

**NAVAL RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

LESSON GUIDE: 26

HOURS 1.0

TITLE: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITUATION

I. Learning Objectives

A. Reading Objectives

1. The student will comprehend the three basic situational variables.
2. The student will comprehend and describe the seven task characteristics that can influence leadership decisions and follower performance.
3. The student will comprehend the methods, instructions and reasons for Operational Risk Management (ORM).
4. The student will apply his/her knowledge of situational variables and ORM to the excerpt from "The Perfect Storm."

B. Discussion Objectives: Same as Reading Objectives

II. References and Texts

A. Instructor References

1. Leadership and Management, Chapter 26
2. CNET ORM website at:
<https://www.cnet.navy.mil/cnet/safety/orm.html>
3. Naval Safety Center ORM website at:
<http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ORM/>
4. The Perfect Storm Official Movie Home Page at:
<http://perfectstorm.warnerbros.com/cmp/flash-thefilm-fr.html> (optional)

B. Student References

1. Leadership and Management, Chapter 26

2. CNET ORM website at:
<https://www.cnet.navy.mil/cnet/safety/orm.html>
3. Naval Safety Center ORM website at:
<http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ORM/>

III. Instructor Notes

Circumstances alone decide whether a correct conventional maneuver is right or wrong. The circumstances include all the factors which are at work at the time; numbers and quality of troops and their morale, their weapons, their confidence in their leaders, the character of the country, the condition of the roads, time, and the weather: and behind these the politics of their states . . . And it is the true comprehension at any given moment of the dynamic sum of all these constantly shifting forces that constitutes military genius.

Winston Churchill

Little things affect little minds.

Benjamin Disraeli

I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me.

Abraham Lincoln

Some of you always seem to think he (Robert E. Lee) is suddenly going to turn a double somersault, and land in our rear and on both of our flanks at the same time. Go . . . and try to think what we are going to do ourselves, instead of what Lee is going to do.

GEN Ulysses S. Grant
to his commanders at The
Wilderness

Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.

GEN George S. Patton, Jr.

- A. The third element of our leader-followers-situation model is often neglected in writing about leadership, but the context in which the leader relates to his followers is of fundamental importance.
- B. The situational variables of the mission or task you are engaged in, the command or other organization you are assigned to, and the environment (tactical situation, climate/weather, larger political situation) you are working in will often significantly limit your options as a leader. The ability to identify the key factors in any given situation is of great value to the leader and must be regularly considered. The Navy and Marine Corps use

the process of Operational Risk Management (ORM) to assess and address risks in non-combat situations, during training, at work and while on liberty. It is important for the leader to have a basic understanding of the reasons and methodology of ORM.

IV. Chapter Outline

A. The three basic situational variables

1. Task/Mission: The one you are currently engaged in.
2. Organization: The one you are assigned to.
3. Environment: Tactical situation, climate/weather, larger political situation.

B. The Work -- Job Characteristics

1. Skill Variety: Cross training for understanding and flexibility.
2. Task Identity: Identifiable outcome of work.
3. Task Significance: Importance and impact of work.
4. Autonomy: Measure of control over work process by the workers.
5. Feedback: Information about performance from performing the task itself.
6. Task Structure: Clarity of rules, procedures and methods.
7. Task Interdependence: Coordination with other groups.

C. The People

1. Leaders should look at the followers in terms of skills, knowledge, experience, expectations, needs and preferences.
2. Diversity is no longer merely the politically correct façade of leadership -- it is essential to quality and survival in a rapidly changing world.

D. Environmental Characteristics

Environmental characteristics concern situational factors outside the task or organization that still affect the leadership process.

E. Crises

1. During crises, followers are more likely to look to leaders to identify the problem, as well as to develop and implement a solution.
2. Groups facing crises generally expect their leaders to be more assertive, directive, and decisive.
3. Leaders are less apt to use participation or consultation during crises.

V. Discussion Questions

- A. Identify some environmental characteristics affecting the Navy today.

Tactical situation, climate/weather, larger political situation. Others might include technology, uncertainty, crisis.

- B. Provide a personal example that illustrates the impact of two of the task characteristics.

Task Structure: Clarity of rules, procedures and methods.

Skill Variety: Cross training for understanding and flexibility.

Task Identity: Identifiable outcome of work.

Task Significance: Importance and impact of work.

Autonomy: Measure of control over work process by the workers.

Feedback: Information about performance from performing the task itself.

Task Interdependence: Coordination with other groups.

- C. Provide a personal example that illustrates the impact of two of the organizational characteristics.

Level of authority, organizational structure, organizational design, and lateral interdependence.

- D. Provide a personal example that illustrates the impact of two of the environmental characteristics.

Tactical situation, climate/weather, larger political situation.

- E. Describe a crisis situation you have faced in your personal life or as part of a unit over summer cruise. Identify the characteristics of the situation employing the task, organization, and environment model. Describe how the crisis was overcome using those same terms.

- F. You are a squad leader. Describe your unit in terms of the tasks of your subordinates, your unit's place within the company, and the environment within which your unit will normally operate. What aspects of the situation do you have control over? What aspects do you have no control over?

- G. Discuss the situational variables in the excerpt from "The Perfect Storm." Specifically address the work, the people, the environment, and how the crisis situation affected the outcome and the performance of the crew. Incorporate the principles of ORM into this discussion.

VI. In-Class Exercises

Choose from one or more of the following from the Leadership Instructor's Manual:

- A. Students should visit the CNET ORM website at <https://www.cnet.navy.mil/cnet/safety/orm.html> and print out ORM forms. Students should review all or part of the ORM PowerPoint presentations available there (at least the "Introduction"). Following the student's discussion of Chapter 26, "The Perfect Storm," and the introduction to the Navy's ORM program, students should apply their knowledge by performing an ORM Assessment of a selected aspect of "The Perfect Storm" as an in-class exercise. Not every detail of the ORM process or of "The Perfect Storm" case can be covered in the limited instructional

time available, but the exercise will provide a good introduction to ORM. As an alternative, any of the Naval Safety Center's Summary of Mishaps ("Friday Funnies") or Pictures of the Week summaries can be used to develop less involved, but perhaps equally enlightening, ORM exercises. The Summary of Mishaps and Pictures of the Week can be found at <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ORM/> in the "Popular" drop down menu at the top of the page.

- B. Exercise 2: The Balloon Competition, p. 242
- C. Exercise 1: 7 Task Factors in the Sport of Your Choice, p. 253

VII. Supplemental Learning Opportunities

The Perfect Storm Official Movie Home Page provides a wealth of information concerning the events of October 1991, the storm, the rescue, etc. Includes movie trailers to stimulate discussion of Characteristics of the Situation.

<http://perfectstorm.warnerbros.com/cmp/flash-thefilm-fr.html>