

Heron's Six Categories of Intervention

Follow Us

Share this page

(1) 

Heron's Six Categories of Intervention

John Heron's **Six Categories of Intervention** serve as a flexible and intuitive framework for resolving issues with performance on a certain task within the workplace. The Six Categories offer solutions most suited to different leadership styles, situations and to the target individual. The two main styles of intervention are **Facilitative** and **Authoritative**, and each of these main styles has three sub-styles within.

 [Printer-friendly version](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1.1. **Origins**
- 1.2. **The Six Categories**
- 1.3. **Applications**
- 1.4. **Individual Growth**

Heron's Six Categories of Intervention

Origins

The **Six Categories of Intervention** were formulated by **John Heron** and initially described in 1975 with the intention of providing leaders and managers with a more adaptive and flexible approach to assisting their staff and team members with work or personal growth.

Heron's Six Categories of Intervention	
Facilitative	Authoritative
<p>Cathartic: If a team member has hit a wall with their work, this approach is used to help allow them to express their thoughts and feelings and to tackle those themselves. Look to understand their situation from their perspective.</p>	<p>Prescriptive: The simplest of all the techniques – this involves telling the individual directly what is required and how to achieve it. Generally utilized with inexperienced individuals or under time constraints.</p>
<p>Catalytic: This is likely the most commonly-used approach. It involves providing support during individual self-discovery for the team member. Decisions and paths should be supported but control remains with the individual.</p>	<p>Informative: This approach involves passing on information or experience about a given task or challenge, without directly controlling the individual. Generally utilized with productive but inexperienced individuals.</p>
<p>Supportive: This approach focusses on building the confidence of the individual. The leader should highlight their achievements and value to the company, and encourage them to find confidence in their personal abilities.</p>	<p>Confronting: The most aggressive of all the approaches considered. This should still be used in a positive manner; however, they will directly address issues and ask the individual to consider whether their method is correct.</p>

The Six Categories

The Six Categories can be split down-the-middle into two major sub-groups: **'Authoritative'** and **'Facilitative'**. These sub-groups are designed in such a way as to allow the manager to easily choose the intervention that fits their **leadership style** or **philosophy**, or which intervention best suits the situation or the target individual at hand.

Authoritative Style

The first of the two sub-groups, the **Authoritative** style is indicative of an autocratic or 'hands-on' leader and is most suited to managers who prefer to take charge of each project and control individual team members. The three different authoritative approaches are as follows:

- **Prescriptive.** The most straightforward approach - this involves describing in clear terms to the employee what is required of them, and how to do it. This approach is generally utilized when time is of the essence or is targeted at inexperienced staff. However, it also often characterizes a lack of trust between manager and team member.

- **Informative.** This approach involves passing on personal experience at performing a certain task to a less experienced member of staff, to aid them in completing the assignment efficiently and effectively. This technique is generally used to provide aid on tasks of which the team member is familiar, or is within their skill set – however, they are not quite proficient enough to be fully independent as of yet.
- **Confronting.** This is the most aggressive of the three authoritative approaches. It involves questioning the employees' approach to the task in order to encourage them to consider other options, or to view the task in a different light. This method is best utilized when trying to encourage the employee to think independently, whilst still being overseen by the manager.

Facilitative Style

The **Facilitative** style is typical of *laissez-faire* managers that understand the strengths and weaknesses of their individual team members and know that they can rely on each individual to handle their tasks efficiently and to a high standard. The different facilitative approaches are as follows:

- **Cathartic.** This approach is usually considered when a proficient team member is beginning to slow in productivity or performance. It aims to allow and encourage the individual to express their emotions and frustrations with the task or situation, so that the issue can be identified. Once identified, the individual and the manager can work together to find and discuss a constructive solution.
- **Catalytic.** The aim of this approach is to aid an employee with reflecting on their own abilities. Its purpose is to enable them to find their own weaknesses, which they can subsequently improve upon. In addition, it helps them to recognize and understand their strengths. By doing this, the employee can see their work from an objective viewpoint and can subsequently work to develop and resolve any knowledge or performance issues they may have had.
- **Supportive.** This approach aims to build employee confidence and self-esteem. This is done by identifying and pointing out the individual's strengths, through their qualifications, contributions, achievements and general qualities. It may also be reinforced to the individual their value to the team and the company as a whole. The outcome of this approach is to enable the employee to tackle a challenge with renewed confidence.

Applications

Heron's Six Categories of Intervention can be applied to the majority of employee-based business issues. A general and unspecific example of one category would be a manager taking an informative approach with a member of staff that has recently taken on more responsibility, as the manager has already experienced the obstacles that the staff member will be experiencing. Another example is: if an experienced member of staff is falling behind in productivity, and their confidence is being affected as a result, the manager would potentially opt for a supportive and cathartic intervention. This is so that the team member can express their frustrations, whilst being reassured that the manager believes in and supports them. However, the approach that may be taken is also dependent on the skills, knowledge, personality and leadership style of the manager, and therefore may not always be this flexible.

Individual Growth

Using or considering Heron's Six Categories of Intervention allows the manager to be flexible, and through analysis of each unique case, they are able to identify and utilize the most suitable intervention technique for each member of staff and individual situation to maximize productivity and raise job satisfaction. Furthermore, by being able to apply a plethora of differing approaches, the manager becomes more aware of how best to tackle certain situations and issues that each member of staff may face. This approach also brings the added benefit of flexibility - not only are each of the interventions suitable to their own specific problems - but they can be combined for more complex issues, and this makes the approach highly-effective for managers struggling with a wide range of issues across their team, or is leading a group of varying skill-sets and experiences.

Tags: [Coaching](#) [Team Management](#)

Rate this Resource

[Login](#) is required to rate resources. If you don't have an account, [sign up now](#) for free.

Ratings for this Resource

Seán Lea 12th Apr 2019



Add a link to this page on your website:

`BusinessBalls.com - Heron's Six Categories of Intervention`

The Vimeo logo is displayed in a teal-colored rectangular box. The word "vimeo" is written in a lowercase, bold, sans-serif font.

Key links

Home

Courses

Quizzes

About Us

Contact Us

Privacy Statement

Terms of Use

[Cookie Info & Security](#)

[Partner with Us](#)

[Site Index](#)

Key Partners

ACCIPIO



About Us

Businessballs is a free ethical learning and development resource for people and organizations. The use of this material is free for self-development, developing others, research, and organizational improvement. Please reference authorship and copyright of material used, including link(s) to Businessballs.com and the material webpage. Disclaimer: Reliance on this material and any related provision is at your sole risk. Businessballs Ltd assumes no responsibility for any errors or damages arising

Follow Us

