The Ultimate Guide to Leadership Assessment
Welcome to the Ultimate Guide to Leadership Assessment

Your Quick Reference Guide:

Understanding Leadership Assessments

Personality Tests for Leaders

Leadership Tests

360-Degree Feedback

Assessment Centers

Combining Assessment and Development

Every Company Stands and Falls with Its Leaders

That's why it's so critical that companies make the right decisions about who should lead, how to support leaders' development, and how to align them to the business strategy. And it's why we've created this guide to leadership assessment.

In recent years, we've seen a major movement in HR to build data into their leadership processes. We all recognize that it's not enough to make these crucial decisions based on gut feeling alone. After all, we're only human, subject to our own biases.

This is especially important as businesses turn their focus to diversity and inclusion. We need to be thinking differently about people and considering all angles of our talent strategy. We can't assume that the superstar leadership profile of the past will stay the same for the future.

That's why so many clients are now trying to bring leadership assessment into their strategy. However, leadership assessment can be complex. It's not enough to simply have data. You need the right data for the right purpose.

We created this guide to leadership assessment to help HR professionals get started. We want you to understand the types of data you can get, and how you can leverage them.

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Your Quick Reference Guide:

How to Use This Guide

This is designed to be a practical guide to leadership assessment. It's based on the common questions that we hear from our HR clients every day.

While we have a lot of industrial-organizational psychologists doing excellent research behind the scenes, this is not a whitepaper or research piece. Rather, it is advice based on our experience working with clients for five decades to successfully implement leadership assessment. In short, this is our advice on what works and what doesn't in the real day-to-day work of HR.

Note that this is a "living" guide to leadership assessment. That is, we intend to update it as we explore new areas in assessment, get new data, and most importantly, based on your questions. So if you have a burning question about leadership assessment, please send it our way at info@ddiworld.com. You can be our inspiration for new sections!

Hear advice on what works and what doesn't in the real day-to-day work of HR.

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Understanding Leadership Assessments: Signs vs. Samples
A quick overview of how to understand the two main ways to collect data, and how you can use each type.

Personality Tests for Leaders
Personality tests are some of the most common tests used in business. But they are also commonly misused, with data being applied to the wrong purpose.

Leadership Tests
They're fast. They're easy to use. And they can deliver solid data about a person's knowledge, judgement, and preferences. But there are limits to what you can do with test data.

360-Degree Feedback
It's critical to know how the people around you respond to your actions. That's why so many companies collect 360-degree feedback. But while 360s are deeply valuable for feedback, there can be some pitfalls when they are used incorrectly.

Assessment Centers
Assessment centers offer some of the most robust, multi-use data on the market. But are they right for your situation?

Combining Assessment and Development
Assessments offer deep insight on where people are today. But the real question is what you do with that insight. Learn how assessment can drive focused, accelerated leadership development for your future.

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Understanding Leadership Assessment Types

Introduction to Signs and Samples

In today's data-driven world, HR professionals are increasingly looking for objective data to help them make more informed choices in leadership selection and development. But with a wide range of options on the market, the first challenge is to understand different leadership assessment types.

There are two main types of assessments, which are based on the type of data they collect—signs or samples.

With a wide range of options on the market, the first challenge is to understand different leadership assessment types.

What Do I Need to Do with the Assessment Data?

Before diving into different leadership assessment types, the first question you should ask is what you want to be able to do with the data. It may sound obvious, but it's a step that many HR professionals overlook. As a result, they may end up choosing the wrong assessment for their needs.

Start by framing the questions that you need to answer. Are you trying to make promotion decisions? Do you need to assess broad skill gaps across your leadership population? Are you trying to get accurate data on skill gaps, or are you merely trying to build self-awareness in leaders?

It's essential to answer these questions up front because it may lead you to different leadership assessment types. The danger is that if you choose the wrong one, it can be tempting to incorrectly interpret the data to suit your needs.

For example, personality insights can be very useful in driving self-awareness. However, it doesn't tell you what someone is capable of from a behavioral perspective. Nor does it tell you anything about readiness for a leadership position.

But if that's the only data you have, it may be tempting to use it to make a leadership selection decision. For example, you might end up choosing someone with a highly extroverted personality over a more introverted peer for a manager role, assuming they are more of a "people" person.

Once in the role, you might find that the extroverted manager struggles to listen to others and micromanages their projects. Meanwhile, the introverted person is the person that everyone on the team goes to because they listen well and give measured coaching to help them succeed.

The point is, with the wrong data, you may make poor decisions. That's why it's so important to state your goals up front about what you plan to do with the data.

The Difference in Leadership Assessment Types: Signs vs. Samples

One of the biggest sources of confusion when choosing between leadership assessment types is the difference between "signs" and "samples." Signs and samples represent the different ways that data is collected, and consequently, what you can use the data for.

Signs are data points, such as personality or judgement, that can be used as indicators of future performance. In contrast, samples are actual examples of a person's behavior. When making a prediction about a person's performance in a role, signs require more inference than an actual sample of a person's behavior.

A simple way to understand the difference is to think of a driving test. In most places, potential drivers are required to pass a written test to gain a learner's permit. The test quizzes the driver on driving laws and may ask how they would react to certain situations.

If a person passes the test, you know that they have a baseline understanding of what to do and are likely to make the right choice in those situations.

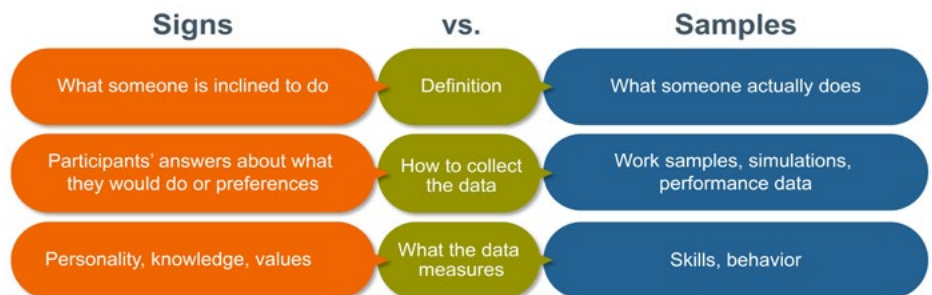Does that mean they're ready to get on the road? Not even close.

To actually get your driver's license, you need to pass a road test. You need to get behind the wheel, and someone needs to evaluate you while you're driving. You need to prove that you really can perform the skill.

Back to our leadership assessment types. In this analogy, the written test for the learner's permit is like tests on skills, values, or personality. They're all signs of performance. Meanwhile the road test gives you a sample of performance.

In a leadership assessment, signs are usually collected through a written or multiple choice format. Leaders are asked to choose the best action to respond to a scenario. Or they are given a scenario or statement and asked to agree with it.

In contrast, simulation-based assessments—also known as assessment centers—immerse a leader in leadership challenges. They have to respond to fictional challenges in real time. Their responses are recorded as video, audio, or open-ended written responses. That way, you can truly observe their behavior.

As you might expect, samples of performance are typically more predictive (and provide more detailed insights) than signs of performance.

Signs	vs.	Samples
What someone is inclined to do	Definition	What someone actually does
Participants' answers about what they would do or preferences	How to collect the data	Work samples, simulations, performance data
Personality, knowledge, values	What the data measures	Skills, behavior

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What Do You Learn from Signs vs. Samples?

An example of the "signs" type of leadership assessment might be a multiple choice situational judgment test. A multiple choice situational judgment test shows us that the person knows what to do in various situations. But it doesn't tell us whether the person can actually do those things.

This is really important for leadership performance. Plenty of smart leaders understand what to do, such as in a coaching situation. But they may not be very good at doing it. And they might not realize the difference.

Personality tests are another example of signs. Based on how a person is wired, you might be able to predict what parts of a leadership role will be easy or challenging for them. For example, someone who is resistant to change may struggle to lead it. However, it doesn't mean that they can't lead change. It simply means it will take more energy and effort to do so.

On the flip side, assessment centers provide sample data. As part of the experience, they put leaders in an immersive situation, and see how they react. For example, someone might be given a fictional scenario in which they need to lead a change on their team. They might have to write email responses to situations, participate in a coaching role play, and create a written strategy of how they would lead that change. With that sample data, you get an accurate look at the leader's capability to lead change.

Plenty of smart leaders understand what to do
...but they may not be very good at doing it.
And they might not realize the difference.

When Should I Use Each Type of Assessment?

Knowing when to use the two different leadership assessment types is critical. Just as we started with framing your purpose, there are a few questions you should ask yourself when determining which type to use:

- **How many people do you need to assess?** Are you doing a small group, or trying to quickly get data across your leadership population? For high-volume situations where scalability is key, signs-based assessments typically make more sense.

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- **Do you want to make selection decisions based on the data?** Both types of leadership assessments can be used to support selection decisions (see our notes on personality testing). However, sample-based assessments provide more in-depth insights and are typically more accurate in predicting performance. If the decision is for a critical position, sample-based assessments are the better bet.

- **How in-depth do you need the data to be for development?** If you're using the data to simply drive self-insights, signs-based data may be robust enough. But in some situations you may need deeper insight. For example, high-potential leaders benefit from sample-based testing that can give them highly accurate, deep insights about their skills. Similarly, if you are trying to accelerate succession readiness, sample-based assessments are the better way to go.

Use Signs For:	Use Samples For:
High-volume scenarios where scalability is key	High-stakes selection decisions
Development situations that don't require deep insight	Development scenarios that require an in-depth insight, such as accelerating a high-potential leader or succession
Situations in which you have other assessments or data to support your approach	Lower volume, high-importance decisions

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How to Use Personality Tests for Leaders

Personality tests for leaders are a huge source of fascination. People are always looking to learn about themselves. They might wonder if they have what it takes to be a great leader, or how their personality might be similar to famously successful leaders.

In truth, personality is incredibly complex, and our unique combination of characteristics can manifest itself in innumerable ways. That's why it's important that HR uses personality tests carefully and correctly for leaders.

...personality is incredibly complex, and our unique combination of characteristics can manifest itself in innumerable ways.

What Is a Personality Test?

A personality test typically involves the leader responding to a series of statements related to their style and preferences. The tests are usually delivered online or as a questionnaire.

For example, a personality test might make a statement like, "I enjoy large parties where I can meet new people." The leader would then select their level of agreement with the statement, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

Other tests might make several statements, and leaders need to choose which statement best describes them.

The goal is for participants to quickly answer based on their immediate reaction to the question to get an accurate picture of their natural preferences.

Personality Test: Definition

✔ A test designed to identify a person's natural characteristics, motivations, and tendencies, or "why they are the way they are." These factors tend to stay fixed over time, although major life events can sometimes change a person.

What Does a Personality Test Measure?

Personality is one of the big causes for behavior, along with environment, learning, values, motivations, etc. Everyone has a personality and no two are the same.

But because we can't measure personality physically, like height and weight, personality tests help us use common language and science to describe and understand the unique characteristics that cause people to do what they do.

That science, which is vast, has led to a global conclusion that there are five common factors of personality, or what's known as the "Big Five," often known by the OCEAN acronym, which are:

- Openness to Experience
- Conscientiousness
- Extroversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism

That's not to say that there are only five overall factors. Underneath each personality trait are several subsets of characteristics that influence these broader five areas. That's why you may see some providers like Hogan introduce a wider range of personality factors, such as ambition and inquisitiveness, among others.

Regardless of the framework used to interpret results, what's important is that personality tests are consistent in measurement. They should accurately measure characteristic patterns related to how a person behaves at work, how they interact with others, and which parts of a job bring them satisfaction. This data can help to create a well-rounded view of a person and how they may react to situations on the job.

When Should I Use a Personality Test for Leaders?

There are a range of circumstances when you might consider using a personality assessment for your leaders. For example:

Leadership Selection

Personality tests can be useful when you are considering someone for a new role. The test could help raise any red flags that may prevent their success as a leader. In addition, the test may help you spot strengths where someone is highly inclined toward leadership.

However, a word of caution: we do not recommend using a personality test on its own in leadership selection. It should be paired with behavioral data. That data might come in the form of an assessment center, or a behavioral interview. What's important is that you get an accurate picture of what the person chooses to do, beyond just what they may be inclined to do based on their personality type. Using a personality type measure without a behavioral measure can lead to inaccurate conclusions about a leader.

Leadership Development

Personality tests can be particularly powerful in fueling leadership development. They can help leaders uncover deep insights about themselves and understand how they can leverage natural strengths.

Personality data can also help leaders recognize when their natural instincts and reactions might be holding them back. They may recognize when their natural reaction, such as a tendency toward arrogance, might prevent them from trusting and listening to their teams. Once they are aware of a problematic personality trait, they can work to change their behavior.

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Leadership Succession

Personality testing becomes increasingly important for leaders as they get promoted into higher positions. That's because personal impact increases in each level of leadership. For that reason, companies looking to build a strong succession pipeline should consider helping leaders gain personal insight through personality testing to increase their effectiveness for future roles.

Like any tool, personality tests for leaders can be used for good or poor purposes. It's up to HR to ensure that personality tools are used properly.

What Are the Benefits of Using Personality Tests for Leaders?

After taking a personality test, leaders should gain a better understanding of how they're wired as a person. This deeper understanding can help them understand why certain leadership responsibilities and challenges are easier or harder for them.

For example, an introverted person may find that they struggle to build their network. That doesn't mean that they can't do it. However, they may need to apply more conscious effort to networking. Meanwhile, an extroverted person may find themselves building networks nearly effortlessly.

By having a better understanding of how their personality can enable or derail their performance, leaders are better equipped to manage their personality. They can leverage aspects of their personality that enable them to thrive. And they can recognize situations where they may need to modify their behavior.

What Are the Dangers of Using Personality Tests for Leaders?

Like any tool, personality tests for leaders can be used for good or poor purposes. It's up to HR to ensure that personality tools are used properly.

At DDI, one of our biggest cautions to our clients is against using personality assessments as a standalone tool to make leadership decisions. We strongly recommend pairing personality data with behavioral data. Why? Because when personality data are used in isolation, it's too easy to misinterpret the data and insights.

This can play out in several ways, but one of the most common is in "typecasting" people. Many companies will reach broad conclusions about their talent based on personality data. For example, they may assume that people who are introverts can't build relationships across the organization. But that may not be correct. Many introverts are excellent at building relationships and can broaden their networks with conscious actions.

This is especially important given the focus on inclusion and diversity. One of the biggest payoffs of diversity comes from having people with different perspectives and ways of thinking contribute to solving a problem. So it may be a mistake to limit the types of personalities accepted into leadership roles.

Where we see personality data come to life is when it's coupled with behavioral data. Together, you get a more holistic view of a person. You can see why they might do things, and how they get satisfaction from their job. That can help you choose and develop deeply self-aware and effective leaders.

What you do (Behavior) **+** Who you are (Personality) **=** Holistic Insights (Rich Data)

What Type of Personality Assessment Should I Use for Leaders?

There are a range of personality tests for leaders. At DDI, we incorporate personality directly into some of our tests and assessments, such as Leadership Snapshot™ and Leader3 Ready®. At our executive levels, we use a custom version of Hogan's personality tests, which we couple with behavioral data.

Often, we get requests from clients about using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), or the DiSC assessment, based on the popularity of both tests. We rarely use these tests in our client contexts, especially not for selection. However, they can be used for engaging self-discovery, or to spark conversations about team interactions.

We also work with clients who use several other types of personality tests, which they may choose to pair with our behavioral assessments or behavioral interviewing approach.

Before using any test, we advise clients to request and evaluate the test technical manual that should include information about the test's reliability, validity (preferably relationship to job performance), and fairness.

How the Personality Test Process and Timing Works

Typically, personality tests for leaders are extremely scalable and easy to roll out. Usually done online, HR can send a link to leaders and they can quickly respond. Depending on the test, it may take 10 minutes to an hour to complete.

The real question is what companies choose to do with the data after the personality test is delivered. In many cases, leaders may get a report back and are left on their own to interpret the personality test results.

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In our experience, a personality test is more powerful when a trained coach is able to talk through the results with the participant. The coach can help the leader bring in their personal context, and understand how their personality type may be playing out in work situations. This can help leaders shift their interpretation of the data from a simple score or label, and instead apply the insight to their real-life situations.

Should I Pair a Personality Assessment with Other Assessments?

As noted elsewhere, we strongly encourage any company using a personality assessment to pair it with behavioral data. Using a personality assessment as a standalone tool results in the real risk that leaders and organizations make talent decisions based on faulty assumptions of what the data actually means.

Personality Test Summary

How to Use It

Best used to gain self-insight to help leaders understand and manage their strengths and derailing behavior

Key Advantages

- Reveal tendencies and characteristics that show what someone can do
- Identify points of risk or potential failure
- Particularly important in higher-level roles

What to Consider

Should not be the sole factor in hiring or promotion decisions

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Is an assessment a test, and is a test an assessment? We often hear questions like this, and a lot of confusion about how to use leadership tests.

So, let's start with getting the terms clear. You've likely heard the two words "test" and "assessment" used interchangeably. But it's important to highlight what makes a test unique compared to other types of assessments.

...data helps you to see that they know the correct actions to take. As a result, they are more likely to take that correct action in real life.

What Is a Leadership Test?

A leadership test is a series of questions (usually closed-ended) designed to gather data on a leader's intelligence, knowledge, judgement, personality, and/or preferences. Tests almost always have entirely automated scoring.

In most cases, HR uses tests to screen or shortlist a large group of people. That's because they are online, fully automated, and easy to scale for a high volume of users. Our discussion will focus on tests designed specifically for early leadership roles.

You may be familiar with some of these common types of test questions:

- **Extent of agreement with a statement:** Leaders are presented with a statement, then select a rating ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."
- **Forced choice:** Leaders choose between options, without the ability to select "neutral," or "I don't know."
- **Situational judgement:** Leaders are presented with a situation, and given multiple choices about how they would respond.
- **Action effectiveness items:** Leaders are presented with a situation and a series of potential actions in response to it. They then rate the effectiveness of each potential action.

Leadership tests capture the "signs" type of data. Some of these signs, such as the situational judgement and action effectiveness items, help you to see that the person knows the correct actions to take. As a result, they are more likely to take that correct action in real life than someone who answered incorrectly.

However, they do not offer a true sample of work. So, you won't know that they have the skill to take that action.

In another section of this guide, we mention an analogy related to a driver's test. A leadership test is like the written test someone takes before getting their learner's permit. The test shows that the person knows the theory of what they should do. But does it mean you can toss them the keys to drive off? Not necessarily.

Leadership Test: Definition

A series of questions (usually closed-ended) designed to gather data on a leader's knowledge, judgement, and/or preferences.

When Should I Use a Leadership Test?

A leadership test is a relatively quick and easy way to get data as you look to hire, promote, or develop leaders. Consider a leadership test if you need to:

- **Accelerate high-performing individual contributors.** High-performing individual contributors or aspiring leaders can take a leadership test to boost their careers. The results can provide valuable data points to help determine who is most likely to succeed as a leader. You can then determine next steps to prepare top performers for a leadership position or a more challenging role.

- **Design personalized individual development plans.** Based on individual results, you can create targeted individual development plans. For example, if someone shows a gap in delegating skills, their manager can provide specific best practices or tools, assign an online course on delegation, or give an assignment to encourage effective delegation.

- **Use group-level data to design development programs.** Aggregate reports can inform trends related to group strengths and development opportunities. For example, if you see that several teams have a gap in influencing others, you can choose to include some content on influencing skills in a cohort-based or on-demand program.

- **Increase confidence in selection decisions.** A leadership test can give you data on candidates early in the process. This provides you with more effective interviews and focused next steps. With a valid leadership test, candidates with higher test scores should ramp up more quickly and are more likely to succeed in a leadership role.

When Should I NOT Use a Leadership Test?

It can be tempting to rely on leadership tests for all your data needs. They're easy to administer and you can typically get the results immediately. But here are situations when we would not recommend tests:

- **As an end-all and be-all for selection decisions:** Given the limitations of what a leadership test can measure, it should not be used as the only data point to hire or promote leaders. A single test will not give you enough insights into the behaviors or motivations or other important aspects critical for a leadership role. Beware of tests that over-promise!

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- **When depth of insight matters:** If you're looking to provide your leaders with a high-level view of strengths and development areas, then a leadership test might meet the need. But if you're looking to provide more in-depth insights to pinpoint specific behaviors, then a more immersive assessment might be required, especially for high-potential leaders you're looking to accelerate quickly.

- **When you're trying to answer the readiness question:** In succession situations, you may be trying to determine who's ready to move into a leadership role and find skill gaps. In these cases, a simulation-based leadership assessment where you can observe how a leader responds to various challenges specific to that next-level role will be more appropriate.

- **Performance management:** It would not be appropriate to use a leadership test as part of the performance management process. A person's performance evaluation should be based on their on-the-job performance, not on the outcome of a leadership test.

How a Leadership Test Works

A leadership test requires several steps to be effective. These steps include:

- **Step 1:** Select a test that's relevant to the competencies required for success. You won't want to try to force-fit the results of a test that's really designed for a different purpose.

- **Step 2:** Establish a data sharing policy. Who will have access to the data, and for what purpose? For development purposes, we recommend that both leaders and their managers have access to the report. With external hires, candidates may not see the results unless they are eventually hired. Then they can access the data as part of their onboarding. For internal promotion, you can determine who gets the data, when, and why.

- **Step 3:** Train hiring managers on how to use and interpret the results.

- **Step 4:** HR administrators set up a platform for participants to access the test online.

- **Step 5:** Leaders complete the test in one sitting and within a given time frame.

- **Step 6:** Results can be available almost immediately.

- **Step 7:** Analyze individual and group-level results for next steps.

How Much of a Time Commitment Is a Leadership Test?

Compared to other assessment types, a leadership test requires the least amount of time. For you and your HR team, an automated test will typically involve minimal set-up steps. It requires names, email addresses, and any additional demographic details you want to track. It sends self-service emails afterward.

Depending on the type of test, it may take 30 to 60 minutes to complete a leadership test. Beyond the administration and completion of the test, time should also be scheduled to review the results and plan next steps.

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What Are the Common Pitfalls with Leadership Tests?

Based on our experience working with clients, there are several leadership test pitfalls. Some common leadership test pitfalls you can avoid include:

- **Unclear purpose and expectations.** Inform your leaders if the test results will be used for development planning or promotion decisions, or both. Also, be clear about your data sharing policy and expectations after completing the test.

- **Viewing test results as a pass or fail.** In a leader selection process, the real value of a leadership test is having an additional data point to combine with other selection measures like existing performance data and behavioral interview data. Using a test as a pass or fail is more appropriate in high-volume testing situations.

- **Expecting too much from test results.** A test can only do so much. A test does not assess actual behaviors. It presents a snapshot of leaders' knowledge, judgment, or perspectives at that point in time. It can't effectively capture leadership behaviors required for success.

- **Not having a plan after the test.** Especially if a test is used for development, the main payoff to the leader is the insights around their strengths and development areas.

- **Forgetting to train managers on report interpretation.** While the results of a leadership test should be fairly clear, it's important to teach hiring managers how to use the results. For example, they should know how to use them to probe for more information in an interview. They also need to know how heavily to weight the results in their hiring decision. And once they've made their decision, they need to know how to feed the results into a development plan.

What Else Should I Use with Leadership Tests?

A view of the bigger picture can help you make better talent decisions. It is best to supplement leadership tests with a behavioral assessment tool to observe specific actions or get sample behaviors.

For example, you can pair a leadership test with a behavioral interview to get concrete examples of past behavior. Or after a test, you can immerse leaders in a day-in-the-life assessment to measure current skills and development areas.

Leadership Tests Summary

How to Use It
- Accelerate aspiring leaders
- Design personalized individual development plans
- Spot group-level development gaps
- Narrow candidate pool for manager roles

Key Advantages
- Fast and easily deployable
- Broad group of people
- Insight can spark developmental plans

What to Consider
- Does not demonstrate readiness or skill on the job
- Should be paired with behavioral data for selection decisions

Explore DDI's leadership test Leadership Snapshot℠.

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How to Use 360-Degree Feedback Tools

Every leader needs feedback. The question is how to get them the right kind of feedback, when they should get it, and who they should get it from.

That's where a 360-degree feedback tool comes in handy. A lot of companies use 360s, but many of them don't know how to use 360-degree feedback correctly. In this section, we'll cover the details on how to use 360-degree feedback tools effectively.

There's a big gap between how we think of ourselves and how others think of us. The use of 360-degree feedback can help to close that gap.

What Is 360-Degree Feedback?

Also called a multirater tool, 360-degree feedback is a process to survey a group of people who work around a leader about the leader's performance and behavior. The feedback should be private and anonymous to ensure that people feel comfortable being truthful, without worrying about damaging their relationship with their leader.

The feedback should be from a variety of sources, including the leader's manager, direct reports, key partners, and peers. The leader also rates themselves for each skill in the survey. That way, they can see how their perception of themselves varies from the perception of those around them.

Most of the time, 360-degree feedback is collected through an online survey. However, in some cases—particularly at the executive level—it might be collected through an interview with a trained assessor.

After the survey, leaders get detailed reports about how others have observed them on the job. They can then use the data to fuel their development, focusing on key strengths and weaknesses.

360-Degree Feedback: Definition

A competency-based survey that collects feedback from a leader's direct reports, peers, manager, and senior leaders.

When Should I Use 360-Degree Feedback?

Often, there's a big gap between how we think of ourselves and how others think of us. The use of 360-degree feedback can help to close that gap. For example, a leader might think they are doing really well at communicating, only to find that others don't think they communicate clearly at all.

Or you might have a high-potential leader who isn't confident about her skills, but is surprised to realize that others around her perceive her as a strong leader.

Either way, the goal for 360-degree feedback is to ensure that leaders are aware of how others perceive them. Armed with the data, they can incorporate it into their personalized development plan. In addition, it helps to drive accountability for practicing their leadership skills on an ongoing basis.

At a broader level, HR can use 360-degree feedback to spot strengths and weaknesses across their organization's entire leadership population, or specific segments of it. This approach can be particularly useful when you are trying to shift your corporate culture or solve an issue in a part of the company. With this information, you can create group-based development programs that focus on key gaps.

When Should I NOT Use 360-Degree Feedback?

Because 360-degree feedback is relatively easy to use, a lot of companies want to get the most they can out of the data. We generally recommend that 360s should NOT be used for the following:

- **Performance management:** If people know that their ratings will impact someone's performance review, and possibly their position and compensation, they may not respond as truthfully. Some may be more hesitant to provide useful feedback for improvement, for fear it will negatively impact the person's career. On the other hand, it can create a competitive situation, leading to some toxic behavior among colleagues.

- **Promotion decisions:** A 360-degree assessment can't determine whether someone is ready for the next level. Since 360s are limited by perceptual data, the insights can only tell you what the leader is currently doing. Therefore, you won't get a picture of what they might do in their next role.

- **Decisions about potential:** Like promotion decisions, a 360-degree assessment can't tell you who has leadership potential. You simply can't spot what they might be able to do, only what they currently are doing.

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How the 360-Degree Feedback Process Works

Step 1: Define Your Competencies

The first step to using a 360-degree assessment is to pick your set of leadership competencies. You might have competencies that are unique for specific roles, such as a frontline leader. Or you might use a common set of competencies across all of your leaders as part of a broader leadership culture.

If you don't have an existing competency profile, your provider may be able to create one. For example, at DDI, we have set lists of common competencies based on our own research that you can use as is or modify to fit your company.

Note that it's critical to choose competencies that have clearly defined behaviors that are both observable and measurable. Otherwise, it will be too hard for people to rate whether someone has really demonstrated the competency.

Step 2: Determine the Rater Group

Once you define your competencies, determine the rater group for your leaders. Some companies allow leaders to pick who they want to rate them. Other times, the leader's manager and HR choose to be involved in selecting the rater group.

For the leader to receive valuable feedback, it's important to select a diverse group of raters. Even more importantly, it can't just be people who have positive views of the leader. It's also critical that the raters are close enough to the leader to have true opportunity to observe their behavior and performance.

Step 3: Administer the Survey

Assuming you use an online survey, raters provide their responses online. Each leader should receive a list of competency areas to rate their leaders on.

For best results, raters should be asked to rate leaders on behaviors associated with each competency area, instead of the overall competency. This helps pinpoint exactly which behaviors leaders need to change.

For example, if a leader scores low on a broad competency like communication, they wouldn't know exactly what to do about it. Is the problem that they don't communicate enough? Is it that they write long, rambling, unfocused emails? Or is it that they don't seem to understand the needs of their audience?

It's also important to allow feedback providers to share open-ended comments. These comments add context and clarity for development.

By ensuring raters provide feedback at the specific behavioral level, leaders can pinpoint exactly what they need to do to improve.

Step 4: Leverage the Results

Ideally, reports for individual leaders should be fairly easy to understand. But in some circumstances, it may be helpful to have a trained coach walk the leader through the results. That may be especially true if the survey was only used for a small group of leaders, or was designed to address sensitive feedback about a leader's behavior.

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Once the leader has the report, they can leverage it to identify their strengths and create a plan for future success. Perhaps more importantly, they can spot relative weaknesses where they can accelerate their development.

At the HR level, group data provides a broader look at the organization and its cultural health. You can use it to identify group development priorities and spot any highly problematic areas that need additional intervention.

How Does 360-Degree Feedback Benefit Leaders?

The main value of 360-degree feedback is that it helps leaders see how their own perception compares to others' perceptions. This insight can help them uncover both hidden strengths and blind spots.

These blind spots are often the most powerful outcomes of a 360. Suddenly, leaders can see how specific behaviors might have held them back. These turn into "a-ha" moments and can help them commit to change.

Along with that newfound commitment, leaders can use the data to create a targeted development plan that leverages their strengths and helps them develop in their target areas.

And of course, leaders really do get a "360" view from different groups. For example, they might see that their direct reports love working for them, but their key stakeholders are frustrated. Or they might see that their peers rate them highly, but they aren't focusing on what their direct reports need.

Use data to create a development plan that leverages strengths and helps leaders develop in their target areas.

How Many People Participate in 360-Degree Feedback?

The number of people who go through a 360 varies widely, depending on what you're trying to accomplish.

For example, some companies use it only for a single leader—often an executive—who is struggling. Or they might use it when they are considering someone for a specific promotion and want to get some data about where they can improve. Some CEOs even insist on getting an annual 360 for themselves to help them gauge their own performance.

More often, companies use 360s across larger portions of the company as part of their talent management process. They might conduct a 360 for each of their leaders every year or two, ensuring leaders get the feedback they need. Or, some companies use it to kick off insight at the beginning of a learning journey or leadership development program. They might even assess different sections of the company at different times.

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How Often Should I Collect 360-Degree Data?

Everyone wants to know how often they should do a 360. And realistically, it depends.

For some companies, the right answer is to get 360-degree feedback annually or every other year as part of their regular feedback process. For others, it might take place only when there's a triggering event, such as a change in organizational strategy. Some only conduct these surveys when they are hearing that there are cultural leadership issues in all or part of the company.

Here are a few factors you might consider when you're thinking about running a 360 survey:

- **How stable are leadership jobs in your company?** If you're experiencing a lot of turnover, it may be time to gather some insight.

- **How much time have leaders had to develop?** A 360 should spark development. If your leaders haven't had time to improve yet, it may be too soon to send out a 360 again.

- **Are your raters fatigued?** Collecting data too often can tire out your raters, leading to lower-quality responses.

While there's no single correct answer, what's important is that you are finding a way to build data and feedback into your leadership culture. Otherwise, it will be challenging to get an accurate picture of where strengths and gaps are.

How Much of a Time Commitment Is This?

The time commitment for a 360-degree assessment varies based on the number of people being assessed. If you're doing only one or a few leaders, the whole process could be wrapped up in a month or so.

Of course, if you're rolling out the survey across a broader group, it may take about two or three months, depending on how much work you need to do up front to identify your competencies. It also depends on how much time you give raters to submit their response, which is often about two weeks.

The length of the assessment itself depends on the number of competencies you choose. On average, most people take about 30 minutes to complete the rating process.

However, consider that if you assess large groups of leaders at one time, each rater may have to complete multiple surveys. As the time adds up, consider if you might need to give raters a longer period to respond. Or you might consider ensuring that a person isn't asked to rate too many people, although that would require active management by HR.

What Are the Common Pitfalls of 360-Degree Feedback?

A few mistakes can counteract the good intentions of collecting 360-degree feedback. Here are some of the most common ones we've seen:

- **Not spending the time to select the ideal rater group.** The quality of the data is dependent on the raters. Picking people who are familiar with the leader's performance and who will provide balanced feedback is key.

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- **Misusing 360 data.** Using it for performance management purposes or to make decisions around a person's promotion readiness may poison your results.

- **Not having a plan to support the leader post-assessment.** The big payoff to leaders is the personalized data they get. Many leaders may need help with the interpretation of their feedback report and may need additional support to craft a development plan based on the results.

- **Asking about competencies too broadly, rather than specific behavior.** We often see clients use general competencies in their surveys, such as simply asking about communication or coaching. But you need to dive down into the specific behaviors detailed within the competency. Otherwise, the leader doesn't know what they are doing specifically that's right or wrong.

- **Using external benchmarks to draw definitive conclusions about how your leaders compare.** The culture of a department or organization can significantly affect the outcomes of a 360 survey. For example, a relaxed culture that might influence higher overall scores. Meanwhile, you might see lower scores from stressed leaders who are going through a restructuring. That's why it's important to use benchmarks cautiously in a 360, and take your culture into account.

Can I Pair 360s with Other Assessments?

You can pair a 360 with multiple other assessments to get deeper data. For example, you can combine a 360 with an assessment center to get better data about readiness and potential for future roles.

You might also consider combining 360 assessments with a personality test. A personality test reflects what's going on inside, or what you might call their "wiring." In contrast, the 360 reflects what's going on outside, and their behavior.

When you pair these two types of data together, leaders can gain deeper understanding of how their inner wiring is manifesting in their actions. As a result, they may be able to recognize how some of their reactions are harming their success, and learn how to overcome their natural tendencies for better outcomes.

360-Degree Feedback Summary

How to Use It
- Help leaders gain self-awareness of how their actions are perceived
- Spark individual development
- Spot broader development gaps across your leadership teams

Key Advantages
- Best way to gather perceptions from others
- Demonstrates immediacy and relevancy of development
- Flexible and easily deployable across leader levels

What to Consider
- Should not be used for promotion decisions
- Data is based on perceptions and not a true measure of skill

To learn more about DDI's 360-degree tool, check out Leadership Mirror®

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How to Use Assessment Centers for Leaders

Your Quick Reference Guide:

Just as pilots train in a flight simulator and surgeons test and practice in virtual reality, leaders can try out and experience what it's like to be a leader in a virtual setting before they do so in real life. The data from a leadership assessment center is behavior-based, objective and measurable, and highly predictive of future success. In this section, you can learn everything you need to know about assessment centers from our experience as the pioneers and innovators.

Originally, the methodology was created to select officers and spies after World War I. However, DDI's founders and industrial-organizational psychologists introduced the assessment center approach to the business world in 1970 to identify, evaluate, and develop leadership skills in organizations. Over the last 50 years, DDI's behavior-based assessment centers have transformed into fully virtual centers that deliver powerful immersive experiences and actionable data for our clients worldwide.

You can learn everything you need to know about assessment centers from our experience as the pioneers and innovators.

What Is an Assessment Center?

Assessment centers offer day-in-the-life experiences. Leaders immerse themselves in level-specific or role-specific job simulations and assignments in a fictitious organization. We often use the term "day-in-the-life experience" for an assessment center. You might also see us talk about immersive simulations, which are a part of assessment centers, but not synonymous. So what exactly is an assessment center?

Assessment centers are standardized evaluation experiences built on multiple components. At least one part is always a behavioral simulation, which is rated by multiple assessors. Other potential inputs sometimes include tests (such as cognitive ability tests or personality inventories), interviews, or a range of simulations that are designed to complement one another.

The important thing is there are multiple assessment components that are integrated to provide a multifaceted view of the person, including at least one that is a simulation of important target behaviors.

In the simulation portion, participants face various tasks, challenges, assignments, and interactions that a typical leader would face in the real world. For example, during a first-level leader simulation, he or she might be asked to coach a direct report with a performance problem or assigned to delegate a new task to a peer. For an executive-level participant, the assignment may be a high-profile media interview to manage a crisis facing the company.
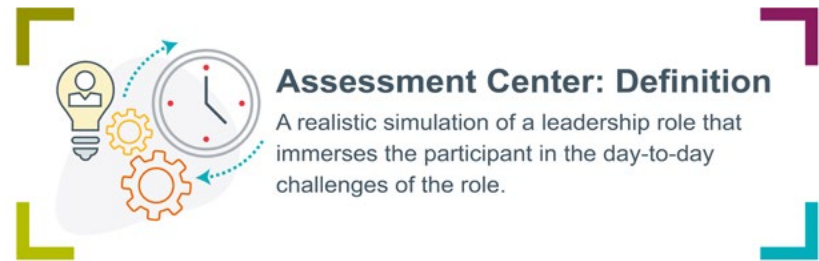
Common job simulations used in assessment centers include:

- Inbox exercises, which were previously known as "in-basket exercises"
- Group discussions
- Working simulations or role plays with "direct reports" or "clients"
- Fact-finding exercises
- Analysis or decision-making problems
- Formal presentation exercises
- Written communication samples

Exercises bring out the most relevant behaviors participants need for a specific position. These job aspects or competencies are identified prior to the assessment center exercise with a job analysis of the targeted position.

Trained and calibrated assessors evaluate the participant's behaviors and deliver a robust evaluation report. The report includes overall ratings on leadership competencies as well as detailed feedback on specific actions or behaviors they observed. An assessment center exercise provides in-depth data to make accurate and valid hiring, succession, or development decisions based on who's ready for future roles.

Assessment Center: Definition

A realistic simulation of a leadership role that immerses the participant in the day-to-day challenges of the role.

When Should I Use an Assessment Center?

The assessment center methodology has been proven to be fair and valid over several decades. In most situations, it is the best method available to organizations if your goal is to make accurate hiring and promotion decisions while minimizing adverse impact. More importantly, it's a very powerful way to engage leaders with a breakthrough experience and get them excited about their own development.

Here are specific ways to use an assessment center:

- **High-potential programs**: If you're looking to provide a distinct program for your top talent, an assessment center can be an extraordinary moment in a leader's career.

- **Succession:** Simulations help determine readiness for the next level and pinpoint what gaps need to be addressed to accelerate readiness.

- **In-role development:** Some organizations have found it valuable to use a day-in-the-life approach for incumbent leaders in need of additional development in their current role. For example, a first-level leader with limited formal training can get additional experience in an assessment center exercise.

- **Hiring or promotion:** Immersive simulations can be used for both external hires and internal promotion decisions.

When Should I NOT Use an Assessment Center?

Due to time and cost restraints, assessment centers usually don't work for high-volume situations. These immersive simulations provide the most in-depth insights of any assessment. Given how robust it is, it's typically more expensive and requires a longer time commitment on the part of the leader.

You should also consider how critical the position is for which you're selecting or developing someone. When there's a greater risk and higher cost of failure, an assessment center can help you mitigate that risk with richer data.

In short, use immersive simulations for high-value situations, rather than high-volume needs.

What Are the Advantages of Assessment Centers?

One of the biggest advantages of an assessment center is that it can predict future capability. Meanwhile, other assessment types or data can only evaluate what someone has done in the past or is doing in their current role. But in an assessment center, you can see what someone will do when they stretch into a future situation.

Here are some key advantages with the day-in-the-life approach.

- **Data on future performance, not the current job performance.** A realistic day-in-the-life simulation gives you a valid picture of how a person would perform in a target position before you decide to hire or promote them.

- **Participants get objective data, not perceptions.** Unlike a 360-degree feedback assessment that is driven by perceptual data, an assessment center participant receives an objective measure of their leadership capabilities. The results are based on the evaluation of professional assessors or smart technology.

- **Targeted feedback on specific behaviors and competencies.** When you get a rating on a certain competency, it will help if you know exactly what did and didn't work. Imagine getting feedback on what you actually said or did that was effective or ineffective. An assessment center report and actionable feedback from a coach can help leaders focus on where and how to improve.

- **Proven to be valid and fair.** Since its first use in the corporate world, many researchers have studied assessment center validity and documented thousands of successful applications. There is no question that assessment centers are predictive of on-the-job performance as well as future performance. In addition, compared to other selection tools, the assessment center method is generally seen as more fair and objective in terms of gender, race, and age than other approaches.

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- **It's a pivotal moment in a leader's career.** An assessment center can be one of the most significant development opportunities for a leader. The insights they gain from the high-stakes experience can literally change how they lead now and throughout their entire career. Plus, regardless of outcome, the experience allows participants to accept the fairness and accuracy of promotion decisions and have a better understanding of job requirements.

What Are the Potential Pitfalls of an Assessment Center?

While assessment centers provide a lot of advantages, there are a few pitfalls companies should avoid. These pitfalls include:

- **Not setting appropriate expectations with the leader.** Leaders need to know what they are getting into. Without the right explanation, the experience may seem intimidating and time-consuming. But with the right mindset, leaders may view it as an eye-opening experience that changed the course of their career. So it's critical to clearly articulate what they can expect from the experience and the benefits they'll gain before they begin.

- **Unexpectedly changing your data sharing policy.** Leaders want to know how assessment data will be used and who will see the results. It's important to be clear how you plan on using the data, communicating your policy, and sticking to it.

- **Viewing immersive simulation as an all-or-nothing proposition.** Many organizations shy away from immersive simulations due to time and cost constraints. But there are significant payoffs to this powerful methodology. It helps develop your most critical talent and assists in making high-value and high-risk selection decisions.

What to Expect in an Assessment Center

Before participating in an assessment center, it's important to set expectations and understand the process. Take the following steps for assessment center success:

Step 1: Prepare for the Assessment
First and foremost, communicate the purpose and importance of the assessment to the leader. Also share with them how their data will be shared and used.

Leaders will then need background information about the simulation they plan to take part in. Background information can include details about their role, the company, organizational charts, financials, and other information to provide context.

Step 2: Engage in Simulation
During the actual assessment center experience, which can be hosted in-person or virtually, leaders are given time to respond to the tasks and prompts. The simulation itself includes a mix of emails, interactions, and other challenges relevant to the targeted leadership level. For example, a mid-level leader simulation may require the participant to complete a business analysis while an executive-level simulation may include an activity where participants need to prepare a vision speech.

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Step 3: Score Behavior

Certified professional assessors and smart technology score participants' behaviors. Their behaviors are evaluated against specific competencies required for success in that leadership role.

Step 4: Share Feedback

You may choose to have a trained feedback provider review the results with the leader. In some situations where a leader is not selected for a role, especially if it's an external candidate, clients choose not to have feedback provided.

But most often, this one-on-one feedback session is deeply valuable to the leader. The feedback provider is able to review the data in the context of the person's role. They can discuss the leader's challenges and responsibilities and help them identify their strengths and development priorities within that context.

As a result, the leader has a much deeper understanding of how they can use the data to propel their own success. Most importantly, it can help gain their commitment to their future development plan.

Step 5: Use the Data

Last is all about how you decide to use the data. Because the data is so rich, you can use it for a wide range of applications. For example, you can use it for hiring or promotion decisions in critical roles. Or, you can use it to make a final decision about which candidate is ready immediately for a critical role.

Once the candidate is in the role, they can use the data to rapidly develop and improve their chances for success.

For candidates who are not selected (but still have potential) or who went through the assessment purely for development, the next step is to design individual development plans. This approach is particularly important for high-potential leaders for whom you need to accelerate development.

Plus, assessment center data can help design group-level development plans, and pinpoint specific assignments needed to accelerate individual leaders' readiness.

How Do Leaders Benefit from an Assessment Center?

In an assessment center, leaders can benefit from:

- **Feedback at both the behavioral level and overall competency level.** Leaders receive detailed feedback on the specific behaviors they exhibited or missed. They also receive overall ratings on leadership competency areas.

- **Insights into role strengths and development areas.** If the leader went through a simulation targeted at their current leadership level, then the data helps them build on their strengths and close the gaps in their development areas.

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- **Data on readiness gaps.** If the leader is put through a simulation targeted at the next level, they're able to see which next-level competencies they're ready for and competency gaps.

- **A broader appreciation of all the competencies required for success.** Even high-level executives sometimes struggle to see what it will really take to succeed in bigger roles. An assessment center gives them an appreciation of what they might face in these roles and why it's critical to develop key skills. The experience can also help them decide if they truly want to pursue certain roles.

How Long Do Assessment Centers Typically Last?

It varies based on the level and configuration. An assessment center experience ranges from 90 minutes to a full day.

How Often Should I Administer an Assessment Center?

As a high-value, high-stakes assessment methodology, we recommend an immersive day-in-the-life experience once for each leader at each level.

What Else Should I Use with an Assessment Center?

By design, the assessment center methodology focuses on evaluating behaviors. Many organizations supplement the day-in-the-life simulation data with a personality test or behavioral interviews. Plus, leaders benefit from individual feedback and coaching sessions to review the results with their manager or a trained coach.

Assessment Centers Summary

How to Use It
- Can be used at any level from manager to CEO
- Can be used as part of promotion and selection decisions, succession planning, and to accurately focus development

Key Advantages
- Rich data offers a look into the future
- High-fidelity measure of leadership skill
- Discrete behavioral feedback to accelerate behavior change

What to Consider
- Requires more time and investment
- When used for selection, best used as part of decision between final few candidates

Explore DDI's Immersive Assessments:

Manager Ready®: An Immersive Simulation for Frontline Leaders

Leader3 Ready®: An Assessment of Personality and Skill for Mid-Level Leaders and Early Executives

C-Suite Assessment: Our Most Robust Assessment for Top Executive and C-Suite Roles

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As is often said, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." In other words, when the combination is just right, 1+1 can equal 3, or possibly more. And that's the kind of math you see when combining assessment and development.

Too often, we see companies separate their assessment and development strategies. Different teams of people may lead each part and may have different purposes. But bringing these two pieces closer together offers a lot of opportunity.

When you understand the why, what, and how of combining leadership assessment with development, you can achieve higher goals.

> When you understand the why, what, and how of combining leadership assessment with development, you can achieve higher goals.

The Why: The Value of Combining Assessment and Development

One of the key issues of leadership development is knowing where to start. You don't want to waste leaders' time with things they are already good at. But you don't want to leave any gaps either.

Assessment data makes the strengths and gaps in your organization clear. Based on our experience, there are specific benefits to combining assessment and development. Organizations make the most of their efforts when they:

- **Invest where it matters most.** When assessment data is used as a starting point for designing development programs, you can spend your budget, time, and other resources on addressing and developing critical skill gaps. You decrease the risk of spending valuable resources on building the wrong capabilities.

- **Personalize development.** Research shows that leaders' top preference is for personalized development instead of a generic, one-size-fits-all approach. Assessment data can zoom in on specific strengths to build or gaps to close. This becomes especially important when leaders also say that time is the biggest barrier to learning and development. You can personalize development at two levels:

  - **Build skills at the competency level.** Which competency should a leader focus on? Leading change? Coaching? Influence? It depends on what they are good at and where they need to improve. Assessment data can determine organizational gaps as well as individual priorities.

  - **Add precision at the behavioral level.** Within a given competency, an assessment can enhance precision. For example, two leaders might need to improve their coaching skills for different reasons. One leader may need to give more timely and specific feedback while the other struggles to involve others. Assessment data can help pinpoint what behaviors the leader should focus on to accelerate their development.

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- **Engage leaders in their development.** Recent research shows that 15,000 leaders want more assessments to determine strengths and gaps. In fact, it was ranked third on their wish list, just behind external coaching and assignments.

  Assessment data can serve as a catalyst for change by providing meaningful insights into their strengths and development areas. Leaders can reflect on what's working or not and fully embrace development plans. This personalization, as well as engagement, sets individual assessment apart from a generalized needs analysis.

- **Track measurable change.** With baseline assessment data, you can gauge the impact development has on an individual leader or group of leaders.

The What: What to Assess and How to Develop

You should answer two questions when thinking about combining assessment and development:

- What's the purpose of the assessment?
- How will the data be used?

Specifically, are you looking for a robust assessment that gives leaders deep insight into their capabilities and attributes? Or do you need a lighter, less costly assessment that provides only a broad view of strengths and development needs?

The answers depend on how the data will be used and in the development effort's rigor. Development aimed at making incremental improvements to a general set of skills may only warrant a light assessment.

However, a deeper transformational leadership experience, such as for a high-potential leader, requires the precision of a higher-quality assessment. This might include an assessment center, which include simulations, personality measurement, and interviews.

You might also be wondering whether assessment should drive development priorities, or the other way around. Most of the time, it can go either way.

- **Development priorities can drive assessment.** When you already know which competencies you want to focus on, you can look at an assessment as a form of feedback. That way, you know if people are really showing the behaviors they learned about. For example, you might have a set of core competencies that all leaders need to demonstrate. After putting them through a learning journey focused on those areas, you might launch a 360-degree feedback assessment to see how they are performing on the job.

- **Assessment can drive development priorities.** Assessment data can determine which areas your leaders should develop in as individuals or a group. For instance, a leader might use their results to build a personalized individual development plan, often with the support of their manager. Meanwhile, HR can be looking at the data across leaders to launch effective group-based development.

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When combining assessment and development, we recommend that the assessment is competency-based or focused on behaviors. This way, the data and insights are actionable since the leader can develop that skill or behavior.

In contrast, a personality test alone may not be the best assessment tool to pair with development. A personality test certainly has value. But it won't lead to actionable insights without being paired with a behavioral assessment.

Assessment **+** Development → Creates Energy

The How: Planning to Combine Assessment with Development

Your implementation plan is crucial for success. There are some actions necessary when combining assessment with development, including:

- **Get buy-in and alignment.** You need a compelling value proposition for leaders and internal stakeholders. Communication, engagement of learners, and active involvement of senior leaders will help drive commitment and deliver results. To sustain development efforts and show impact, make sure you have answers to key questions:

  - What will be participants' required follow-up steps?

  - Who will be accountable for what outcomes?

  - How will you measure success and impact?

- **Set clear expectations.** Build excitement about your integrated program by clearly outlining what's coming and why. It's especially important since assessments can create a range of emotions in leaders. Some will be excited about the opportunity, while others may feel anxious.

  Make sure you explain four key points to leaders:

  - Why they're being assessed.

  - Who will have access to the data.

  - How their assessment results will be used (and not used).

  - What development opportunities are planned.

  It's also important to set expectations around the assessment experience itself. A leader will want to know what to expect from the experience, what to complete, how much time to invest, who to contact for any concerns, and the next steps.

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- **Establish a data sharing policy.** One of the biggest concerns your leaders will have is who will have access to the assessment results. They'll want to know who can see their data and how those people might use it. That's why it's so important to establish your data-sharing policy in advance. And of course, you have to strictly abide by the policy afterward.

  When assessments are used for development purposes, many companies choose to make the individual assessment results available to the leader only. Meanwhile, HR can only view the aggregate data.

  While that approach protects individual data tightly, it leaves out the opportunity for manager involvement. That's why other companies allow the leader's manager or coach to see the data, so they can provide additional support.

  Different approaches can work, but the important thing is that you communicate them clearly and stick to them.

- **Proactively plan for feedback and development planning.** Don't wait until after the assessments are complete to start thinking about your development program. Depending on the type of assessment tool, you can schedule one-on-one feedback sessions with leaders to walk them through their assessment results and translate the feedback into an individual development plan. Some assessment reports can be self-explanatory, but many require additional support.

- **Involve direct managers.** Find ways to engage and bring managers in as part of your integrated program. You can encourage leaders to share results or key insights from the assessment and their draft development plan with their manager.

  That way, their manager can work with them to refine and finalize the plan with unique development opportunities or assignments. During these discussions, the manager can also identify ways to remove any barriers or provide ongoing support.

About the Author

Michael Ganeles is the Director of Product Management responsible for managing DDI's Leadership Assessment Solutions. During his 14 years with DDI, he has consulted with organizations across various industries to implement leadership assessments to support the selection and development of leaders across the pipeline. His areas of expertise include system-wide competency modeling, selection system design and implementation, succession management and leadership assessment and development. Michael holds a Master of Science in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from Baruch College and currently lives in West Hempstead, NY with his wife and three children.

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