CIOs wanting a master class in situational leadership should look no further than the character of Obi-Wan Kenobi in the Star Wars franchise. With Luke Skywalker, Obi-Wan acts as a mentor, with stormtroopers he pretends to be a harmless old man, and with Darth Vader he is the Jedi Master. Obi-Wan adapts because each situation calls for a different mix of persuasion, engagement or force.

The same is true for leaders of digital transformation. Success depends on your ability to adjust your leadership style to suit the digital business initiative and the mix of personalities that make up your digital workforce.

To be a digital leader, CIOs must abandon the traditional concept of a single, fixed leadership attitude in favor of a flexible, responsive approach that takes into account the nature of the work required, the state of the team doing the work and the role that the leader plays in shaping team performance.

Adapting your leadership style to the situation starts by first understanding the leadership models available to you. The following five leadership styles can be adopted depending on the desired outcome of the digital project and the makeup of the digital team.

To become more adaptive, review the leadership styles to see which one best captures the approach that comes most naturally to you. Seek feedback from employees to validate your self-assessment. Then, look at the other approaches to identify the skills and instincts you need to develop.

**Commanders**

Define the goals of a project and provide initial guidance on the approach a team should take. Once the effort is underway, however, the commander leaves the execution of the project and day-to-day decisions to the team. This approach works best for exploratory projects run by teams composed of experienced digital professionals accustomed to self-direction.

**Catalysts**

Provide a framework for what needs to get done and offer inspiration, creative support and brainstorming opportunities to the team. Rewards go to those members with the most innovative ideas and who take creative risks. The catalyst type works best for entrepreneurial or innovative teams working on new digital product designs.

**Coaches**

Provide day-to-day direction to monitor team progress on digital projects and validate outputs at each stage. Coaches give individual team members advice on ways to improve. Likewise, they set individual and team performance goals. The coach type works best with midcareer professionals focused on converting new designs into deployable digital
products.

**Collaborators**

Take an operational role within the team to serve as an ever-present in-team resource and to model practices the team should adopt. This approach works best with inexperienced teams working on scaling or operationalizing an existing, small-scale digital initiative.

**Consultants**

Have vast experience with digital projects in a range of contexts. Their approach is to offer guidance, advice and context at various stages of the project, but leave the decision making to the team members. Consultants are particularly effective for midcareer professionals with solid technical skills working on efforts to improve and revise existing digital initiatives.

*Suzanne Adnams is a VP Analyst at Gartner.*

https://www.forbesmiddleeast.com/whats-your-digital-leadership-style