Module 1:
Introduction to Strategic Leadership
(30 minutes)

Introduction

Show Slide 1: *Strategic Leadership.*

Tell the participants that the purpose of this workshop is to

- Identify the four core leadership strategies

- Help you determine the strategy you use most often

- Enable you to adjust your approach or strategy to reflect the capabilities and desires of your employees

Show Slide 2: *A Strategic Role for Leaders.*

> ## A Strategic Role for Leaders
>
> ■ Employees have varied needs based on the work they are doing and what skills and attitudes they bring to it.
>
> ■ Strategic leadership responds to these varying needs with appropriate strategies to guide the leader's efforts.
>
> ■ The leader chooses from a handful of general strategies, then uses judgment, experience, and creativity to find (many) good ways to implement the strategy depending on circumstances.
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Make the following key points to provide a general framework for the participants as you set them up for their learning experience.
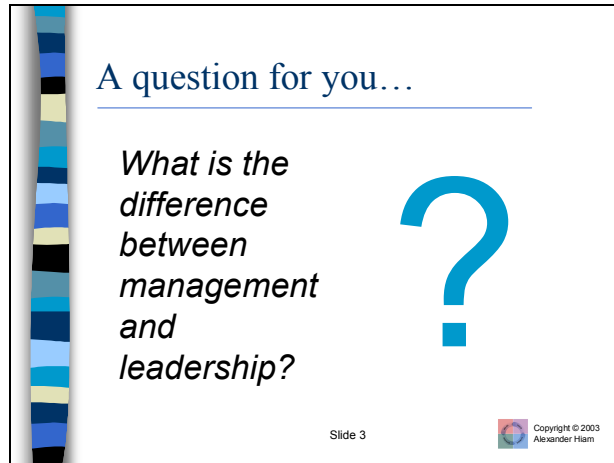
As you present these points, keep in mind that the content begins to get challenging from here on out. It is helpful to make sure everyone is settled and attending to you, and that they begin to understand the foundational concept that leaders should respond strategically (intelligently) to the varying leadership needs of their employees. Click on the mouse (as indicated by the mouse icon ⌐) to bring up each bullet on the slide. Finish discussing the first bullet before you bring up the second and then third.

⌐ Each person we manage has different requirements for peak performance right now and for professional development over time. In fact, each individual may have multiple sets of needs or requirements for success. In a single day, one individual may work on multiple tasks or projects requiring different skills and therefore requiring different types of leadership strategies in order to succeed.

⌐ A strategic leader focuses on both the work to be done and the people doing it. And a strategic leader responds thoughtfully and appropriately to the combinations of tasks to be done and people performing those tasks. The leader is strategic in the sense that he or she makes thoughtful adjustments based on an understanding of these needs.

⌐ The leader is strategic also in the sense that a strategy gives *general* guidance, at a high level, and then permits the leader to take action as he or she sees fit in order to implement the strategy well, given the context.

In strategic leadership, we will help you develop that big-picture understanding of how to guide your actions. But we will also encourage you to take responsibility and initiative for how you implement those strategies on a day-to-day tactical level. As a leader, you won't be following a pat formula; you will be making decisions about how best to relate to your employees as you implement the strategies you decide are appropriate to employee performance and development needs.

Show Slide 3: *A Question for You.*

A question for you…

What is the difference between management and leadership?

?

Slide 3

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Challenge the participants with the following question:

"What is the difference between management and leadership?"

This question may generate some interesting comments, which you should acknowledge positively and not dispute, since this is your first opportunity to encourage and reward them for active participation.

You may want to jot some of the key points made by the participants on the flipchart.

When participants are finished responding, you can proceed with *your* discussion of the question.

Show Slide 4: *Management versus Leadership.*

Now *you* answer the question: *"What is the difference between management and leadership?"* by making the following key points:

• Anyone in a position of authority may find themselves thrust into a leadership role. But being in a leadership role means you have the opportunity to provide leadership. It does not guarantee that you will do so.

• It can be fairly difficult to provide good management, let alone good leadership. Management involves stepping up to various responsibilities. It requires you to be accountable for the performance not only of yourself but of a group of people. To do this, you probably need to use various methods for controlling what they do, such as

   – Defining each person's tasks or roles
   – Checking on their work
   – Giving them instructions
   – Correcting them when they make errors
   – Tracking information about results

These elements of managing the performance of others are important in the workplace, but they do not, on their own, ensure good leadership.

• Leadership goes beyond management because it has higher expectations for performance. In managerial leadership, the leader's aim is to get superior performance from the group. This involves many additional considerations, such as raising motivation to perform, developing skills and abilities, and improving work processes. The leader attempts to move the entire group ahead. To lead means to strive for higher and better results and to believe in the potential of your employees.

Note: →

The question on the slide, *"How do we do this?"* will be answered for participants in the rest of the workshop. It is intended to present the leadership challenge this workshop will help them meet. It does not have to be answered here, but if participants want to discuss it briefly and you have the time, feel free to let them raise some thoughts of their own.

Remember, avoid correcting or disputing any participant thoughts voiced in discussion. Your priority in facilitating these brief discussions near the beginning is to build participant involvement in the workshop.

Show Slide 5: *Leading by Focusing on Others.*

Leading by Focusing on Others

- Leaders generate exceptional performance by giving their attention to what **others** need to succeed, then

- Leaders attempt to influence the performance of others through how they (the leaders) *act* or *behave*

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Make the following key points to extend thoughts about differences between management and leadership:

- A manager may be focused on what needs to be done and who is doing what. This basic attention to what has to be produced is part of any manager's core responsibilities.

- To perform better and produce more, the manager needs to focus on other things as well. Specifically, leadership involves giving attention to what your employees may need in order to succeed at a higher level.

- Leadership also involves adjusting your own behavior to have a positive influence on employee development and performance.

- Even though the leader's concerns are ultimately with how the employees behave—what employees do and how well they do it—the leader's main influence on employees is often through how the *leader* behaves toward them. This workshop will be looking at leadership behaviors and how we can best help employees perform well through the ways we interact with and treat those employees.

Show Slide 6: *Managers' Leadership Behaviors* to challenge participants to think about managerial leadership behaviors and to come up with specific, concrete examples.

Managers' Leadership Behaviors

- Managers often take action in attempts to influence the performance of others.
- What sorts of things do managers do in their efforts to lead?

Take a few minutes to **LIST** examples of specific management behaviors you have seen or done.

Slide 6

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Exercise (5 minutes)

Use the following exercise to find out what participants know about leadership behavior. This will help you teach them more about it later on.

Ask the participants to form pairs for a brief thinking activity (create a triad if there is an odd number of participants).

Distribute paper and pencils to each pair, if needed. Ask the pairs to make a list of manager's behaviors—any things they or others they know sometimes do to try to improve the performance of employees.

Give them a few minutes to generate six or more items on their lists. Encourage them to talk to their partners for ideas.

Assist any pairs who are stuck.

Debrief the exercise by asking for some examples from the participants. If you want, write their responses on the flipchart under the heading

Managers' Leadership Behaviors

Then, point out that while they did a good job and came up with many behaviors, it is kind of interesting that the lists aren't even longer.

Tell the participants:

- People tend to make short lists whenever this activity is done—yet there ought to be an almost infinite choice of leadership behaviors or actions available to managers. So why is it hard to think of very many? Maybe we don't have as big a "menu" of potential leadership actions and behaviors in our minds as we could have. One of the goals of this workshop is to help you increase your range of options.

- Another common finding from this activity is for people to list very general, abstract actions rather than specific things. For instance, people often put something like *"motivate employees"* on their lists. Yet to motivate someone is not really a specific action or behavior. It is more of a general goal. It is a very abstract, high-level description of what a leader might do. Before it is useful as a description or guide to behavior, we would have to break it down into more specific possible actions.

- An example of a more specific description of motivational leader behavior might be *"Tell employees why it is important to accomplish a goal."* That is one of many possible ways a leader might behave if he or she wanted to motivate people to perform well.

Note: →

> You can elicit examples of general actions from participants, praise their contributions, and then discuss how each one can always be broken down into more specific behaviors too. For example, *"Communicate with employees"* can be broken down to *"Hold a Q&A session," "Write an explanatory memo," "Listen respectfully to an employee's idea,"* and so on. This discussion is helpful in making them more aware of how leader behavior can be thought of on a very concrete, building-block level. The more specific and narrow our observations, the more clearly we can see—and thus control—our own leadership behaviors.

Tell the participants:

- I gave the example of taking a general leadership behavior description like *"motivate employees"* and making it more specific, by describing a motivational action like *"tell employees why it is important to accomplish a goal."* Notice that even this is still fairly general. How might you specifically go about sharing an important goal and relating it to employee tasks?

If you wish, you can stop here and elicit comments before going on.

- One way might be to quantify the goal and post a chart showing how the group is doing. For example, when workplaces have United Way fund drives, they sometimes post a giant poster of a thermometer where all can see it. The thermometer is marked not in degrees but dollars, and it gets filled in with red ink as the "temperature" rises toward the dollar goal for the drive. This is one of many possible ways to make a goal visible to everyone.

The leadership behavior of *"posting and updating a thermometer showing progress toward the goal"* is a very concrete, specific description of a leadership behavior. Specific descriptions are helpful because they make us more aware of our behaviors and options.

Show Slide 7: *Behaviors of Managers.*

Tell the participants that these are some examples of descriptions of leadership behaviors (some more specific than others).

Ask if they have any of these on their own lists.

Show Slide 8: *More Examples of Behaviors* and tell the participants that these are even more examples.

Make the following points:

- These examples are quite specific; they are examples of basic "building-block" behaviors leaders often use when interacting with employees.

- Notice that the two columns of behaviors are different. The left-hand column has behaviors that are focused on the employee. They are ways we seek to influence the people we lead. (Some of these ways are better than others, but all focus on trying to influence other people.)

- On the right-hand side, the behaviors are focused more on the work we want to accomplish. When a leader does something like set a deadline, the focus is on getting the work done—not on the people and how they feel about it. Many leader behaviors focus on the work more than the people. We can often improve performance by creating structures like assignments, deadlines, or goals.

Ask the participants:

"In your own lists of behaviors, do you find that some of the things you wrote down are more focused on or about the work itself, while other behaviors are more about the people?"

If you have time, have the participants return to their lists and code their responses as either **P** (people) or **T** (task) to help them understand the distinction. Allow a minute or two. Point out that it is possible for some of the behaviors to be focused on both people and tasks. However, many should be clearly biased toward one or the other.

If you wrote their responses on the flipchart, you can do this as a group.

Show Slide 9: *What Do I Do When…*

What Do I Do When…?

- We can think of strategic leadership as making thoughtful choices about what behaviors to use.

- What are the possible actions a leader can take, and which of them will work best?

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Tell the participants:

- As leaders, we have access to a great many behaviors. If we wanted to take the time, we could probably make a master list of hundreds of possible behaviors using the lists we just made as a starting point. The strategic leader is flexible and creative about what behaviors he or she uses, and always looks for new ideas to add to his or her "collection" of possible leadership actions.

- But the strategic leader does not just select any old behavior from the list and try it out. The odds of one particular leadership action working well are not very high. Each may work well in the right context, but not in others. So the strategic leader not only considers many options, but also selects behaviors with care.

- Do most managers do this—do they usually consider many options, then select certain ones with careful consideration of what will work best? In truth, managers usually use a fairly small selection of behaviors. And most managers tend to fall back on habit or tradition rather than making a careful selection of what behaviors to use. Have you ever found yourself doing the same things over and over out of habit, even when they might not be working very well? Most managers have.

If you want, take a moment to elicit examples of habitual management behavior and also share your own, if you wish. Or you can present a question, such as:

"What do you do when an employee begins to come into work late more and more?"

You could also ask a more general question, such as:

*"What does a parent do when a child's room is very messy?"*

The typical answer to this last question is *"Tell them to clean it up."* Of course, this never works—yet parents keep doing it, maybe telling them more and more loudly, in spite of the obvious evidence that their method is a failure.

Do we repeat unsuccessful behaviors in management too? Often we do.

Strategic Leader Behavior

Show Slide 10: *What is Strategic Leader Behavior* to compare two different approaches. A typical management approach is illustrated on the top row; a more strategic approach is illustrated on the bottom row.
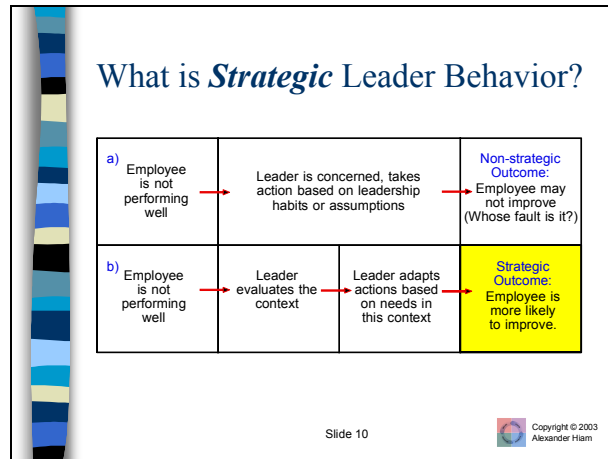
Tell the participants:

- Imagine a typical manager who notices an employee is not performing his work very well. If the manager is responsible and concerned, she'll certainly want to do something about it. But what?

- If the manager usually uses a particular behavior in this context, then she will probably try it again. For instance, maybe she will warn the employee to do better. Or perhaps she will take a more positive approach by encouraging the employee to improve or showing the employee how to do the job correctly. But whatever her response, if it is based on habit and not carefully thought out, then it probably will not work.

- Now think about an alternative approach, illustrated on the bottom half of the slide. Here the manager analyzes the problem before deciding how to act. This makes the manager's response more strategic and, therefore, more likely to succeed.

  (For instance, if the manager finds that the employee does not know how to use new software, then the best response might be some training in how to use it. If, however, the problem turns out to be that the employee thinks she has been unfairly treated, then the best response might be quite different—it might involve discussing the employee's grievance and trying to remedy it, for example.)