

IMPACT BOARD

Adapt Your Leadership Style To Increase Team Performance

What this is

This playbook helps you get better performance from your team by adapting your leadership style to the individual requirements of your team. It's a framework to guide leadership styles -

Based on:

- How skilled they are at a specific task
- How much ownership they take
- Choose the right leadership style for that mix

The goal is less repeating yourself, less micromanagement, less frustration, and more people who can get things done without you.

Why this works

Most owners lead in the style that feels natural to them.

- Always in "tell" mode and the team waits for orders
- Always in "nice" mode and you end up doing their job

Situational leadership is like changing gear in a car.

Different people and tasks need different leadership styles.

When you match your style to the person and the task:

- New starters feel guided, not dumped on
- Growing team members feel stretched, not smothered
- Strong performers feel trusted, not ignored

When to use it

Use this playbook when:

- You delegate a new task or role
- Someone is underperforming
- You are growing a leader or manager
- You feel like you keep repeating yourself but nothing changes

When to use it:

- In a short monthly review for each direct report, or
- When a key task is not working as it should

The 2 questions to ask

Pick a person and a specific task or area. For example:

- Running the weekly sales meeting
- Handling inbound leads
- Managing client onboarding

Then ask:

1. Skill – how good are they at this task?

- Low: needs hand holding, often makes basic mistakes
- Medium: has some experience but still unsure on tricky parts
- High: knows what good looks like, can solve problems alone

2. Ownership – how much do they care and take responsibility?

- Low: avoids it, waits for you, blames others
- Medium: does the basics, needs reminders
- High: wants it to work, takes initiative, brings ideas

Ask them too:

- “Out of 10, how confident do you feel doing this on your own?”
- “Out of 10, how much do you want to own this?”

Compare their answers with yours and use any gap to guide the conversation.

You will then pick your leadership style.

The 4 leadership styles

1. **Teach**
2. **Coach**
3. **Support**
4. **Trust**

You move up and down based on what the person needs for that task.

Style 1: TEACH

Low skill, low ownership

Use Teach when:

- They are new to the role
- It's a new task
- They've never done this before

What it looks like:

- Clear instructions and steps
- Show examples of "good", checklists, SOPs
- Frequent check ins at the start

Your focus: clarity, structure, repetitions.

If both skill and ownership are very low:

- Teach the basics
- Set a clear standard and deadline
- Be honest about the need to move towards that standard

Style 2: COACH

Medium skill, medium to high ownership

Use Coach when:

- They've done this a few times

- They understand the basics
- They want to get better

What it looks like:

- You ask questions first, give answers second
- You explain the “why”, not just the “what”
- You give feedback and let them try again

Questions:

- “What do you think is going wrong here?”
- “How would you approach this?”
- “Here is one tweak that will make this better.”

Your focus: confidence, judgment, problem solving.

Style 3: SUPPORT

High skill, low to medium ownership

Use Support when:

- They’re good at the task
- They know what to do
- They seem flat, checked out or frustrated

What it looks like:

- You listen more than you talk

- You remove blockers
- You link the task back to goals and impact

Questions:

- “What’s getting in the way here?”
- “What would make this easier?”
- “How does this link to what you want long term?”

Your focus: motivation, alignment, removing friction.

If low ownership continues after Support, shift into Coach with clear expectations and consequences.

Style 4: TRUST

High skill, high ownership

Use Trust when:

- They’re strong at the task
- They care about the result
- They already take initiative

What it looks like:

- You agree outcomes and guardrails
- You give them space to deliver
- You ask for updates, not details

Questions:

- “How will you approach this?”
- “What do you need from me to get this done?”
- “How do you think we could do this better?”

Your focus: autonomy, growth, getting out of their way.

Leadership Style Cheat Sheet

- Low skill, low ownership
 - Teach the basics
 - Set clear standards and timelines
 - Decide what happens if there's no progress
- Low skill, high ownership
 - Teach and encourage
 - Give lots of feedback and reps
- Medium skill, medium ownership
 - Coach
- High skill, low ownership
 - Support first to understand what is going on
 - Then Coach with clear expectations and consequences if nothing changes
- High skill, high ownership
 - Trust, develop them further

Pick a style for this person and this task, and stick with it for a few weeks unless something major changes.

Check the system too

If more than one person is struggling with the same task, ask:

- Are goals clear?
- Are tools and processes good enough?
- Is workload realistic?
- Are incentives and rewards aligned?

Sometimes it is not a people problem, it is a system problem.

Use this playbook to improve conversations, not to avoid fixing broken systems.

Ready to stop feeling stuck in your business and start building something bigger?

[Download our free brochure to see full details on the support we offer through Impact Board, or request a free strategy call.](#)