hold its next convention is facing a highly structured task. In other situations, the group’s task is ambiguous and unstructured. For example, a corporation that meets to discuss how to boost profits is facing a rather ambiguous task, in that there are many possibilities to consider.

As shown in Figure 9.8, Fiedler believes that task-oriented leaders are most effective when situational control is either very high or very low. In the former case, the group is already functioning effectively, so a relationship-oriented leader isn’t needed. In the latter case, the group is adrift and needs a task-oriented leader to provide strong direction to get it back on course. Relationship-oriented leaders are most effective at moderate levels of situational control, because they are needed to produce group cohesion and promote group harmony. Although contradictory findings have been reported, the research generally supports Fiedler’s model, especially when situational control is high (Peters, Hartke, & Pohlmann, 1985; Stroebe & Garcia, 1981). Under these conditions, task-oriented leaders tend to outperform relationship-oriented leaders.

4. Adaptive Leadership

Whatever their leadership style, great leaders must adapt themselves to the situations they face. Former New York major Rudolph Giuliani exemplifies this point. During most of his term, Giuliani was known as a hard-nosed reformer who came to power promising to reduce crime in New York City. Although he alienated many of his constituents, Giuliani succeeded in reducing crime and corruption in New York, earning himself a reputation as an efficient, no-nonsense politician. All of this changed on September 11, 2001. When terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, Giuliani appeared on television to calm and soothe a troubled nation. In a moment’s time, he was transformed from being a heartless bureaucrat to a warm, gentle source of solace and comfort. Interestingly, President George W. Bush experienced almost the opposite transformation. Known as an affable, hands-off administrator, Bush suddenly became a more hardened president who vowed to rid the world of evil. The same