Technical Notes on the Design of the
Strategic Leadership Type Indicator (SLTi) Model

The *Strategic Leadership Type Indicator* (SLTi) is an assessment tool, model of leadership behaviors, and prescriptive job aid for managers and other workplace leaders. It uses as its central model a description of leadership behavior that derives from classic studies of management behavior and leadership style and also reflects a decade of original research (through case studies, statistical surveys and modeling), performed by Alex Hiam & Associates in collaboration with various researchers. The SLTi and its strategic leadership model modifies, extends, and integrates a number of models and findings from diverse streams of research. It in some cases attempts to resolve inconsistencies or apparent errors in earlier models or teachings. It does *not* rely on unproven or hypothetical concepts, since it is built on the premise that leaders need to be given validated tools and advice rather than theoretical or presumptive opinions presented as fact.

Much of what is taught today to supervisors, managers, and team leaders is not derived obviously or clearly from careful research. It is an interesting question as to why consultants, trainers, and even professors will often present ideas as if they are validated when they are not. There has been a tremendous effort to develop a science of management over the past 75 years or so, and much of what has been learned has been humbling in the sense that models and methods concerning employee performance rarely prove to be as valid and effective as their designers expected. It is common for a model to be formulated with high hopes, and then to prove far more complex and confusing in testing, perhaps to be modified or extended, or even to be discarded after considerable efforts to prove it through controlled research. The upshot of this growing body of research ought to be a growing realization that human behavior is highly complex and difficult to understand or influence. Yet it is easy to fall into deceptively simple generalizations when it comes time to train leaders in how to manage human performance in their workplaces.

To avoid this risk as much as possible, the SLTi was built through a reexamination of every assumption and the model was constructed through careful reference to a long stream of research and development of models of similar form. Thus although new in a number of ways, the SLTi is essentially a conservative model, designed with the goal of representing in a practical way for managers only what is fairly well established as generally useful and valid. The following provides an overview of our research on the model and the extensive earlier research by others that we considered in the design and development of the SLTi model.

Summarizing Ten Years of
Original Leadership Research

In 1992 I published the results of a study of Conference Board member companies undertaking a rigorous reinvention under the banner of total quality management (Hiam, *Closing the Quality Gap: Lessons from America's Leading Companies*, Prentice-Hall 1992; see especially Chapter 9, "Leadership"). At that time and in that group of companies, management was being redefined to involve a more proactive, transformational leadership role, to engage employees more fully in communications and decision-making, to develop new employee skills and capabilities, and to

manage motivation by focusing on important transformational goals and redefining individual employee tasks based on those new goals. In my in-depth case studies, a common theme emerged. Each successful transformation involved extensive rethinking of the leadership role. And in each case, leaders were being retrained and re-motivated to see their roles differently. Their behavior toward employees changed. They became more involved in the "hard" aspects of individual employee's and work group's task design—providing job enrichment, feedback, and support as work processes were reengineered and individual tasks defined in more efficient, effective, and clear ways.

Also in these case studies, leaders were becoming more actively involved in the "soft" aspects of management—using communication and facilitation techniques to help, engage, and motivate their employees. The combination of more and better practices on both the task and people dimensions was central to this stepped-up role for leadership and made many breakthroughs possible in the organizations we studied. Later quantitative studies of Conference Board member companies allowed us to construct a path model and determine that, of all the factors affecting bottom-line outcomes from quality or reengineering efforts, leadership was often the most important causal factor (results summarized on p. 302 of Hiam, *Motivating & Rewarding Employees*, Adams Media, 1999).

Which leadership behaviors are most important, when? This is a natural question to ask since today's leaders need to be given as much guidance as possible—but not unhelpful or misleading guidance. In 1998, I collaborated with Richard J. Petronio, Ph.D., of Surcon International (Chicago) to seek a definitive answer to this question. Surcon's internal database contains statistical results from millions of employee surveys and from thousands of business unit's financial results, gathered in the process of providing consulting and survey work for clients in many industries. Surcon (unlike most survey research firms) builds models of performance from linked data sets for each of its clients so that it is statistically able to provide a model of the causal links from hard-to-measure variables such as employee perceptions of their leaders, on the one hand, and variations in hard measures of output on the other hand. (For instance, Surcon often compares different facilities within a company to show how productivity or profitability is affected by variations in management behavior.)

Our goal was to probe the combined data from many such engagements to seek broader patterns that could safely be generalized to all companies. (There are many such efforts to do so in the research literature on management and leadership, of course, and I will review many of the most relevant ones in later sections, but we felt it imperative to make an independent effort to link leader behavior with performance results in modern workplaces through this more extensive and practical database of case histories.)

I reported on the findings of this study (in Hiam 1999, pp. 304–310), and in particular on the universal importance of two dimensions of leadership behavior that had a determining impact on profits or other performance measures in every case studied (quoted from p. 306):

1. *Initiation of job structure*. When supervisors are good at organizing and structuring work, identifying who does what, managing and teaching the technical aspects of the work, and generally providing appropriate structure and roles for each employee, then employee motivation is higher. A concern for task structure and definition is key.

2. *Consideration*. When supervisors are considerate of employees, are good at listening, communicate well, make themselves available, and are considerate of employees' feelings, then employee motivation is higher.

Initiation of job structure and consideration are the two key variables that cross company and industry boundaries in the Surcon database. No matter what company or industry...these are important to management style and have considerable power over the bottom line....If you track these variables for two or three years, you generally find that motivation and profits rise with them.

The Surcon study reported in Hiam 1999 also concluded that "from 40 to 50 percent of profit margin fluctuations at companies are predictable based on employee feelings and opinions," in particular measures of employee perceptions of their managers on the two variables described above (the other 50 to 60 percent of profit fluctuations are outside of the model, and are often driven by economic factors, competition, and so forth.)

In Hiam, *The 24 Hour MBA* (Adams 2000), I showed one approach to providing leadership training in a modern workplace focused on how to manage these two key variables. Leaders (as this practical treatment illustrates) can be taught techniques for effectively focusing on the tasks to develop increasing competence and raise the quality of the work (see Chapter 5, Leading to Build Commitment), to build employee motivation, and strengthen their desire to succeed at the work. They can be taught a different set of skills to develop increasing competence and raise the quality of the work (as in Chapter 6, Leading to Build Competence), and these two sets of skills can be dove-tailed in practice to provide a high-performance work environment, as in Chapter 7 of Hiam 2000 or in other ways to reflect more specific management issues and needs, as in Hiam, "The New Leadership Essentials," Chapter 12 in Meredith, Schewe et al., *Managing by Defining Moments*, New York: Hungry Minds, Inc., (John Wiley & Sons) 2002, where "task orientation" and "people orientation" are the terms used to describe the same two variables identified in the Surcon study.

These two variables were further analyzed through a theme analysis of research on leadership and management as it relates to human and organizational performance, and were found to be central to many earlier studies. This analysis was extended by integrating more specific and detailed studies of relevance to one or the other of the variables in order to deepen or extend our findings as to how they can be effectively implemented in workplace leadership. The examination of prior research starts with findings from the 1950s and 1960s.

Early Origins of the Core Dimensions

Remis Likert (*New Patterns of Management*, McGraw-Hill, 1961) identified two general classes of supervisory behavior: employee-oriented behavior (which focused on meeting the social and emotional needs of employees) and job-oriented behavior (which focused on careful supervision of work methods and task results).

Edwin Fleishman and associates at Ohio State, who used factor analysis to identify the key variables in supervisory behavior based on employee surveys, obtained similar results at almost the same time. In R. M. Stodgill and A. E. Coons, *Leader Behavior: Its Description and Measurement* (Ohio State University, Bureau of Business Research, 1957), these variables were defined as *consideration* and *initiating structure.* Consideration involves leadership behavior directed toward the social or emotional needs of the employees—such as being helpful and kind and sharing the reasons for decisions. Initiating structure involves leadership behaviors directed at achieving results through the accomplishment of tasks, such as telling employees what they are expected to do, making sure employees follow procedures, monitoring work to make sure it meets standards, or setting performance goals.

Similarly, Robert Kahn and Daniel Katz's *Leadership Practices in Relation to Productivity and Morale* (1962) examined the influence of supervision (especially how closely tasks were supervised) and also of supportive behavior toward the employee on the part of managers— thus isolating two key variables that also emerged in other studies of leadership style and form the foundations of the SLTi's leadership strategies grid.

In 1964 (and in later publications), Robert Blake and Jane Mouton presented a leadership grid that was based on attitudinal (as opposed to behavioral) variables—but aside from this difference in how the dimensions are viewed and measured by the researchers, the grid is quite similar to that still used in many leadership training and assessment protocols, and in the SLTi. Blake and Mouton called their two dimensions "concern from production," which corresponds to the task-orientation side of other managerial grids, and "concern for people," which corresponds to a supportive or people-oriented dimension. (They used the following names for the four combinations in their grid: high-production/low-people = Authority-Compliance; high-production/high-people = Team Management; low-production/high-people = Country Club Management; low/low = Impoverished Management.) Details of this model are explored in R. R. Blake and A. A. McCanse, *Leadership Dimensions—Grid Solutions*, Gulf Publishing Co., 1991. It is extended to the sales function by adapting the dimensions to be concern for sale and concern for customer in Blake and Mouton, *The Grid for Sales Excellence* (2nd Ed.), Scientific Methods, Inc., 1970.

Single-Style versus Multi-Style Prescriptions for Leaders

While the Blake and Mouton leadership and sales grids use comparable dimensions and look similar to the managerial grids arising from the Ohio State studies, there is a fundamental difference of interpretation or use of the grids. Blake and Mouton have stated that there is one best approach in all managerial situations—to use the maximum concern for both production and people—their "Team Management" style of leadership in which work is accomplished by "committed people" who have a "common stake" in the organization and its goals and who relate to one another based on trust and respect.

In SLTi, this finding is rejected on the grounds that, as John Wagner and John Hollenbeck conclude in a review of the literature, "a good deal of research argues against the notion that there is any 'one best way' of leading, regardless of followers and situations" (*Management of Organizational Behavior*, 2nd Edition, Prentice-Hall, 1995, p. 385). This is not a rejection of Blake's findings concerning the efficacy of management that generates commitment, trust, and shared goals—those do seem to be virtually universal in their desirability. However, they do not necessarily flow directly from one combination of the two underlying dimensions of task and people—and nor are they impossible results from the other combinations. For example, when an employee has a lot of skill, experience, and professionalism, she may feel more committed and goal-oriented if the leader delegates to her—using low levels of emphasis on supervising the task or supporting the person—than she would if she were feeling "over-managed" and therefore distrusted by a leader who insisted on coaching every detail of her performance.

Perhaps at least part of the difference of viewpoint between Blake and others is explained by the difference in how Blake and his associates define the dimensions of their grid: based on "concern" for production and people—a basic attitude on the part of the manager. Other managerial grids take a behavioral (not attitudinal) approach. Behaviors can and should vary depending on the situation. But perhaps as important an underlying attitude as concern should

not. How effective could any leader be without concern for both the people and the work to be done? In the SLTi model, it is assumed that the task and the people are important and that the leaders ought to be consistent in their interest and concern for them—but that their behavior ought to vary in order to best express their concerns in different contexts.

Expanding on the Ohio State Model

Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard's "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership" (*Training and Development Journal*, ASTD, 1969) built on the Ohio State studies and Blake and Mouton's similar managerial grid. In reviewing and noting the similarities between the Ohio State model (with its initiating-structure and consideration dimensions) and the Blake/Mouton grid (with its concern for production and concern for people), Hersey and Blanchard concluded that "there is no normative (best) style of leadership" and that "successful leaders are those who can adapt their leader behavior to meet the needs of their followers and the particular situation" (hence their later use of the name Situational Leadership to describe their approach).

Hersey and Blanchard argue (in the same 1969 paper) that Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid is not incompatible with the Ohio State leadership studies, even though the Managerial Grid studies pointed to one optimal leadership style (high concern for both production and people) while other findings pointed toward a need for leader flexibility. Specifically, Hersey and Blanchard point out that "behavioral assumptions have often been drawn from analysis of the attitudinal dimensions of the Managerial Grid" and "it is assumptions about behavior drawn from the Managerial Grid and not the Grid itself that are inconsistent with the Leader Effectiveness Model."

The Style-Modification Paradox and the Strategic Resolution of It

Hersey and Blanchard present a behavioral grid model very similar to the Ohio State one, in which the two dimensions of leader behavior are labeled as "task" and "relationships"; in later publications, they clarify these dimensions by defining them more fully as "task orientation" and "relationship orientation." Individual leaders' styles vary on these two dimensions. Effectiveness is seen as varying based on the combination of leader style and the situation. Leaders are seen as needing to learn to modify their style to fit the situation, but Hersey and Blanchard cite numerous studies of problems arising from efforts to change leader style. They caution that unpredictability on the part of leaders can hurt employee attitudes and performance, and also that aspects of leader style are linked to relatively inflexible aspects of personality and may be slow and difficult to change.

Thus the (1969 Hersey and Blanchard) paper seems to present a paradox. Ideally, leaders will be flexible in their style to meet varying needs. Yet style is risky and difficult to change. In the SLTi, we back off of the notion of style in the sense it is often used in psychology (as related to fundamental aspects of personality). Instead, we address the task and people orientations more on the strategic than the style level, following the insight provided in his review of the leadership literature by Peter J. Dean ("Leadership, Leaders, and Leading: Part Three," *Performance Improvement Quarterly* 15(3), 2002). He wraps up his review with the conclusion, "the most to be expected from leadership theory is general guidelines and branching scenarios that can be expected to unfold under shifting and often unpredictable circumstances."

A strategy is a general plan or technique for achieving some end (according to dictionary definitions). Strategies provide the general guidelines for action, but unfold in various ways as circumstances shift or more experience or information is acquired through action. Tactical-level actions can branch in different directions in spite of their having a single, constant strategic guide at a higher level of leadership conceptualization.

Leaders formulate strategies of many kinds—often having to do with external objectives for their organizations. For instance, they might adopt a growth strategy involving an effort to gain market share by outselling key competitors. Such a strategy then leads them (and others in their organization) to focus on selling more than a competitor does. They may do this in many different ways. They may give their employees freedom to pursue the strategic objective creatively, so long as any tactics adopted are indeed oriented toward the objective. Thus strategies are fixed in their basic purpose and orientation, but very open-ended behaviorally. They permit alternate tactics. In the SLTi, any specific, purposeful orientation toward a combination of task and person is viewed in this same manner—as a strategy that focuses the leader's intent and inspires one or more appropriate tactics. The leader's personal style and many other situational variables may have an impact on the types of tactics considered and adopted and whether they are effective or not. Style thus becomes a secondary, although still important, aspect of the leader's behavior. The basic orientation dictated by the task/person grid is interpreted on a more strategic leadership level.

Further Explorations of the Core Dimensions

In 1970, Fred Fiedler published his research on leadership in "The Contingency Model: A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness (*Problems in Social Psychology*, Second Edition, McGraw-Hill 1970), in which he used a three-dimensional model that included "affective leader-member relations"—corresponding roughly to the people dimension of the Ohio State studies, and "Task structure"— corresponding to initiating structure. Fiedler then added a third dimension, "Leadership position power," which is not included in the SLTi.

In his article, he pointed out that "Tasks can...be structured to a greater or lesser extent by giving very specific and detailed, or vague and general instructions..." He also found that leaders did best by providing much of the structure in an autocratic manner when there was a high need for structure in the task, whereas when there was no clear idea of how to get a task done a more democratic, open process worked better for leaders. This seems to get into some aspects of style that are external to the management grid underlying the SLTi and that are best thought of as affecting how a leader might implement a specific style or strategy. For instance, during a crisis a leader can be expected to use any of the managerial styles from the grid differently from how s/he might use the same style during routine operations. Fiedler thus opens up a broad set of secondary (but nonetheless important) questions about implementation patterns and approaches for leaders. Considerations as diverse as the positional power of the leader and the nature of the current challenge or goal may need to be considered in selecting the best leadership behavior in any context. However, in spite of the added complexities of additional concerns or influences, the two core dimensions of task and people orientation continued to be important in this contingency model (and are viewed as foundational in the SLTi as well).

At least one study of employee attitudes and performance attempted to test the impact of varying leadership styles arising from the basic dimensions of the managerial grid (see G. I. Graeff, "The Situational Leadership Theory: A Critical Review," *Academy of Management*

Review 7, 1983). In this study, employees who were low in "maturity," defined as low in both ability and willingness to perform a task, performed better when managed with a directive style than with other styles tested. This possibly reflects the influence of an unmeasured variable, the extent to which the managerial style was coercive and based on extrinsic motivators, versus inspirational and relying on intrinsic motivations. People who are not motivated to perform a task and don't know how are not going to perform well unless the leader either changes their underlying condition (by teaching them and/or motivating them), or the leader supplies the motivation and know-how by making them do the right things. (In the SLTi model, the former is presumed to be desirable.)

The specific definitions of each leadership style as studied by Graeff are based on Hersey and Blanchard's model of Situational Leadership, and a close reading of situational leadership style descriptions suggests that they may complicate the basic task and people dimensions of the managerial grid with another issue of leadership style—one that was first formulated in terms of an authoritarianism scale, and then seems to have been picked up or at least paralleled in studies of employee motivation (in particular in the distinctions between leading with an emphasis on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation). The core concept is that leaders can either *make* or *let* their employees perform well (see Kenneth W. Thomas, *Intrinsic Motivation at Work*, Berrett Koehler 2000, for an overview of contemporary thinking on motivational leadership; his approach adds another dimension to the management grid in that in each of its quadrants the leader might implement with a more controlling/extrinsic style or a more inspiring/intrinsic one).

One of the roots of the motivational-style issue is found in "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern" (Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt, *Harvard Business Review*, 1958), where the distinction between an authoritarian style of leadership and a democratic one is established. The authoritarian one is directive and not very concerned with the people and how they feel or what they think. Its main interest is in getting the task done and the goal accomplished by telling people what to do. It has a rough correspondence to a high-task, low-person orientation such as is represented by the Instruct strategy in the SLTi model—especially if the leader tends to use this strategy in a directive manner rather than encouraging a participative give-and-take about task-oriented questions such as how to set goals or create feedback about performance. The correspondence between the two styles—democratic and authoritarian—and contemporary ideas about leadership style or strategy based on the managerial grids, is imperfect. Some authors (such as Hersey and Blanchard) have tended to equate authoritarian style with the high-task/low-person orientation, and democratic (or, to use a more current term, participative) leadership with a high-task/high-person orientation. But it can logically be true that someone might implement either of these orientations differently depending on how authoritarian or democratic their style tends to be. There is certainly room for variation and personal expression in the implementation of any of the basic orientations in the task/person orientation grid.

The core model—in which leader behavior is defined by extent of orientation toward or attention given task structure on the one hand and the people doing the task on the other—has received additional research support in a study by G. Graen, R. Linden, and W. Hoel ("Role of Leadership in the Employee Withdrawal Process," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 67, 1982). They observed that the traditional research approach to these two dimensions involves administering a survey to employees and then averaging employee ratings of their leaders. (Thus each leader receives two average scores, one for each dimension.) Yet managers do not treat all employees the same (and nor should they according to the Ohio State and Situational Leadership models). To refine the research methodology, Graen et al. compiled so-called dyadic scores, which examine results across pairs of leaders and employees instead of across

averaged data. Their method reduces the confounding effects of differential treatment. And it shows stronger performance-related results from dyadic variations in leadership behavior on the two core dimensions.

Specifically, Graen et al. concluded that leaders who treated employees more considerately were more likely to have satisfied employees, and that leaders who provided more initiating structure were more likely to have employees who were clear on their roles (knew what to do). These leader orientations were shown to correlate with potentially important aspects of employee attitude and task understanding.

Prescriptions for Leadership Effectiveness

In addition, Graen's finding that dyadic measures correlate more highly than average group ratings is evidence that leaders naturally do vary their emphasis along these two dimensions depending on which employee they are interacting with. In other words, leaders seem to already use a form of situational leadership, even without receiving specific training. They are certainly capable of treating different employees to different levels of task and people orientations, since Graen shows that many leaders already do so. Whether they do so in the most effective possible manner is another issue. It appears that most managers do not optimize their behavior toward specific employees without training in how to do so. The need to focus leaders' attentions on the effectiveness of their use of these two orientations is behind Hersey and Blanchard's introduction of what they call an "effectiveness dimension" to the basic grid. Hersey and Blanchard (in *Leader Behavior*, Management Education & Development, Inc., 1967), state that their model adds an effectiveness dimension to the Ohio State model. They reiterate this point in "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership," saying, "…By adding an effectiveness dimension to the Ohio State model, a three-dimensional model is created."

Blanchard later published a series of training materials based on the grid, modifying its presentation in certain ways. In *The Color Model: A Situational Approach to Managing People* (Blanchard Training and Development, Inc., 1985) he labels the axes "directive behavior" and "supportive behavior." He defines effectiveness in terms of appropriateness of the amount of directive and/or supportive behavior the leader provides, given the needs of the follower as defined by "the competence and commitment (Development Level) that a follower exhibits in performing a specific task." Blanchard uses somewhat different terms and definitions of the four leadership styles in his grid as well. It is perhaps simplest to present both the original terms and definitions from Hersey and Blanchard, and the newer ones from Blanchard, at the same time for the sake of comparison:

SLTi Strategies	Comparative Hersey Styles	Comparative Blanchard Styles
Instruct by focusing on the performance.	Telling. High task, low relationship. Provide specific instructions and closely supervise performance.	Directing. High directive/low supportive behavior: Leader provides specific instructions (roles and goals) for follower(s) and closely supervises task accomplishment.
Coach by focusing on both the performance and the performer.	Selling. High task, high relationship. Explain your decisions and provide opportunity for clarification.	Coaching. High directive/high supportive behavior. Leader explains decisions and solicits suggestions from follower(s) but continues to direct task accomplishment.
Relate by focusing on the performer.	Participating. High relationship, low task. Share ideas and facilitate in making decisions.	Supporting. High supportive/low directive behavior: Leader makes decisions together with the follower(s) and supports efforts toward task accomplishment.
Delegate by focusing on the employee's need for independence.	Delegating. Low relationship, low task. Turn over responsibility for decisions and implementation.	Delegating. Low supportive/low directive behavior: Leader turns over decisions and responsibility for implementation to follower(s).
	Source: Paul Hersey, *The Situational Leader*, Center for Leadership Studies, 1984, p. 63.	Source: *The Color Model: A Situational Approach to Managing People*, Blanchard Training and Development, Inc., 1985.

Leadership and Employee Development

M. L. Kohn (in "Job Complexity and Adult Personality," in N.J. Smelser and E. H. Erikson, Eds. *Themes of Work and Love in Adulthood*, Harvard University Press, 1980) reports on two important findings. First, the tasks people actually do when they work—and how intellectually complex and demanding those tasks are—have a bigger impact on them in many cases than more obvious variables such as how much they earn or where they work. The complexity of work is closely tied to intellectual growth and flexibility and the mastery of complex tasks contributes positively to sense of self, adding to personal feelings of competence (Diane Papalia and Sally Wendkos Olds, *Human Development* 4th Edition, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1989, p. 498). And second, it seems clear that "intellectual flexibility continues to be responsive to experience well into midcareer" (Kohn 1980, p. 202). Employees are capable of developing and growing in their work, and they can benefit personally from this development.

It is worthwhile to look more closely at this research concerning the links between the nature of work and the personal development of the worker. Kohn found specifically that, of 50 different variables describing aspects of the work experience (such as pace of work and relationships with co-workers and supervisors), "substantial complexity" of the work itself had the strongest impact on the worker. Substantial complexity was defined as "the degree to which the work, in its very substance, requires thought and independent judgment." (Kohn, 1980, p. 197.)

It is interesting to note the relationship of the complexity of work to the developmental goal in Hersey and Blanchard's life cycle theory of leadership. In a later commentary on the delegating style of leadership, Blanchard observes that delegation "produces more satisfied employees who are able to develop a broad range of skills and thus become qualified to be promoted," and that "since delegating helps both managers and their employees, it is a win-win activity." (Kenneth H. Blanchard, writing the Foreword to Robert H. Nelson, *Delegation: The Power of Letting Go*, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1988.) The SLTi model incorporates this win-win goal of developing employees by working them toward tasks of increasingly substantial complexity. Delegation is seen as the end goal in a developmental leadership process. Leaders are encouraged to consider not only how to get the task performed or the work-objective accomplished, but also how to do so in ways that maximize the development of the performers over time.

This concept of leading so as to develop the performer, instead of simply completing the task with no regard for the performer's development, has some of its roots in the life cycle model, which Hersey and Blanchard explain by reference to various developmental analogies, such as parenting or teaching. They point out that a parent at first initiates much of the structure for a young child, but gradually works toward independence (analogous to delegation) as the child matures. And (in Hersey and Blanchard 1969) they report that:

> In a college setting, the Life Cycle Theory has been validated in studying the teacher-student relationship. Effective teaching of lower division students (freshmen and sophomores) has been characterized by structured behavior on the part of the teacher as he reinforces appropriate patterns in attendance and study habits, while more relationship behavior seems to be appropriate for working with upper division undergraduates and Master's students. And finally the cycle seems to be completed as a teacher begins to work with mature Ph.D. candidates, who need very little guidance or socio-emotional support.

This quick overview of effective teaching styles ignores variations in the difficulty of the tasks assigned. It is possible for instance that the Ph.D. student may need considerable support and structure while tackling a complex experiment. But as a generalization, the quote does seem to illustrate the point that people grow over time in their capacity to perform and thus need and quite possibly want more independence and higher levels of challenge. Hersey and Blanchard see the same sort of sequence operating within businesses when they state that, "people occupying higher level jobs in an organization tend to be more 'mature' and therefore need less close supervision than people occupying lower level jobs." Implicit in these general examples is the idea that greater general maturity is achieved through the specific mastery of a sequence of increasingly complex or challenging tasks over time. The first-year college student or entry-level worker will not automatically become the Ph.D. candidate or potential chief executive. Such personal development depends at least in part on leaders providing developmental opportunities and through these opportunities helping the individual achieve growth and development on many levels, from specific task knowledge to broader cognitive and socio-emotional maturity.

A contemporary application of this developmental approach to leadership is found in the Active Leadership Program taught to leaders at Canon Canada Inc. (based on corporate training materials attributed to Gilmore & Associates of Toronto and dated June 1997). The developmental approach culminating in delegation of the task is explained clearly as:

> Whenever a Canon leader chooses to give an employee a task, the leader has to decide who owns what part of the responsibility for getting the task done. If you give a task to someone who's never done it before, you own the lion's share of the responsibility for getting the task done.... However, as that employee becomes more capable of doing the particular task, he or she owns more and more of the responsibility for getting the task done. (p. 1-17)

In the Canon version of developmental leadership, there are three leadership styles and their definitions are focused on this concept of shifting responsibility to the employee over time. The styles correspond fairly well to three of the SLTi leadership strategies:

SLTi Strategy	Canon Canada Active Leadership Style
Instruct	Teaching: Demonstrating how to do something, giving instructions, training
Coach	Sharing: Co-owning the Task with the employee, asking for their ideas, offering your own
Relate	(No match; the Canon model appears to emphasize tasks over relationships)
Delegate	Transferring: Turning over the responsibility for the Task, with little or no detailed instructions

Corporate and Personal Benefits of Employee Development

The need to move employees toward ever higher levels of performance capacity and to encourage them to take increasingly more responsibility and initiative is based on the links between superior individual performances and superior organizational performance in the thinking of Gerald Kushel, who observes that, "A company will get peak performances out of its work force only if it has either trained its people to be totally self-responsible or hired those who already are." (Kushel, *Reaching the Peak Performance Zone*, AMACOM, 1994, p. 87.) This objective of achieving a high-performing organization through developing its constituents is behind Blanchard's statement that, "At the highest level of development...employees usually demonstrate high levels of both competence and commitment. Managers should delegate as much responsibility as possible to such workers—giving them increased autonomy to do the job in which they've demonstrated both competence and commitment." (Blanchard, Schewe, Nelson, Hiam, *Exploring the World of Business*, Worth Publishers, 1996, p. 245.)

A benefit to the organization of this progress toward delegation is that span of control need not be a constant in an organization, but can broaden as maturity rises (according to Hersey and Blanchard 1969): "...span of control...should be a function of the maturity of the individuals being supervised. The more independent, able to take responsibility, and achievement-motivated one's subordinates are, the more people a manager can supervise."

Moving Employees Toward Delegation with the Life Cycle Model

The goal of developing mature employees who have the commitment and competence to take on more responsibility is best pursued, according to Hersey and Blanchard's life cycle model, through a specific developmental sequence. As Peter J. Dean points out in his 2002 review of the model, "Situational leadership...claims that as task relevant maturity increases, leadership style should progress accordingly."

However, exactly how leadership style should progress as maturity increases is not specified in detail in Hersey and Blanchard (1969), except that they state it involves gradual "change through the cycle from quadrant 1 to quadrant 2, 3 and then 4." This is illustrated with examples from parenting and child development. In later works, both authors (together and independently) describe a more rapid, flexible approach to style selection that is driven more narrowly by maturity on specific tasks. They define this task-related maturity somewhat differently too.

Specifically, in Hersey and Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* 4th Ed., Prentice-Hall 1982, they define maturity as task-related combinations of follower ability and willingness and call it "task relevant maturity." In contrast, they described a more general maturity in their 1969 article in terms of "relative independence, ability to take responsibility, and achievement-motivation of an individual or group." Which is correct? Probably both are valid views of maturity on different levels of specificity. In a general way, managers may want employees to gain in independence, responsibility and achievement-motivation over a period of months or years. To achieve this development in the daily supervision of task performances, however, the manager may adapt his or her leadership style not only in response to such general differences in human maturity, but also (or even mostly) in response to how prepared an employee is to perform a specific task independently and well.

Thus to actualize a trainable, implementable model of leadership based on maturity, Hersey and Blanchard avoided measuring broad personality characteristics (such as need for achievement), and instead created a method in which leaders look simply and logically at task-readiness of the individual. This task-level assessment of the employee is probably far easier for leaders to do well and it is more likely to yield a helpful understanding of the individual in a task context than would a more long-term, personality-based view of maturity. Nor does this shift in definition of maturity to task-specific measures of ability and willingness lose anything of significance. To the extent that general maturity affects an individual's willingness or ability to tackle a specific challenge, it could be incorporated into the leader's assessment of that individual's ability and willingness.

Expanding the Definitions of Ability and Willingness

The SLTi defines employee ability (or capability) in terms of attitudes and abilities toward a specific task as well, although it expands the definitions of both of these dimensions to include consideration for factors external to the individual employee that may be important to their capacity to perform. (The intent is to avoid the pitfalls of the fundamental attribution error.)

For instance, an individual may have the knowledge to do a task, but lack specific information or other resources needed to do it—thus information and other resources need to be considered when a leader evaluates an employee's task-related capability to perform. And this implies too that the leader may want to incorporate additional behaviors into his or her response to the employee's capability. If the employee lacks a needed resource, then part of the leader's task-related behavior ought to be aimed at securing this needed resource. In Strategic Leadership, the term *capability* is used to represent the employee's ability to perform the task, inclusive of factors both internal and external to the employee that can affect that ability to perform the task well.

Similarly, Strategic Leadership broadens the definition of willingness to include a range of both internal and external attitudinal influences, calling this broader dimension *employee desire to perform.* Employees may lack desire to perform a task for many reasons. Employee motivation is at best a highly complex subject. Sometimes information plays a role in raising desire to perform, for example, even if it is not needed for the sake of capability. Sometimes the leader needs to attend to stresses, anxieties, and other feelings—as the relatively recent application of research on empathy to management suggests (see the various authorities on emotional intelligence in the workplace for details). And just as with capabilities, desire can be influenced by factors external to the individual that may warrant leadership attention, such as the organizational climate, the influences of the physical environment on mood, and so forth. SLTi uses "desire" to capture the benefits of a broader definition of task-specific motivation to perform, and to open the door to leadership instructions and actions that incorporate new insights from work on intrinsic motivation, job enrichment, participatory management, emotional intelligence, and other areas that seem relevant to or expand upon the original definition of consideration in the Ohio State studies and Hersey and Blanchard's definitions of willingness.

Ambiguity Surrounding Sequence of Motivational States

The state of the employee as defined by specific task-related ability and willingness (in Hersey and Blanchard's training materials based on Situational Leadership) is not clearly linked to their 1969 article on the Life Cycle Theory of Leadership, and nor is it clear how it flows from the Ohio State studies. It may have derived from the case studies of child and student development cited by Hersey and Blanchard in the 1969 article. It is summarized by Dean (2002), who uses the codes M1 through M4 for the four levels of maturity taught in some commercial versions of Situational Leadership (quoted from Dean, p. 5):

> M1 is low in both ability and willingness. Individual followers or groups at this level lack both competence and confidence.

> M2 is low in ability but high in willingness. Followers or groups at this level are self-confident but lack needed skills to take responsibility.

M3 is high in ability but low in willingness. The problem is often a lack of motivation rather than a sense of insecurity.

M4 is high in both ability and willingness. Followers and groups at this level are both competent and confident to take responsibility.

Hersey (in *The Situational Leader*, 1992, p. 69) summarizes the progress of willingness through this four-step development sequence in the following diagram (which should be read from right to left):

FOLLOWER CONFIDENCE

R4	R3	R2	R1
Confident	Insecure	Confident	Insecure
FOLLOWER DIRECTED		**LEADER DIRECTED**	

As both Dean's summary and this diagram make clear, ability is seen as gradually increasing, but willingness is seen as oscillating. It is portrayed as starting out low, peaking, then dropping again, before finally peaking in consort with the peak of ability (thus permitting delegation to occur at M4).

Why does the development sequence start with unwilling employees? How does willingness go up after the leader uses directive, task-oriented behavior (as per the prescription of the Situational Leadership model to use a Telling style at maturity level 1)? Why does willingness then drop, in spite of the high emphasis on both supportive and task behavior at maturity level 2 by the leader (who is supposed to have switched to the Selling style at M2)?

The specifics of the developmental sequence as described by this task-focused version of the life cycle model are confusing and there are no references to studies or findings supporting or verifying the model. In later literature on leadership styles and on employee motivation and performance in general, there seems to be no clear test or proof of this maturity model either.

Instead, the general consensus of studies seems to be that an employee's task-related work motives are complex and varied and not reducible to any simplistic, sequential motivational model. Pinder in his exhaustive review of work motivation theory and findings concludes by identifying 58 separate points that "provide a set of principles that may be useful to those whose job it is to arouse or sustain the motivated effort of themselves or others" (Craig C. Pinder, *Work Motivation in Organizational Behavior*, Prentice-Hall, 1998, p. 466). Fifty-eight is a large number of points, reflecting the many and complex relationships between factors that might affect motivation and actual motivation or desire to perform in any specific context. Nowhere in Pinder's extensive review does there appear to be support for the fixed two-peak model of willingness over the life cycle of task-related maturity posited in some versions of Situational Leadership. Instead, an almost infinitely complex set of possibilities seems to be more likely. Any individual employee may be less or more willing to do any specific task at any point in time based on the myriad influences of a diversity of factors, some of which the leader may control and others of which the leader may not control.

The low-high-low-high motivation sequence posited in the Situational Leadership model of employee development toward task mastery is further complicated by the inconsistency between Hersey and Blanchard (1982) and Hersey (1984) on the one hand (where that version of the willingness construct is presented), and Blanchard's later training materials, in which a different version is presented. Blanchard (in *The Color Model*, 1985) describes and illustrates a significantly different version of the life cycle model as follows (where D stands for development level, analogous to M or maturity in the Hersey diagram above):

DEVELOPMENT LEVEL

HIGH	MODERATE		LOW
High Competence High Commitment	High Competence Variable Commitment	Some Competence Low Commitment	Low Competence High Commitment
D4	D3	D2	D1

In this version of the model, commitment starts out high at the first level of development, and then drops before rebuilding at the end. Contrast this to the low commitment assumed at the first level of maturity in earlier publications by Hersey and Blanchard as well as in later publications by Hersey. Does willingness to perform start high or low when a manager introduces an employee to a new task? Does it then fall or rise? And at the third step in the diagram, does motivation fall again or become variable?

The models only agree on one point—that desire to perform must eventually be raised to a high level in order to reach the end goal, an employee capable of taking initiative and succeeding when the task is delegated. How the employee gets to this stage is unclear. It might be worth attempting to ascertain which of the two versions of the model is more accurate, except that (as argued above) the bulk of the copious research on work motivation suggests that either might be true in certain circumstances but cannot be universally true because there is not a simple, single pathway to the end goal of self-motivated employees who are ready to take responsibility for self-managing their performance of important tasks.

Common sense tells us that in real life, different combinations of people, tasks, and contexts will produce different patterns of motivation over time. It is easy to imagine one employee approaching a tough new challenge with high motivation (even if competence is initially low) while another employee might view the same challenge with resentment and low motivation.

It is also easy to imagine that one employee might tackle a new task and achieve mastery quickly. Getting positive feedback about the work, this employee might quickly achieve high levels of self-motivation and competence, thus moving rapidly from a beginning state to a state of high mastery—short-cutting the journey toward delegation and independent responsibility.

Then again, it is also easy to imagine employees who linger at the beginning or somewhere in the middle of the development process, not achieving high levels of competence and desire to perform and thus not moving to a level where delegation would work for them. Many factors can and do conspire to hold some employees back. Perhaps there is a tradition or culture of labor-management conflict that makes employees view leadership efforts to "develop" them with skepticism. Or maybe a perceived inequity over pay or conditions leads to lingering resentment

that contaminates attitudes toward specific tasks. The list could go on almost indefinitely—there are probably even more ways to demotivate someone than to motivate them.

And the task itself must be important. A highly complex and difficult-to-master task is going to be more likely to produce periodic lapses into insecurity (to use Hersey's term) or variable commitment (to use Blanchard's) than an easy-to-master task will. Managers may be able to influence the state of employee motivation over the development sequence too. For instance, by providing more rapid and accurate feedback about performance, the manager can transform a task from one that is difficult and frustrating to learn into one that is easier and more rewarding to learn—thus perhaps preventing an interim deterioration of work motives.

Avoiding Fixed-Sequence Assumptions about Motivation

These arguments and findings lead to the decision in designing the SLTi that it would be deceptive and unhelpful to include any version of the life cycle model's portrayal of employee motivation as a fixed sequence that is predictable over acquisition of task capacity. And there seems to be no real need for such a motivation model. The most practical way to implement the notion that employee motivation is important to leadership style is simply to point leaders toward the need to evaluate it and respond accordingly. If motivation is low and getting in the way, then it is logical to assume the leader needs to attend to the people and their feelings if he or she wishes to improve their performances. There is no real need to predict when motivation will be low or high, providing the leader can be taught to evaluate it and respond to observable conditions, whether they correspond to the predictions of a specific life cycle model or not.

The literature review above has pointed to strong evidence across a variety of studies over many years, in support of the importance of the task and people variables as descriptors of leadership behavior and as potentially valuable predictors of followers' leadership needs. It is not necessary to posit or prove any single sequence of combinations of low and high willingness or ability in order to give leaders helpful advice. In the Strategic Leadership training materials, the emphasis is put on teaching leaders to think about these two fundamental dimensions of follower need and leader behavior, and to respond to assessed levels of both—without preconceived notions of whether they ought to be high or low since any such notions would be inaccurate in many cases.

Alfred North Whitehead advised, "Seek simplicity and distrust it." Leadership models used in teaching may need to have an essential simplicity to them that academic models used for research may not. The more parsimonious a model is, the better, when it comes time to teach it to busy managers or supervisors. Yet in designing the SLTi, we have been very mindful of the risks of over-simplifying. The use of a two-factor model is of course a simplification to start with, since there are plenty of other factors that trainers could (and often do) teach leaders about. Yet the strong support for this model over time in the literature, combined with our independent veri-fication of it in case study and database-driven research (as reviewed in the beginning of this analysis), seems to indicate it is a safe and useful simplification. The same cannot be said of the (two conflicting versions of) the life cycle model of employee motivation over the development process. It is apparently an inaccurate and potentially misleading simplification, one that is not needed and may not be helpful in the goal of sensitizing leaders to the two dimensions of the Ohio State management studies and their more modern applications. In Strategic Leadership, we therefore avoid firm predictions about when employees will be motivated or demotivated, and instead encourage managers to see for themselves and respond accordingly.

Portraying Employee Needs on the Grid

Implicit in much of the style-based leadership training flowing from the Ohio State model is the idea that not only can the model describe leadership behavior, it can also prescribe leader behavior. To look at a contemporary example, Canon Canada's Active Leadership training program prescribes a different style for each of three conditions (which correspond to some of the possible combinations of low/high task and people needs):

If employee has low ability and motivation	If employee has moderate ability and motivation	If employee has high ability and motivation
Lead by Teaching (demonstrating, instructing, training, etc.)	Lead by Sharing (asking for employee's ideas, sharing your own)	Lead by Transferring (turning over responsibility)

In this linkage of leadership methods to specific combinations of motivation and ability, the Canon training program follows the general pattern used in Situational Leadership trainings and many related courses over the years since the Ohio State studies. There is some inconsistency in the details of how leadership styles or strategies are mapped to combinations of ability and willingness, but there is general agreement that this can and should be done as an aid to the leadership performances of managers. It should be noted, however, that modern research on motivation and management has focused on far more detailed and specific levels of treatment of employees than this broad model suggests. For example, many studies have shown the benefits to motivation and performance of giving employees clearer or more accurate knowledge of the results of their work. This is a specific element of task structure, one that could be taught as part of a general strategy aimed at the task side of the old Ohio State model—even though it was not specifically measured in the original research on the model.

Thus we can say that as a generalization, the model's two dimensions are useful in grouping two growing families of ideas, techniques, and findings concerning employee motivation and performance. But we cannot say that any narrow definition of management behavior on one or the other of these dimensions is going to produce optimal leadership in any specific context. Leadership is not that simple.

With this caveat in mind, the SLTi was designed to support a more open-ended approach to defining and implementing leadership strategies than earlier models appear to have been. In fact the strategy-level depiction of leadership behavior itself is helpful in this effort to encourage leaders to think more deeply about their own behavior and how they may wish to vary it or incorporate additional ideas and techniques into it. A general strategy that says to support the performer (aiming at the people side of the model when attitudes are in the way of performance) allows for an open-ended approach to how the leader might best do so. A leader with interest in and knowledge of newer theories of intrinsic motivation might tackle the strategy of supporting the performer very differently from another leader whose viewpoint is more traditional, but both would be pursuing a similar strategy—and thus both would presumably be more likely to succeed than if they lacked an appreciation of the strategic need for supporting the performer in the current context.

Similarly, a leader with a commitment to job enrichment might tackle the strategy of supervising the performance in a different way from a leader who takes a more traditional approach. The job-enrichment approach to the task dimension might incorporate elements of task redesign, whereas a more traditional approach might confine itself to showing and telling and providing reinforcing feedback. Leaders probably should be given enough knowledge to be aware of such choices, but they also need to appreciate that they have choices they may be in the best position to make about how they tackle the challenges of implementing a task-focused strategy and increasing the employee's performance capabilities. Details of some of these options for leaders are explored in later sections.

The Strategic Leadership model remains true to the two simple but powerful dimensions of the original Ohio State studies, as there has been broad agreement with and support of them in later studies and models. But the Strategic Leadership model had to tackle the matching of leadership strategies to specific employee conditions in the context of some ambiguity and inconsistency in the literature on the subject (as reviewed above). A consequence of the inconsistencies in assumptions about how willingness/motivation vary over the life cycle is that different versions of Ohio State–derived models map leadership styles or strategies to underlying employee conditions or states in *different* ways. The Canon Canada version (shown above) is just one of many possibilities, and there are potential issues with it. Perhaps the most troubling issue is its prescription of Teaching, which is defined in a task-oriented manner (demonstrating, giving instructions), to the condition in which employees are low in both ability and motivation. The prescription to be directive with demotivated employees is troubling because it seems unlikely that employees who do not want to perform will do so just because someone shows them how to. Yet that is what the model tells leaders to do.

In this prescription the Canon model is consistent with some versions of Situational Leadership, especially those published by Hersey. Because Hersey portrays the employee's starting state as being low in ability and willingness, his first style, Telling, is also matched to this low/low condition. And Telling seems to be defined and taught as if it is high in task orientation and low in people or support orientation.

Exploring the Problem of Leading Demotivated People

In other words, multiple examples exist of Ohio State–derived leadership models that prescribe directive leadership for employees who don't know how to do a task and *are not motivated to do it*. The logic of this prescription is difficult to grasp. Common sense suggests that a directive task-focused leadership style is going to run into trouble if applied to employees with an attitude problem. Unless the leader implements this approach in a highly coercive manner, it is unreasonable to expect the employees to do what they are told. Certainly they will not eagerly attend to and learn from any demonstration if their motivation is low. In general, it is fair to say that nobody is going to learn much when they are not motivated. In fact, they are not going to do anything without motivation.

Motivation is one of the basic underlying causes of behavior, and employees cannot be expected to behave reliably in desired ways when they lack the motivation to do so. The practical question therefore is: What leadership strategy is most likely to solve the dual problems of low motivation and low capability?

Again, simple logic points to the original Ohio State grid's quadrant made up of the combination of a high leadership emphasis on consideration *and* task structure. When employees have both motivation (people) issues and capability (task) issues, then surely we need to teach leaders to attend to both sets of issues rather than to ignore one. It is in any case a relatively safe bet to prescribe this most involved and multi-dimensional leadership approach—the one that, incidentally, Blake and Mouton recommended for most leadership situations because of its attention to both dimensions of the performer's needs.

This logic seems to be reflected in versions of Situational Leadership published by Blanchard, in which the Coaching style is defined as "high directive/high supportive behavior" and prescribed for conditions of low-to-moderate competence and low commitment—the same conditions for which earlier versions of Situational Leadership prescribe only high directive behavior.

Constructing an Employee-Needs Version of the Ohio State Grid

Resorting again to logic and inference since the literature on Situational Leadership and follow-up studies derived from the Ohio State work is apparently lacking in specific tests of the prescriptive elements of the model (with the helpful exception of the study cited earlier by G. Graen, R. Linden, and W. Hoel, "Role of Leadership in the Employee Withdrawal Process," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 67, 1982), it would seem to make the most sense to posit that:

a) When employees have task-related issues or problems on the attitudinal dimension of the model, then the leader should attend to this dimension by working on improving employee attitudes—or else the attitudes will hinder performance;

b) When employees have task-related issues or problems with capability to perform (such as lack of knowledge), then the leader should attend to this dimension by working on improving the employee's capability to perform the task (either by modifying the employee's knowledge, experience and resources, or by changing the task to make it more doable or learnable);

c) When employees have both task-related and attitude-related issues that have a negative impact on their ability to improve their performance, then the leader needs to attend to both of these factors and if the leader attends to only one then progress is unlikely;

d) When employees have neither task-related nor attitude-related problems to affect performance, then the leader need not attend to either of these dimensions and can reasonably expect the employees to be ready to self-manage their performance on the task to a higher degree than in any of the other three conditions;

e) When the employees are not performing well and the leader cannot be sure what issues may be involved, then the leader would do best by attending to both dimensions in case one, the other, or both are concerned.

If we construct a grid describing the employee's performance context, using the same two dimensions and high/low combinations that the Ohio State study used for describing the leader's behavior, we get a model that mirrors the managerial grids of the literature, but is from the employee's perspective instead of the leader's:

	Low	Employee needs work only on attitude/motivation	Employee needs work on both attitude/motivation and capability
Employee's desire to perform			
	High	Employee does not need work on either capability or attitude	Employee needs work only on capability

High   Low

Employee's capability to perform

Why does this grid use axes that start high and range to low instead of the other way around? Because it follows the original logic of the Ohio State–derived grids of leadership behavior, in which leader's task-oriented or support-oriented behaviors ranged from low to high. To mirror the leadership behavior model with one based on the employee's need for specific leadership behaviors, it is easiest to invert the scale when describing employee condition. When the employee is low on a dimension, then the leader's behavior needs to compensate by being high on that dimension. This is the basic logic of the prescriptive part of the Strategic Leadership model. And the logic seems sound and consistent with many studies cited on earlier pages, yet caution dictates that any leadership prescriptions require rigorous validation. Can the logic of this grid be supported by reference to additional research findings on employee motivation and performance?

Referring again to Pinder's exhaustive review of the literature from *Work Motivation in Organizational Behavior* (pp. 463–466 in particular), we can find a number of statements of well-established principles from the research literature that bear on one or the other of the two dimensions of the prescriptive Strategic Leadership model:

A. *In support of leading by focusing on teaching and structuring the **task** when it is an apparent issue or problem for the employee:*

> "People pay particular attention to the feedback that is available from their environments as it relates to their successes and failures in goal-related activity."

> "Specific task goals result in higher levels of performance than do vague goals or instructions to 'do your best.'"

> "The need for achievement is most likely to motivate behavior when the person perceives a moderate (or 50:50) degree of chance of success at the task."

These examples of generally accepted findings all address aspects of the task and the employee's experience of it, which are things that the leader can influence through an emphasis on the task dimension of the management grid. In other words, it could clearly be productive for a leader to improve task-performance feedback, to provide specific goals, or to manage the level of challenge and resulting chances of success by modifying the task or the help provided for doing it. These are examples of actions leaders might take to improve employee performance and move the employee toward higher levels of self-sufficiency through a leadership focus on the task dimension of the management grid. It also stands to reason (although the point may be too obvious to receive much research attention) that employee performance is limited by task-relevant knowledge, so teaching or informing an employee is also a clear example of task-focused leadership that can have a positive impact on performance.

Andrew J. DuBrin (of the Rochester Institute of Technology) provides a more extensive review of evidence concerning specific task-related leadership attitudes and behaviors, including adaptability to the situation, direction setting, high performance standards, risk taking and bias for action, ability to interpret conditions, frequent feedback, stability of performance, and strong customer orientation. (DuBrin, *Leadership: Research Findings, Practice, and Skills*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1995, p. 83.)

B. *In support of leading by focusing on **attitudes** when they are an apparent issue or problem for the employee, Pinder includes the following validated findings:*

"The most effective means for changing volitional behavior is to alter people's perceptions, and accordingly, their beliefs, attitudes, and—of most importance—their intentions."

"Absenteeism, turnover, and psychological withdrawal are commonly observed among people who feel inequitably treated."

"People's level of confidence in their capacity to succeed at a task positively influences their motivation to engage in the task."

"People with a strong capacity to understand and manage their own emotions as well as those of other people can have an advantage in the workplace."

These examples of generally accepted findings all address aspects of the performer's feelings that the leader can attempt to influence through an emphasis on the motivation side of the grid. In other words, it could clearly be productive to try to stimulate appropriate intentions to perform, to work on eliminating feelings of inequity, or to build up employee confidence—three examples of ways to influence task performance by focusing leadership attention on how the performer feels about the task.

It is easy to generate many other examples of benefits likely to flow from a leadership emphasis on one or the other of these two dimensions, but caution dictates that common-sense conclusions are insufficient unless tested carefully—human nature being far more complex than most popular beliefs make it out to be. Thus it is worth the effort to establish a number of specific examples from the research literature (as done above) to check that the logic employed in building a prescriptive element in Strategic Leadership is indeed consistent with accepted findings.

Thinking of the Dimensions as Emotional versus Cognitive

There is a parallel between the two dimensions of the SLTi model and earlier leadership grids (feelings and abilities) and the classic division in psychology between human emotions on one hand and cognitive processes on the other. This parallel is apparent when we consider that much of what a leader attends to when focusing on the employee's desire to perform is in the realm of feelings. Similarly, much of what the leader attends to when focusing on the employee's capability to perform is in the realm of cognitive know-how. Thus in Strategic Leadership, the Instruct Strategy attends in large measure to issues concerning how the employee thinks about the task and what she knows about it, while the Relate Strategy attends

in large part to what the employee feels about the task and how other feelings or attitudes affect the employee emotionally in ways of importance to task performance.

Popular trainings and publications on the topic of "emotional intelligence" tend to present a view of human (and more particularly employee) behavior in which the emotions are hidden drivers of performance and thus mastery of emotions is a shiny new key for leaders to use when they wish to turn on good performances. If this were true, then there would be little need for the more cognitively oriented leadership strategies and tactics at all. Yet research on the roles of cognition and emotion show them as intertwined, with each capable of being dominant over the other depending upon circumstances. According to Daniel Goleman (in *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ*, Bantam Books, 1994, p. 28), "In the dance of feeling and thought the emotional facility guides our moment-to-moment decisions, working hand-in-hand with the rational mind, enabling—or disabling—thought itself. Likewise, the thinking brain plays an executive role in our emotions—except in those moments when emotions surge out of control and the emotional brain runs rampant."

This varied combination of emotional and cognitive processes is also reported by Pinder (2002, p. 465) who finds that "There is mixed evidence on the matter of the primacy of emotions and cognitions. Sometimes one of these facets of human nature seems to rule the other, but the dominant role can vary from time to time."

In applying these findings to the Strategic Leadership model and in particular to the question of how to prescribe a cognitive task orientation versus an emotional feelings orientation, we seem to see additional support for maintaining the situational or context-based approach. Sometimes the employee is going to be behaving based predominantly on how he is feeling, in which case the leader will generally benefit from recognizing and responding to the employee's feelings rather than ignoring them. And sometimes the employee's thoughts and knowledge about the task will be determinant, in which case the leader can work with the employee on a cognitive level, for example by giving the employee information about the task or his performance of it.

What we do not find in any of the literature on performance and motivation reviewed so far is any suggestion that it might be beneficial to ignore employee feelings when they are dominating employee behavior. It is therefore puzzling that some versions of the Situational Leadership model prescribe a directive, task-focused leadership approach when employees have low motivation. The reason for this prescription could possibly be historical. Consider the traditional factory work environment, for example, in which "labor" is given very simple, narrowly defined tasks with a high degree of structure and supervision and is presumed (in accordance with Theory X) to dislike their work and only be willing to do the least necessary to hold the job and secure the paycheck. In this view of management, the employee is presumed to be naturally demotivated and to need firm extrinsic motivation from management. And when employees are treated according to these assumptions, they often fulfill the expectations of them, for someone who is distrusted and subjected to controlling supervision will often take advantage of any lapse of management attention to stop working and goof off.

If the original prescriptive formulation of the Telling style in Situational Leadership was created with reference to the above context, then it can be seen as a fairly accurate description of a common managerial response to low-skill, demotivated workers. Rather than figure out why the workers in a factory are demotivated clock-punchers who seem to do the least work possible, management might respond by increasing the use of directive supervision and extrinsic moti-vators. Work could go on in this manner for many years without the factory line shutting down or anything catastrophic occurring to force a reexamination of leadership assumptions (although a

union drive, high error rates, or excessive production costs could eventually create a catastrophe of sufficient magnitude to force leadership to reexamine its assumptions about employees).

The point is that in a traditional control-oriented low-skill work environment with little or no concern for employee development, management might consider it optimal to ignore negative attitudes and to address poor performance by increasing the use of task-oriented supervision. However, in most workplaces today, leaders have far higher expectations for themselves and their employees, and thus would be far more likely to favor an approach that addressed negative employee attitudes over one that ignored them. Engaging employees on both the emotional and cognitive levels is perhaps a more common and accepted goal for leaders today.

Employee Development Through Job Enrichment

Hersey and Blanchard (1969) point out that the life cycle model suggests "It is theoretically possible to supervise an infinite number of subordinates if everyone is completely mature and able to be responsible for his own job. This does not mean there is less control, but these subordinates are self-controlled rather than externally controlled by their superior."

Note the parallel to work by Frederick Herzberg and others on intrinsic motivation; self-controlled workers would have to be intrinsically rather than extrinsically controlled. This might be achieved through a job enrichment approach, which focuses on redesigning tasks so as to give them more of the qualities needed to engage the performers and involve them in a developmental process based on high commitment and the meaningful application of skills. Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation emphasizes managerial use of intrinsic motivators (as opposed to hygiene factors) in the redesign of jobs and tasks (Herzberg, *Work and the Nature of Man*, World Publishing, 1966). Extensive and often conflicting studies have been conducted in efforts to prove or disprove the two-factor theory, and there is certainly no consensus on whether it is accurate or not (N. King, "Clarification and Evaluation of the Two-factor Theory of Job Satisfaction," *Psychological Bulletin* 74, 1970). However, this debate has no direct impact on the SLTi or the application of job-enrichment tactics to the task dimension of its underlying model because, as Pinder (1998) points out, regardless of whether the specifics of the two-factor model are accepted or not, "There is support for many of the implications the theory has for enriching jobs to make them more motivating...building jobs to provide responsibility, achievement, recognition for achievement, and advancement will make them satisfying and motivating." In other words, the *practices* Herzberg introduced for enriching jobs have been shown to be effective in many contexts, regardless of whether the specifics of his model of motivation are accepted or not.

Similar practices result from other models of job enrichment, such as the Job Characteristics Model (J. R. Hackman, G. Oldham, R. Janson and K. Purdy, "A New Strategy for Job Enrichment," *California Management Review* 17, 1975). For instance, in one case keypunch operators at a Traveler's Insurance office were given enriched jobs through changes based on the idea that individuals should handle specific accounts, should have more planning and responsibility in their work, should have direct client contact and more feedback about performance, and should have more authority to correct errors and plan their own work schedules. These changes had positive effects on performance (as measured by productivity) and on attitudes (as measured by absenteeism). Sufficient literature exists in support of the general concept of job enrichment to make it a "safe bet" to include in Strategic Leadership some of its more generally applicable prescriptions in what leaders are taught about task

management, including the following tactical approaches to improving task performance through task redesign:

- Skill variety is important to performance and should be increased when feasible.

- Task significance is important and should be communicated (and increased) as much as possible.

- Autonomy is important and should be maximized as feasible.

- Feedback is important and should be as rich and informative and frequent as is possible to make it.

Such approaches to leading on the task dimension of the management grid are derived directly from job enrichment studies and add a useful level of options for managers wishing to do more than simply show and tell people what to do. (It is interesting to note too the parallels between the high-responsibility style of job design in job enrichment and later job redesigns inspired by the total quality management movement. Although the underlying reasons and models may differ, the end results were often the same, with employees taking on more responsibility and showing more initiative in their work. See Hiam, *Closing the Quality Gap: Lessons from America's Leading Companies*, Prentice-Hall 1992 for a review of these practices and their implications for leadership that need not be repeated here.)

Hersey and Blanchard (1969) observe that, "the demands of the job may often be a limiting factor on the development of maturity in workers. For example, an assembly line operation in an automobile plant is so highly structured that it offers little opportunity for the maturing process to occur. With such monotonous tasks, workers are given minimal control over their environment and are often encouraged to be passive, dependent, and subordinate." This recognition of the relationship between job design and employee development sets the stage for later integration of job enrichment methods into the application of the task-oriented leadership styles, as in Strategic Leadership.

Concluding Comments

This summary and discussion of relevant research is intended to help explain and support the many and sometimes difficult decisions involved in the design of the SLTi Assessment and the Strategic Leadership model and approach to measuring and developing leadership performance in a contemporary workplace setting. It does not explore the specifics of the design and testing of the assessment itself—a topic that is covered elsewhere. Nor does it fully explore issues of curriculum design and teaching that were considered in the development of practical and easy-to-use training and assessment tools and materials. There are many details and yet the most central ones (in terms of potential positive impact on leadership and organizational perform-ance) are probably the ones addressed here in this review—those that concern the design of the descriptive and prescriptive elements of a practical performance model for leaders. We are respectful of the difficulties involved in describing and modeling human behavior in any complex workplace context, and yet we are pleased to be able to point to a large body of work, including work of our own and many decades of earlier research, to support the design decisions we have made in our effort to introduce a useful contemporary model for generalized application in managerial leadership.

– Alex Hiam, December, 2002