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NASSP Bulletin 2014 98: 185 originally published online 19 September 2014

DOI: 10.1177/0192636514551043

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NASSP Bulletin
2014, Vol. 98(3) 185–197
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DOI: 10.1177/0192636514551043
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Abstract

The Supervisor's Interactive Model of Organizational Relationships (SIMOR) integrates two models addressed in the leadership literature and then highlights the importance of relationships. The Supervisor's Interactive Model of Organizational Relationships combines the modified Hersey and Blanchard model of situational leadership, the Glickman Developmental Supervision Model, and considers relationships within the organization to form a more comprehensive picture of the supervisee's supportive and supervisory needs. This model provides supervisors with a more realistic and useful framework to guide their supportive interactions with supervisees.

Keywords

leadership, supervision, relationships, ability, willingness

There are numerous models and academic studies involving leader and follower interactions. The Supervisor's Interactive Model of Organizational Relationships (SIMOR) adapts and integrates two models that are prevalent in the leadership literature. This process of integration and adaptation highlights the importance of relationships. The intent of SIMOR is to help make these models practical for leaders working to maximize an individual's potential within the organization. Having the ability to successfully lead and supervise individuals in a given situation is enhanced by integrating existing leadership models with an emphasis on relationships to determine the optimal supervisory strategy.

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SIMOR was developed over an 8-year period by the authors who have a combined 62 years of supervisory experience and a century of experience in the field of education. Having taught supervision at the graduate level and with educators from a host of other countries, it became apparent that a practical synthesis of supervisory models that address the identified shortcomings of long accepted models was necessary. The missing component was the role of relationships within the supervisory context. Working in collaboration with administrators in the field of education, SIMOR has been refined and improved. SIMOR has been presented at conferences and has received vast praise for its usability and simplicity.

Theoretical Foundation of the Model

It is beneficial for educational leaders to have a model to guide their decisions and actions. "A model . . . is a pattern of . . . events that can be learned and therefore repeated" (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993, p. 185). "Perhaps the most important implications [for management] is that *managers should be good diagnosticians and should value a spirit of inquiry*" (Schein, 1980, p. 94). To be useful, diagnostic models like SIMOR need to be manageable. "Theorists like Argyris, Bennis, and McGregor have argued for more diagnostic ability and more skill flexibility in managers" (Schein, 1980, p. 95). SIMOR is not a theory, but is a model. The outcomes of SIMOR are based on two existing models of supervision. The two foundational models adapted for SIMOR are the Situational Leadership Model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Reddin, 1967) and Developmental Supervision Model (Glickman, 2002). SIMOR, the integration of these two models, is practical and will guide a leader in optimizing human resources, and in turn, enhancing the individual and the organization. Hersey and Blanchard's Model of Situational Leadership has general acceptance in the field because of its intuitive nature (Bass, 1990). Glickman's Developmental Supervision Model, developed more recently than Hersey and Blanchard's model, is a supervisory guide for staff engagement and development. The strength of the SIMOR model is its emphasis on the role of relationships in leadership decisions and organizational effectiveness. "Investigations from a wide variety of disciplines consistently demonstrate that social support—the quality of interpersonal relationships—serves to enhance productivity, psychological well-being, and physical health" (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 302). To clearly understand the SIMOR model, an understanding of the supportive behaviors contained in situational leadership and the supervisory approaches inherent in developmental supervision is required.

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership recognizes that different situations call for different leadership behaviors. Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) model focused on singular tasks and what ability and willingness a supervisee possesses to perform that task, defined by the authors as "task maturity" or "readiness." Their approach focused on adapting leadership style (the behavior pattern of an individual who attempts to influence others) to

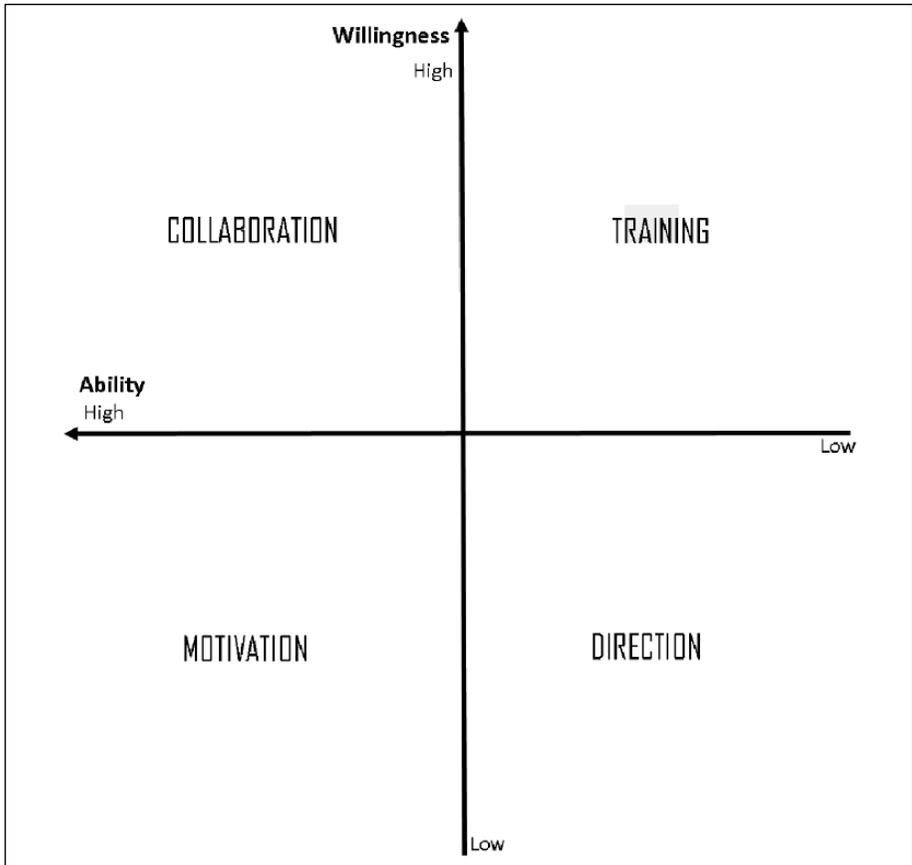


Figure 1. Adaptation of Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) model.

include both task behaviors and supportive behaviors (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). They posited that leadership effectiveness depends on assessing the subordinate's developmental level, and adapting the leadership behavior to match that level. This approach is straightforward, easily understood, and can be applied to a variety of settings (Northouse, 2010). In addition, Hersey and Blanchard's model stresses that leaders should adapt their supportive behaviors based on task requirements and unique supervisee needs, thus allowing for differentiation as the leader responds to the supervisee (Northouse, 2013).

In the modified Hersey and Blanchard model, once the supervisor has assessed the supervisee's ability and willingness, supportive behaviors should be applied: Quadrant I–Direction, Quadrant II–Training, Quadrant III–Motivation, and Quadrant IV–Collaboration. These supportive behaviors are used by the supervisor to assist the supervisee in successfully performing the necessary task. Figure 1 represents the modification of the model articulated by Hersey and Blanchard.

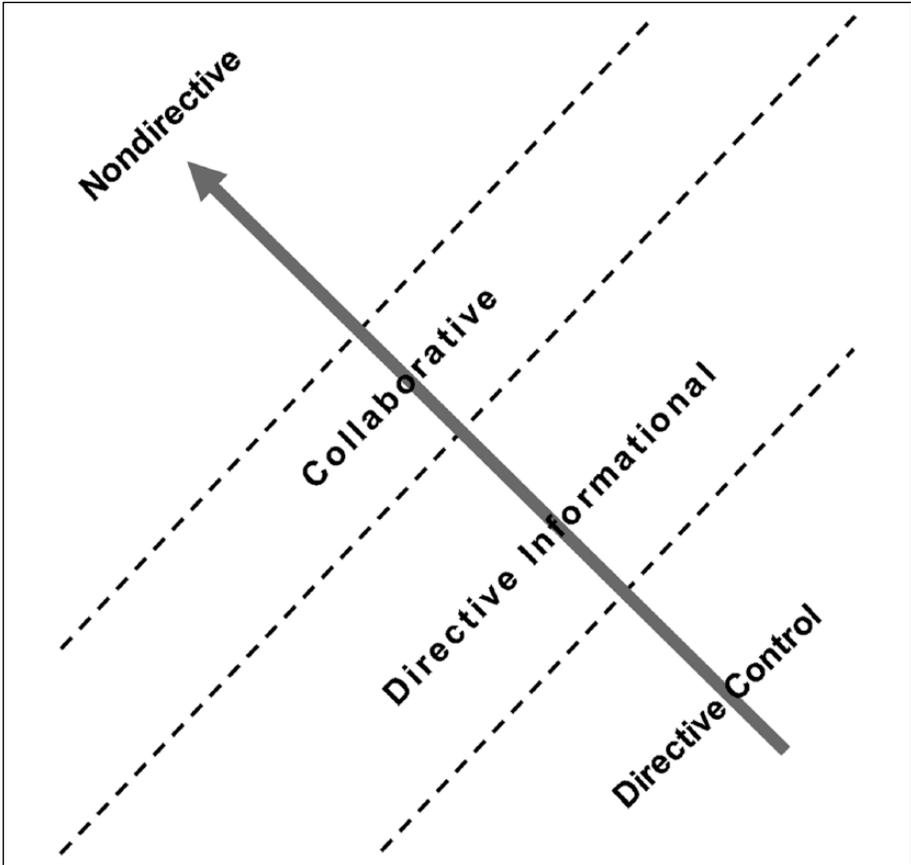


Figure 2. Developmental supervision continuum.

Developmental Supervision

Developmental supervision, as defined by Glickman (2002), utilized a continuum of four supervisory approaches ranging from Directive Control to Nondirective. The continuum represents a shift from the supervisor taking full control and responsibility (Directive Control) to the supervisor empowering the supervisee with more control and responsibility (Nondirective) as the task dictates. “As the teacher [supervisee] or group increases expertise, problem-solving capacity, and motivation, the supervisor hands over more decision making responsibility” (Glickman, 2002, p. 123). The goal of developmental supervision is to move, over time, the supervisee along the continuum to a Nondirective supervisory approach (see Figure 2).

Directive Control requires the supervisor to make the decisions for the supervisee. The supervisor analyzes the task, determines the solution, and directs the supervisee to implement the directive. Directive Control situations include: (a) when [supervisees]

are functioning at very low developmental levels, (b) when [supervisees] [lack] awareness, knowledge or inclination to act on an issue the supervisor . . . [believes is critical]. . . (c) when the supervisor is committed to resolve the issue and the [supervisee] is not . . . , and (d) in an emergency when the supervisor does not have time to meet with the [supervisee] . . . (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2010).

The next level of supervisory approach on the developmental supervision continuum is Directive Informational. At this level the supervisor takes on the role of expert and provides alternatives for the supervisee to select from in making a decision. There needs to be trust in this relationship because confidence and credibility need to be shared by the supervisor and the supervisee. Situations where the Directive Informational approach is most beneficial include (a) the [supervisee] is functioning at a fairly low developmental level, (b) the [supervisee] does not possess knowledge of the issue and the supervisor does, (c) when the [supervisee] feels confused, inexperienced, or at a loss for what to do and the supervisor understands successful practices, (d) when the [supervisee] believes the supervisor is credible. . . , and (e) when time is short and quick action is necessary . . . (Glickman et al., 2010).

In a collaborative approach, the teacher and supervisor share the responsibility for the decision (Glickman et al., 2010). This is more than a mechanical procedure of democracy. Supervisors should use the Collaborative model when, (a) the [supervisee] is functioning at a moderate or mixed developmental level, (b) the [supervisee] and supervisor have approximately the same degree of expertise on the issue . . . , (c) when the [supervisee] and supervisor will both be involved in carrying out the decision. . . , and (d) when the [supervisee] and supervisor are both committed to solving the problem . . . (Glickman et al., 2010).

The highest level of supervisory approach on the developmental supervision continuum is the Nondirective approach. The supervisor trusts the supervisee to make the best decision in a given situation. This approach is not laissez-faire and is used only with supervisees “. . . who are operating at high levels of abstraction, motivation, and expertise” (Glickman et al., 2010, p. 181). Nondirective supervision is best used when, (a) the [supervisee] is functioning at high developmental levels, (b) when the [supervisee] possesses most of the knowledge or expertise about the issue, . . . (c) when the [supervisee] has full responsibility for carrying out the decision . . . , and (d) when the [supervisee] is committed to solving the problem and the process employed doesn't matter to the supervisor. . . . (Glickman et al., 2010, p. 183).

Supervisor's Interactive Model of Organizational Relationships

The Supervisor's Interactive Model of Organizational Relationships (SIMOR) is based on four assumptions. The assumptions are

- Individuals do not exist in isolation within an organization.
- Individuals in an organization have a relationship with the leader and with others in the organization.

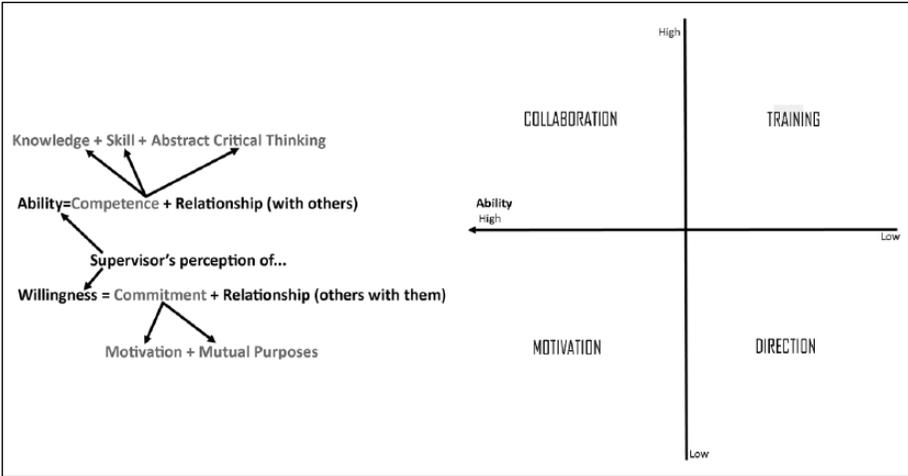


Figure 3. Ability and willingness.

- The leader can have a positive or negative impact on the willingness of the follower.
- The leader’s actions are for the betterment of the organization.

SIMOR requires a modification of Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership Model (Figure 3). In this new model, the two axes represent the constructs of ability (*x*-axis) and willingness (*y*-axis). Each construct consists of two components. Ability (*x*-axis) is composed of competence and relationship components. Competence consists of three elements, knowledge, skill, and abstract critical thinking. Relationship, within the ability construct, is the supervisee’s relations with others as perceived by the supervisor.

On the *y*-axis, willingness is comprised of two components, commitment and relationships. Commitment consists of the combination of two elements, motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and mutual purposes. In the willingness construct, relationship is the supervisee’s relationship with the supervisor as perceived by the supervisor.

Relationships

SIMOR adds the relationship component to both axes. Relationships are an important aspect of all interactions. “What is critical is the relationships created between the person and the setting. That relationship will always be different, will always evoke different potentialities. It all depends on the players and the moment” (Wheatley, 1994, p. 34). In this model, the level of a person’s performance depends on their competence and commitment; competence and commitment are influenced by relationships, in turn ultimately influencing the ability and willingness of a supervisee. The supervisor utilizing this new, more comprehensive model is in a better position to maximize each

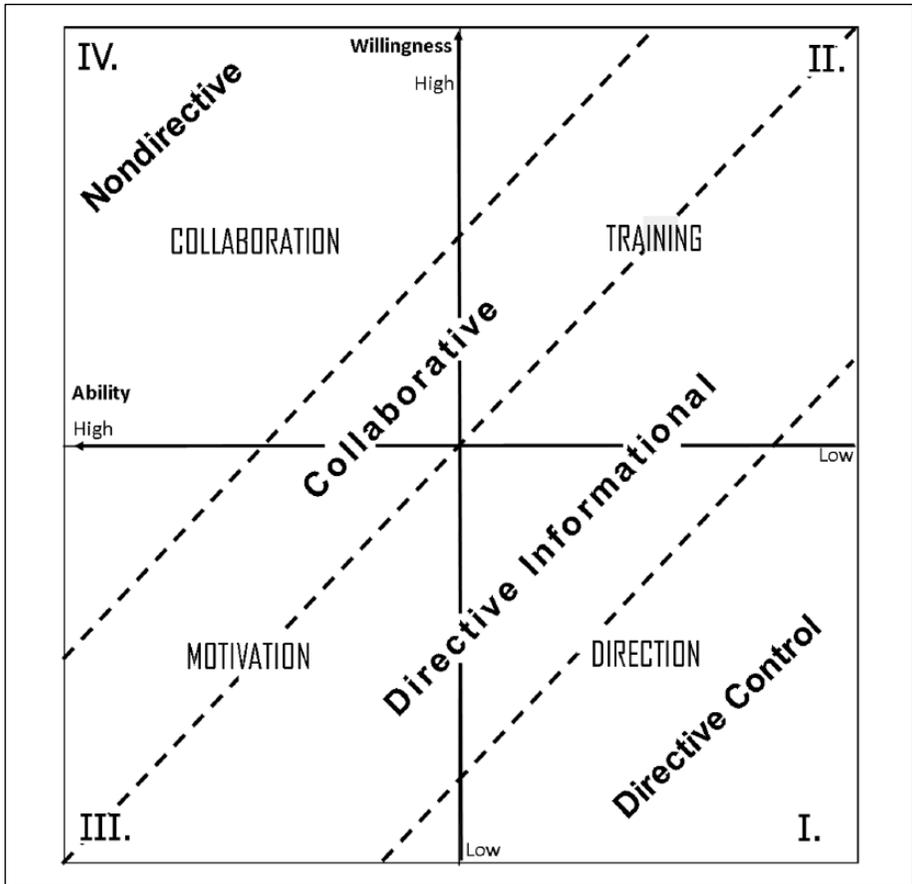


Figure 4. Supervisor’s Interactive Model of Organizational Relationships (SIMOR).

supervisee’s strengths in the most beneficial way to enhance the performance of the supervisee, supervisor, and organization. “The nature of the relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else” (Barth, 2006, p. 8).

Historically, relationships have played a role in situational leadership models. Reddin’s (1967) initial model identified relationship as one of two constructs but subsequent models eventually moved away from relationships as a construct. Building on Reddin’s work, models by Hersey and Blanchard (1969), Glickman (2002), and Glickman et al. (2010) did not use relationships as one of the construct axes for situational leadership and developmental supervision, respectively. SIMOR brings back the importance of relationships. “Without a good relationship and some degree of respect and trust, the leaders will have a very difficult time getting employees to comply regardless of the power he or she may have” (Nahavandi, 1997, p. 102).

Leadership skills have also taken on a relational slant. Leaders are encouraged to include stakeholders, to evoke fellowship, to empower others. Earlier, when we focused on tasks, and people were the annoying inconvenience, we thought about “situational leadership”—how the situation could affect our choice of styles. A different understanding of leadership has emerged recently. Leadership is *always* dependent on the context but the context is established by the *relationships* we value. We cannot hope to influence any situation without respect for the complex network of people who contribute to our organization. (Wheatley, 1994, pp. 144-145)

It is imperative that the supervisor be accurately aware of relationships involving the supervisee in order to select the appropriate supporting behavior and supervisory approach. To be effective, it is important that a supervisor develop relationships with those they supervise in the organization. When considering willingness, the supervisor needs to recognize the role of the relationship between themselves and the supervisee. In addition, when considering ability, the supervisor must also be knowledgeable about relationships *among* the supervisees in the organization. Part of the selection of an individual for a task will entail knowing how that individual is perceived in the organization and if “they work well with others.” In order to gauge this perception, the supervisor will need to be aware of how an individual is perceived by his/her colleagues.

Evolution of SIMOR

SIMOR combines the modified Hersey and Blanchard (1969) Situational Leadership Model and the Glickman et al. (2010) Developmental Supervision Model. Through this combination, SIMOR applies the strengths of both models while adding the essential component of relationships to allow a supervisor to consider a variety of supervisory approaches that neither the Hersey Blanchard nor the Glickman et al. models alone address. SIMOR overlays the developmental supervision continuum with the willingness and ability components of the modified Hersey and Blanchard model to form a more comprehensive picture of the supervisee’s supportive and supervisory needs. The power of this model lies in the ability of the supervisor to differentiate and consider a graduated scale of ability and willingness for the supervisee. “Often . . . leaders will implement the identical supervisory approach for all [supervisees] in spite of the fact that some approaches are more or less suited to a particular situation” (Fritz & Miller, 2003, p. 26).

The strength of SIMOR is that it allows the supervisor to consider an array of supervisory approaches that are not considered in previous situational leadership models. For example, if a supervisee is slightly below average in ability and willingness, the Hersey and Blanchard model would have suggested the supervisor use Direction in their approach. In this fused model the supervisor has the capability to consider a less directive approach involving Directive Informational and may include Training or Motivation depending on the supervisee’s needs. Thus, a supervisee could be in Quadrant I (low ability, low willingness) of the modified Hersey and Blanchard model

and not be at the lowest level (Directive Control) of the developmental supervision continuum. Similarly, in Quadrant IV (high ability and high willingness) the supervisor can apply varying levels of collaboration and Nondirective approaches and combine the supportive behaviors of Motivation and/or Training. In Quadrant II (low ability, high willingness) and in Quadrant III (high ability, low willingness) the degree of ability and willingness will give the supervisor discretion to use various supervisory approaches for providing the leadership behaviors of Training or Motivation that range along the continuum from Directive Control to Nondirective. This merged model opens up a myriad of supervisory approach and supportive behavior combinations allowing the supervisor to maximize the potential of each supervisee, and enhance the relationships that are essential to the success of the organization.

Using SIMOR

There are three sequential steps to follow when utilizing SIMOR. (See Figure 4) The first step is to gauge the supervisee's ability and willingness. The second step focuses on the supervisee's needs as perceived by the supervisor (Direction, Training, Motivation, Collaboration) and becomes the focus of the supervisor's supportive behaviors. The third step identifies the supervisory approach to be used based on the needs of the supervisee (Directive Control, Directive Informational, Collaborative, Nondirective).

Use of the SIMOR model should begin with the x -axis, which represents the ability component (competence and relationships) of the construct. Determine the supervisee's competence for the particular task on the scale of low to high. This will place the individual on one side or the other of the midpoint on the x -axis. The next step is to consider the individual's working relationships with others; such a consideration will add to or subtract from the original placement of the individual on the x -axis but the adjusted placement must not cross the midpoint of the x -axis. Individual competence plus their working relationship with colleagues constitutes their ability. The individual's ability will now be noted somewhere between the midpoint and the end of the x -axis.

Next, consider the individual's placement on the y -axis, which represents the willingness component (commitment and relationships) of the construct. Determine the individual's commitment for the particular task on a scale from low to high. This will place the individual above or below the midpoint on the y -axis. In addition, consider the individual's relationships with you as the supervisor. This consideration will add to or subtract from the original placement of the individual on the y -axis but the adjusted placement must not move above or below the midpoint of the y -axis. The individual's commitment plus their relationship with the supervisor constitutes their willingness in regard to that particular task. The individual will now be somewhere between the midpoint and the end of the y -axis.

Determine the location of the coordinate (x, y) by drawing a horizontal line on the y -axis and a vertical line on the x -axis at the previously determined points. Where those two lines intersect is the location of the coordinate. This will assist in identifying the supportive behaviors along with the supervisory approaches appropriate for the given task and specific employee.

Four Scenarios Using SIMOR

The following examples are used to illustrate how SIMOR can be applied in four scenarios involving the same individual. These scenarios are presented to illustrate the practicality of the model and to emphasize the situational nature of SIMOR. The four examples depict an actual teacher in nonhypothetical situations. The teacher in these examples is a music director responsible for teaching middle school band and choir.

1. The teacher described above is asked by the principal to coach junior high basketball. As a new teacher, he is very willing to try new things and is excited about the opportunity however, he knows very little about the game of basketball.
2. The following spring, the same teacher is asked to coach junior high track. The teacher has a true aversion to the sport of track and expresses to the supervisor his lack of interest in the offer.
3. The teacher, being responsible for the band program, is requested by the principal to have the pep band perform at all home basketball and volleyball games. While he has the ability to accomplish this, he is reluctant because of the rehearsal requirements of being constantly prepared for pep band, which would take away from concert band rehearsal.
4. The teacher is asked to lead the development of a curriculum for the Fine Arts Department. As the curriculum did not currently exist, the teacher was excited at this leadership opportunity.

Explanation of Example 1: The teacher described above is asked by the principal to coach junior high basketball.

In Example 1, the teacher would fall into Quadrant II which contains the descriptors of low ability and high willingness (see Figure 4). The teacher was in his first year and was excited at the opportunity to work with kids in a different environment. He also wanted to please his supervisor who desperately needed someone to fulfill the coaching position. His ability was low because he lacked experience as a coach and as a player. His commitment came from his desire to please the principal and they shared the purpose of fulfilling the coaching requirements. It was the relationship with the principal that led to the increased willingness. The principal, who was aware of the low ability of the teacher/coach for this situation, knew that he must provide Training as a supportive behavior, if the teacher/coach was to be successful.

In applying SIMOR to Example 1, the principal would still need to provide the supportive behavior of Training but would have several options as to the supervisory approaches he could utilize. The principal perceived the teacher's relationship with him to be positive and the ability of the teacher to relate to others was also positive. Therefore, the teacher's actual ability for the task as measured in the SIMOR model was higher because the relationships were positive. Accordingly, the initial supervisory approaches available ranged from Directive Control, through Directive

Informational and possibly Collaborative or Nondirective (Figure 4) in the process of providing the supportive behavior of Training. In this actual case, the principal used a Directive Informational approach and connected the teacher with the varsity basketball coach on a regular basis to provide the training necessary for the teacher to be successful. As the season progressed, the teacher's competence increased and the supervisory approaches moved toward the Collaborative and Nondirective.

Explanation of Example 2: The teacher is asked to coach junior high track

In Example 2, the teacher would fall into Quadrant I which contains the descriptors of low ability and low willingness (see Figure 4). It was now springtime and while the teacher was still in his first year, he had lost some of the desire to please the principal. His low willingness came from a lack of interest in the sport of track and field. This lack of interest may have also come from his lack of ability in the sport. The teacher even shared his opinion with the principal that, "Track is a stupid sport." The principal utilized the supportive behavior of Direction by telling the teacher to coach the sport. The principal was seeking someone who could supervise the students and create a safe environment. While the teacher's ability in the sport was low, his ability to meet that rudimentary objective of a safe environment was not low.

In applying SIMOR to Example 2, the principal would still need to provide the supportive behavior of Direction utilizing the supervisory approach options of either Directive Informational or Directive Control. The principal perceived the teacher's relationship with him to be positive, and although the teacher was very reluctant, the teacher's ability to relate to others is also positive. Therefore, the teacher's actual ability for the task and willingness for the task was higher because the relationships were positive. Thus, the initial supervisory approaches available ranged from Directive Control, through Directive Informational (Figure 4) in the process of providing the supportive behavior of Training and Motivation. In this actual case, the principal used a more directive approach because of the teacher's reluctance. The principal provided the assistance of the varsity track coaches (Training) and a great deal of positive reinforcement (Motivation).

Explanation of Example 3: The teacher is requested by the principal to have the pep band perform at all home basketball and volleyball games.

In Example 3, the teacher would fall into Quadrant III, which contains the descriptors of high ability and low willingness (see Figure 4). The band director was fully capable of rehearsing the band and having the pep band perform at any number of games. The band director's reluctance came from a pedagogical concern regarding the balance of pep band rehearsal time and concert band rehearsal time. The principal knew that this teacher would need to be motivated. The principal could have directed the teacher to have the pep band perform but chose to utilize a supportive behavior of Motivation. He explained to the band director that the school board hoped to ask the taxpayers for a bond referendum to build an addition to the school which would include a new band room. The principal felt that having the band perform at public sporting events would be helpful in passing the referendum.

Using SIMOR, the principal, in providing the supportive behavior of Motivation (Quadrant III), could interact with the band director with either a Collaborative or Nondirective supervisory approach depending on the willingness of the director. The relationship between the band director and the principal was strong and the trust was high which supported the principal's decision to apply a Nondirective supervisory approach in providing the supportive behavior of Motivation.

Explanation of Example 4: The teacher is asked to lead the development of a curriculum for the Fine Arts Department.

In Example 4, the teacher would fall into Quadrant IV, which contains the descriptors of high ability and high willingness (see Figure 4). The principal chose the Collaborative supervisory behavior knowing that the teacher had the skills, knowledge, and abstract critical thinking to accomplish the task.

In SIMOR, the principal would naturally tend to use a Nondirective supervisory approach because of the high willingness and ability of the teacher. While not appropriate for this specific example, a strength of SIMOR is that it allows for supportive behaviors that may include some Training or Motivation depending on the supervisee's level of ability and willingness. In this example, the relationships between the teacher and the principal and between the teacher and his colleagues would determine whether a Collaborative or Nondirective supervisory approach is appropriate.

In all four of these examples, the principal understood and followed the modified Hersey and Blanchard model by offering the appropriate supporting behaviors to meet the needs of the teacher. With SIMOR, the principal would have additional options to consider in meeting the needs of the teacher based on the task and the relationships as perceived by the principal.

Summary

Relationships within an organization are complex and evolving. SIMOR provides an integrated framework for leaders to blend supportive behaviors and supervisory approaches which are influenced by the perception of relationships. In a leader's toolbox there are many strategies that can enable them in their role as supervisor to enhance the effectiveness of the supervisee. This user-friendly model provides opportunity for a supervisor to recognize the level of ability and willingness of the supervisee as they relate to a particular task. This recognition guides the supervisor in determining the best supportive behavior and supervisory approach necessary for the successful completion of the task. The distinguishing element of SIMOR is the knowledge and understanding of the influence of relationships within the organization. In turn, as employee performance is optimized, the organization will evolve in an efficient and effective manner.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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John Matt is an associate professor at the University of Montana in the field of educational leadership. He has 32 years in the field of education including 13 years as a school district superintendent. Since 2007, he has been a faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership where he currently serves as department chair.

William P. McCaw has been a public school educator for 34 years including 20 years in P-12 education as a teacher, principal, and central office administrator. For the past 14 years, he has been a professor of educational leadership at the University of Montana investigating the relationship between leaders and followers.