Capability Outlook™

Companion to Becoming a Catalyst | John Coné

A Recurring Review of Organizational Capability

"Catalysts don't simply measure organizational performance. They notice how organizational capability is emerging, spreading, and compounding."

Purpose

The Capability Outlook is a recurring executive review of the organization's capability. Its purpose is not to report activities or summarize learning programs. Its purpose is to recognize how organizational capability is developing and identify opportunities to strengthen it.

Unlike traditional dashboards, the Capability Outlook combines observations, stories, evidence, patterns, and emerging signals with traditional metrics. The emphasis is not on control, but rather on recognition.

Three Guiding Questions

Every Capability Outlook begins with three questions.

What capabilities appear to be growing?

Why are they growing?

How might we accelerate that growth?

NOTE: Wherever possible, document evidence.

SECTION I

MOVING KNOWLEDGE

Is knowledge flowing to where it creates capability?

Capability rarely develops because knowledge exists. It develops because knowledge moves.

What We Are Seeing

[Evidence examples may include things like stories, communities, collaboration, AI use, reuse of successful practices, expert networks, knowledge sharing, and cross-functional problem solving.]

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Where is useful knowledge moving especially well?

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Evidence

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Where does knowledge appear trapped?

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Evidence

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Where are communities creating new capability?

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Evidence

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Where is expertise spreading across organizational boundaries?

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Evidence

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Which conversations are accelerating organizational learning?

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Evidence

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Where is AI helping people find and apply knowledge more effectively?

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Evidence

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Where is AI creating dependency rather than better judgment?

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Evidence

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Catalyst Reflection

What does someone already know that someone else should not have to discover again?

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Experiments Worth Trying

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SECTION II

CAPABILITY SYSTEMS

Are the systems producing stronger capability?

Capability emerges when Infrastructure, Experiences, and Conditions reinforce one another. Evidence examples may include things like behavioral observations, success stories, manager observations, Catalyst conversations, emerging practices, use of capability infrastructure, and evidence of changing conditions

What We Are Seeing

Which capabilities appear strongest?

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Evidence

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Which are becoming stronger?

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Evidence

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Which appear to be weakening?

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Evidence

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Where are Infrastructure, Experiences, and Conditions reinforcing one another?

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Evidence

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Where does one element appear to limit the others?

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Evidence

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Which developmental experiences are producing noticeable growth?

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Evidence

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Where are leaders creating conditions that accelerate capability?

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Evidence

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Where are people solving new challenges without requiring new interventions?

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Evidence

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Catalyst Reflection

What part of the Capability System appears to be creating—or limiting—this capability?

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Experiments Worth Trying

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SECTION III

LEARNING VELOCITY

How quickly is capability developing?

The important question is not simply whether people are learning. It is how rapidly learning becomes improved performance and organizational capability. **Evidence e**xamples may include time to competence, speed of adoption, reflection frequency, experimentation, transfer of learning, manager observations, and stories of accelerated capability.

What We Are Seeing

Where is the organization shortening the distance between:

Experience Reflection Experimentation Sharing Adoption Refinement

Questions include:

Where is learning accelerating?

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Evidence

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Where is capability emerging faster?

Evidence

Where is reflection occurring sooner?

Evidence

Which experiments are spreading?

Evidence

Which lessons are being adopted rapidly?

Evidence

Where is capability stalling?

Evidence

Which barriers are slowing development?

Evidence

Catalyst Reflection

Where could we shorten the distance between experience and improved capability?

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Experiments Worth Trying

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SECTION IV

WHAT IS EMERGING?

What are we noticing that we weren't looking for?

One of the Catalyst's responsibilities is recognizing weak signals before they become obvious trends.

What We Are Seeing

What surprised us?

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What capability seems to be emerging unexpectedly?

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What new behaviors are becoming normal?

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What important interdependencies have become visible?

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What appears to deserve wider attention?

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What capability may become strategically important next?

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The Most Important Thing We Noticed

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One Capability Worth Amplifying

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One Experiment Worth Beginning

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Overall Impression

If the patterns we observed continue for the next two years, what kind of organization are we becoming?

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Notes

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The Capability Outlook is intended to become a recurring executive conversation rather than a report.

Its value comes not from collecting more information, but from improving the organization's ability to notice.

Over time, the quality of what leaders notice becomes one of the strongest indicators of the organization's ability to continually build capability.

COMPLETED EXAMPLE Executive Review – Second Quarter

Organization: Global Manufacturing Solutions (fictional composite)

Strategic Priorities:

Accelerate AI adoption

Improve manager effectiveness

Increase innovation

Strengthening customer focus

Executive Summary

This quarter we observed encouraging evidence that organizational capability is beginning to compound rather than simply accumulate.

Manager coaching behaviors are becoming more common, AI experimentation is spreading faster than anticipated, and cross-functional problem solving is increasing. At the same time, important knowledge continues to remain trapped within business units, and inconsistent reflection practices are slowing organizational learning.

Overall, the organization appears to be transitioning from isolated improvement initiatives toward a more integrated Capability System.

Three Guiding Questions

1. What capabilities appear to be growing?

Manager coaching

AI fluency

Cross-functional collaboration

Customer problem solving

2. Why are they growing?

Leaders are modeling desired behaviors.

Internal communities are becoming more active.

AI tools have reduced barriers to experimentation.

Reflection has become part of several major projects.

3. How might we accelerate that growth?

Standardize project reflection.

Expand coaching communities.

Improve knowledge sharing between business units.

Create more cross-functional developmental experiences.

SECTION I

MOVING KNOWLEDGE

Where is useful knowledge moving especially well?

Engineering teams are routinely sharing AI prompts and workflows through an internal community. Within three months, similar practices appeared in Finance and Customer Service without formal training.

Evidence

Membership in the AI Community doubled.

Thirty-two reusable prompt libraries were voluntarily shared.

Three business units adopted engineering practices independently.

Where does knowledge appear trapped?

Customer Service has developed several highly effective approaches for handling recurring customer issues, but Sales and Product Development remain largely unaware of them.

Evidence

Customer issues continue to be solved independently across regions.

Product teams were unaware of recurring customer requests already documented by Customer Service.

Where are communities creating new capability?

The Manager Coaching Network has become a significant source of practical leadership development.

Managers increasingly bring real challenges rather than seeking formal training.

Evidence

Attendance continues to grow.

Members report implementing ideas within days.

Several managers have begun facilitating discussions themselves.

Which conversations are accelerating organizational learning?

Monthly "Capability Forums" have shifted from reporting project status to discussing lessons learned and emerging practices.

Evidence

Executive meetings now regularly begin with:

"What surprised us this month?"

Where is AI helping people find and apply knowledge more effectively?

AI assistants are dramatically reducing the time required to locate technical expertise and summarize project documentation.

Evidence

Engineers estimate a 40% reduction in search time.

New hires reach productive contribution earlier.

Where is AI creating dependency rather than better judgment?

Some managers increasingly accept AI-generated recommendations without challenging assumptions.

Evidence

Several project reviews revealed AI suggestions implemented without discussion of alternative approaches.

Catalyst Reflection

What does someone already know that someone else should not have to discover again?

Customer Service possesses valuable customer insights that should become routine input into Product Development.

Experiments Worth Trying

Create a quarterly "Customer Insight Exchange."

Ask AI to recommend internal experts before external resources.

Assign rotating community facilitators.

SECTION II

CAPABILITY SYSTEMS

Which capabilities appear strongest?

Manager coaching

Customer responsiveness

Cross-functional collaboration

Evidence

Coaching conversations are increasingly mentioned during performance reviews.

Which are becoming stronger?

AI fluency is improving rapidly.

Managers increasingly use AI for planning and coaching rather than simply content generation.

Which appear to be weakening?

Knowledge sharing across regional boundaries.

Several business units continue solving similar problems independently.

Where are Infrastructure, Experiences, and Conditions reinforcing one another?

Manager effectiveness.

Infrastructure:

Manager toolkits and AI coaching support.

Experiences:

Peer coaching circles and stretch assignments.

Conditions:

Senior leaders consistently recognize coaching behaviors.

Where does one element appear to limit the others?

Innovation.

Infrastructure and funding are strong.

Employees report insufficient time for experimentation.

Which developmental experiences are producing noticeable growth?

Cross-functional customer improvement teams.

Several participants have since become informal innovation leaders.

Where are leaders creating conditions that accelerate capability?

Senior leaders increasingly ask questions before offering solutions.

Executive meetings include discussion of lessons learned rather than only project updates.

Where are people solving new challenges without requiring new interventions?

A manufacturing team redesigned onboarding using practices learned from another division—without Talent initiating the effort.

Catalyst Reflection

What part of the Capability System appears to be creating—or limiting—this capability?

The organization's Experiences are improving faster than its Infrastructure for sharing those experiences broadly.

Experiments Worth Trying

Map one complete Capability System for AI fluency.

Introduce the Catalyst Conversation into quarterly business reviews.

Create an Experience Exchange where managers share developmental practices.

SECTION III

LEARNING VELOCITY

Where is learning accelerating?

Manager coaching.

AI experimentation.

Customer issue resolution.

Where is capability emerging faster?

New managers now become effective coaches within approximately six months rather than twelve.

Where is reflection occurring sooner?

Several project teams now conduct brief retrospectives immediately following key milestones rather than waiting until project completion.

Which experiments are spreading?

Engineering's AI prompting practices.

Customer Service's escalation process.

Peer coaching circles.

Which lessons are being adopted rapidly?

Customer feedback is influencing product design much earlier in the development cycle.

Where is capability stalling?

Knowledge transfer between global regions.

Which barriers are slowing development?

Competing priorities.

Meeting overload.

Limited opportunities for cross-regional interaction.

Catalyst Reflection

Where could we shorten the distance between experience and improved capability?

Capture lessons within days rather than weeks and make them visible through communities and AI search.

Experiments Worth Trying

Five-minute project reflections after every major milestone.

AI-generated summaries of project lessons.

Monthly cross-functional capability exchanges.

SECTION IV

WHAT IS EMERGING?

What surprised us?

Managers increasingly request coaching rather than training.

What capability seems to be emerging unexpectedly?

Cross-functional problem solving.

Employees are reaching beyond formal reporting relationships to solve customer problems.

What new behaviors are becoming normal?

Beginning meetings with questions rather than updates.

Using AI as a thinking partner.

Requesting feedback earlier.

Sharing unfinished ideas.

What important interdependencies have become visible?

Manager effectiveness appears to influence:

AI adoption

Knowledge flow

Customer responsiveness

Innovation

Employee engagement

More than any other single capability.

What appears to deserve wider attention?

The Manager Coaching Network.

It is becoming a capability accelerator rather than simply a leadership program.

What capability may become strategically important next?

Organizational judgment.

As AI becomes more capable, the organization's competitive advantage appears to be shifting toward helping people ask better questions, exercise sound judgment, and integrate insights across disciplines.

The Most Important Thing We Noticed

Capability is beginning to spread through conversations rather than programs.

One Capability Worth Amplifying

Manager coaching.

It is reinforcing learning, collaboration, innovation, and AI adoption simultaneously.

One Experiment Worth Beginning

Introduce a quarterly Catalyst Conversation for each major strategic capability.

Overall Impression

If the patterns we observed continue for the next two years, what kind of organization are we becoming?

We are becoming an organization that relies less on centralized development interventions and more on leaders, teams, and communities that continually build one another's capability. Learning is becoming increasingly embedded in work, managers are acting as capability builders, and knowledge is beginning to move across organizational boundaries rather than remaining confined within them. If this trajectory continues, our competitive advantage will not be a particular technology or program. It will be our increasing ability to adapt, learn, and develop new capabilities faster than the challenges before us.

SECTION II

SEE THE CAPABILITY SYSTEM

Looking beyond programs and isolated interventions

Capability Map™

Capability System Assessment™

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