Catalyst Leadership Quick Scan

Companion to Catalyst Leadership | *John Coné*

Action Path • Entry check

How Much Deeper Do You Need to Go?

You have a consequential problem or opportunity in front of you. Before deciding what to do, take a few minutes to answer four questions. For each, rate your confidence in your answer from 1 to 5.

You are not rating the organization. You are not rating the importance of the issue. You are rating something much simpler: How confident am I that I understand this well enough to act intelligently?

Be particularly cautious about confidence based primarily on familiarity, assumption, or having seen something similar before.

1. SEE THE SYSTEM

Do I understand what in the system is actually producing this situation—not merely its most visible symptoms?

Can I explain why this is happening?

Do I have evidence for that explanation?

Have I considered whether my first explanation might be incomplete or wrong?

MY CONFIDENCE

1 2 3 4 5

Very Low Very High

If your confidence is low, use the SYSTEM SCAN.

2. FIND THE LEVERAGE

Do I know where a focused intervention could produce disproportionate movement?

Can I identify a place where changing something could improve more than one part of the problem?

Am I focusing on an underlying condition rather than jumping immediately to a solution?

Could acting there improve both the immediate result and the larger system?

MY CONFIDENCE

1 2 3 4 5

Very Low Very High

If your confidence is low, use the IGNITION POINT FINDER.

3. CHANGE THE CONDITIONS

Do I understand what must become true for the system to behave differently?

What information, authority, connections, learning, experimentation, incentives, human judgment, or technological capability needs to change?

Can I describe the conditions we need without prematurely describing the solution?

Do I understand which few conditions matter most?

MY CONFIDENCE

1 2 3 4 5

Very Low Very High

If your confidence is low, use the GENERATIVE CONDITIONS AUDIT.

4. CONSTRUCT THE LEADERSHIP RESPONSE

Am I clear about what I should Direct, what I should Empower, and what I should Catalyze?

What is sufficiently known, urgent, consequential, or accountability-bound that it should be directed?

Where is the outcome clear enough that others should own how it is achieved?

Where must the answer emerge through connection, experimentation, judgment, learning, or discovery?

Am I preserving as much generative space as the situation responsibly permits?

MY CONFIDENCE

1 2 3 4 5

Very Low Very High

If your confidence is low, use the DIRECT–EMPOWER–CATALYZE DIAGNOSTIC.

READ THE PATTERN

DON'T ADD THE SCORES

This is not a Catalyst Leadership score. It is a way to identify where additional thinking may be worth your time.

4–5 — HIGH CONFIDENCE

You probably do not need the full tool.

Move ahead if the evidence supports your confidence and the consequences of being wrong are acceptable.

3 — UNCERTAIN

There are important questions you have not completely resolved.

Consider the stakes, unfamiliarity, and consequences of being wrong. Use the relevant tool if deeper thinking could materially improve the decision.

1–2 — LOW CONFIDENCE

Slow down.

You may be preparing to act on assumptions that have not been adequately tested.

Use the corresponding tool before deciding how to proceed.

ONE FINAL QUESTION

Before you act, ask one question that cuts across all four areas:

How could addressing this problem or opportunity also increase our generative capability—our capacity to create whatever new capabilities changing circumstances require?

You do not need a perfect answer. But if the answer is simply “It won't,” ask yourself whether that is inherent in the situation—or whether you have designed the response too narrowly.

THEN DECIDE HOW DEEPLY TO GO

You may discover that you are highly confident in all four areas. If so, Act.

You may discover one area where your confidence is low. Then use that tool.

Or you may discover that the problem is more consequential, unfamiliar, or systemic than you initially thought. In that case, work through the complete Action Cycle:

SEE THE SYSTEM → FIND THE LEVERAGE → CHANGE THE CONDITIONS → CONSTRUCT THE LEADERSHIP RESPONSE → ACT

The purpose of the Quick Scan is not to make every problem more complicated. It is to help you recognize the problems that deserve deeper thinking before you make them look simple.

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