



Situational Leadership

Having the Responsibility and Authority to Solve Problems

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"This document was written for the staff of my businesses. I hope you find it useful."

Jeff Lulla

Situational Leadership means that someone who is not a leader or Manager in our organization has the responsibility and the authority to act as a Manager to solve problems instead of putting them off and passing them on to someone else who may not be available at that time.

Have you ever been at a business when an issue comes up and the person assisting you does not have the authority to solve the issue? It can be very frustrating to be told, "You need to talk with the Manager, but he isn't here right now so he will have to get back to you."

You want your needs met now. And to be put off can be a huge inconvenience. And, if the manager never gets back to you, the issue continues unresolved and the frustration grows into anger.

To provide outstanding customer service in situations where a Manager is not immediately available, I believe that everyone in the organization needs to be ready to step up into a leadership role and solve a problem. For this to be possible, the entire team needs to fully understand the business procedures AND have the authority to make exceptions using common sense to satisfy the client.

But it may also mean that, acting as a Leader, you will at times need to say 'NO' and hold true to our Procedures when that is the right thing to do so we, and our procedures, are not disrespected and abused by those who have already had exceptions made for them.

What is an Exception?

An exception, by definition, is a rare opportunity to 'bend the rules' and violate our procedures **once or twice only** as a gesture of good faith and **to better EDUCATE THE CLIENT about our procedures** and **why they are important** for us to deliver the quality of service the client and the business desire.

Example: Punctuality – it is important to start our classes on time and for all students to be ready to go. When we allow students to join the class late, several negative things happen including;

- it is disruptive to the class – the Instructor may need to repeat instructions or change the class set up to accommodate the late student

- it may create a safety concern if the student is not properly warmed-up (physically, mentally, emotionally and socially prepared to participate)
- If the warm-up is over, and the class has moved on to the equipment, the student may need to be warmed-up in another class or by someone else, if available. This may cause the student to miss instructions from the teacher when arriving late to the class.
- attendance and/or skill tracking records may be inaccurate – attendance is taken at the beginning of class. For the instructor to accommodate late students slows the class down.
- Allowing late students into a class makes those who arrived on time suffer because now the teacher has to accommodate the late student which slows the 'flow' of the class.

The first time a new student arrives late we may wish to make an exception so the parent is not feeling like it was a wasted trip (that would be very upsetting).

But, **when we make the exception we also must have a Crucial Conversation** with the parent educating her on **WHY** arriving on time for class is important and;

1. Suggesting a later time or a different day that might make it easier for her to be on time in the future.
2. Letting her know that if she is running late or stuck in traffic that she should call and excuse the student and schedule a make-up.
3. Asking her if she understands the importance of arriving on time and to **agree to comply with being on time in the future.**

While we do not want to upset our clients we also do not want the quality or safety of our programs to be less than the best. If we allow people to arrive late (if the exception becomes our new 'normal') the value of our program will suffer and no one wants that.

There are many important procedures and systems in place at Fun & Fit. They have been developed and modified over 30+ years to allow us to run a quality business where Safety, Fun and Success are our main objectives. Every member of our team, both Instructors and Office Staff, needs to be ready to step into a Leadership position when issues occur and make the best decision to solve problems quickly.

At Fun & Fit Gymnastics, nothing is more important than the relationship we have with our clients. And all employees are authorized to make exceptions, when necessary, to nurture relationships.

As the owner of the business I know that when you step up into a Leadership position you will sometimes make mistakes. But I would rather you make mistakes and learn from them than avoid acting as a Leader and fail to solve the problems when you have the chance to do so.