

## Extra Course Resource

<b>Follower Readiness Level</b>	Competence (Low)	Competence (Low)	Competence (Moderate to High)	Competence (High)
	Commitment (High)	Commitment (Low)	Commitment (Variable)	Commitment (High)
<b>Recommended Leader Style</b>	Directing Behavior	Coaching Behavior	Supporting Behavior	Delegating Behavior

Situational Leadership Theory helps leaders match their style to follower readiness levels.

## Vroom and Yetton's Model

Let's try it. Imagine that you want to help your employees lower their stress so that you can minimize employee absenteeism. There are a number of approaches you could take to reduce employee stress, such as offering gym memberships, providing employee assistance programs, establishing a nap room, and so forth. Let's refer to the model and start with the first question. As you answer each question as high (H) or low (L), follow the corresponding path down the funnel.

1. *Decision significance.* The decision has high significance because the approach chosen needs to be effective at reducing employee stress for the insurance premiums to be lowered. In other words, there is a quality requirement to the decision. Follow the path through H.
2. *Importance of commitment.* Does the leader need employee cooperation to implement the decision? In our example, the answer is high, because employees may simply ignore the resources if they do not like them. Follow the path through H.
3. *Leader expertise.* Does the leader have all the information needed to make a high-quality decision? In our example, leader expertise is low. You do not have information regarding what your employees need or what kinds of stress reduction resources they would prefer. Follow the path through L.
4. *Likelihood of commitment.* If the leader makes the decision alone, what is the likelihood that the employees would accept it? Let's assume that the answer is Low. Based on the leader's experience with this group, they would likely ignore the decision if the leader makes it alone. Follow the path from L.
5. *Goal alignment.* Are the employee goals aligned with organizational goals? In this instance, employee and organizational goals may be aligned because you both want to ensure that employees are healthier. So, let's say the alignment is high, and follow H.
6. *Group expertise.* Does the group have expertise in this decision-making area? The group in question has little information about which alternatives are costlier or more user friendly. We'll say group expertise is low. Follow the path from L.
7. *Team competence.* What is the ability of this particular team to solve the problem? Let's imagine that this is a new team that just got together and they have little demonstrated expertise to work together effectively. We will answer this as low, or L.

Based on the answers to the questions we gave, the normative approach recommends consulting employees as a group. In other words, the leader may make the decision alone after gathering information from employees and is not advised to delegate the decision to the team or to make the decision alone with no input from the team members.

### **OB Toolbox: Avoid Getting Stuck in the Storming Phase!**

There are several steps you can take to avoid getting stuck in the storming phase of group development. Try the following if you feel the group process you are involved in is not progressing:

- *Normalize conflict.* Let members know this is a natural phase in the group-formation process.
- *Be inclusive.* Continue to make all members feel included and invite all views into the room. Mention how diverse ideas and opinions help foster creativity and innovation.
- *Make sure everyone is heard.* Facilitate heated discussions and help participants understand each other.
- *Support all group members.* This is especially important for those who feel more insecure.
- *Remain positive.* This is a key point to remember about the group's ability to accomplish its goal.
- *Don't rush the group's development.* Remember that working through the storming stage can take several meetings.

### **OB Toolbox: Steps to Creating and Maintaining a Cohesive Team**

- *Align the group with the greater organization.* Establish common objectives in which members can get involved.
- *Let members have choices in setting their own goals.* Include them in decision making at the organizational level.
- *Define clear roles.* Demonstrate how each person's contribution furthers the group goal—everyone is responsible for a special piece of the puzzle.
- *Situate group members in close proximity to each other.* This builds familiarity.
- *Give frequent praise.* Both individuals and groups benefit from praise. Also encourage them to praise each other. This builds individual self-confidence, reaffirms positive behavior, and creates an overall positive atmosphere.
- *Treat all members with dignity and respect.* This demonstrates that there are no favorites and everyone is valued.
- *Celebrate differences.* This highlights each individual's contribution while also making diversity a norm.
- *Establish common rituals.* Thursday morning coffee, monthly potlucks—these reaffirm group identity and create shared experiences.

## **OB Toolbox: Tips for Preventing Social Loafing in Your Group**

When designing a group project, here are some considerations to keep in mind:

- *Carefully choose the number of individuals you need to get the task done.* The likelihood of social loafing increases as group size increases (especially if the group consists of 10 or more people), because it is easier for people to feel unneeded or inadequate, and it is easier for them to “hide” in a larger group.
- *Clearly define each member’s tasks in front of the entire group.* If you assign a task to the entire group, social loafing is more likely. For example, instead of stating, “By Monday, let’s find several articles on the topic of stress,” you can set the goal of “By Monday, each of us will be responsible for finding five articles on the topic of stress.” When individuals have specific goals, they become more accountable for their performance.
- *Design and communicate to the entire group a system for evaluating each person’s contribution.* You may have a midterm feedback session in which each member gives feedback to every other member. This would increase the sense of accountability individuals have. You may even want to discuss the principle of social loafing in order to discourage it.
- *Build a cohesive group.* When group members develop strong relational bonds, they are more committed to each other and the success of the group, and they are therefore more likely to pull their own weight.
- *Assign tasks that are highly engaging and inherently rewarding.* Design challenging, unique, and varied activities that will have a significant impact on the individuals themselves, the organization, or the external environment. For example, one group member may be responsible for crafting a new incentive-pay system through which employees can direct some of their bonus to their favorite nonprofits.
- *Make sure individuals feel that they are needed.* If the group ignores a member’s contributions because these contributions do not meet the group’s performance standards, members will feel discouraged and are unlikely to contribute in the future. Make sure that everyone feels included and needed by the group.