

Using the Myers-Briggs® Instrument with Blanchard's Situational Leadership® II Assessment



Blanchard's *Situational Leadership® II* (SLII®) is a model and framework for developing people by providing effective leadership, over time, so that they can reach their highest level of performance. It is based upon a relationship between an individual's Development Level (various combinations of Competence and Commitment) on a specific goal or task and the Leadership Style (various combinations of Directive and Supportive behavior) that the leader provides. The goal of *Situational Leadership® II* is to match the Leadership Style that is appropriate to an individual's Development Level at each stage of development on a specific goal or task. The leader provides the direction and support that an individual needs in order to move along the development continuum—from the development cycle—from an enthusiastic beginner to a self-reliant achiever. As Development Levels change, the leader's style should change. This means there is no best Leadership Style because Development Levels vary from person to person, from goal to goal, and from task to task.

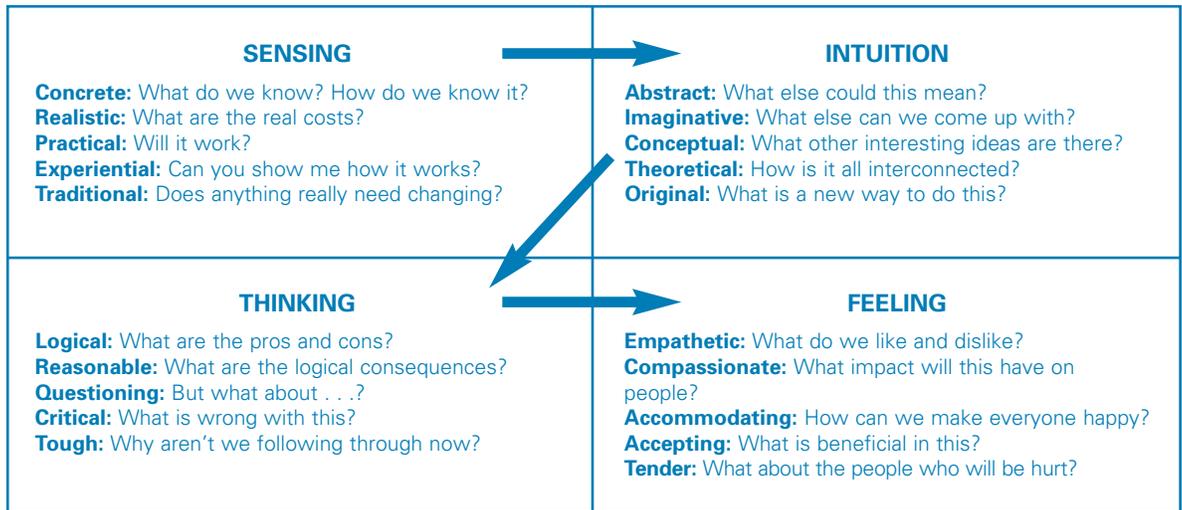
Situational Leadership® II is a partnership model. Since this partnership model begins with understanding the needs of the individual with whom the leader is working with, Development Level is a critical skill that needs to be addressed first. Given that this foundational model is all about developing people to their highest level of performance, it makes practical and intuitive sense to incorporate MBTI® knowledge into this framework to help the leader learn more about what to pay attention to when diagnosing an employee's Development Level and potential growth areas. We know that by understanding the four mental processes in Jung's theory we gain access to information about energy, data collection, decision making, and orientation. These four processes are helpful in identifying what is needed to make Blanchard's model even more useful and effective. Combining the MBTI and SLII® frameworks increases a leader's knowledge about themselves and others, leading to more sustainable, long-term movement toward productivity and growth of employees. Therefore a higher return on investment is possible in terms of what employees are able to accomplish.

THREE KEY SKILLS

In Blanchard's model, the three skills of a Situational Leader are Diagnosis, Flexibility and Partnering for Performance. These skills are discussed below.

Diagnosis

In the Blanchard model, the first skill of a Situational Leader is Diagnosis. Diagnosis is defined as the willingness and ability to assess the situation and identify the needs of the person for a specific goal or task. This skill can be enhanced by examining the Diagnosis process through the lens of psycho-



Source: Kummerow, J. M., & Quenk, N. L. (2004). *Working with MBTI® Step II Results*. Mountain View, CA: CPP, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

logical type. According to type theory, the Sensing and Intuition preferences help us take in information. During this process we identify the types of information we know and trust. People with a preference for Sensing trust information that is concrete, specific, exact, precise, and tangible. They believe in what they can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Any opportunity to use their five senses reinforces their belief that something exists and is real. People with a preference for Intuition want to see the big picture before they dive into the details. They trust their sixth sense, or hunch, about something as if what it tells them is solid fact. They want to invent new ways to see things and enjoy using creativity and innovation when interpreting new data. Of course, we all use both Sensing and Intuition as we gather and interpret information, but we tend to rely on our preferred preference, much as we rely on our preferred hand to write. As a leader begins to diagnose the Development Level of an employee on a particular goal or task, certain questions come to mind:

- Does the person tend to communicate in a precise, exact way or using symbols and metaphors?
- Does the person tend to be more realistic and efficient or more innovative and imaginative?
- Is the person more results oriented or idea oriented?
- Does the person tend to trust experience more or theories and patterns?
- Is it typically more comfortable for the person to stay with known solutions or to try something new and different?

The self-awareness gained through the Myers-Briggs® assessment—specifically in regard to type bias—can be extremely helpful to the leader at this juncture. The leader needs to keep in mind that some answers to the questions above may be more appealing to him or her than others because they reflect *the way the leader naturally takes in information*. Studies show that supervisors tend to promote employees who share their characteristics and qualities. It has also been shown that people tend to hire on the basis of certain style similarities. We are compelled, then, to ask the question, do leaders define high potentials based on their potential congruence with the leader or on what those individuals can potentially bring to the organization? In order to accurately diagnose

the Development Level of their employees, leaders have to enlist both sides of the Sensing–Intuition preference dichotomy. Using the Zig-Zag model of decision making can help them ensure that they are asking themselves questions drawing from both the Sensing and Intuition preferences. Though this model is geared toward a decision-making process, the questions presented can help ensure that leaders are using the full range of their Sensing and Intuitive knowledge to diagnose an employee’s Development Level on a particular goal or task.

This diagnostic process can be aided by the leader’s knowledge of the Thinking and Feeling preferences as well as the Judging and Perceiving preferences. Let’s start by examining the influence of Thinking and Feeling.

The Thinking and Feeling preferences are used in making decisions. People with a preference for Thinking tend to make decisions based on logical analysis. People with a preference for Feeling tend to make decisions based on their values about honoring other people. Of course, everyone uses both Thinking and Feeling to some extent in determining what the best possible decision is, but each person tends to naturally rely more heavily on one or the other. Even though a person may have developed a practice of incorporating both Thinking and Feeling components into his or her decision making, he or she needs to be aware of what comes more naturally, and what others may need from him or her to feel more engaged and connected. For example, if a leader has a clear preference for Thinking and is coaching an employee who has a clear preference for Feeling, he or she may question the employee’s ability to behave logically in a crisis or assume the employee will have difficulty making tough decisions that affect people. If leaders can be aware of their perspective going into an evaluative situation, they can remind themselves of the importance of flexing their type to accommodate others’ styles.

The Blanchard organization offers another means of combining MBTI type and SLII® in a model titled The Leadership Bridge. This integrated framework utilizes psychological type and the Temperament construct as an additional lens from which to understand diagnosis. This framework outlines the needs of each Temperament at the four Development Levels and prescribes behaviors to address those needs based on type and Temperament.

As the Development Level of an individual progresses from D1 to D4, his or her Competence and Commitment fluctuates. Competence is goal-or-task specific knowledge and skills as well as transferable skills. Commitment is a combination of motivation and confidence.

DEVELOPMENT LEVELS

In the SLII® model, the four Development Levels are:

- D1** Low Competence, high Commitment—the Enthusiastic Beginner
- D2** Low to some Competence, low Commitment—the Disillusioned Learner
- D3** Moderate to high Competence, variable Commitment—the Capable, but Cautious Performer
- D4** High Competence, high Commitment—the Self-Reliant Achiever

Question	Thinking	Feeling
What are the necessary elements of Competence?	Analyzing logically	Trusting one's coworkers
	Making a practical presentation or argument	Having faith in others' abilities
	Having expertise in one's area	Trusting one's own values
	Being willing to debate ideas	Being tactful in communications with others
	Performing a thorough examination of the facts	Promoting team harmony rather than conflict
	Being rational	Tolerating different viewpoints
	Thinking things through	Appreciating diverse opinions
	Making decisions based on successful experience	Knowing there is more than one right way to do something
	Having the qualifications to do the job right the first time	Having a means-oriented approach
	Being objective	Placing importance on the value of people
	Being able to answer difficult questions	Paying attention to how people will be affected
	Being able to identify where one's ideas come from	Investing time in focusing on points of agreement
Being able to be firm in one's decisions and adhere to them	Knowing the importance of human capital in a project	
What are the necessary elements of Commitment?	Having the desire to follow a project through to the end	Being loyal to one's teammates
	Doing whatever it takes to get the job done	Being sensitive to what other people need to do their work
	Being exact about facts to avoid mistakes	Giving people the benefit of the doubt
	Being confident and clear about objectives	Using affection and praise to encourage others
	Staying the course	Understanding the mission of the job
	Knowing it is one's job to challenge others	Knowing it is your job to support others
	Keeping working relationships as rational as possible	Wanting people to feel good about the work they are doing
	Being able to compete to address challenges that arise	Resisting the urge to turn on others when things go bad
	Stating one's opinion freely and openly	Considering the feelings of others when communicating

How we assess Competence and Commitment can be influenced by our Thinking and Feeling preferences. The Blanchard definition of Competence requires that the performance must have been demonstrated, not the measure of someone's potential. Identifying Competence requires use of the Thinking preference and identifying Commitment requires use of the Feeling preference. It requires the use of the Zig-Zag model once again to get a true picture of both Competence and Commitment. One might reason that is equally critical to provide both a logical analysis of the

Development Level	Needs	Use This Preference to Assist
D1 Needs	Structure	Judging
	Concrete examples	Sensing
	Step-by-step learning plan	Sensing
	Frequent feedback on progress	Thinking
D2 Needs	Praise	Feeling
	Reassurance	Feeling
	Clarification of goals	Thinking
	Advice and coaching	Thinking, Feeling
D3 Needs	Sounding board to test ideas	Sensing, Intuition
	Praise to build confidence	Feeling
	Opportunities to lead	Intuition
	Help removing obstacles	Sensing
D4 Needs	Trust	Feeling, Thinking
	Autonomy	Thinking
	Variety/challenge	Perceiving
	Opportunity to teach others	Thinking, Feeling

steps necessary to achieve an end goal and the ability to establish rapport with each team member to generate his or her buy-in.

In summary, using the four functions in combination—Sensing, Intuition, Thinking, and Feeling—creates a stronger foundation for the skill of Diagnosis. By correctly diagnosing Development Level a leader can then determine the appropriate Leadership Style to use.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Leadership style is the pattern of behavior leaders use, over time, to influence others, as perceived by those being influenced. This pattern of behavior falls into two basic categories, which are defined in Situational Leadership® II as Directive Behavior and Supportive Behavior. Leaders use a combination of these two behaviors to meet the developmental needs of the individual on a particular goal or task. The chart above suggests which preferences the leader should enlist at each development level to provide a balanced experience for the employee.

The four Leadership Styles:

- S1 Directing** High Directive and low Supportive Behavior
- S2 Coaching** High Directive and high Supportive Behavior
- S3 Supporting** Low Directive and high Supportive Behavior
- S4 Delegating** Low Directive and low Supportive Behavior

In all four styles, the leader

- Makes sure goals and expectations are clear
- Observes and monitors performance
- Gives feedback

The leader's goal is to match his/her Leadership Style to the Development Level and flexibly use the different Leadership Styles appropriately with different employees who are at different Development Levels on various goals or tasks. One key to being a successful leader, according to Blanchard, is having the flexibility to enlist different leadership behaviors with people to ensure they meet their development needs. The leader who manages all employees in exactly the same cookie-cutter manner will likely fail. The leader who works to understand the unique needs of his or her employees will build loyalty and dedication to both himself or herself and the organization, while achieving a higher level of performance. Having an understanding of his or her Myers-Briggs type preference enables the leader to use the awareness of his or her style to shift and flex behaviors to meet employees where they are. The SLII® model is all about developing people. It encourages ongoing conversation in a spirit of partnership as individuals learn to take responsibility for their own decision making and problem solving. Because the cornerstone of emotionally intelligent leadership is self-awareness, the MBTI assessment is an effective tool for use with Blanchard's SLII® model and Leadership Bridge Framework which links leadership behaviors to type and Temperment needs.

If you are working with people in the C-suite or at the top of the organization, you can use the MBTI® Step II™ (Form Q) assessment to facilitate a discussion about how they identify and differentiate between the types of leadership necessary for success in their field. If you begin by facilitating an MBTI workshop, you can give people a foundation of self-awareness on which to lay Blanchard's concepts. Furthermore, if you are working with people at the EVP, VP, or management level, the Step II assessment provides an additional resource to define styles of leadership through the lens of type.

Using SLII® and MBTI together offers a more holistic look at what leadership requires and at different perspectives and ways to understand the individuals involved. If you are working at a company that has many virtual employees at different levels of the organization, using the online version of the Myers-Briggs assessment, MBTI® Complete, may be the ideal solution. With MBTI® Complete, an online interactive learning session provides an interpretation of an individual's MBTI type. Ultimately, the goal of combining these two models is to provide leaders with an awareness of self and others and a situationally effective model to help them develop their people and thereby help their organization achieve greater results.

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