

Your Bonus Content for *Leaders Ready Now*

On your way to accelerating your leaders for your next big challenge? Here's a list of additional resources that will help you to create a strong pipeline of leaders, ready for whatever gets thrown at your business.

Commit

Communicating about Acceleration.....	1
Who Does What—Acceleration at a Glance.....	7
Capacity Gap Calculation Process.....	10
Sample Acceleration Dashboards.....	11
Committing to Acceleration.....	15

Aim

Sample Business Driver Analytics.....	17
---------------------------------------	----

Identify

Making It Work: Process Guidance for Acceleration Reviews.....	23
--	----

Assess

Building the Right Readiness Assessments.....	27
---	----

Grow

Executive Development Guide: Derailers.....	36
Assignment Science: The Art of Assigning Development Resources.....	42
How Should Coaching Engagements Be Structured?.....	46

Sustain

Sources of Energy.....	48
------------------------	----

COMMUNICATING ABOUT ACCELERATION

What to Say, When to Say It, and to Whom It Should Be Said (or Not)

On the surface, the decision to accelerate leadership growth seems easy enough. But as we discuss in *Leaders Ready Now*, it is anything but. It means having to differentiate among people in ways that are not always familiar to those charged with that task. For example, referring to some leaders as “high potential” might be construed to mean that other valuable players are less important to the organization’s future. Clearly, such a message would be a mistake. So, what are the right messages to share?

Leadership shortages cripple business progress and fuel the urgency for accelerated development. Yet, we have seen some of the most determined organizations embark on the effort to identify high-potential leaders, only to be stymied by philosophical resistance to the concept of differentiating among people’s potential. Their rationale often sounds something like this: “*We can’t create an elitist culture,*” and “*What will we say to the ones who aren’t identified?*” And yet, business logic dictates precisely that it is imperative to distinguish those most likely to return the investment in growth from those less likely to do so. This is a perfect moment to summon the boldness that we discussed in the introduction of our book.

Recall that acceleration is primarily an investment in the business and secondarily an investment in the culture. The following are essential points of departure that you likely will need to reiterate each time you host a session to identify leadership potential:

- Accelerating the growth of a subset of leaders (with high potential) is a business necessity.
- Everyone is eligible, although not everyone can participate at the same time.
- Those receiving specialized development experiences will rotate periodically.
- Those receiving specialized development are not guaranteed promotions; all promotions are based on readiness for the requirements of the role.
- Everyone in the organization still receives development.
- Not being offered accelerated development does not reduce one’s value to the organization or limit one’s prospects for advancement (those judgments stem primarily from job performance).

Before proceeding to identify high-potential leaders, it is critical to restate these fundamental commitments. Clearly, there are nuances that must be crafted to fit your unique circumstances, but in general, the more open and aligned you are able to be about these tenets, the more likely that you will sustain success.

The word “potential” is dangerous in the hallways.

What do you call the people who have been identified as having high potential and who are likely to receive accelerated development experiences? This is a very real messaging challenge. *High potentials. High-po's. Key talent. Top talent. Pivotal players.* We've seen all of these terms used, and all can be easily misconstrued as permanent designations, thus causing anyone not identified among them to feel permanently excluded. To avoid this stigma, acceleration-minded organizations often try to use such terms only behind closed doors, which then promulgates unhealthy secrecy in the process.

A useful distinction is to avoid naming people in the process and instead name what those people will experience. We favor the term *acceleration*. Throughout *Leaders Ready Now* we refer to anyone participating in an accelerated learning process as an accelerated learner, which could mean a leader at any level, experiencing any level of learning. We prefer the term *acceleration process*, but some of our client partners have opted for labels like *specialized learning, accelerated learning*, or other terms branded specifically to suit the organization's lexicon. Under this approach, people are referred to as *process participants*, which suggests temporary involvement and avoids characterizing them; instead, the focus is on the process. Ultimately, the terms selected will be only as good as the consistency with which they are used and explained, but choosing those that are most consistent with system intent is very important in sustaining support for the process.

Offer Accelerated Learners a Choice

Clearly, the prospect of accelerated development is difficult (if not impossible) to achieve if the people targeted for development aren't aware of the intent. But it's not enough to simply inform high-potential leaders that management thinks highly of their future leadership prospects. That alone won't cultivate the engagement needed to drive accelerated learning. Individual leaders must be offered the choice to participate in accelerated development or to opt out without negative consequences. Oddly, this practice is routinely overlooked. Perhaps in days gone by leaders were more uniform in their desire for advancement. Not so in today's environment. Fewer leaders seek leadership advancement, and those who do often have conditions.

Are you making offers your high-potential leaders can't refuse?

"None of us signed up for this."

Let's call him Tim. A sales superstar with a phenomenal track record, people love working with him. A straight talker, he transforms complicated problems into action plans and makes hard work rewarding.

Tim has had his share of chances to be promoted, but he likes what he does. He doesn't see the corner office as his destination.

But the company has a leadership shortage, and management needs people like Tim to step up. So, they asked him to do just that. Actually, they sort of asked him.

"This is a good development opportunity for you. . . . You really need to do this." That was the "invitation" from Tim's boss to join a group of a few dozen high-performing leaders and participate in special development opportunities that would accelerate his growth and position him to possibly take on an executive role down the road. It was a clear business need for the company and a great career opportunity for Tim.

But Tim was hesitant about the proposition, a sentiment that was echoed by others. In the orientation meeting to kick off the initiative, a latecomer (by five minutes) was publicly berated as being uncommitted to the company. Suddenly, this didn't sound so much like an opportunity.

OK, so perhaps Tim never should have been invited in the first place, and perhaps this organization's process is broken. Maybe so. Probably so. But there's more.

We asked Tim if he would be interested in accelerated development under any circumstances. He said he would *"if they were serious about involving me in the real business issues."* As it turned out, Tim is more interested than we thought. But his engagement doesn't have to do with the job he might get; it's about being a part of the solution. It's about having impact.

Accelerated development isn't a one-way street. It isn't something you wrap up and "give" to someone, particularly when that someone has a track record of success. Accelerated development is something that executives and high-potential leaders do together. Growing a cadre of emerging leaders means building a community whose purpose is to solve the most pressing business problems at hand. Everyone learns. Everyone steps up. Everyone grows together.

Are you building a learning community, or making offers that your highest-potential leaders can't refuse?

Tell Learners They Are Being Accelerated

Across the world, by far one of the most frequent questions organizations have asked us and their peers is, “*Do you tell people they’re high potential?*” The concern, of course, is not about the people who are high potential; rather, it’s about those who are not. While it’s easy to envision a healthy discussion between a manager and a leader who has just been called out as one of the company’s top performers with the highest potential, it’s more difficult to imagine a similar healthy response each time a leader asks his or her manager, “*Why not me?*” Gaps in the effectiveness of the performance management system, coupled with a lack of skills among top leaders to navigate these conversations, can create resentment among those not identified as high potentials (i.e., because they don’t get a sound explanation of why they’re not high potential, or they’re left with a feeling that their advancement possibilities are limited). Without strong communication, such concerns are legitimate and can threaten to break any high-potential identification system, no matter how well intended.

We’ve seen many organizations adopt policies of secrecy around leadership potential, keeping the names of high-potential leaders known only to the senior leadership team and Human Resources. High-potential leaders are not explicitly informed that they have been identified as such, thereby avoiding the need for senior leaders to field difficult questions about purpose and intent of the process or, worse, challenges from individuals feeling they were passed over or incorrectly evaluated. But while this approach seems to sidestep the communication challenges, it undermines the original intent of the acceleration effort.

Consider this situation from the perspective of the leader who has been identified as high potential: You are experienced and accomplished in your role. You work exceptionally hard, and your track record shows it. Management has discussed your potential and holds high hopes not only for your long-term future, but also for the near term. Management not only hopes, but *needs* you to acquire new skills and capabilities, and quickly. The business situation dictates that you (and others like you) accelerate your growth and become ready for one or more positions that right now might seem like long reaches to you. You’ll need to stretch yourself to take on development challenges that feel both exciting and intimidating, and that cause you to try new approaches to complex assignments. You may be asked to participate in key projects that can teach you crucial lessons, or you may attend powerful learning experiences that provide instrumental insights. But alas, no one has mentioned any of this to you.

From this frame of reference, the absence of clear communications to accelerated learners is exposed as ill-advised. The good news, however, is that there are ways to communicate effectively and openly—in almost any organizational culture—that do not risk damage to employee engagement. To the contrary, well-executed communications enhance engagement in development among *all* associates (not just those in accelerated learning programs) and preserve the integrity of the acceleration effort. These communications begin with a simple and often-forgotten step: asking high-potential leaders if they are interested in accelerated development.

Send the Right Messages to Each Audience

It's not necessary to communicate all elements of the acceleration system to the entire organization. To the contrary, specific messages must be selected to meet the specific demands of the system and the organization's unique culture. Following are the primary messages we have found to facilitate adoption and engagement in high-potential identification efforts. Note that these messages presume that leadership acceleration is an organizational imperative.

What acceleration participants (accelerated learners) should know:

- The business purpose for identifying and accelerating individuals with leadership potential (i.e., rapid development of leadership is critical to business success).
- They have been identified as having leadership potential.
- The criteria used to identify potential.
- They have an option to engage in accelerated development, or not.
- Opting out of acceleration will have no negative impact on their value to the organization; they may be asked again in future years if unique circumstances (e.g., family, health) prevented participation at this time.
- Promotion/Advancement is not guaranteed to accelerated learners (high-potential leaders), nor is it denied those not participating in an acceleration process.
- Development will involve learning experiences and stretch assignments, which may at times require an extra effort and/or time commitments.

What managers of acceleration participants (accelerated Learners) should know:

- The business rationale for identifying and accelerating the growth of people with leadership potential.
- Which direct reports have been identified as high potential and are participating in an acceleration process.
- The criteria for identifying people with leadership potential.
- The commitment that will be required in the accelerated learning experiences and the support that they, as managers, will need to provide.
- Participation in accelerated learning should not keep participants from their primary job responsibilities, but some support from managers might be required to make learners available for development experiences.

What all employees should know:

- All employees will be developed.
- All employees are eligible for advancement/promotion.
- Each employee will have his or her personalized development plan.
- Management will at times ask people to participate in specialized (accelerated) development experiences to respond to critical business needs.
- Participation in specialized (accelerated) development requires that current job performance be fully proficient and sustained.

What people NOT currently participating in the acceleration process should know:

- The criteria used to identify leadership potential.
- Participation in specialized development will rotate. New people will be invited to participate periodically. Everyone is eligible, at any age.
- Improving current job performance is the best way to increase one's chances of being asked to participate in accelerated learning.

Acceleration at a Glance

Acceleration Imperative	Key Systems and Activities	Who Does What ¹			
		CEO	Senior Management Team (SMT)	Talent Management (HR)	Individual Leader (Learner)
<p>COMMIT</p> <p>Adopt acceleration as a business priority.</p> <p>Chapters 1–2</p>	<p>Acceleration Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align talent needs with business and culture strategies. Specify the highest-priority leadership growth initiatives and outcomes. Complete Leadership Capacity Analysis to strengthen the business case for talent growth. Determine short- and long-term talent system priorities (i.e., how capacity gaps will be addressed). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish importance of accelerated talent growth to the business. Clarify expectations of all leaders with respect to talent management. Charter the senior management team’s role in the acceleration process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss and agree on talent needed to execute business strategy. Agree on SMT member accountabilities. Agree on measures of success in talent management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a provocative business case for acceleration. Facilitate development of a talent strategy. Ensure that outcomes are measurable. Establish routine for progress evaluations. Ensure role clarity among all stakeholders 	N/A
<p>AIM</p> <p>Define leadership success for your business context.</p> <p>Chapter 3</p>	<p>Success Profiles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align competencies to the few leadership challenges that are most central to business success. This provides the business foundation for a success profile. Align success profiles across all leadership levels, illustrating key transitional challenges. Articulate knowledge, experiences, competencies, and personal attributes needed at each level of leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share insights on leadership needed to drive business and cultural success. Ensure input from all appropriate senior leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share insights on leadership needed to drive business and cultural success. Review and approve final profiles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate development of success profiles for all levels of leadership. Ensure stakeholder input, business relevance, and research foundations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share insights on leadership needed to drive business and cultural success.

¹ Note that not every role is addressed in this table. Roles of managers (to whom high potentials report), mentors, executive coaches, and other key stakeholders are discussed in the specific chapters referenced for each mandate in the Acceleration Imperative.

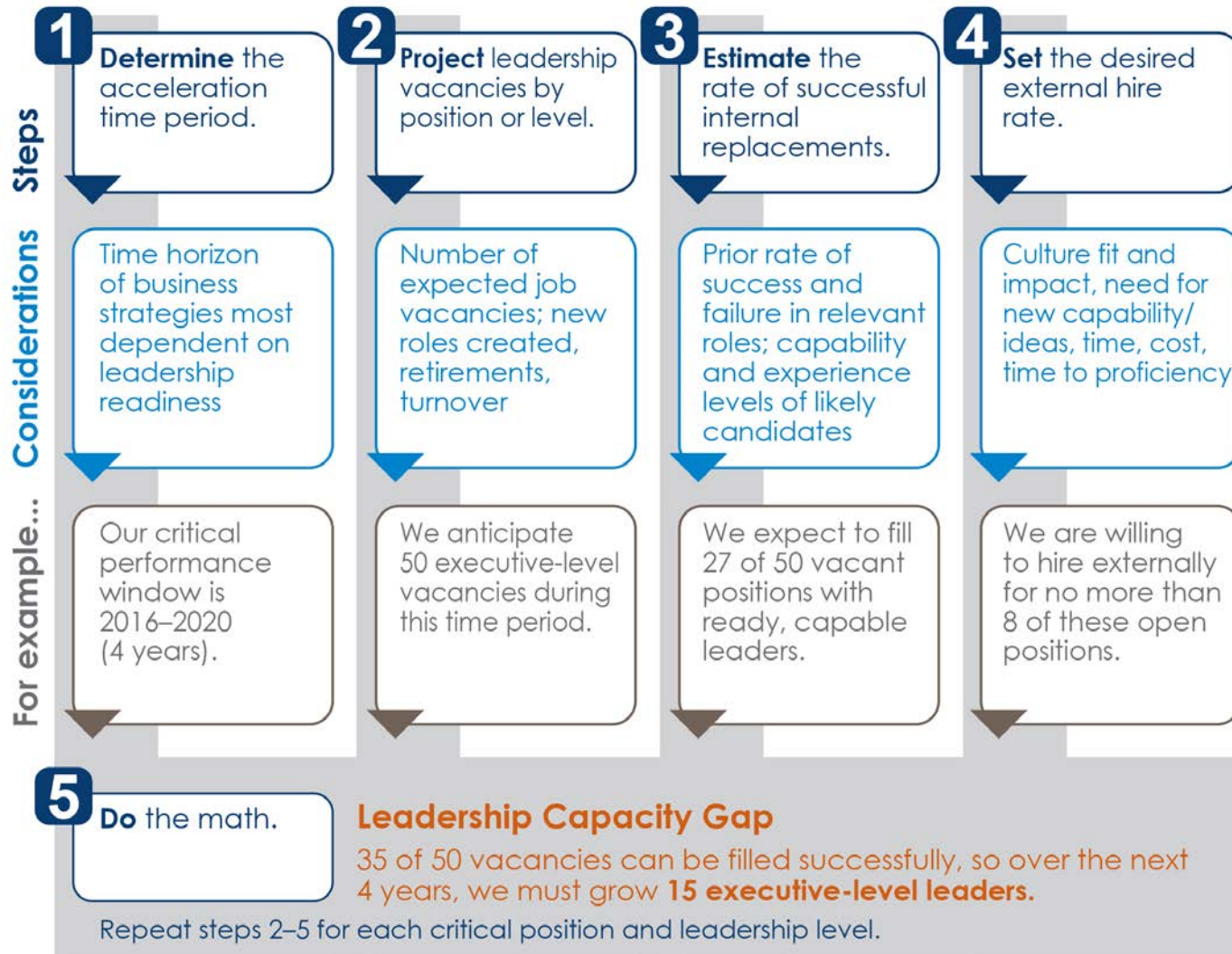
Acceleration Imperative	Key Systems and Activities	Who Does What ²			
		CEO	Senior Management Team (SMT)	Talent Management (HR)	Individual Leader (Learner)
IDENTIFY Make efficient, accurate decisions about whom to accelerate. Chapter 4	Talent Review (Identifying Potential) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiently review performance and growth of critical positions, units, or groups of leaders against business needs. Accurately identify high-potential leaders Determine whom to accelerate and how. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champion the need to identify leadership potential. Ensure that senior leaders adopt enterprise view. Support use of objective data to support process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize organizational talent over unit-level talent. Review and evaluate leaders with rigor and objectivity. Support judgments with behaviors and examples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and facilitate rigorous processes. Ensure use of objective data to support judgments. Ensure focus on potential and growth, not only performance and results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share personal motivations regarding development, advancement, and leadership.
ASSESS Accurately evaluate readiness gaps and give great feedback. Chapters 5–6	Assessment and Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess individual and group readiness for future leadership challenges. Assess high-potential leaders and possible successors against critical positions, assignments, or levels. Evaluate for Key Actions to enable precise, targeted development. Gather analytics to objectively examine readiness against future business scenarios and common/critical leadership challenges. Cultivate a dynamic, proactive feedback culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champion use of high-quality assessments to enhance placement and development decisions. Support and become familiar with objective, valid readiness assessments for key leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and become familiar with objective, valid readiness assessments for key leaders. Leverage assessment to enhance selection, succession, and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure valid assessment systems for all critical positions, assignments, and role levels. Drive common application and high integrity use of assessment to improve decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Step up to objective assessment to identify personal strengths and growth needs. Invite feedback to understand growth opportunities. Provide thoughtful and accurate self-evaluation.

² Note that not every role is addressed in this table. Roles of managers (to whom high potentials report), mentors, executive coaches, and other key stakeholders are discussed in the specific chapters referenced for each mandate in the Acceleration Imperative.

Acceleration Imperative	Key Systems and Activities	Who Does What ³			
		CEO	Senior Management Team (SMT)	Talent Management (HR)	Individual Leader (Learner)
<p>GROW</p> <p>Make the right development happen.</p> <p>Chapters 7–11</p>	<p>Development Solutions (Individual and Group)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure a diverse array of development alternatives to support unique learning needs. Align development solutions with both aggregate (business-level) needs and individual growth needs. Foster the application and practice of leadership skill sets required for business success. Make leadership development an ongoing process and blur the lines between learning and performing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure sufficient organizational resources to support development. Hold senior management accountable for talent growth. Devote personal time to catalyzing growth of key leaders and senior team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support investments in development. Devote personal time to catalyzing growth of key leaders and/or groups. Be accountable for talent growth. Apply creativity and risk in generating high-value learning opportunities for key leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble diverse development alternatives to support unique learning needs. Ensure role clarity and support for development. Cultivate executives as mentors to enhance impact and business relevance of learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit time and energy to growth opportunities. Take on “stretch” assignments to cultivate new skills. Seek feedback and input from colleagues and mentors to improve approaches.
<p>SUSTAIN</p> <p>Aggressively manufacture the energy for growth.</p> <p>Chapter 12</p>	<p>Measurement, Accountability, and Communication Tactics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure top management modeling and active engagement in acceleration activities. Drive global alignment and engagement. Ensure system alignment and full accountability among senior management. Secure skill-building opportunities for all process players. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create positive growth tension by setting bold targets and high expectations for growth. Drive accelerated growth within the senior management team, including self. Ensure routine review of progress against measures of success. Communicate plans and progress clearly and often. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champion the focus on achieving talent growth outcomes. Model process discipline. Initiate action to drive stretch development and sustain energy toward goal attainment. Hold high potentials and managers accountable for growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustain growth tension by monitoring progress against growth metrics. Facilitate peer reviews of development progress to promote mutual input and healthy competition. Ensure skill development for coaches and mentors to enhance development support. Communicate clearly and often about plans, roles, and progress. Celebrate and communicate successes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take charge of personal development, and stretch self to conquer new and unfamiliar challenges. Communicate support needs to management to ensure that development stays on track. Ensure that development goals are measurable and business relevant. Develop strengths and derailers with equal vigor. Expand self-awareness by enlisting input from a network of colleagues.

³ Note that not every role is addressed in this table. Roles of managers (to whom high potentials report), mentors, executive coaches, and other key stakeholders are discussed in the specific chapters referenced for each mandate in the Acceleration Imperative.

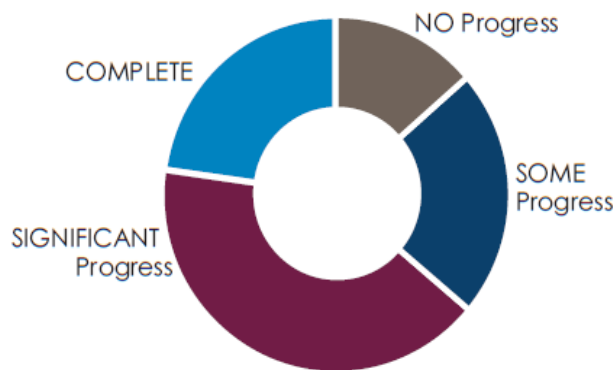
CAPACITY GAP CALCULATION PROCESS



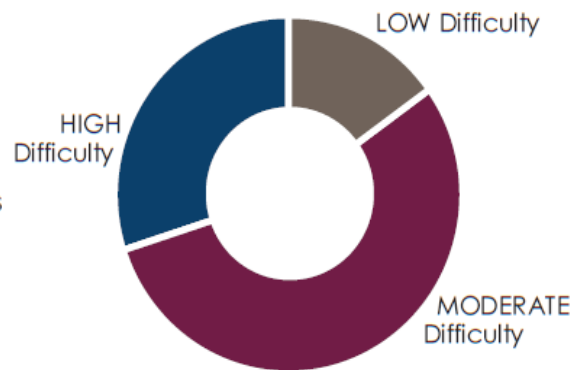


Sample Acceleration Dashboards

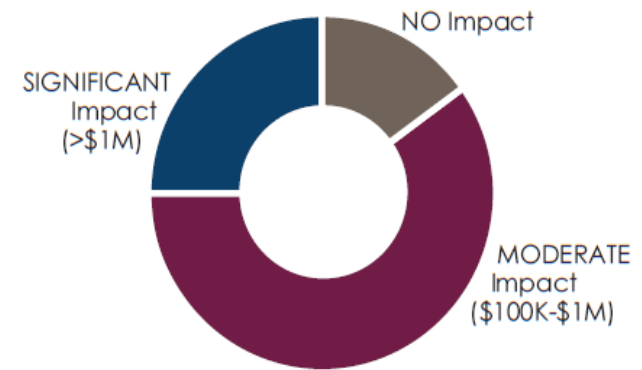
Acceleration System Dashboard



Progress Against Development Plans



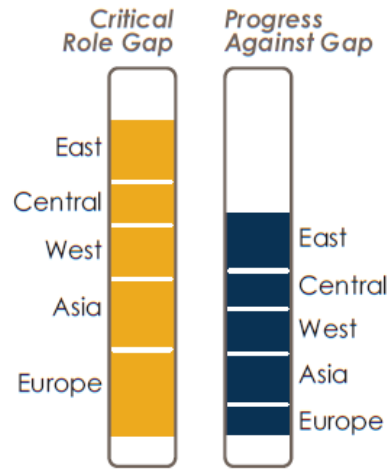
Difficulty of Development Plans



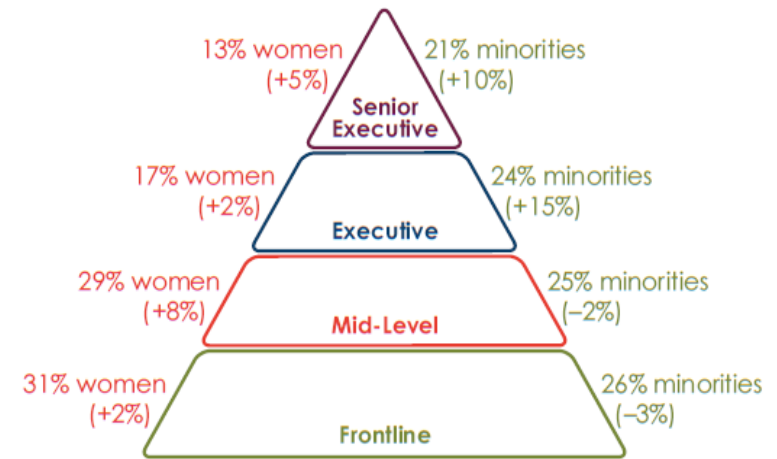
Business Impact of Development Plans (in dollars)



Speed to Completion of Development Plans



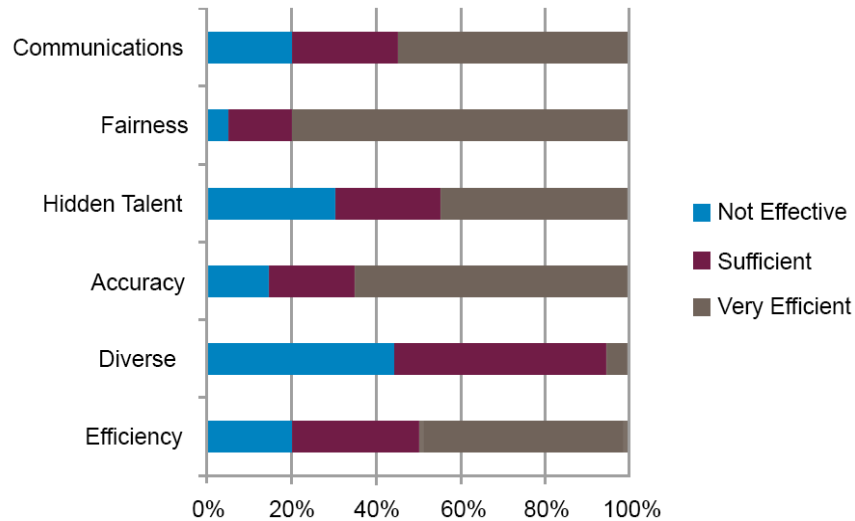
Readiness



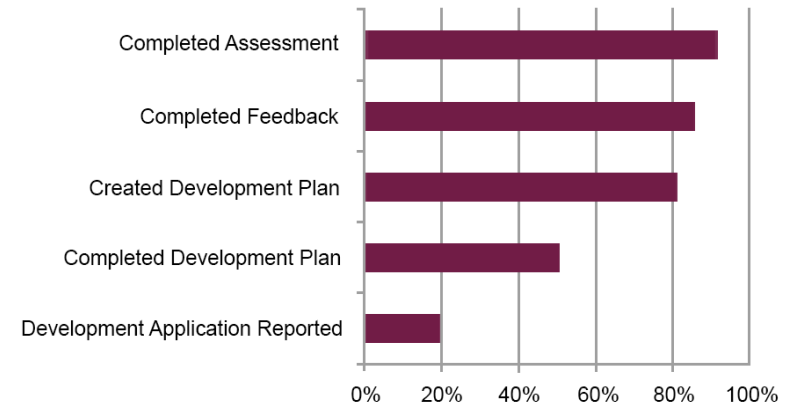
Diversity

Acceleration System Dashboard

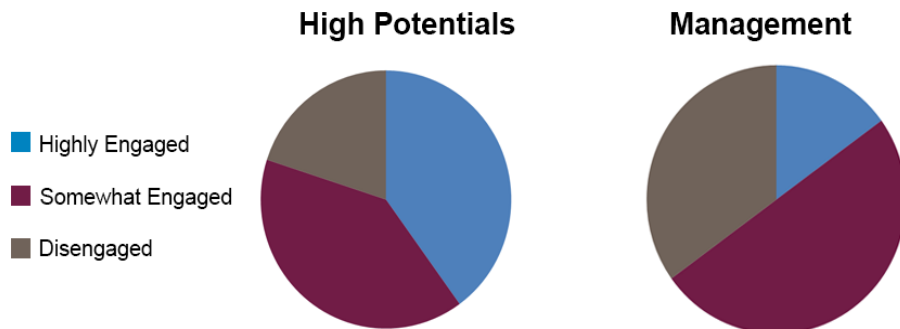
High Potential Identification Effectiveness



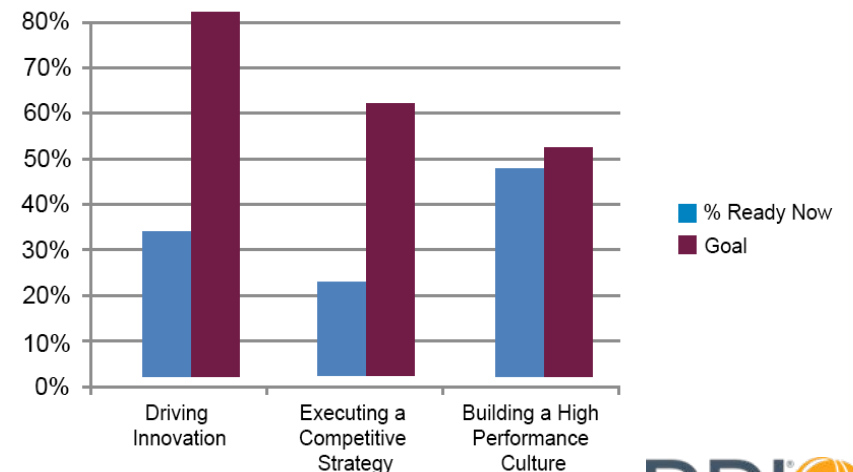
Development Activity



Engagement in Development

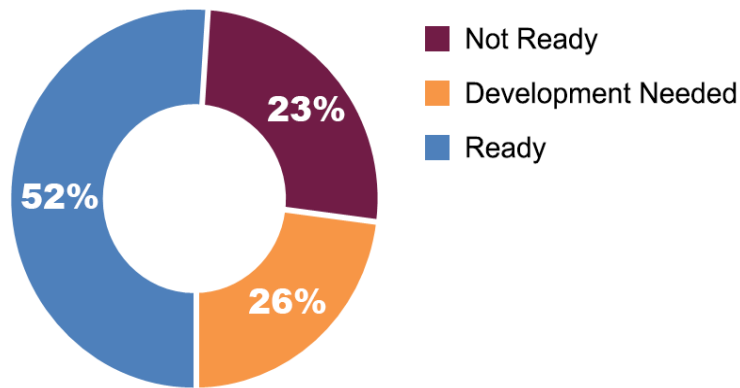


Business Driver Readiness Growth Rate

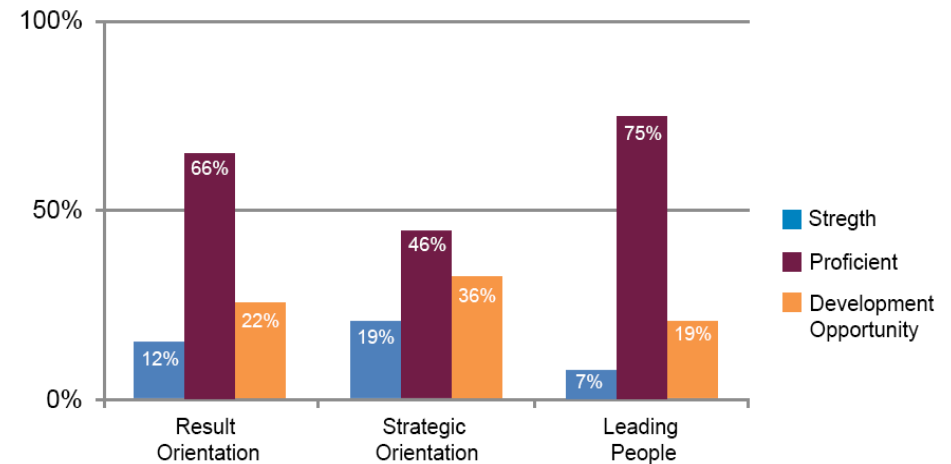


Business Driver Progress Update (Driving Efficiency)

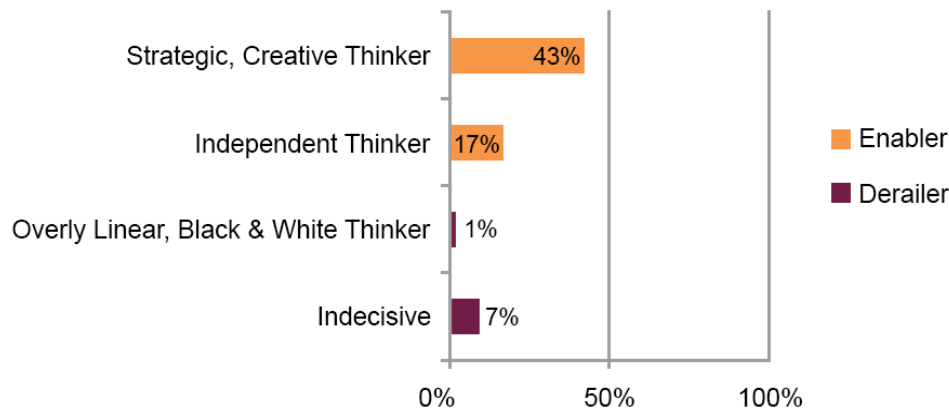
Ratings in Percentage



Competency Ratings in Percentage



Personality Patterns for Driving Efficiency



More than 35% of your leaders need development in Strategic Orientation in order to successfully execute on Driving Efficiency.

Nevertheless, the enabling patterns suggest more than **40% of your leaders are strategic/ creative thinkers.**

COMMITTING TO ACCELERATION

Acceleration is a discipline, a way of operating that makes your talent systems work better and faster to produce more leaders *ready now* for your business. As such, it requires that you and your senior management team commit to acceleration in the same way you commit to other top business priorities. But in order to quicken your systems, it's essential to be clear about where you're going in the first place and how you plan to get there.

At Fifth Third Bank, CEO Kevin Kabat's strategic architecture for leadership acceleration helped to see the firm through the financial crisis of 2009 and emerge as a stronger, more competitive player. Dan Neary, CEO at Mutual of Omaha, has led a decade-long focus on leadership growth that has fueled success that he deems would have been impossible without the emphasis on acceleration. Add Quest Diagnostics' Ken Freeman and Nissan's Carlos Ghosn to the list of Jack Welsh (GE), A.G. Lafley (Procter & Gamble), Larry Bossidy (Honeywell), Bill George (Medtronic), and others who have shown that a disciplined, sustained focus on growing your own leadership talent brings value to the bottom line.

These well-known CEOs didn't share a secret manual with step-by-step instructions for how to manage talent. Each adapted an approach to suit the unique business environment and culture, but their tactics are bound by several common fundamentals. They did more than simply nod to talent growth as a perfunctory activity to maintain a positive organizational culture or retain key players. They didn't delegate the growth of talent to others or stop at the sanction of programs that others led. They saw a vital connection between growing talent and growing the business, and they made a strategic, personal commitment that required their own deep involvement and focus, and that of all leaders in their organization. To them, the job of managing talent was a constant preoccupation that steered the organization forward in the same way as business plans and budgets. To achieve that level of focus, an explicit acceleration plan is required, and discipline in managing to that plan is the way each of these leaders achieved success.

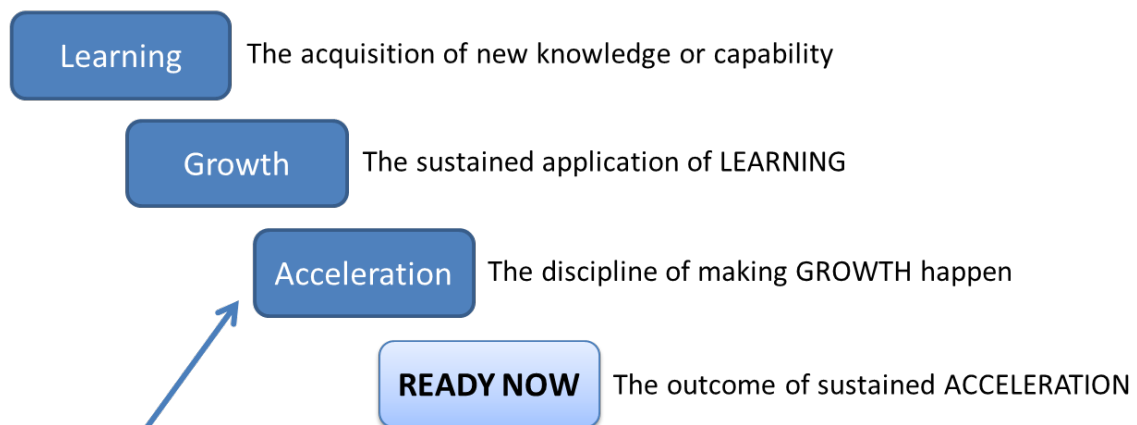
What exactly are we asking senior management to commit to?

When organizations launch new products or take on new sales objectives, few have difficulty understanding that there must be a clear plan for how those new targets will be achieved. Detailed metrics of success are declared, and specific action plans are outlined to realize results. Clear accountabilities are set.

However, when new business demands raise the bar for leadership, the strategies for securing that capability seldom reach the same level of specificity. Why? Many CEOs and business leaders do not recognize or acknowledge that it is both possible and essential to enact a strategy that will grow leaders for a specific business context, and that this can be done rapidly enough to respond as business conditions change. And for those who do recognize this need, many lack a clear notion of how to make it happen. The result is an unwittingly partial commitment to increasing readiness, emphasizing *learning* but not *growth*. That's not enough. Acceleration requires that your senior management team commits to the discipline of acceleration, and not simply to creating opportunities for people to learn.

Committing to learning versus committing to growth.

Where most organizations commit



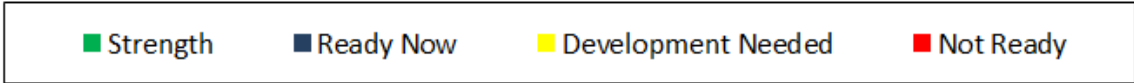
The commitment required to become Ready Now

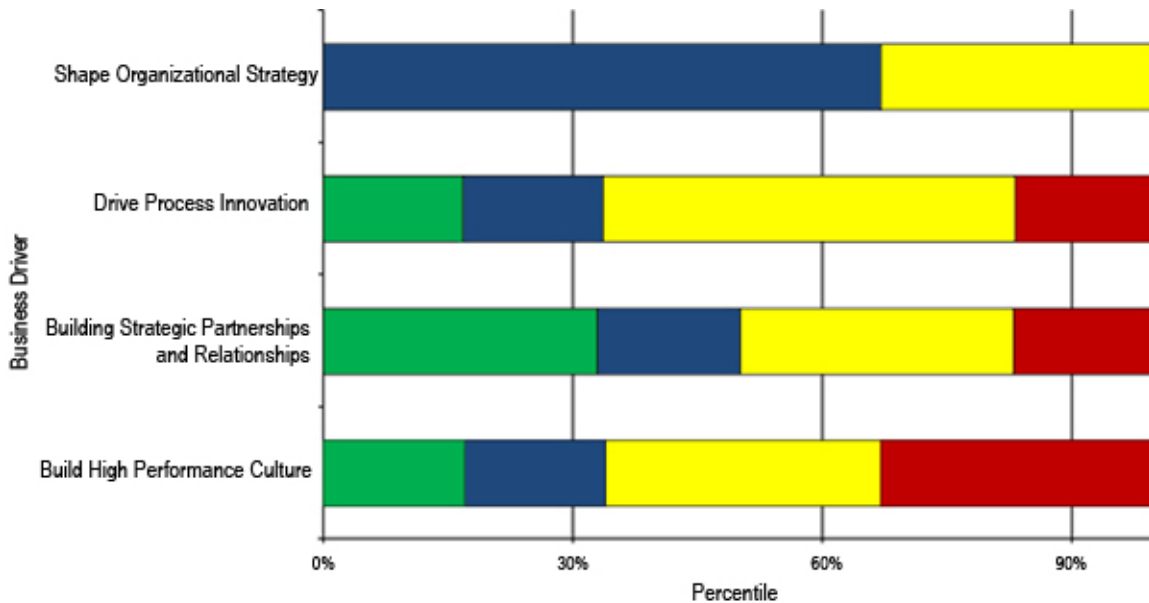


Sample Business Driver Analytics

Business Driver Ratings – Group Pattern

Builds Strategic Partnerships and Relationships	Builds High Performance Culture	Enhance the Brand	Execute Competitive Strategy
Strength	Strength	Strength	Ready Now
Strength	Strength	Strength	Ready Now
Strength	Strength	Ready Now	Ready Now
Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now
Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now
Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now
Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now
Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now	Development Needed
Ready Now	Ready Now	Ready Now	Development Needed
Ready Now	Ready Now	Development Needed	Development Needed
Ready Now	Development Needed	Development Needed	Development Needed
Ready Now	Development Needed	Development Needed	Development Needed
Development Needed	Development Needed	Development Needed	Not Ready
Development Needed	Development Needed	Not Ready	Not Ready
Not Ready	Not Ready	Not Ready	Not Ready





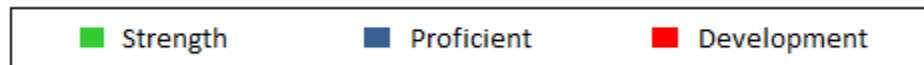
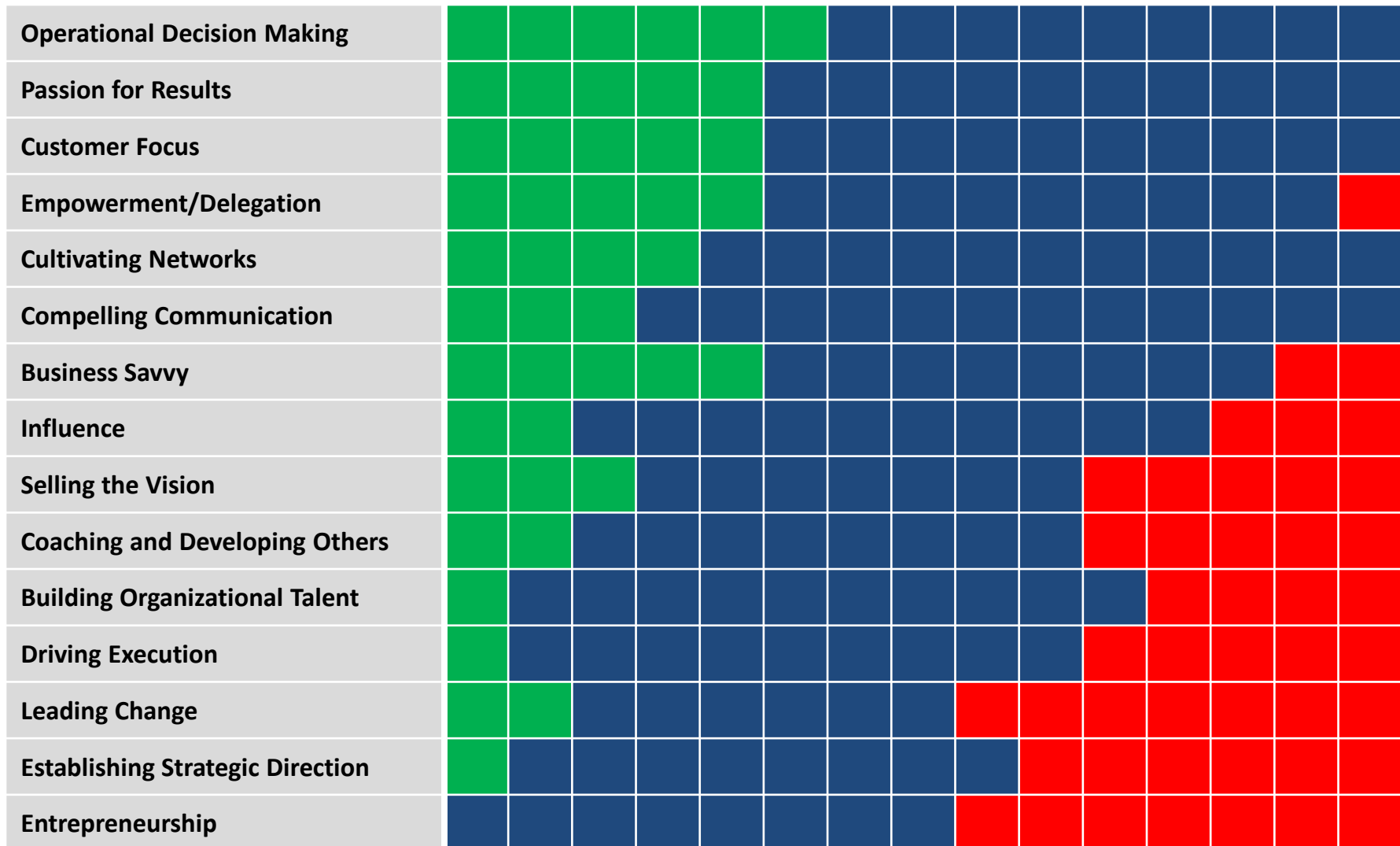
Business Driver Group Readiness Summary (N=65)

Business Driver Readiness (Senior Team – N=6)

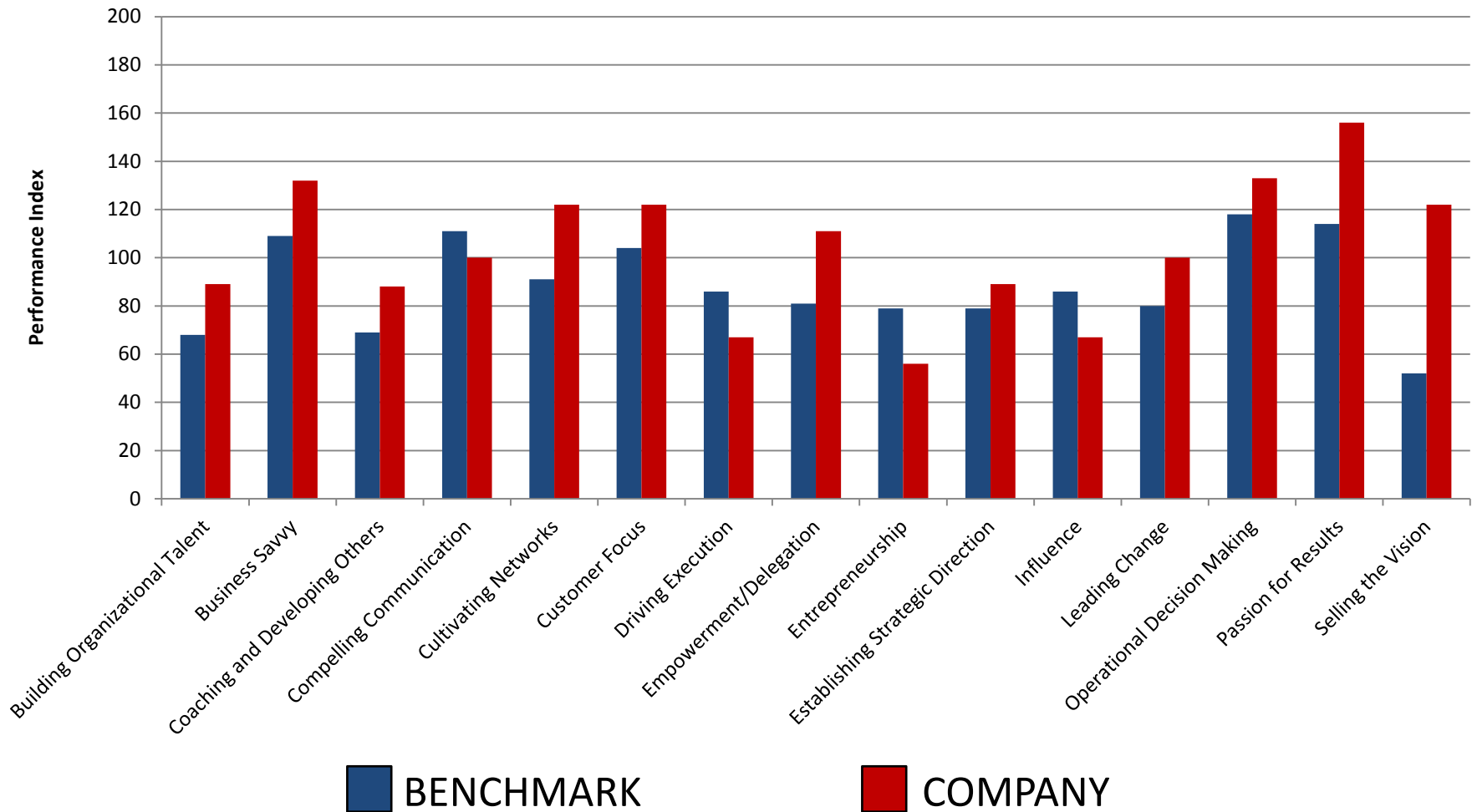
	Build High Performance Culture	Building Strategic Partnerships and Relationships	Drive Process Innovation	Shape Organizational Strategy
Jane Sample	Ready	Strength	Ready	Development
Lisa Sample	Not Ready	Development	Strength	Ready
Brad Sample	Ready	Strength	Ready	Ready
Louis Sample	Not Ready	Not Ready	Strength	Strength
Casey Sample	Strength	Development	Ready	Strength
Kathryn Sample	Strength	Not Ready	Development	Not Ready

■ Strength
 ■ Ready
 ■ Development
 ■ Not Ready

Competency Ratings – Group Pattern



Competency Performance Benchmarking



Observed Behaviors



Larger print = more frequently observed

MAKING IT WORK

Process Guidance for Acceleration Reviews

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, some methods and criteria for conducting talent reviews that accurately evaluate leadership potential have been consistently applied with strong outcomes in both efficiency and prediction (Bernthal, 2007). Bear in mind that these processes, which we refer to as the Acceleration Review, are designed and assumed to be integrated with your organization's annual talent review process. In practice, arriving at final judgments of individual leadership potential against the right factors (see Leadership Potential Factors in Chapter 4 of *Leaders Ready Now*) proceeds in the following primary steps:

- 1. Orient nominators to the process.** A simple, high-payoff first step is to ensure that prior to the Acceleration Review, all nominators (those evaluating others' potential) participate in a brief orientation to the process. This can be a brief, prerecorded webcast or flash video that can be accessed anytime. Even well-practiced teams of leaders do well to be reminded about the central tenets of the process. These include a recap of the business purpose and planned process as well as an emphasis on finding *growth* potential. Definitions of potential are clarified, and reminders about the distinction between performance, potential, and readiness can be shared. Diversity goals can be communicated to foster greater inclusion. Also, a preview of the review discussion and how it will be facilitated helps nominators prepare. Moreover, management gains calibration and alignment, setting up the remainder of the process to be more efficient and objective.
- 2. Gather nominations and ratings of potential.** Next, managers select and evaluate individuals within their respective organizations they view as having leadership potential. Ratings of both current performance and leadership potential are gathered so that the distinction between the two can be explicitly discussed. A critical point here is that we strongly recommend that individuals not be considered for nomination as high potential until they have **demonstrated sustained strong performance** in their current role. This ensures that leaders do not move too quickly through the organization without delivering the organizational impact needed in each role they fill. Next, the four Leadership Potential Factors are represented in a series of sub factors and behavioral statements, against which each nominee is rated. Each nominee is then evaluated by at least two raters. If only one person is knowledgeable enough to rate an individual, more exposure is recommended before considering that individual for special development. All ratings then are compiled into individual and aggregate summaries for the next step.

3. **Conduct the Acceleration Review discussion.** Raters next come together to discuss each nominee, determine who shows the greatest leadership potential, and decide who will be eligible for specialized development experiences. The Acceleration Review discussion should include a series of inputs completed in advance of the meeting:

- Acceleration Pool nomination form.
- Personal information form (including career history, education, training, and relevant demographics).
- Summary ratings of potential, such as reports from the Leadership Potential Inventory.
- Summary of behavioral assessment data (e.g., from Acceleration Center, multirater survey, or other sources).
- Summary of interests/motivations (e.g., advancement motivation, relocation/mobility interests, retention concerns).
- Recent performance reviews.
- Development priorities and recent Development Action Plans.
- Aggregate data painting overall pictures of pool demographics, performance trends, development progress, etc.

For a specific agenda illustrating how the entire Acceleration Review might unfold, see Appendix 4.2 in Chapter 4. This discussion should be facilitated by an expert who ensures that conversations about nominees maintain a behavioral focus (avoiding unreliable inferential leaps or personal biases) and who drives consensus around both performance and potential evaluations by using the 9-box performance-by-potential grid shown below.

9-Box Performance-by-Potential Grid



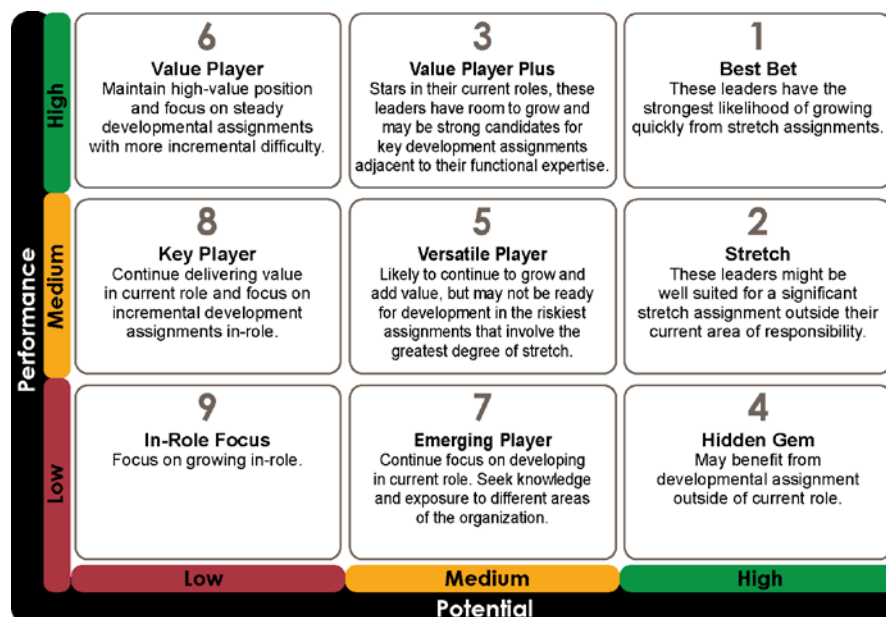
To arrive at this array, the leadership potential discussion is conducted in two parts:

1. Confirm the overall performance ratings on the vertical axis (low-medium-high).
2. Discuss and agree on levels of potential on the horizontal axis (low-medium-high).

Note once more that these two judgments, performance and potential, are isolated to avoid the common mistake of equating the two. Also, note that no judgments of readiness for promotion are made at this time.

4. **Populate the 9-Box and plan development.** While there are different ways to facilitate 9-box discussions, we prefer to leverage technology to do so. DDI's Leadership Potential Inventory visually depicts performance and potential ratings and presents the findings in a dynamic 9-box that can be manipulated in real time during the Acceleration Review. Discussion participants refer to both individual and group reports of potential (summarizing ratings made in advance of the meeting) to further discuss and calibrate on each nominee's performance and potential. Ultimately, discussion participants reach consensus on which grid box is most appropriate for each nominee.

The combined judgments of performance and potential inform how to plan the development of nominees named to each box, recognizing that the original intent of the process is to determine how best to apportion limited development resources and ensure the accelerated growth of leaders who can and will deliver on the desired growth. The following descriptors help to make these distinctions. Recall that all nominees named to the box are high performers in their current roles, but may have been placed in the "low" performance box because of their relative position to the others being considered.



These descriptors and prescriptions help to differentiate development investments more strategically, while conveying a clear message that all nominees are valuable assets to the organization and are critical to retain. Once nominees' placement on the grid is complete, focus shifts to communications and accountabilities for development action. Senior leaders should be assigned clear responsibility to “adopt” one or more high-potential leaders and sponsor their growth, sharing accountability for development progress. Strategies for the development of all others also should be confirmed, and any appropriate accountabilities should be reemphasized before the meeting adjourns.

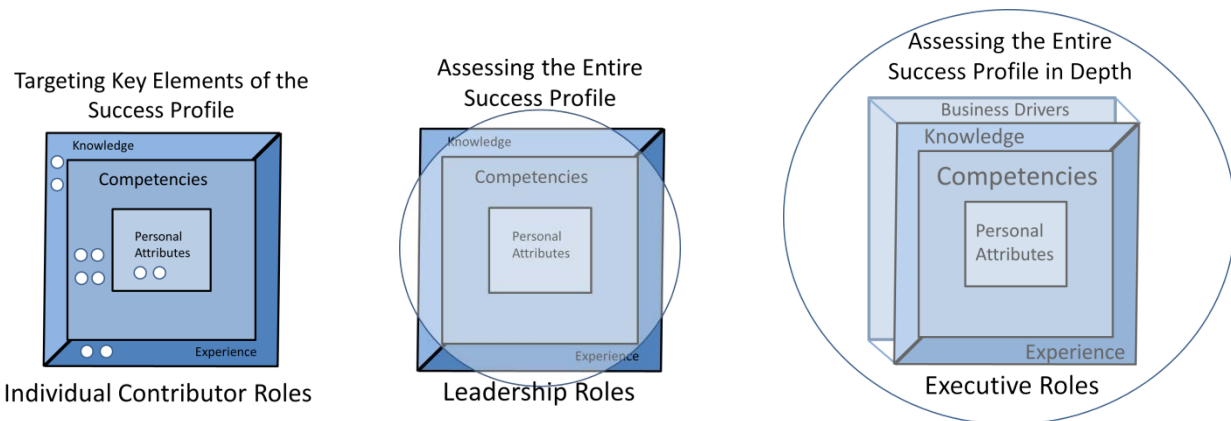
BUILDING THE RIGHT READINESS ASSESSMENTS

For assessment to achieve its optimum benefit as a tool in an acceleration system, it must be applied in the right amount. Used too little, and we don't get enough information on a nominee to improve decision making. Applied too much, and the investment of time and effort required to collect and digest the ensuing information is so large that it outweighs the value gained. So, exactly how do we determine the right amount of assessment? The key is focus.

For jobs with more narrow focus, such as customer service rep, maintenance technician, or software engineer, it makes sense to isolate (i.e., sharp focus) key elements of the success profile that have shown to be most crucial to job performance and assess for those (e.g., service orientation, work standards, or technical knowledge). This approach is appropriate because overall job performance is determined by a smaller set of skills and attributes. As roles become more complex and require more varied skill sets, including leadership capabilities (e.g., supervisor, manager), it becomes important to assess the success profile more comprehensively (i.e., wide focus) to not only ensure minimal capability for leadership tasks, but also to fully inform growth needs so that development can be aimed where it's needed most.

For the most complex, high-risk positions such as vice president, general manager, or chief officer, a combination of both approaches (i.e., wide and sharp focus) must be adopted to understand the entire success profile at a level of precision that meets the complexity of the role. Because these roles have such varied and nuanced challenges and so many determinants of success, to isolate a subset of success factors would result in an overly narrow field of view, and would likely miss crucial insights. In addition, at this highest level of job complexity, assessment also must account for the context in which the leader would operate. As we discussed in Chapter 3 on success profiles, Business Drivers are incorporated into the assessment to enable an analysis of the leader's capabilities and characteristics and an overlay of these capabilities onto the specific environment in which they will be applied.

Increasing Breadth and Depth of Assessment for More Complex Roles



Note that in all instances, capturing all four elements of the success profile (knowledge, experience, competencies, and personal attributes) remains essential. The question of how much assessment to apply is answered by considering both the breadth and complexity (difficulty) of skills required for success. More-focused roles can be assessed with more-focused assessment, while broader leadership roles require more comprehensive assessments. In practice, this means selecting and applying assessment methods to match the needs dictated by the success profile. The table below displays the broad categories of assessment tools and the quality and quantity of information that each provides relative to each success profile element.

How Assessment Methods Differ in Their Viability to Assess the Success Profile

Note: More Xs denote more quantity and quality of information gleaned by each method.

Assessment Tool	Knowledge	Experience	Competencies	Personal Attributes
Simulations*			XXX	XX
Multirater (360°) Surveys*			XX	X
Personality Inventories*			X	XX
Cognitive Ability Tests*			X	
Behavior-Based Interviews*	XX	XX	XX	
Multirater (360°) Interviews	XX	XX	XX	XX

** Often incorporated as a component of an Acceleration Center*

In *Grow Your Own Leaders* (2002), we described the basic nature and functions of each method, and readers interested in those fundamentals will find that discussion current and relevant. Building from those foundations, a few remarks about recent advancements and the most useful applications of each method are important to set up a discussion below on how to scale assessments in organizations with varied needs across multiple units and levels.

Simulations

When to use—Simulations, the cornerstone method in Acceleration Centers, are most useful when past performance does not provide sufficient insight into future capability, as is the case when one is making a leap into previously untried performance territory (e.g., becoming a leader for the first time or moving into an executive role). While our work often has proven that past performance is a key predictor of future performance, we also recognize that at major career junctures, when the transition to a new way of achieving success must take place, assessing past performance (say, with a behavior-based interview)

provides only partial insight into one's readiness for the new assignment. When a mid-level manager is being considered for a leap into an executive role, crucial aspects of the future assignment—such as external market analysis, strategic influencing, and establishing long-range strategic direction—cannot be assessed by examining prior experiences.

Simulations are also uniquely advantageous when seeking to assess for capability in a future or emerging business context. Note that some simulations are designed to assess for a very specific skill (e.g., solve a complex scheduling challenge, analyze a numerical data set, or interact with an angry customer) and, like all simulations, are useful because of their high job relevance and the opportunity to observe behavior objectively. However, as they are more narrowly focused, we refer to them as **task simulations**. More sophisticated simulations (e.g., for executives or C-level candidates) feature a holistic business context in which an array of tasks and assignments are presented in a free-flowing, day-in-the-life format. Participants face many choices about what to prioritize and how to channel their leadership efforts. We refer to these latter simulations as **role simulations**, because participants not only engage in the tasks that they will encounter in the future, but they do so in a relevant organizational context. They have a full-fledged role just as they would in the future leadership environment for which they are being considered. Because it elicits a wider range of behavioral responses and demonstrates participants' performance against more competencies and in greater depth, this role-oriented approach enables assessment not only of what a leader *can* do (task), but also addresses the more pressing question of what he or she will do (role).

Recent advancements—Technology has enabled simulations to become more realistic, automated, scalable, and reliable predictors of leadership success than ever before. Participants in virtually any worldwide location with an Internet connection can complete a dynamic, interactive simulation (task or role) without leaving their office or home. Meanwhile, results can be reliably scored by trained assessor teams that share technology and leverage algorithm-optimized scoring methods to collaborate in the observation and interpretation of behavioral information. Classic assessment approaches for the highest-risk applications, such as CEO or executive assessment, can and typically are still conducted in-person to present the most realistic business and interpersonal context. Higher-volume scenarios with more moderate risk (e.g., for first-time or mid-level leaders) now leverage technology to compress an expansive assessment into a more efficient “package” that reflects the way leaders work in today's instant-access, always-connected environment.

Multirater (360°) Surveys

When to use—The observations and perceptions of competency-related behavior by colleagues above, on the same level, and below leaders are crucial to sustaining leadership success. Multirater (360°) feedback continues to be widely employed as a tool for gathering developmental feedback. To varying degrees, it is made available to management for constructing development plans and to a far lesser extent for making

succession decisions (an application we strongly discourage due to the likelihood that over time the quality and accuracy of the data gathered will erode because of the tool's association with advancement in the organization). We find that the most productive applications of multirater feedback occur when:

- It is used for development only and is clearly prohibited from use as a decision-making tool.
- Multirater tools are used in conjunction with other assessment methods (e.g., Acceleration Center simulations and/or personality inventories) so that feedback can be triangulated (and validated) with other observations and inputs.
- Participants (those being rated) and their managers collaborate in interpreting and taking action based on the feedback.
- Participants communicate with their raters not only before the rating process, but also afterward to solicit input on the quality of their development plans.
- Communications about the purpose and explicit uses of multirater feedback are clear and frequent.

Recent advancements—Traditional multirater feedback is widely used. Many incremental enhancements have been made to technology-delivery systems as well as to feedback reporting that enable better insight and understanding of results. Beyond these developments, we've seen the start of what may be a more significant long-term shift in the application of multirater feedback. With the advent and widespread adoption of social media, along with various feedback and reinforcement-sharing applications, there are more venues and opportunities than ever for gathering more real-time feedback from colleagues. The question is, how?

Some applications already are gaining popularity. Under the category of “social performance management,” these systems use recognized social media-sharing mechanisms like posting to one another's “walls” and assigning badges to publicly label performance that is noteworthy among colleagues. The intent, of course, is to promote more frequent, fluid communications among coworkers and to enable a platform for feedback to occur more constantly. While clearly useful for sharing information and communicating, these applications have yet to demonstrate that they can fully replace the more structured functions of traditional multirater feedback, which include competency-based insights gathered in a set behavioral format at a specific moment in time.

For example, if social media outlets are to be used to gather multirater feedback to discuss development with one's manager, which components of the social “conversation” are to be made accessible? When? By whom? The intersection of social media with developmental feedback is a promising prospect for the cultivation of new feedback methods, but there is more work to do before we will have an application that supplies information in the same way and with the same utility as traditional multirater feedback. So, we anticipate continued growth of both social performance management and traditional multirater feedback, and we expect that there likely will be developments that enable a more complete intersection. We also believe these developments have yet to be invented.

Personality Inventories

When to use—As job assignments become more complex, personality exerts a larger influence on behavior, and therefore it becomes more important to include as an explicit measure for more advanced leadership roles. Why? Consider this example: Sonya is promoted from territory sales manager to district sales director. In her transition she inherits a series of new responsibilities for which she has had little training and preparation. Committed to excellence and moving beyond the sphere of her own well-known territory, she dedicates herself to generating broader, longer-term customer strategies, capitalizing on larger-scale market opportunities, and inspiring a larger, more geographically and culturally diverse group. She is both anxious and energized, exerting her full effort to being successful. Focusing her many talents on these new challenges, Sonya has so much to concentrate on in her new role that she is scarcely aware that:

- All her actions are now being observed by a much-larger team.
- Many aspects of her behavior are reflexive and automatic because the magnitude of the role is so much more taxing, allowing her little or no time to prepare.
- Because she has so many more responsibilities to so many more people, she has significantly less one-on-one time with individuals in her group.

This increased level of visibility, combined with more rapid, reactive behaviors and less opportunity to spend time with team members, can be translated into one simple thing: less behavioral control. When capabilities are stretched by challenging new assignments, leaders are required to react more often and simultaneously have less time to explain themselves. So, in the roles where leaders are most stretched and have the least amount of time with others, instinctive responses (i.e., those driven by underlying personality) are more commonplace.

This requires a more in-depth assessment of personality for higher-risk roles. Of course, the obvious next questions are, “*How much assessment?*” and “*Which roles?*” In other words, how should we approach personality assessment at different levels of leadership? Let’s begin by acknowledging that personality plays a role in performance in all jobs at all levels. However, it's not essential at all levels of leadership to administer extensive personality assessments or to provide job incumbents with deep insight into personality to enhance performance. As you'll recall from Chapter 3, personality includes both enablers and derailers. Factors such as sociability and inquisitiveness are among the former, while volatility and arrogance are among the latter. At more advanced levels of leadership, assessment of both enablers and derailers is critical to: a) provide feedback to cultivate self-awareness so that leaders can mitigate their unproductive tendencies, and b) inform management decision-making by obtaining a full picture of leadership readiness so that individuals are developed for and placed into roles where they can succeed.

We're not advocating ignoring personality for lower-level, lower-risk roles. Personality-driven capabilities like service orientation or interpersonal sensitivity can and do play important roles at individual contributor and frontline leader levels. However, the assessment need at these levels comes primarily in the selection process where job candidates are screened for these foundational personality traits. As such, personality is less a part of the accelerated development and more central to the process of selecting the right people into the job. When jobs reach a critical point of complexity—typically at the mid-level manager or early-phase executive level when decision-making complexity, interpersonal dynamics, and leadership difficulty spike sharply—personality assessment must be incorporated as a distinct measure to ensure selection or promotion of the right leaders, while also enabling in-depth feedback to facilitate accelerated development.

Recent Advancements—Personality assessment is widely available in the open market—perhaps too widely available. Given the ease of making an inventory accessible on the Web, it's not difficult to find someone, somewhere, who can provide an inexpensive measure of precisely that critical personality variable you can't seem to find anywhere else, such as resilience, grit, sunny disposition, compassion, or more complex attributes like cultural sensitivity and entrepreneurship. It is not difficult to think of roles where these attributes would be critical to success, and to imagine that a simple inventory can measure them accurately and reliably is very attractive. Whether the measures are rooted in sound empirical foundations, however, is another question entirely. The scientific pursuit of personality assessment has continued to advance in uncovering the characteristics that are common and measurable among all working adults, worldwide. Like measures of height and weight, significant progress has been made in achieving normative insight into variables like sociability, interpersonal sensitivity, conscientiousness, and a host of others for which measurement rigor and validation efforts have been extensive. We believe that the most effective personality assessment is done when relying on these scientific pillars. In most cases we have found that leveraging these fundamentals enables the assessment of unique or idiosyncratic attributes that arise in specialized roles. We caution the use of measures with limited research foundations or those that depart from scientific fundamentals and attempt to invent new personality variables simply to achieve market differentiation.

Cognitive Tests

When to use—Cognitive ability (intelligence) has been shown through many years of research to be one of the strongest predictors of leadership success (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Schmidt et al, 1992; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998, etc.). It is commonly referenced that as jobs become more complex, cognitive ability—like personality—becomes more important. We concur, but with some important caveats. First, while there can be no question that as roles become more complex, their cognitive demands increase substantially, it is not necessarily true that cognitive ability accounts for a larger *proportion* of the success profile. In more advanced leadership roles, there are increasing demands beyond the cognitive. One could easily argue (and we do) that demands such as interpersonal dynamics, leadership challenges, and business

management tasks together amount to the larger proportion of what accounts for success in more advanced leadership assignments (senior leaders, executives). In other words, cognitive ability is a reliable predictor of leadership success, but not because it is the greatest determinant of success. In addition, because cognitive ability is the component of the success profile that individuals can least develop, it must be considered carefully when seeking to accelerate growth.

When determining leadership readiness, cognitive ability is most useful as one component of a more comprehensive assessment. For lower levels of leadership, more focused assessments of cognitive ability may take the form of situational judgment tests, while more comprehensive measures of critical thinking or complex reasoning are applied at more advanced levels. Also at lower levels, where volumes are higher and external screening is more commonly the need, it is often applied as a component (along with other behavioral measures) of a selection system to screen for foundational capabilities and/or to determine which candidates advance to more in-depth screening.

For leaders being considered by management for executive-level assignments, it is an essential part of the overall picture when making promotion decisions. It should be noted, however, that when using assessment data to craft accelerated development plans, interpretation and communication must be crafted delicately (we recommend trained professionals). There are many stories of highly intelligent leaders who failed, and less-intelligent leaders who achieved great success. Cognitive ability must be interpreted in light of the overall profile of skills and attributes, and be recognized as a stable characteristic that should be understood for its role in each leader's unique strengths and growth needs. Leaders seeking to accelerate growth would do well to understand that in leadership, the application of intelligence is as important as intelligence itself.

Recent advancements—Many long-standing, well-validated cognitive ability tests are available in the marketplace, and should always be considered for their relevance to the job or job family to which they will be applied. However, new technologies have made cognitive ability testing easier and more efficient than ever. DDI has recently advanced adaptive technology in which the test automatically adjusts the item difficulty to the response pattern of the test taker, thereby avoiding the requirement to complete long lists of items (many of which would be too difficult or too easy for some respondents), and more quickly arriving at the respondent's "true" ability level. Tests that once took an hour or more to complete can now be completed (with equal or greater reliability and validity) in 20 minutes.

Behavior-Based Interviews

When to use—Behavior-based interviews are important for examining prior experiences and job performance patterns relative to competencies important to a future role. Past behavior has been proven to predict future behavior again and again, and this axiom has most often been applied to positive effect in employee selection systems. However, behavior-based interviewing is also an important assessment

element in preparing leaders for increased levels of responsibility—understanding how one’s past approaches must be adapted to address new challenges is crucial to growth. An important consideration, however, is that not all behavioral interviewing approaches are created equal. It should not be assumed that any system that attempts to evaluate past behavior against competencies will achieve sufficient insight and validity. *Targeted Selection*[®], perhaps the first and most proven behavioral interviewing methodology in the world, incorporates a series of protocols (behavior definition and categorization, question design, interview delivery, note taking, integration and scoring, etc.) that build consistency and depth into the process. These process elements are the foundational pillars of validity, but training and skill practice are the primary drivers of success. We find often that organizations take the validity of behavioral interviewing for granted, assuming that it is easy to learn and will automatically produce positive results. This is absolutely not the case, and the implications are particularly evident when behavioral interview data is used to support accelerated development. If not conducted with skill and insight, interview outcomes fall short of delivering the feedback needed to identify winning development plans.

Recent advancements—While behavioral interviewing and the methods for helping organizations become adept at the approach are tried and true, the support available to sustain effectiveness have advanced considerably. Once again through the use of technology, interviewers can access real-time support to gather and apply interview tools, refine interview approaches to meet each emerging need, get help reviewing best practices at the various phases of the interview process, and find support to translate interview findings into developmental guidance.

A second significant advancement in behavioral interviewing has been the addition of Business Drivers to the interview protocol. While typical competency-driven interviews may be relevant to a job's required critical skills, to help interviews at the executive level elicit more business-relevant dialog and insight, it is useful to anchor the interview on both Business Drivers and competencies. By using Business Drivers to present and discuss current and emerging business challenges, interviewees share experiences relevant to broader business challenges, which to them feel more relevant to their thinking and operating. Then, through probing around these broader business challenges (Business Drivers), more specific insights relevant to competencies can be gleaned. In the end, interview insights are more business relevant, easier to connect to organizational strategy, and result in better receptivity to both the process and the feedback by interviewees.

Multirater (360°) Interviews

When to use—Because conducting interviews with multiple coworkers about a target individual can be resource intensive, multirater interview approaches are typically reserved for assessments aimed at top leadership roles or individuals in critical assignments. When structured to gather insights on both key competencies and business drivers, multirater interviews can yield exceptional insight into an individual’s leadership patterns in the current context. This approach is also highly effective in situations developing

senior team effectiveness. Because the information gathered illuminates the areas of shared strength and weakness as well as an in-depth understanding of how the team is operating and the environment that their habits are creating, unique insight is gained into the appropriate development strategies that can be undertaken to improve team effectiveness.

Recent advancements—Because multirater interviewing can represent a significant intrusion into the work environment by the interviewers (who often come from outside the organization), it can be leveraged as a major cultural building block if the interviews and feedback are anchored against the organization’s Business Drivers. As mentioned above, because Business Drivers are rooted in competencies, they incorporate the same behavioral rigor and objectivity, but because they are also more connected to business strategy, they help to keep interview conversations focused more on how behavior affects the business and less on the political or personal dynamics that may be occurring. In this way, interviews represent a productive avenue for participants to share their insights, ideas, experiences, and frustrations about how progress is being made (or not). This clear, business-focused lens through which the interview process is administered helps to maintain a productive atmosphere for the process and avoids concerns about the interview process exacerbating political battles or becoming too personal. Naturally, the more delicate issues of building trust, collaboration, communication, and other variables that could be culturally sensitive are still examined and uncovered, but they are done in a manner that is more clearly aimed at achieving business success.

Excerpted from DDI's

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

DERAILERS

DERAILERS

Certain qualities (personal attributes) and learned behaviors that can get in the way of effective performance.

DERAILERS:

Approval Dependent—Seek and need praise or reassurance from others, particularly from people higher in the organization.

Argumentative—Skeptical, tense, perhaps paranoid or suspicious, focused on protecting their own interests, and likely to resist coaching and feedback.

Arrogant—Overly self-assured or confident, resulting in poor listening and/or dismissal of feedback from others.

Attention Seeking—Gregarious, charming, and persuasive, perhaps excessively so, which can result in becoming melodramatic and self-promoting.

Avoidant—While seemingly pleasant and cooperative, tend to be preoccupied with their own agendas, and may prefer to address issues covertly (avoiding more direct solutions), thus being perceived as procrastinators, manipulative, or stubborn.

Eccentric—Creative and, accordingly, different from others, perhaps to the point of being unorthodox or even odd.

Imperceptive—Not naturally inclined to read others' behavior, intent, and motivations.

Impulsive—Impatient, unpredictable, and inclined to act before considering the consequences of actions.

Perfectionistic—Micro-managers, controlling, and demanding of others.

Risk Averse—Indecisive, too deliberate, or reluctant to take unusual or unconventional actions due to overemphasis on the prospect of failure.

Volatile—Have difficulty controlling their emotions, and are perhaps moody and quick to erupt in anger.

TRUTHS ABOUT DERAILERS

They get in the way of success.

While positive personal attributes, such as ambition, interpersonal sensitivity, or resilience, can contribute to a leader's success, negative attributes or derailers can lead to poor performance outcomes. Leaders should recognize and build upon their positive attributes, but they cannot ignore their derailers, which are of greater consequence because they can lead to failure. Research has shown convincingly that most, if not all, leaders have some characteristics that inhibit their success, and when these negative behavioral trends are left unattended, their leadership performance declines (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; McCall, 1998).

Everyone has them (to some degree).

If you're honest with yourself, you must acknowledge that you have some negative personal attributes. For example, some of us are a bit too arrogant or volatile or attention seeking; yet, these characteristics make us human. The difference between those who succeed and those who fail is the willingness to acknowledge their negative personal attributes and deal with them openly. Therefore, the focus of this development guide is on learning to manage your derailers so you can limit their negative impact.

You can't get rid of them.

The distinguishing feature of personal attributes is that, for the most part, they can't be changed. Our personalities are pretty much fixed by the time we reach adulthood. Therefore, it's essential that leaders understand their personalities so that they can build on their strengths and manage their weaknesses in complementary ways.

Because derailers are personality traits, they pose a unique set of development challenges:

- Derailers are difficult to correct because they stem from basic personality factors. When you are used to acting or thinking in a certain way, you tend to gain satisfaction from your behavior. For example, if you are prone to micromanagement, you might derive enjoyment from closely checking the details of a business plan.
- Derailers are difficult to pin down because they often appear only during stress or periods of change or when people take on higher levels of responsibility.
- Derailers are difficult to accept as an issue because they often are associated with attributes that have actually led to past successes or that haven't caused performance problems in the past. Unfortunately, these same attributes can derail your chances for future success in increasingly senior, more visible roles. For instance, a tendency to be detail oriented can greatly help a leader

emerge as a star performer; but, once the person reaches a higher leadership level—where the workload is greater and delegation is a must—this detail orientation can manifest itself as micromanagement.

In some instances an organization might even reinforce a top executive's negative characteristics, that is, until it finds that the person's behaviors are contributing to its downfall.

“No doubt, many people at Enron were aware of Jeff Skilling's inflated view of himself. As long as the company did well, however, people chose to deny the aspects of Skilling's leadership style that ultimately derailed him. In fact, it was probably easy to overlook them because his great confidence and ego also contributed to Enron's spectacular success. When things went wrong, though, these behaviors were magnified because they were part of what contributed to the company's spectacular fall, and in hindsight could be seen as hindering its success.” (Dotlich & Cairo, 2003)

You can overcome them with positive behavior.

Derailers are not inevitable; they can be overcome. The best solution is to attack the negative behaviors associated with a derailer rather than the derailer itself. For example, if “arrogance” is one of your derailers, one way it probably manifests itself is by your acting like a know-it-all in meetings, dominating the discussion by letting everyone know how much you know. You can work to change that behavior by always being the last person to talk on an issue. Most of the time, the right or best answer will come from others in the meeting, so there will be no need to show others how smart you are. At first, keeping silent will be difficult to do, but such a conscious behavior change will eventually cause others to see you as less arrogant. And, if you continue to seek and accept others' ideas, you'll find that your self-perception of your own wisdom will change as you see more of others' positive contributions.

Overcoming derailers (or at least minimizing their negative effects) is much like breaking a bad habit. Admittedly, doing this can be quite difficult because your troublesome traits can seem fairly permanent. You must believe that changing your derailer behavior is critical to your leadership success, and then work diligently and consistently to address the challenge that overcoming it presents. You can compensate for your derailers with positive behaviors, such as:

- **Recognizing the derailer as a career limiter**—Invite feedback on your personal attribute strengths as well as your derailers through behavioral assessment, personality inventories, and multirater feedback. The more self-awareness you have, the more you'll avoid surprises and blind spots.

- **Soliciting others' help to overcome it**—Declare publicly that you're trying to improve this behavior, and then enlist help from coaches, trusted confidants (people who are safe, but not too safe), and those who are affected in your daily work life.
- **Staying aware of and avoiding your derailment "risks"**—Once you have admitted your derailer and sought help to overcome it, you'll find it much easier to avoid situations that trigger those potentially destructive behaviors. Maintain your awareness of progress and manage your derailer through making periodic self-assessments and occasionally soliciting feedback from others.

Executive coaches can play a valuable role by helping leaders zero in on necessary behavior changes that are needed to avoid derailers and break bad habits. Coaches can offer a "mirror" to help executives recognize when their overreliance on familiar behavior patterns is affecting their performance and perceived organizational credibility. Coaches also aid executives in understanding how their actions are being perceived, thereby helping them to avoid potentially fatal career mistakes. They also offer objective suggestions for alternative ways to handle high-risk situations that can boost the executive's confidence and competence.

Through properly managing derailers, you'll put yourself in a better position to achieve your personal and organizational goals, while also making your job more rewarding and enjoyable.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR THE ARGUMENTATIVE DERAILER

- Realize that you can sometimes be seen as argumentative when you're just trying to express your honest opinions. This can distance you from others. Show sensitivity by asking people about their reactions to your comments.
- Ask for and recognize the value of others' viewpoints.
- Take your coworkers' actions at face value. Refrain from being skeptical of their good intentions.
- Don't waste time and energy focusing on perceived mistreatment.
- Tell a trusted friend or associate about behaviors you are trying to change. Then ask that person to tell you when you appear excessively critical, defensive, or sensitive.
- Praise others for their contributions.
- Practice being less critical and judgmental. Describe how things can work, rather than why they won't work.
- When you feel yourself distrusting the coaching process you're involved in, suspend your judgment and give the coaching a fair chance to help you.
- Practice giving positive feedback on others' ideas by forcing yourself to consider the best-case scenario.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR THE ARROGANT DERAILER

- Ask others for feedback on your leadership. If you rely entirely on your own point of view and ignore others' judgment, you'll miss learning information about yourself that might be critical of your leadership success. Identify a coworker who'll be brutally honest with you and ask how you are perceived in the organization. Solicit feedback on the impact that your leadership has had on your direct reports. Be open to negative as well as positive feedback.
- Recognize your potential for intimidating others. Soften the way in which you deliver some of your messages.
- Acknowledge the fact that you might not have all the answers. No one is right all the time. Encourage those around you to participate actively in discussing important decisions.
- Recognize people when they have made important contributions.
- Avoid the trap of excessive competition with coworkers—remember that the real competition is outside your organization.
- Use any personal setbacks as opportunities to reflect on what led to your failure and what you can learn from the experience. Was it your excessive pride? Discuss your experience with someone in the organization who will be honest with you.

For a complete list of derailer development suggestions, contact DDI at info@ddiworld.com.

ASSIGNMENT SCIENCE THE ART OF ASSIGNING DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

CHALLENGES AND COMPETENCIES

The list on the left below includes challenges leaders often face when trying to develop their potential. On the right are competencies and activities that can be used to address these challenges. Review and use them in your development discussions.

YOUR CHALLENGES	COMPETENCIES AND POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES
Taking on roles and responsibilities that are new, very different, or much broader than previous ones.	Adaptability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Manage a new project, product, technology, or group of people. ▶ Take a temporary assignment on a cross-functional team. ▶ Be the inexperienced member of a project team. ▶ Serve on a task force to develop expertise in an emerging market. ▶ Implement technological advances in your unit.
Developing relationships and collaborating , all the while subordinating own goals to accomplish common goals.	Building Strategic Work Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Adopt ways your own and others' skills can be used to achieve goals. ▶ Join a task force that includes people from diverse groups in the company. ▶ Analyze the characteristics of people you work well with and those with whom you have difficulty working. ▶ Ask people outside your group to attend and participate in your team or group meetings.
Working with people in a way that gives them confidence in your intentions and those of the organization.	Building Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Create a high-trust vision that focuses on what you'd like to see and hear during team interactions. ▶ Be on time for meetings; return phone calls as soon as possible. ▶ Establish a charter with your team that spells out rules for interactions. ▶ Ask your leader and others about ethical standards to follow.
Managing inexperienced, incompetent, or resistant employees.	Coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Resolve tension between employees. ▶ Coach a direct report with a performance problem. ▶ Assess training and development needs within your group.
Improving conditions and processes by identifying opportunities, generating ideas, and implementing solutions.	Continuous Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Experiment with new ideas or approaches; conduct trial runs. ▶ Maintain a list of new ideas or processes; try to implement one idea a week. ▶ Generate solutions for overlooked but chronic problems within your unit. ▶ Ask others how they address situations similar to yours.
Making sure strategic relationships inside and outside the organization advance business goals .	Cultivating Networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Acknowledge and reinforce partners' contributions. ▶ Ask your partners how well you're meeting their expectations. ▶ Implement a service scorecard with each partner. ▶ Facilitate a cross-functional partners meeting to solve a problem.

YOUR CHALLENGES	COMPETENCIES AND POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES
<p>Setting and monitoring high goals for yourself and your group; working to meet goals while deriving satisfaction from achieving them.</p>	<p>Driving for Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Set challenging goals, then persist in meeting them, despite obstacles. ▶ Delegate effectively, empowering people to exceed expectations. ▶ Anticipate problems and develop contingency plans in the early phases of a project. ▶ Recognize and reward people for achieving or exceeding their goals.
<p>Starting something new, making strategic changes, carrying out a reorganization, or responding to rapid changes.</p>	<p>Facilitating Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reorganize a system or structure in response to customer demands. ▶ Launch a new product, program, or system. ▶ Serve on a reengineering team. ▶ Volunteer your work group for an organizational product rollout. ▶ Facilitate the development of a new mission statement.
<p>Using interpersonal styles and techniques to get others to accept and commit to your plans and ideas.</p>	<p>Gaining Commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ask open-ended questions to encourage involvement. ▶ Share credit for accomplishments so others involved in a project feel appreciated. ▶ Form mutually beneficial strategic alliances with others. ▶ Share data so that everyone can appreciate your perspectives on a topic, an issue, or a goal.
<p>Working with people from different cultures or with institutions in other countries.</p>	<p>Global Acumen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Host visitors from other countries. ▶ Manage a multi-country project. ▶ Serve as a liaison with a business partner in another country. ▶ Volunteer for a business trip to another country. ▶ Take on the global responsibility for a product.
<p>Influencing peers, higher-level management, external groups, or others over whom you have no direct authority.</p>	<p>Influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Serve in a professional organization or networking group. ▶ Present a proposal to top management. ▶ Serve on a cross-functional quality improvement team. ▶ Manage an internal project, such as a company event or office renovation.
<p>Fixing problems that were created by a predecessor or that existed when you took the job.</p>	<p>Managing Conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Resolve a morale problem within your group. ▶ Work with a dissatisfied customer or difficult supplier. ▶ Handle a business crisis. ▶ Correct an existing group quality problem.
<p>Handling important assignments that have clear deadlines and high visibility.</p>	<p>Risk Taking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Set challenging and visible performance goals. ▶ Negotiate a high-profile project or case. ▶ Represent your organization at a conference or an association meeting. ▶ Serve as a product champion.

JOB ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Review this page and the next for ideas on how direct reports can develop through start-up jobs, fix-it assignments, projects or task forces, and line-to-staff switches. Each opportunity includes descriptions clarifying what it is and is not, plus examples and a brief how-to guide.

START-UP JOBS

ARE:

- Building something new.
- Taking action in uncertainty and inspiring others to believe in those actions.
- Positions that might involve relocation.
- Accomplished with little supervision or support.
- Often complicated by other problems (e.g., history of failed start-ups).

ARE NOT:

- Well defined or previously done.
- Closely supervised by management.
- So close to your experience that you know everything that needs to be done.

EXAMPLES:

- From groundbreaking to managing:
 - Building a facility and staff from nothing.
- From hiring to managing:
 - Staffing operations in an existing facility.
- Heading something new:
 - Opening a new product line or starting a new function or group.
 - May involve hiring and policy making.

HOW TO FIND A START-UP JOB:

- Look for positions with start-up components.
- Join a project team with a start-up mission (e.g., new product or plant).

FIX-IT ASSIGNMENTS

ARE:

- Fixing/Stabilizing a failing organization.
- Dismantling a weak operation, usually with resistant, demoralized, or underperforming staff members.
- Reconstructing a new operation.
- Simultaneously tearing down and rebuilding staff and systems.
- Often complicated by additional obstacles:
 - Restoring lost credibility.
 - Lack of authority over people whose support is needed.
 - New cultures/business arena.
 - Loyalty to previous manager.

ARE NOT:

- Minor “surgery.”
- A single source or cure.
- Leisurely; the problems have a sense of urgency.
- Solved by plans from corporate management.

EXAMPLES:

- Widespread problems:
 - Consistently poor performance.
 - Incompetent or resistant people; low morale.
 - Operation lost credibility; still losing ground.
 - Almost always involves firing.
 - Obstacles may be business-related or personal.
- Patching holes:
 - Stabilizing ailing products.
 - Resistance from people whose support is needed.
 - Lack of credibility.
- Unclear lines of authority:
 - No authority over managers who implement change despite a mandate from the top.
 - High-risk, high-exposure.
 - Involves accomplishing task gingerly, without creating adversarial relationships.

HOW TO FIND A FIX-IT ASSIGNMENT:

- Look for businesses not performing up to par.
- Seek troubleshooting or staff assignments.
- Search for task force or problem team assignments.

PROJECTS/TASK FORCES

ARE:

- ▶ Discrete projects or temporary assignments, done alone or with others, with recognizable end points indicating success or failure.
- ▶ Short-term assignments rather than new positions.
- ▶ Aimed at specific outcomes to meet a specific organizational goal.
- ▶ Highly visible, with broad exposure to diverse technologies, organizations, and people.
- ▶ Often extracurricular, creating additional time demands.
- ▶ Frequently in new content areas.
- ▶ Opportunities to establish/develop new relationships.

ARE NOT:

- ▶ Focused on trivial, routine, or administrative problems.
- ▶ Undefined or philosophical problems with no direct action implications.
- ▶ Politically staffed so that membership is based on representation rather than on ability to contribute.

EXAMPLES:

- ▶ Breaking new ground:
 - In R&D, systems, joint venture, product, or operation (e.g., mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, new technologies, or markets).
- ▶ Formal negotiations:
 - Facilitating implementation of decisions through negotiations with external parties.
 - May focus on acquisition, divestiture, government, or union (e.g., contracts, plant closings, or labor negotiations).
- ▶ Troubleshooting:
 - Investigating or eliminating a problem.
 - May focus on accidents, failures, illegality, or operations (e.g., cutbacks, reorganizations, or diagnosing major failures).

HOW TO FIND A PROJECT/TASK FORCE:

- ▶ Search for problems that need to be addressed.
- ▶ Look for temporary assignments.
- ▶ Seek projects you can do on your own but that require cooperation from others.

LINE-TO-STAFF SWITCHES

ARE:

- ▶ Moving to a corporate staff role.
- ▶ A chance to learn another part of the business with exposure to corporate strategies and culture.
- ▶ Varied in role and responsibility among:
 - Planning. – General administration.
 - Financial analysis. – R&D management.
 - Training and HR. – Productivity improvement.
- ▶ Mostly developmental, with a set time limit.
- ▶ Sometimes combined with formal training or sandwiched between line jobs.
- ▶ Specific to individual organizations.
- ▶ Strategic thinking coupled with exposure to high-level executives.

ARE NOT:

- ▶ Trivial to the major corporate mission.
- ▶ Free of involvement from important executives.
- ▶ Intellectually undemanding.
- ▶ Simply an advisory or support role.

EXAMPLES:

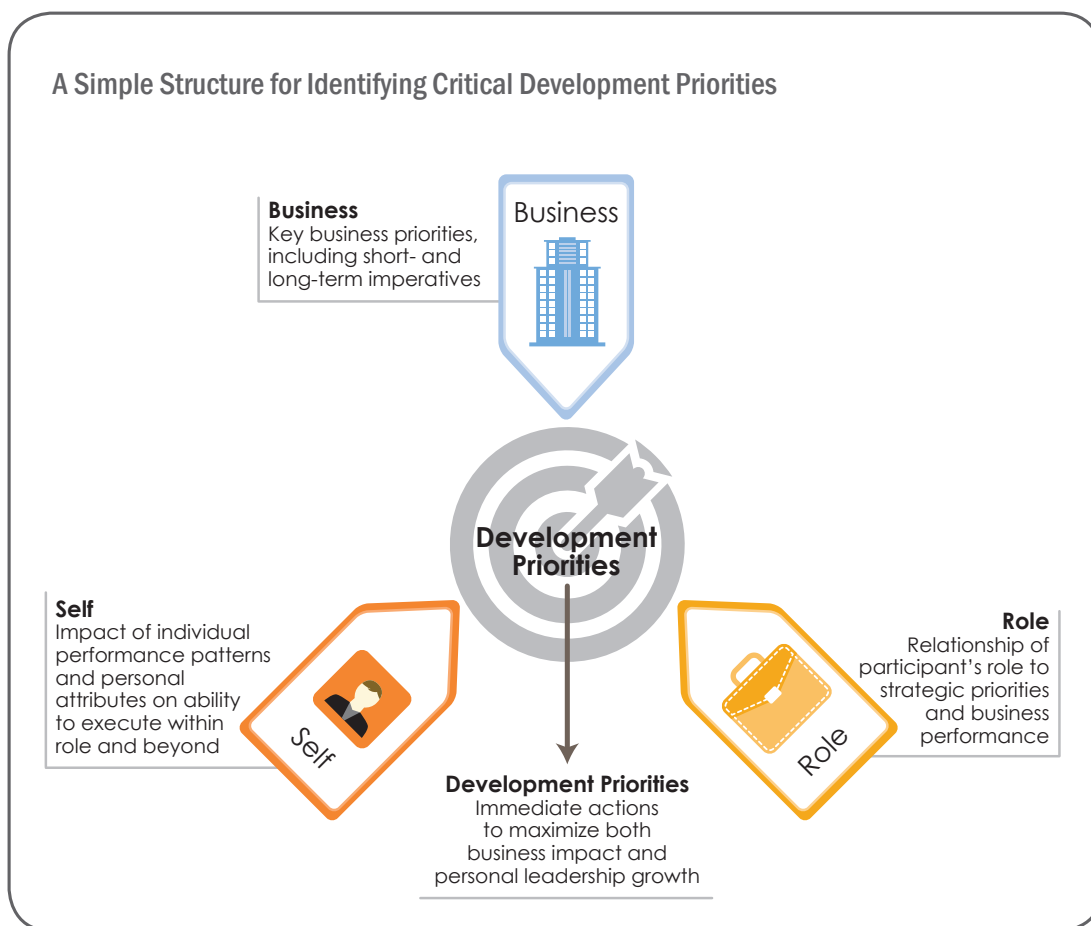
- ▶ Moving to a job with a new mission (e.g., forming or reorganizing a new function or department, administering several departments):
 - Advantages: high visibility and challenge.
 - Provides initiation into world of corporate headquarters.
 - Demands new skills and ways of thinking.
- ▶ Moving to a job with new theoretical and practical knowledge requirements; reporting to senior executives (e.g., business/financial analysis).

HOW TO FIND A LINE-TO-STAFF SWITCH:

- ▶ Look for jobs that present opportunities to develop new skills and perspectives and that involve senior management.
- ▶ Pair a line-to-staff switch with formal training.
- ▶ Determine an acceptable time frame for a staff job, then examine the internal possibilities for impact within that time frame.

HOW SHOULD COACHING ENGAGEMENTS BE STRUCTURED?

Organizations expect coaches to make rapid, positive impact, and executives expect to gain personal value—quickly. A modest amount of structure goes a long way toward ensuring that good intentions translate into desired results and outcomes. Strong executive coaches work intimately with their clients to identify and integrate key factors important to the business situation, current role demands, and individual needs and personal attributes. This business-role-self structure (see below) provides a simple, yet holistic scheme for identifying the most critical development priorities. Through a comprehensive review of the executive’s key challenges in all three categories, the executive and coach identify specific actions and development priorities that will contribute to both business and individual success.









No matter the length or specific focus of the coaching engagement, a solid coaching agenda should always involve the following results-driven activities:

1. Confirm stakeholder (manager, senior management team, HR) expectations of performance.
2. Establish clear coaching objectives, with tangible measures of success (this ensures that the engagement has a planned endpoint).
3. Analyze the business situation and how the individual's role is expected to contribute to success.
4. Analyze job/role challenges and key barriers to goal achievement.
5. Conduct an accurate self-assessment, leveraging reliable behavioral assessment data (e.g., from multiple-perspective [360°] interviews , Acceleration Center results).
6. Identify development priorities, isolating those that will have the greatest impact on business and individual success.
7. Target essential development resources that are needed.
8. Drive development through assertive support and process facilitation.
9. Track performance improvements through metrics and follow-up.

This agenda ensures a productive engagement and guarantees that clients emerge with the specific actions and plans they need to develop the right skills at the right time to drive targeted business objectives. Benefits are maximized by using coaches who have (or can readily gain) strong awareness of the organization's culture and business objectives.

SOURCES OF ENERGY

A great acceleration system doesn't drain energy, it generates it. But how? When leaders are in rapid-learning mode, they report feeling excitement, a bit of performance tension, and even at times, fear. Important business assignments, challenging new roles, or applying new skills for the first time often create this kind of energy. But individual leaders aren't the only ones who need energy to make accelerated growth happen. Management needs it as well. Through the acceleration imperatives, any organization can begin to generate the energy that individuals, management, and all the players in an acceleration system need to sustain rapid growth and generate more *Leaders Ready Now*.

ACCELERATION IMPERATIVE	HOW ENERGY IS GENERATED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared purpose: Unanimous adoption of the Acceleration Credo. • Greater focus: Isolation of the few most critical leadership priorities (Business Drivers). • A more competitive dynamic: A business-level dashboard that the entire senior management team uses to track the most critical Acceleration metrics. • A more compelling business case: Clear articulation of the leadership gaps, and where, exactly, they are in the business, including quantification of the leadership gap. • More enterprise level ownership: Clear accountability for specific Acceleration metrics at both the enterprise and unit level. • More inspiring communications: A clearer sense of purpose and direction enables more positive communications that engage the entire organization around the goal of accelerated growth. • Transparency: Accountability and visibility on what senior leaders are <i>actually doing</i> to demonstrate commitment to and personal investment in their own and others' Acceleration.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More relevance to the business context: Business Drivers that provide a clear and simple connection between business and cultural priorities and the leadership that will be needed to meet them. • Greater usability: Language that can be used with any application at any level of leadership – broad business context, competency focus, key action precision • More precise, accurate guidance for skill development: Key actions provide the exact ways that competencies can be practiced to achieve proficiency or mastery.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More efficient, business-focused conversations: An enterprise driven, integrated talent review process with conversations that more seamlessly connect leadership talent to a range of business dialogues. • Less bureaucracy – Elimination of pointless meetings to produce ratings and/or data that do not improve decision making. • Shrewder, more accurate judgments about people: More well-designed talent review processes that move more quickly, and teach management how to accurately identify individuals with leadership potential.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compelling data that sparks bolder development: Acceleration center intelligence provides a more accurate window into what will happen in future leadership scenarios, enabling better, bolder development. • More in-depth insights that increase self-awareness: More personalized, experiential assessment approaches provide far deeper insight into how one's own tendencies will play out in future situations. • Data that reduces the rate of failure: Data aligned to the organization's context facilitates better decision making about whom to place into key roles, dramatically reducing failure rates. • Provocative Feedback that inspires bold developmental action: A different approach to feedback puts the individual learner in charge of his/her own development, and provides an inspiring platform for growth. • More solicitation of feedback: Leaders who receive feedback from acceleration centers are more likely to seek and use feedback from others back on the job.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less talk, more action: Learning and development methods that spark application of new leadership approaches that the business needs, not just learning activities. • Better leveraging of unique personal attributes: Individuals learn to embrace their stable individual dispositions, and manage the risks of their negative tendencies while capitalizing on natural strengths. • Bigger, bolder development assignments and more of them: Management learns practical ways to generate, assign, and track developmental assignments that dramatically increase the rate and frequency with which growth happens. • Shared growth experiences that electrify groups of leaders: Learning journeys combine group learning and application activities that energize leaders and reinforce the growth process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more realistic mindset: Management doesn't expect an end point; they acknowledge that acceleration never stops, and plan to continually renew their focus on it. • More complete ownership of growth: The CEO and senior team don't just sanction learning activities; they own the accountability to convert leaders from <i>not ready</i> to <i>ready now</i>. • A more productive relationship with failure: Management gets behind people, and helps leaders work through failures to extract valuable lessons that can help the business perform better. • A shared experience: Management grows too, making acceleration something that the entire organization shares. Growth is part of running the business.