



Skill/will matrix

Leadership Dimensions

Engaging the team

Whether you are asked to perform a task or assign it to someone else, the management style that is needed during the course of the assignment depends on a combination of how equipped the person is for the task (skill) and how willing they are to perform the task (will).

That is, adopting a management style of interaction that matches the person's ability and willingness to perform the task ensures that the management style will help, not hinder the task being performed.

The **Skill/Will matrix**¹ is a guide to choosing the best management or influencing style to guide your staff members to success by helping you match their combination of skill level and willingness to four different management styles.

Given that skill and will levels vary along a scale from high to low, the matrix will also enable you to identify a management style solution that may combine strategies from more than one style.

When to use this tool

- When you are planning to coach a team member
- When you are delegating a task to a team member
- When you are assigning a task to a team member

What to do

1. Use the *Skill/Will matrix* to **identify the person's combination of skill level and willingness** to accomplish the specific task.
 - Is their skill level high or low?
where skill = their training, experience, understanding, role perception
 - Is their willingness (will) level high or low?
where will = their desire to achieve, their security, confidence and incentives
2. Use the *matrix* to **identify the matching coaching/management style**.
3. **Discuss your intended approach and your reasons**, with the person assigned to complete the task.
 - Use your discussion to help **confirm or clarify your own perceptions** of their skill/will
 - If necessary, **modify the interaction style** you have planned.

An open discussion of the approach you plan to take will also demonstrate your investment in their development and your willingness to adapt your style to help them achieve task objectives.

¹ The matrix was introduced by Max Landsberg in his book, "The Tao of Coaching". Max Landsberg is an internationally recognised authority on executive coaching and professional development. His books on coaching, motivation and leadership have sold more than 200,000 copies and have been translated into 14 languages.

Skill/Will matrix - use this guide to choose your management style for the task assignment

| | | |
|------------------|--|--|
| | Person with high will / low skill | Person with high will / high skill |
| High will | The enthusiastic beginner new to a particular role, project or task. | The skilled worker who is looking for more opportunities to grow and develop. |
| | Management style = GUIDE | Management style = DELEGATE |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Invest time early on. Provide tools, training, guidance, coaching, feedback up-front, explaining and answering questions. ■ Create an environment free of risks, obstacles and constraints to allow early mistakes and learning. ■ Relax control as progress is shown. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote freedom to do the job ■ Set objectives, not methods. ■ Praise, don't ignore. Communicate trust and recognition. ■ Encourage them to take responsibility and involve them in decision-making. Treat as a 'partner' ■ Take appropriate risks, include stretching tasks. Don't over-manage. |
| | Person with low skill / low will | Person with low will / high skill |
| | The beginner to a role, project or task who is just starting out and is nervous or may have already tried and failed. | The skilled experienced person who is in need of attention of some description and may be being affected by the challenge of change. |
| | Management style = DIRECT | Management style = EXCITE |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ First, build the will. Provide a clear briefing, identify motives and develop a vision of success. ■ Then build the skill. Structure tasks for quick wins, coach, and train. ■ Finally sustain the will; provide frequent feedback, praise and nurture. ■ Throughout, supervise closely with tight control and clear rules and deadlines. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify reasons for the low will (such as task/management, style/personal factors). ■ Develop intrinsic motivation, incentives, value alignment. ■ Work on their confidence by developing a vision of how good they could be at completing the task. ■ If the task is not critical to their mainstream role, demonstrated the positive benefits of improved performance to their 'core' activities. ■ Monitor with feedback and praise. |
| Low will | Low skill | High skill |

