Catalyst Leadership Assessment

Companion to Catalyst Leadership | *John Coné*

Development Path • Full self-assessment

What This Assessment Is For

Catalyst Leadership is not a personality type, and this assessment is not designed to determine whether you "are" or "are not" a Catalyst Leader. Its purpose is to help you answer:

To what extent does the way I currently lead reflect the six disciplines of Catalyst Leadership—and where would greater attention make the greatest difference?

The assessment follows six disciplines:

See the System
Find the Leverage
Change the Conditions
Exercise Catalyst Judgment
Make Capability Generative
Multiply the Catalysts

First Pass: Assess Yourself

For each statement, circle the number that best describes your leadership today.

1 — Rarely or almost never true
2 — Occasionally true
3 — Sometimes true
4 — Usually true
5 — Consistently true

Answer based on what you actually do—not what you intend to do or believe a good leader should do.

Ignore the large empty box at the far right of each rating line for now. You will return to it later.

1. SEE THE SYSTEM

Do I look beyond events and individuals to understand what is producing the result?

1. When an important problem persists or recurs, I look beyond the people closest to the problem to understand the conditions producing it.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

2. Before intervening in a performance problem, I try to understand the situation, performers, requirements, consequences, and feedback surrounding it.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

3. I distinguish between symptoms requiring immediate attention and underlying system conditions that may repeatedly produce those symptoms.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

4. When circumstances change unexpectedly, I look for where information, authority, expertise, relationships, or other system conditions are helping or preventing an effective response.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

5. I consider not only whether the system can produce today's required performance, but whether it can generate capabilities we may need tomorrow.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

6. When performance disappoints, I resist attributing the problem too quickly to individual motivation, competence, or effort.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

MY SCORE: ____ / 30

How important is improving this aspect of my leadership given the work currently facing me?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

2. FIND THE LEVERAGE

Do I look for interventions that can change more than the immediate problem?

7. When facing a consequential problem, I resist equating a long list of actions with a strong response.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

8. I deliberately search for places where a focused intervention could produce a disproportionate effect on the system.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

9. When considering an intervention, I ask not only whether it could solve the immediate problem but what capability it might leave behind.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

10. I look for leverage in connections, information flows, decision rights, assumptions, incentives, access, and opportunities to experiment—not only in organizational structure or resources.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

11. When several possible interventions exist, I consider which would make the organization less dependent upon me or another single source of intelligence.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

12. I look for places within consequential work where solving today's problem could increase our capacity to solve unfamiliar problems in the future.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

MY SCORE: ____ / 30

How important is improving this aspect of my leadership given the work currently facing me?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

3. CHANGE THE CONDITIONS

Do I create conditions from which intelligent action can emerge?

13. I help people gain access to relevant expertise and knowledge across organizational boundaries.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

14. I help important information reach the people capable of exercising judgment about it rather than allowing hierarchy, function, geography, or technology to trap it.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

15. I push authority for discovery and experimentation close enough to the work that people can test reasonable ideas without unnecessary escalation.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

16. I create an environment in which people can acknowledge uncertainty, surface bad news, challenge assumptions, and report unsuccessful experiments without unreasonable personal risk.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

17. I create opportunities within normal work to turn experience into learning rather than relying primarily on occasional reviews or formal development activities.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

18. I recognize and reinforce people who create capability, make useful knowledge travel, and help others become more capable—not merely those who personally deliver immediate results.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

MY SCORE: ____ / 30

How important is improving this aspect of my leadership given the work currently facing me?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

4. EXERCISE CATALYST JUDGMENT

Do I deliberately choose how to lead rather than defaulting to a preferred approach?

19. Before providing an answer I already know, I consider whether providing it is actually necessary.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

20. I distinguish situations requiring compliance with a known answer from those in which discovery should remain open.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

21. I use Direct leadership when urgency, consequence, certainty, or accountability genuinely requires it rather than simply because directing is faster.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

22. When the desired outcome is sufficiently clear, but others should own execution, I transfer meaningful authority rather than continuing to control how the work is done.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

23. When neither the solution nor the precise destination can be fully known in advance, I create conditions for discovery rather than prematurely imposing an answer.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

24. I combine Direct, Empower, and Catalyze within the same situation when different parts of the work require different leadership responses.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

MY SCORE: ____ / 30

How important is improving this aspect of my leadership given the work currently facing me?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

5. MAKE CAPABILITY GENERATIVE

Does the way I lead help today's learning create tomorrow's capabilities?

25. After consequential work, I help people distinguish what happened from what was actually learned from the experience.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

26. I ask what people or the organization are now capable of doing that they could not do—or could not do as well—before the experience.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

27. I help important learning travel beyond the team, function, or location in which it originated.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

28. When learning travels, I encourage people to combine it with their own knowledge and circumstances rather than simply copy the original solution.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

29. I help uncover expertise, experience, relationships, technologies, and other capability ingredients that already exist in the system but have not previously been connected.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

30. When we solve an unfamiliar problem, I deliberately look for ways to make what we learned increase our capacity to address the next unfamiliar problem.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

MY SCORE: ____ / 30

How important is improving this aspect of my leadership given the work currently facing me?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

6. MULTIPLY THE CATALYSTS

Am I making catalysis less dependent upon me?

31. I notice people throughout the organization—not only formal leaders—who already display catalytic behaviors.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

32. When considering someone's leadership potential, I notice whether the person connects others, reframes problems, crosses boundaries, enables experimentation, makes learning travel, and builds capability in others.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

33. I deliberately give emerging Catalysts consequential problems for which the answer is not already known.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

34. I sometimes allow another person to catalyze work I could handle more quickly myself because developing that person's capability has future value.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

35. I am developing people who are increasingly capable of catalyzing important work without my involvement.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

36. I encourage the Catalysts I develop to help other people develop catalytic capability.

Rarely 1 2 3 4 5 Consistently [ ]

MY SCORE: ____ / 30

How important is improving this aspect of my leadership given the work currently facing me?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

SECOND PASS: ASSESS YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

You have now assessed your own leadership. Return to the beginning and read each statement again. This time ask: How accurately does this statement describe the leadership team of which I am a part?

Consider the leadership team as a whole. Do not average individual leaders in your head and do not focus on its strongest or weakest member. Make a judgment about the leadership environment the team collectively creates.

Using the same scale, write a number from 1 to 5 in the large box at the far right of each rating line.

Do not change the number you circled for yourself.

When you finish, total the six leadership-team ratings in each section.

You need not calculate an overall score for yourself or your leadership team. The profile is more useful than the total.

WHAT DO YOUR RESULTS TELL YOU?

Your results give you three kinds of information.

1. Where Am I Strongest—and Most Constrained?

Look across your six scores. Your highest scores suggest aspects of Catalyst Leadership that are already relatively well developed. Your lowest scores suggest possible constraints.

Neither is a verdict. A high score is valuable only if the behavior is useful in the work you face. A low score matters most when it limits your ability to address consequential work.

Ask: Which of these strengths can I use? And: Which of these constraints is getting in the way?

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2. HOW DO I COMPARE WITH MY LEADERSHIP ENVIRONMENT?

Now compare your ratings with those you gave your leadership team. The gap may be as informative as either score. When both scores are relatively high, you may have an existing leadership strength that can be used elsewhere.

Ask: How could this strength help us build capability in one of our weaker areas? When both scores are relatively low, you may have identified a shared leadership constraint.

Ask: What consequential work gives us an opportunity to begin changing this?

When your score is substantially higher, you may be practicing something that the surrounding leadership environment does not consistently reinforce.

Ask: How can I influence the conditions around me without becoming the person who continually compensates for the system?

When your leadership-team score is substantially higher, there may already be capability around you from which you can learn.

Ask: What are other leaders doing from which I could learn?

Sometimes the most catalytic response is not to create new capability. It is to discover and connect with capability that already exists.

3. WHERE SHOULD I FOCUS?

Return to the importance rating you gave each discipline. Now consider three things:

Need
Where are my current leadership scores lowest or most limiting?

Importance
Which disciplines matter most given the consequential work in front of me?

Opportunity
Where do I have a genuine opportunity to act now?

Your Catalyst priority lies where those three intersect:

NEED × IMPORTANCE × OPPORTUNITY

This is not a mathematical formula. It is a prompt for judgment. Consider choosing one—or at most two—areas on which to focus.

FROM ASSESSMENT TO ACTION

The tools in this Field Guide are intended to help you pursue your priorities.

If your priority is SEE THE SYSTEM, use the System Scan and Upstream Question Set.

If your priority is FIND THE LEVERAGE, use the Ignition Point Finder.

If your priority is CHANGE THE CONDITIONS, use the Generative Conditions Audit.

If your priority is EXERCISE CATALYST JUDGMENT, use the Direct–Empower–Catalyze Diagnostic and, when appropriate, the Protect–Improve–Transform Bridge.

If your priority is MAKE CAPABILITY GENERATIVE, use the Capability Extraction Canvas, Enduring vs. Generative Capability Test, and Generative Capability Assessment.

If your priority is MULTIPLY THE CATALYSTS, use the Catalyst Spotter & Builder.

And periodically, regardless of where you begin, use the Leader Disappearance Test.

Remember, the purpose of this assessment is not to tell you what kind of leader you are. It is to help you decide where changing the way you lead could most increase the generative capability of the system around you.

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