices that leaders have in decision-making, and the pressures arising from these options.

They suggested that a leader has seven decision-making options when leading a group, which the diagram below shows:

## Tannenbaum and Schmidt behavioural continuum - diagram



<b>1</b> <b>Leader makes decision and announces it.</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Leader decides and 'sells' benefits of decision.</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Leader decides but presents thinking, inviting exploration.</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Leader presents tentative decision, prepared to change.</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Leader presents problem, gets suggestions, makes decision.</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Leader defines problem, asks group to make the decision.</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Leader allows group to define problem and make decision.</b>
<b>Boss-Centred Leadership</b>			<----->	<b>Subordinate-Centred Leadership</b>		
<b>(original Tannenbaum and Schmidt terminology)</b>						

The diagram and terminology are adapted from Tannenbaum and Schmidt's original, for improved presentation purposes.

'Use of authority by manager' = 'Area of Power retained by the leader' (T&S terminology)

'Area of freedom for subordinates' = 'Amount of power held by the whole group (including the leader)' (T&S terminology)

**From a group development standpoint**, moving from left to right along the continuum, the leader gives up his or her power in making solo decisions so that he/she progressively involves the group, until the group effectively becomes self-managing.

At the far left, the leader sets goals, makes decisions and then tells the others what they are going to do. At the opposite end of the continuum, the leader permits (perhaps encourages) the group to define the issues they are facing and share the decision-making.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt's model is oriented notably towards decision-making, and ignores other aspects of leadership.

Nevertheless the model is powerful and insightful. It's a wonderfully concise and easily applicable tool, showing leaders the many choices they have.

The Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum model also reminds us that all (seven) options are available to leaders depending on the situation. The 'situation' is most commonly a combination of:

- the capability of the group (in various respects - skills, experience, workload, etc), and
- the nature of the task or project (again in various respects - complexity, difficulty, risk, value, timescale, relevance to group capability, etc).

For example:

- the leader of an inexperienced army platoon under enemy fire will tend to be more effective at stage 1 on the Continuum, whereas,
- the head of a product innovation team, under no great pressure, leading an experienced and capable group, will tend to be more effective acting at stage 7 on the Continuum.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt further explained that when leaders choose decision-making options they should consider especially three sets of pressures:

1. Situational pressures.
2. Inner psychological pressures.
3. Pressures coming from subordinates.

In more detail:

### **1. Situational pressures**

- The complexity of the problem.
- The importance of the decision.
- The time pressure.

### **2. The leader's inner pressures**

- The leader's preferences around decision-making (his values, beliefs, behavioural habits).
- The leader's confidence in his or her team colleagues' knowledge and experience.
- How important or risky the decision is to him/her or her personally.

### **3. Pressures coming from subordinates**

- The leader's colleagues' (the group-members') desire to 'have a say' in the decision.
- The group's willingness to take responsibility for the outcomes.
- The group's ability to reach decisions together.
- The group's readiness and ability to accept and follow orders.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt's model demonstrates and provides seven ways of approaching group leadership decisions.

It also defines and predicts typical related internal and external pressures that leaders must consider when choosing a decision-making position.

The underlying teaching is that the leader must have necessary self-awareness, presence of mind, and wisdom, to consider the three sets of pressures (and the ten component forces) before choosing the most effective behaviour.

As with Kurt Lewin's Three Styles model, The Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum offers and advocates a flexible approach to leadership; that the effective leader varies his/her behaviour at will, according to circumstances.



# Fiedler's Contingency Model

Fred Fiedler's Contingency Model was the third notable situational model of leadership to emerge. This model appeared first in Fiedler's 1967 book, *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness*.

The essence of Fiedler's theory is that a leader's effectiveness depends on a combination of two forces:

- the leader's **leadership style**, and
- 'situational favourableness'.

(US-English spelling, favorableness)

Fiedler called this combination (of leadership style and 'situational favourableness'): **Situational Contingency**.

Here are Fiedler's two forces explained in more detail:

## Two Forces of Fiedler's Situational Contingency idea

Leadership Style	Situational Favourableness
<p>Fiedler described two basic leadership styles - task-orientated and relationship-orientated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Task-orientated leaders</b> have a strong bias towards getting the job done without worrying about their rapport or bond with their followers. They can of course run the risk of failing to deliver if they do not engage enough with the people around them.</li> <li>• <b>Relationship-orientated leaders</b> care much more about emotional engagement with the people they work with, but sometimes to the detriment of the task and results.</li> </ul> <p>Fiedler said neither style is inherently superior. However, he asserted that certain leadership challenges suit one style or the other better. The diagram below illustrates this point.</p>	<p>Fiedler defined three factors determining the favourableness of the situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much trust, respect and confidence exists between leader and followers.</li> <li>• How precisely the task is defined and how much creative freedom the leader gives to the followers.</li> <li>• How much the followers accept the leader's power.</li> </ul> <p>Fiedler believed the situation is favourable when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is high mutual trust, respect and confidence between leader and followers.</li> <li>2. The task is clear and controllable.</li> <li>3. The followers accept the leader's power.</li> </ol> <p>The situation is unfavourable if the opposite is true on all three points.</p>

## Fiedler's Contingency Model diagram

Fiedler's Contingency Model		
situation favourableness		most effective orientation (style)
high	=	task-oriented leader
intermediate	=	relationship-oriented leader
low	=	task-oriented leader

Fiedler said that **task-orientated leaders are most effective** when facing a situation that is either **extremely favourable or extremely unfavourable**. In other words:

- when there is enormous trust, respect and confidence,
- when the task is very clear, and
- when followers accept the leader's power without question,

and also when the opposite is true, i.e. -

- when trust and respect do not exist,
- when the challenge people face is vague and undefined, and
- when the atmosphere is anarchic or even rebellious (for example, an emergency or crisis)

Fiedler concluded that **relationship-orientated leaders are most effective** in less extreme circumstances. That is, in situations that are **neither favourable or unfavourable**, or situations that are only **moderately favourable or moderately unfavourable**.

Fiedler's theory took a significant and firm view about personality: He said that a leader's style reflected his or her personality, (which incidentally he assessed in his research using a psychometric instrument).

Fiedler's view about personality - and indeed the common notion of the times - was that individual personality is fixed and does not change during a leader's life/career. Consequently Fiedler's theory placed great emphasis on 'matching' leaders to situations, according to the perceived style of the leader and the situation faced (by the organization).

Fiedler's Contingency Model is therefore a somewhat limited model for effective leadership. Notably it's not a useful guide for helping people become better leaders; nor is it an efficient or necessarily flexible model for modern leadership in organizations, given the dynamic variety of situations which nowadays arise.

A further implication of Fiedler's theory is potentially to require the replacement of leaders whose styles do not match situations, which from several viewpoints (legal, practical, ethical, etc) would be simply unworkable in modern organizations.

Nevertheless, despite its limitations, Fiedler's theory was an important contribution to leadership thinking, especially in reinforcing the the now generally accepted views that:

- There is no single ideal way of behaving as a leader, and
- Matching leadership behaviour (or style) to circumstances (or situations) - or vice-versa - is significant in effective leadership.

And as already suggested, Fiedler's theory also encourages us to consider the leader's personality and the leader's behaviour from these angles:

- the extent to which (a leader's) personality is fixed, and
- the extent to which (a leader's) personality controls (a leader's) behaviour.

Clearly, if a model such as this is to be of great value, then these questions need to be clarified rather more than they have been to date, which is not easy given the complexity of human nature.

We are left to conclude somewhat conditionally, that if personality is fixed (which **generally** it is) and personality controls behaviour, (which **generally** it seems to) then..

the notion of:

- **'matching behaviour to the circumstances'**

probably equates unavoidably to:

- **'matching the person to the circumstances',**

which is usually not a viable approach to leadership and leadership development within modern organizations.

We live in an increasingly virtual world which allows lots of inter-changeability (like 'matrix management' for example - where followers may have two different bosses for two different sets of responsibilities, such as local markets vs international markets), but most indications are that **frequently changing leaders** in order to **match fixed leadership behaviours** to **corresponding and suitable situations** is less efficient and effective than organizations having **leaders who can adapt freely outside of, and despite, individual personality constraints.**



# Path-Goal Theory - Robert House

The next significant leadership theory to emerge in the Situational/Contingency category was Robert House's Path-Goal theory, in his 1971 paper: A Path-Goal Theory of Leader Effectiveness, which he refined three years later in cooperation with T R Mitchell.

House said that the main role of a leader is to motivate his followers by:

1. Increasing or clarifying the (group's/followers') personal benefits of striving for and reaching the group's **goal**.
2. Clarifying and clearing a **path** to achieving the group's **goals**.

Hence the theory's name: Path-Goal Theory.

House's theory matched four ways of behaving to four sets of circumstances, or 'situations'.

The circumstances in Path-Goal theory are driven by '**follower characteristics**' and '**workplace characteristics**'.

**Follower characteristics** include:

- **What they believe about their ability** - Do they feel they are capable of fulfilling the task well?
- **Where control resides** - Do group members believe they have control over the way they approach the task and the chances of achieving the goal? Or do they see themselves as being controlled by other people and outside events?
- **Attitude to power and those in power** - Do members want to be told what to do and how to do it... or not? What do they think of those in the organization who have more official power than they do, especially the leader?

**Workplace characteristics** include:

- **The kind of task** - Is it repetitive? Is it interesting? Is it predictable or structured? Is it unpredictable, creative or unstructured?
- **The leader's formal authority** - Is it well-defined?
- **Group cohesion** - Do those working in the group feel a sense of unity?

House took these two external dimensions and matched them with four leadership behavioural styles, as this diagram summarises:

### House's Path-Goal theory diagram- workplace/follower characteristics and four leadership styles

Leadership Style	Workplace Characteristics	Follower Characteristics
<b>Directive</b>	Unstructured interesting tasks Clear, formal authority Good group cohesion	Inexperienced followers They believe they lack power They want leader to direct them
<b>Supportive</b>	Simpler, more predictable tasks Unclear or weak formal authority Poor group cohesion	Experienced, confident followers They believe they have power They reject close control
<b>Participative</b>	Unstructured, complex tasks Formal authority could be either clear or unclear Group cohesion could either be good or poor	Experienced, confident followers They believe they have power They reject close control, preferring to exercise power over their work
<b>Achievement-orientated</b>	Unstructured, complex or unpredictable tasks Clear, formal authority Group cohesion could either be good or poor	Experienced, confident followers They think they lack some power They accept the idea of the leader setting their goals and have a lot of respect for the leader

### House's Path-Goal Theory - four leadership styles descriptions

Leadership Style	Description
<b>Directive</b>	In House's Directive style, the leader clarifies the path to the goal by giving clear direction and guidance on goals, tasks, and performance standards. The work will normally be complex and unstructured, and followers will usually lack experience and accept a high degree of outside control. In essence, the leader is telling the followers exactly the required methods and outcomes. There is little or no emphasis on personal needs (for example emotional or financial) in striving for and achieving the goal, because the work is considered (by the leader and organization) to be sufficiently satisfying and rewarding in its own right.
<b>Supportive</b>	House's Supportive style puts more emphasis on improving the working atmosphere (notably making it more friendly and helpful) and safeguarding followers' welfare. This leadership approach is appropriate where followers can perform their tasks skilfully, and believe they have a high degree of control over the outcome. Followers don't want close supervision, but they do need protection and care in handling stresses and frustrations arising from repetitive, uninteresting tasks. In this Supportive style, the leader removes or reduces the effects of emotional obstacles on the path to the goal.

<b>Participative</b>	Followers of House's Participative leadership style are similar to followers of the Supportive style: confident and experienced, they believe they largely control the outcome, and they reject close control. However, unlike typical Supportive workplace characteristics, here work is much less structured, repetitive and predictable. The leader consults followers (perhaps more likely here to be called 'colleagues') on decisions concerning goals and methods, and genuinely takes account of followers' opinions and ideas. Here the Participative leader strengthens the path-goal connection in three ways: First, aligning followers' values and concerns with the goals. Second, ensuring followers are happy with how they are to achieve the goals. Third, giving followers a strong sense of autonomy and satisfaction, so improving motivation to achieve the goal.
<b>Achievement-orientated</b>	House's <b>Achievement-orientated</b> leadership style is based on encouraging followers to achieve personally outstanding results. Followers are competent and confident, and crucially also accept the principle of the leader setting ambitious goals. Followers trust and respect the leader, and draw personal motivation and increased confidence from the leader's belief that the individual follower can achieve demanding aims and targets.

In the grid diagrams above Robert House effectively describes **four different 'situations'** (in this case combinations of 'workplace characteristics' and 'follower characteristics') which he **matched** to **four different leadership styles**.

Unlike Fiedler's Contingency model, House's Path-Goal theory asserts that leaders can and should **vary their behaviour** according to the **situation** and the problems or opportunities that each situation presents.

By implication, Path-Goal theory assumes that a leader can vary his or her mindset and behaviour as needed.

In this way, Path-Goal theory is similar to Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Continuum and to Kurt Lewin's Three Styles model. It is a situational or contingency theory that in addition to **matching leadership styles to given situations**, also advocates **switching leadership styles** according to **changing situations**.

# Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model

Lee Bolman and Terry Deal outlined their Four-Frame model in their book, Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership (1991).

Bolman and Deal stated that leaders should look at and approach organizational issues from four perspectives, which they called 'Frames'.

In their view, if a leader works with only one habitual Frame (frame of reference), the leader risks being ineffective.

The Four Frames outlined by Bolman and Deal are:

1. **Structural**
2. **Human Resource**
3. **Political**
4. **Symbolic**

Here are descriptions of and differences between the Four Frames:

## Bolman and Deal's Four Frames descriptions and differences

<b>Bolman and Deal's Four Frames descriptions and differences</b>	
<b>Structural</b>	This Frame focuses on the obvious 'how' of change. It's mainly a task-orientated Frame. It concentrates on strategy; setting measurable goals; clarifying tasks, responsibilities and reporting lines; agreeing metrics and deadlines; and creating systems and procedures.
<b>Human Resource</b>	The HR Frame places more emphasis on people's needs. It chiefly focuses on giving employees the power and opportunity to perform their jobs well, while at the same time, addressing their needs for human contact, personal growth, and job satisfaction.
<b>Political</b>	The Political Frame addresses the problem of individuals and interest groups having sometimes conflicting (often hidden) agendas, especially at times when budgets are limited and the organization has to make difficult choices. In this Frame you will see coalition-building, conflict resolution work, and power-base building to support the leader's initiatives.
<b>Symbolic</b>	The Symbolic Frame addresses people's needs for a sense of purpose and meaning in their work. It focuses on inspiring people by making the organization's direction feel significant and distinctive. It includes creating a motivating vision, and recognising superb performance through company celebrations.

Bolman and Deal proposed that a leader should see the organization's challenges through these four Frames or 'lenses', to gain an overall view, and to decide which Frame or Frames to use.

The leader may use one Frame (implying a behavioural approach) for a time, and then switch to another. Or instead the leader might combine and use a number of Frames, or all four, at the same time.

A crucial aspect of Bolman and Deal's model seeks to avoid the temptation for leaders to become stuck, viewing and acting on conditions through one lens or Frame alone.

Bolman and Deal assert that because no Frame works well in every circumstance, then a leader who sticks with one Frame is bound eventually to act inappropriately and ineffectively.

Instead, it is the leader's responsibility to use the appropriate Frame of reference, and thereby behaviour, for each challenge.

Central to this methodology is asking the right questions and diagnosing the vital issues.

Examples:

1. Where a leader ascertains that the biggest problem in a group is **lack of motivation and commitment**, the leader should probably adopt a **Symbolic** and/or **Human Resource** (Frame) approach.
2. If the main group challenge is instead **confusion around priorities and responsibilities**, then the leader will probably be more successful adopting **Structural** and **Political** (Frames) orientation.
3. If the group is experiencing **uncertainty and anxiety about direction**, then **Symbolic** and **Political** (Frames) leadership behaviours are more likely to produce effective results.

Essentially, the leader should adopt a multi-Frame perspective before choosing how to act.

Organizations tend naturally to use the Structural Frame but pay less attention to the other three Frames.

According to Four-Frame theory, this is due either to:

- lack of awareness of the need for multi-Frame thinking and behaviour or
- behavioural rigidity due to unconscious limiting beliefs (controlling the leader's perceived priorities or capabilities)



# John Adair's Action-Centred Leadership model

John Adair is a prolific writer on leadership and first published his Action-Centred Leadership model in the 1970s. Adair has written several more books that describe this model, notably *Effective Leadership* (1983).

A more detailed summary of Adair's Action-Centred Leadership Model has been available on this website for many years, such is the significance of Adair's work in leadership learning and development.

As Adair himself explains, his thinking emerged from group dynamics - the study of how groups form, evolve and work - and he adapted it to form his fundamental leadership model.

It is most commonly and very simply represented by Adair's famous three circles diagram, interpreted here as follows.

## Adair's Action-Centered Leadership 'three circles' diagram

### Task

The first need is the most obvious. This is essentially why the group exists: to achieve a task or aim.

It's also naturally obvious to most leaders because 'achieving the task' - or 'getting the results' - tends to be the biggest responsibility for which leaders are held accountable by the organization (or executive, or board, or shareholders).

This causes many leaders to focus very heavily on 'achieving the task', and in doing so, to neglect the other two needs.

We might equate this to a strong emphasis on the 'Telling' style within the Situational Leadership® model.

However a group's ability to achieve the task, and more significantly, to continue to achieve more tasks, is usually seriously undermined if leaders fail to attend to the 'team' and 'individual' needs of the group, and to the related functional leadership responsibilities.

### team

The second need - that of the team - is to create an atmosphere of togetherness; one in which group members:

1. share responsibility for reaching the goal or aim
2. hold shared expectations on the performance level each has to contribute, and
3. support each other as they progress.

In so doing, they put the group's goal ahead of their own individual personal priorities.

This last point is important. Without it the group's aims become a collection of individually different goals and methods, which obviously prevent the development of an effective cohesive team.

## individual

The third need centres on each individual team member. Although each individual is a member of a group with a shared goal and shared standards of performance, he or she remains individual. In other words, each person has individual needs, for example: financial recognition, safety, status, respect, praise, intimacy and fulfilment, etc.

So while leaders must ensure that a group has a collective identity and shared methods and purpose, etc., the leader must also help members satisfy individual personal needs.

Put simply, the Action-Centred Leadership model says the overall function of the leader is to focus on the three primary areas of need - task, team and individual.

Beyond this, the leader has more specific functions within each need, summarised as follows:

### Action-Centred Leadership - functional summary

Task	Team	Individual
Clarifying the nature and purpose of the task. Agreeing the group's targets and plan. Agreeing personal targets with each individual. Assigning tasks, powers and responsibilities to individuals or subgroups. Getting the resources to complete the task. Assessing and following up on progress. Setting performance standards through personal example. Adjusting the plan to meet unexpected obstacles.	Ensuring the team as a whole accepts its purpose/targets. Agreeing shared performance and behavioural standards. Ensuring the right number of people and mix of 'know-how', skills and contacts. Creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Consulting members for ideas and feedback. Briefings. Resolving group conflicts. Changing members if they don't perform or collaborate. Adjusting the team's composition according to current or likely future issues.	Getting to know each member. Ensuring that each person's responsibilities fits their aims, skills and 'know-how'. Reviewing personal performance. Making sure each member knows how their contribution helps the team's results. Praising, criticising and addressing poor performance. Ensuring that each individual has the right training and development support. Agreeing financial rewards. Listening and acting on individuals' concerns. Promoting top performers and high potential members.