

The 7 Contingency Leadership Models: Comparison

Contingency leadership says there is no single best style. Effectiveness depends on the fit between a leader's style and the situation. **Use this sheet to pick the right model for the challenge in front of you.**

MODEL	CORE QUESTION IT ANSWERS	STYLE FIXED?	WHEN TO USE	KEY LIMITATION
Fiedler's Contingency Model Fred Fiedler · 1964	Is this leader task-oriented or relationship-oriented, and does the situation suit them?	No Match leader to situation	Leadership placement and team assignment	Assumes leadership style is fixed
Situational Leadership Hersey & Blanchard · 1969	How ready is this follower for this specific task?	Yes Adapt to follower readiness	Day-to-day management and individual development	Oversimplifies readiness into 4 levels
Path-Goal Theory Robert House · 1971	What obstacles stand between this follower and their goals?	Yes 4 behaviors available	Motivation, goal clarity, and team direction	Many variables to assess at once
Normative Decision Model Vroom, Yetton, Jago · 1973 / 1988	How much participation should this decision include?	Yes 5 decision styles	Structuring decisions for quality and commitment	Narrow focus on decision-making only
Leadership Substitutes Theory Kerr & Jermier · 1978	Is active leadership even necessary in this situation?	N/A Situation substitutes/neutralizes	Autonomous expert teams and mature cultures	Substitutes hard to measure empirically
Multiple-Linkage Model Gary Yukl · 1981	Which intervening performance variable needs attention now?	Yes Direct & indirect actions	Complex organizations with multiple performance gaps	Too complex for real-time use
Cognitive Resource Theory Fiedler & Garcia · 1987	How does this leader's stress level affect their effectiveness?	No Stress sets which resource applies	High-pressure environments and crisis leadership	Limited modern empirical validation

THE LPC SCALE (FIEDLER)

Rate the one coworker you least enjoyed working with. A relatively positive rating means **high LPC = relationship-oriented**. A harsh rating means **low LPC = task-oriented**.

3 SITUATIONAL VARIABLES

Leader-member relations (trust), **task structure** (clarity of the work), and **position power** (formal authority). Together they set how favorable a situation is.

CONTINGENCY VS SITUATIONAL

Fiedler changes the **situation** to fit the leader (style is fixed). Hersey-Blanchard changes the **leader** to fit the follower (style adapts).