



# Identifying the Components of an Effective Leader

Unpacking the PXT Select™  
Assessment Leadership Report

**When it comes to leadership, we believe everyone is a leader. Or, at least, everyone has the potential to lead. Exercising leadership doesn't depend on having a specific title, a certain level of seniority, or a set of personality traits you're born with. Leadership is a mindset and a collection of skills that we develop through practice and repetition. But what skills and traits make someone a successful leader?**

**As far as that goes, we isolated six traits necessary for exercising effective leadership in the PXT Select assessment Leadership Report. In this report, we explain why we picked these traits and why they're important to you and the success of your organization. We also take time to shine a light on the psychometric makeup behind each trait.**

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## **Evidence & Research**

What makes us so confident in our recipe for good leadership? Why do we know the PXT Select assessment provides a solution for selecting and developing strong leaders? Our confidence comes from the fact that we ground every claim we make in evidence, scientific data, and over 20 years of research. Research lends our brand legitimacy, reinforces quality as a priority, and instills confidence in the ability of our powerful tool to deliver value and results—every time.

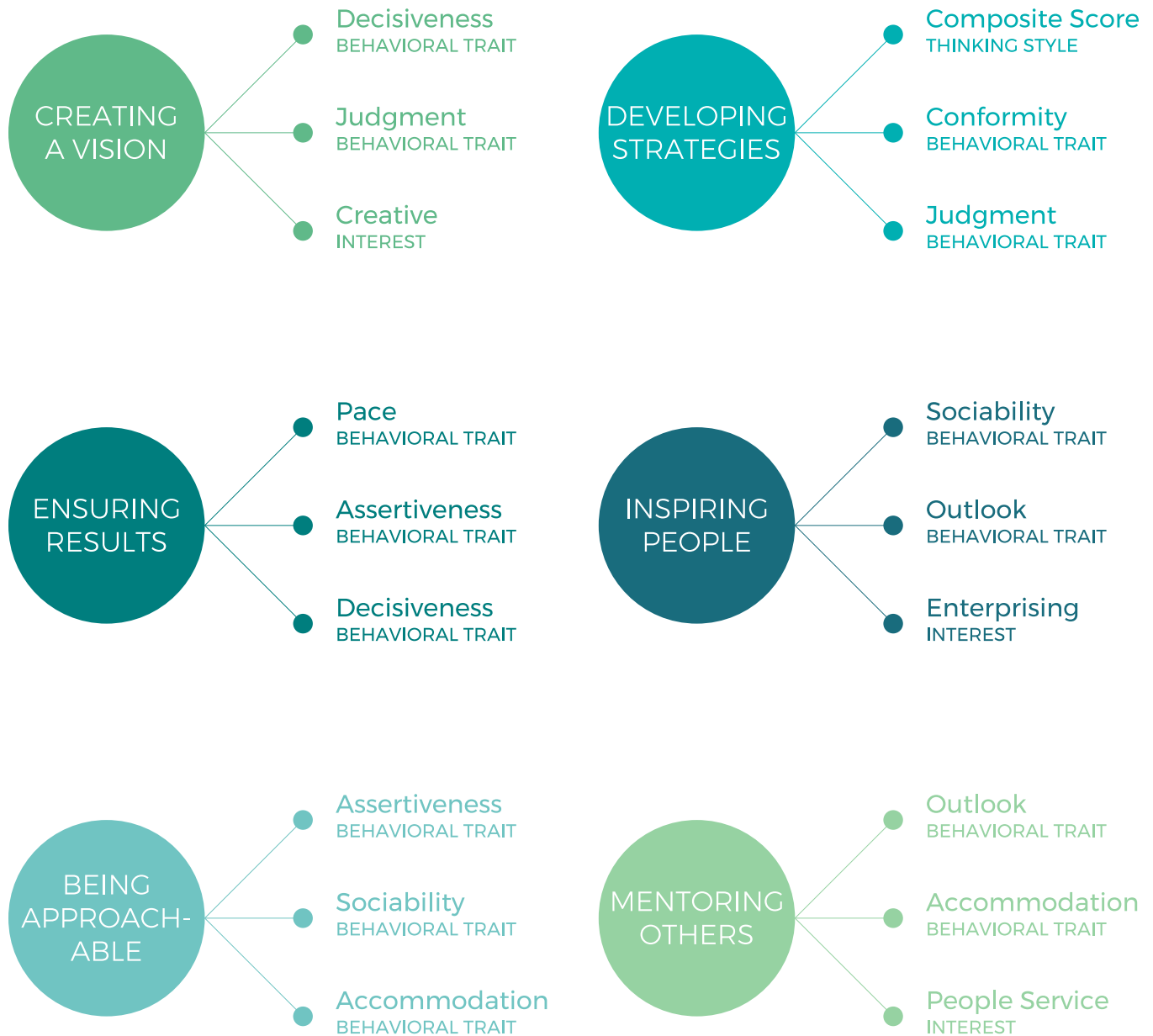
If you encounter individuals who doubt or question the effectiveness of PXT Select or who want to know more about the assessment, you can rely on this research to dissipate doubt, foster confidence, and provide information on our solutions—solutions with a proven impact. To understand this evidence and how PXT Select works to deliver talent management solutions, we invite you to read further.

## **What Is the PXT Select Leadership Report?**

The PXT Select Leadership Report is one of the 13 powerful reports in the PXT Select assessment suite. It leverages assessment data to help identify the leadership potential of each individual. The report provides insight that allows organizations to predict how someone confronts the complexities and challenges of a leadership role. As an employer or a manager, you want to make sure a candidate or incumbent employee has the specific skills you're looking for with each position. You also want to know whether each candidate or employee has the potential to develop existing and additional leadership skills along the way.

The Leadership Report focuses on how to help you create a consistent, scalable, and tailored process for selecting the right leaders and for nurturing their long-term success once placed in their roles.

Again, our research goes deep. The Leadership Report draws on decades of experience, hundreds of thousands of assessment results, and leadership performance data to provide actionable information on candidates' leadership potential. We base our leadership model on 12 different dimensions of Thinking Style, Behavioral Traits, and Interests, which we explain in the following pages.



## What's the Science Behind the PXT Select Assessment?

Psychometric assessments, like PXT Select, measure how people **think, work**, and what **interests them** innately. It studies the differences between individuals at a Cognitive level (can they do the job?), a Behavioral level (how will they do the job?), and an Interests level (will they enjoy the job?).

By looking at an individual's psychometric characteristics, organizations can match people to roles they're most likely to succeed in. They can also identify the leadership potential of candidates or employees and predict how someone may confront the complexities and challenges of a leadership role.

## Psychometrics Explained

### Thinking Style

The Cognitive section of the PXT Select assessment, known as the Thinking Style section, asks participants to answer multiple-choice questions in four areas of knowledge and reasoning. The assessment uses these responses to calculate scores on the following five scales that reflect verbal and numerical skill and reasoning:

1. **Composite Score** reflects overall learning, reasoning, and problem-solving potential—a combined and standardized score of all four cognitive scales. There are no “good” or “bad” scores—just different scores.
2. **Verbal Skill** measures vocabulary by having respondents identify synonyms to words.
3. **Verbal Reasoning** measures the ability to use words in reasoning and problem-solving by having respondents complete a series of analogies.
4. **Numerical Ability** measures numeric calculation abilities by having respondents use formulas to perform calculations. Again, there are no “good” or “bad” scores here—only different scores.
5. **Numeric Reasoning** measures the ability to use numbers as a basis in reasoning and problem-solving by having respondents perform calculations to solve mathematical problems.

## Behavioral Traits

The Behavioral Traits section of the PXT Select assessment asks participants to agree or disagree with statements of work-related preferences and behaviors in nine distinct areas. These responses help determine how the individual expresses each trait. The nine scales are as follows:

1. **Pace** measures preference for the overall rate of task completion with items referring to urgency, liveliness, and/or steadiness.
2. **Assertiveness** measures the preference for expressing opinions and the need for control.
3. **Sociability** measures the desire for interaction with others by using questions that ask respondents about being outgoing and meeting new people or being more reserved and quiet.
4. **Conformity** measures attitudes on policies and supervision by asking questions about challenging decisions, showing discontent, or following rules and policies.
5. **Outlook** measures the type of anticipation of outcomes and motives respondents have, whether more skeptical and practical or trusting and optimistic.
6. **Decisiveness** measures the preference for speed or caution to make decisions, with questions asking respondents how much time they take to make decisions.
7. **Accommodation** measures the inclination to tend to the needs of others, consider their ideas, ask about opinions, take a stand, or promote harmony and agreement.
8. **Independence** measures respondents' preferences for instruction and guidance with items referencing procedures, preference for flexibility, and attitude toward status check-ins.
9. **Judgment** measures respondents' basis for forming opinions and drawing conclusions. It also considers the role of instincts or logic in their decision-making process.

## Interests

Based on John Holland's RIASEC classification for occupational interests, the Interests section of the PXT Select assessment asks participants to rate their level of enjoyment of various activities to measure their degree of interest in six different areas (Holland, 1959). The assessment uses responses to determine a respondent's relative degree of enjoyment among the six interests. The report shows the individual's interests ranked from highest to lowest preference. In a case where a respondent enjoys multiple interests to the same degree, the assessment report shows a tie between the interests. The six interests are as follows:

1. **Enterprising**, also labeled "Enterprising" in Holland's model, suggests the enjoyment of leadership, presenting ideas, and persuading others.
2. **Financial/Administrative**, or Holland's "Conventional" interest, suggests enjoyment in working with numbers and organizing information.
3. **People Service**, or Holland's "Social" interest, suggests enjoyment in collaboration, compromise, and helping others.
4. **Technical**, or Holland's "Investigative" interest, suggests enjoyment of learning technical material, interpreting complex information, and solving problems.
5. **Mechanical**, or Holland's "Realistic" interest, suggests enjoyment of building and repairing things, working with the hands, and using machinery and tools.
6. **Creative**, or Holland's "Artistic" interest, suggests enjoyment of imaginative and artistic activities.

## Adaptive Testing Format

PXT Select uses the adaptive testing format for the Cognitive and Behavioral sections of the assessment. Adaptive testing maximizes precision in measuring respondents' true scores in Cognitive or Behavioral Traits while minimizing the number of questions they need to answer. The assessment presents increasingly difficult cognitive questions in response to correct answers and easier questions following incorrect answers. The Behavioral Traits section presents statements representing each scale, asking assessment takers to agree or disagree with those statements. For each Behavioral Trait, there is an item bank of statements describing different examples of how the trait may look in the workplace. As the respondent self-identifies with the different items, the assessment hones in on how strongly they express the Behavioral Trait.

The assessment reports information on the nine Behavioral Traits using a continuum scale between two endpoints that describe opposing expressions of each scale measure. Results on the five Thinking Styles scales are reported on a ten-point scale, with higher values indicating a higher level of knowledge and skill in each area.

## Research for The Leadership Report

We don't own the definition of leadership. It's fluid. You'll likely find several definitions out there—each of them defining the skills necessary for leadership in different ways.

Based on our research, here are the six leadership skills that the Leadership Report establishes as necessary for a leadership mindset:

- Create a vision
- Develop strategies
- Ensure results
- Inspire people
- Be approachable
- Mentor others

## Methodology

We leveraged over 20 years of practice and research in utilizing Job Fit assessments for measuring all levels of leadership in a wide variety of industries. By examining organizational leadership performance data and by noticing certain patterns of behavior common in effective leaders, we realized there are several key leadership skills. After reviewing the abundance of literature on leadership competency, we noticed these leadership skills generally follow most other established leadership models. Like those we established for the PXT Select Leadership Report, most leadership competency models focus on setting a vision for achieving organizational results and for supporting others so they can perform at their best.

For instance, the foundational research on leadership development by Zenger and Folkman established 16 leadership competencies for achieving exceptional business results. In their 20 years of research, Zenger and Folkman surveyed over 20,000 leaders on 360 different leadership assessments. Found among them are very similar competencies to the six leadership skills we identified in our leadership performance research, such as “displaying a strategic perspective, building relationships, driving for results, developing others, and inspiring and motivating others (Zenger & Folkman, 2019).”

Ashkenas and Manville also identified similar leadership skills in preparing the HBR Leader’s Handbook (2019). Combining years of consultation experience, interviews with dozens of successful leaders, and a review of decades of HBR literature, the most important leadership skills they identify closely mirror those found in organizations using the PXT Select assessment. These skills focus on setting a clear vision and strategy, developing talent, focusing on impactful results, and, most importantly, knowing yourself as a leader so that you can employ those skills when they are needed.

Taken together, we settled on the six leadership skills to capture the breadth of competencies found by our client organizations and in the leadership literature while avoiding redundancy and efficiently reporting compelling assessment results. In fact, according to Zenger and Folkman, performing well and focusing development in just four to five competencies can put leaders in the top ten percent of all leaders that deliver exceptional results.

Unlike most leadership-focused assessments, PXT Select provides requisite psychometric and adverse impact data, making the PXT Select Leadership Report results valid for selecting leaders in any organization.



Various PXT Select Cognitive, Behavioral Traits, and Interests scales were mapped to each of the six leadership skills by examining client organization data and by relating scale results with leadership skills measured by the same organizations. We further confirmed those relationships by reviewing leadership industry reports and primary studies in leadership development. Not surprisingly, some scales were found to be very important for various leadership skills, like Assertiveness, Decisiveness, and Sociability. Other scales were not shown to be strong indicators of leadership performance and aren't represented in the PXT Select leadership skills.

Taken together, these methods provide a solid scientific foundation for establishing the validity of the PXT Select Leadership Report as a tool for selecting and developing high-performing leaders.

See Zenger, J., & Folkman, J. (2019). *The New Extraordinary Leader, 3rd Ed: Turning Good Managers into Great Leaders*. New York: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing; Ashkenas, R., & Manville, B. (2019). *HBR Leader's Handbook: Make an Impact, Inspire Your Organization, and Get to the Next Level*. Boston, MA: HBR Press.

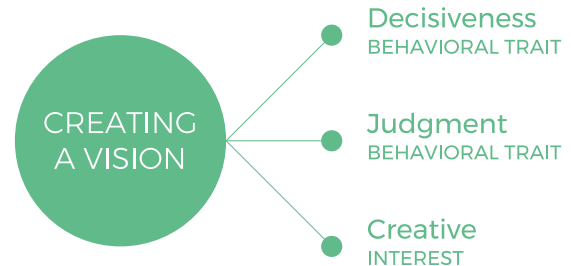
# Meet the Six Critical Leadership Skills of PXT Select

Let's look at how the perspectives of leaders come to life in the workplace as they demonstrate the **Six Critical Leadership Skills**.

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## Creating a Vision: Decisiveness, Judgment, & Creativity<sup>7,8</sup>

Leaders who excel at creating a vision imagine vivid, new ideas, directions, and innovations for the future. They think big and redefine the boundaries of what's possible for their teams, their organizations, and their industries.



When creating a vision, leaders should have a personal vision and a shared organizational vision that promotes buy-in from their coworkers.

To craft a vision and take the organization to new and unknown places, visionary leaders must be decisive. They must have the courage to make tough or unpopular decisions—even in the face of adversity or where there is a lot of risk involved. Decisive leaders make decisions quickly and effectively and demonstrate the discipline to live out their decisions. Knowing a leader's level of **Decisiveness** is important in knowing how adaptable, agile, or risk-averse they are when making decisions.

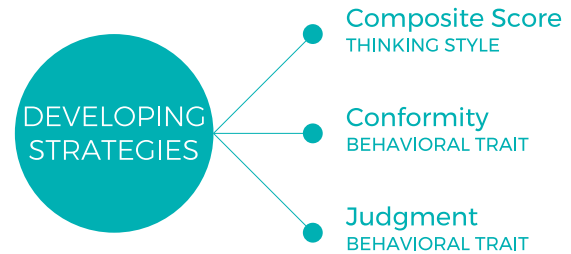
In creating a vision, sound **Judgment** is essential. It is a necessary skill when making decisions and aligning resources with corporate initiatives. Judgment is perhaps one of the most crucial assets required of a leader. Effective leaders use their personal styles of judgment to make well thought-out decisions or come to sensible conclusions through a combination of their own experience, intuition, and available facts.

Leaders harness their **Creativity** to envision new ideas and possibilities that provide fresh direction for their organizations. They paint a picture of a better future and expand on their vision to draw others toward it and bring their personal color into it.

See Hess, D. (2018). *Leadership by Engineers and Scientists: Professional Skills Needed to Succeed in a Changing World*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Forbes, R., & Forbes, D. (2010). *Creating a Compelling Ideal Vision*. *Performance Improvement*, 49, 41-45.

## Developing Strategies: Composite Score, Conformity, & Judgment<sup>9,10</sup>

Developing strategies is all about transforming goals and ideas into action plans that are both innovating and achievable. To do this, leaders must understand their organizations' unique resources and challenges and use this knowledge to act as agents of change.



Two core competencies of strategic leadership are systems thinking and risk management. Systems thinking combines a leader's overall problem-solving abilities and personal judgment to evaluate the best course of action using a complex network of organizational systems. Similarly, critical thinking involves understanding complex issues and environments, recognizing patterns in situations, and drawing connections between pieces of information.

To develop strategies, leaders must have the necessary skills to problem solve, think critically, and make sound decisions. The **Composite Score** shows the leader's verbal and numerical skills and reasoning as a measure of predicting their ability to do their job effectively.

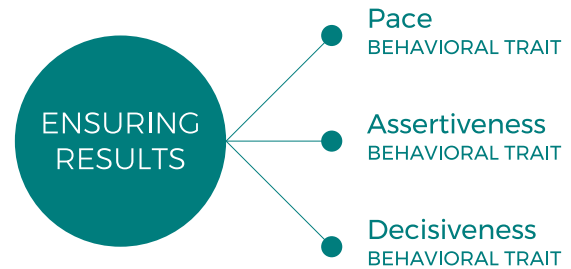
The pressure to conform in a group can be quite powerful and can often get in the way of developing or advancing strategies to meet organizational goals. Many people go along with the majority regardless of the consequences or their personal opinions. Where a leader fits in the **Conformity** continuum determines their comfort level in strategically pushing boundaries and knowing when it is appropriate to do so.

When developing strategies, leaders are required to act promptly and decisively. To do so, they must use their intuition and factual **Judgment** to critically evaluate each aspect of complex situations to form opinions and make decisions. They must think about the big picture as well as the individual pieces to understand the risks and consequences of their decisions. They'll do so in different ways depending on where they fall in the Judgment range. Understanding when to stay firm or when to adjust, and when to work around organizational constraints is crucial for effective strategic decision-making.

See Olson, A., & Simerson, B. (2015). *Leading With Strategic Thinking: Four Ways Effective Managers Gain Insight, Drive Change, and Get Results*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Mulnix, J. (2010). *Thinking Critically About Critical Thinking*. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44, 464-479.

## Ensuring Results: Pace, Assertiveness, & Decisiveness<sup>11,12</sup>

Leaders who ensure results implement organizational priorities and make sure they get carried out accurately and efficiently. They set the pace of work and establish expectations of quality throughout their teams.



Often, a gap forms between focusing on goals vs. focusing on execution. This gap exists in organizations that cannot strategize through vision and goal setting or realize their strategies and achieve results. The fact is, organizations cannot succeed unless their leaders successfully execute strategies and business plans or utilize the resources at their disposal.

To achieve results, a leader must set the pace through expectations and examples. Some leaders might jump in and ask for work to be done faster if they think the pace of progress is too slow. Others might ask teams to work at a steadier pace if the situation requires it. Leaders need to calibrate their **Pace** with each situation, knowing when to encourage their teams to be deliberate or urgent.

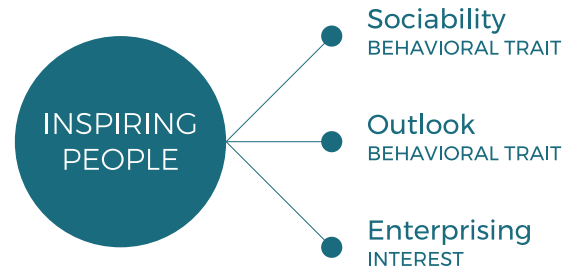
Varying opinions, risk avoidance, or lack of alignment can get in the way of achieving results. **Assertive** leaders express themselves effectively and stand up for their point of view while also respecting the views of others. Their level of assertiveness will indicate if they're more forceful or more unassuming. A situation may sometimes require pushing back or letting go to move a project forward. A leader's level of assertiveness determines how well they listen to customers' needs along with their effectiveness while managing productivity and expectations with their teams, their organizations, and the market. They will ensure results by creating structures that support quality execution, the communication of roles, and the responsibilities of the team. They will align the right people with the right skills to get the job done effectively.

To complete projects, deliver on commitments, and achieve results, leaders need to mobilize resources and act with **Decisiveness**. This skill proves important when leaders think through a project and make timely decisions. They need to be able to operate without fear of failure while also encouraging a focused and aggressive workflow. A leader's level of assertiveness determines their use of speed and caution in making decisions.

See Schmitt, T., & Perl, A. (2007). *Simple Solutions: Harness the Power of Passion and Simplicity to Get Results*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Lepsinger, R., (2011). *The Execution Solution: Five Secrets of Companies That Consistently Achieve Results*. *Employment Relations Today*, 37, 53-58.

## Inspiring People: Sociability, Outlook, & Enterprising Interest<sup>13,14</sup>

Creating clarity and unity around ideas leads to inspiration. Effective leaders communicate with enthusiasm while approaching new endeavors and convincing coworkers of the merits behind their causes.



Leaders fail when they can't inspire and motivate. Inspiration comes from the passionate communication of big ideas. Effective leaders paint a vivid picture of the future. These pictures can take the shape of their outlook, whether weary and questioning or optimistic and hopeful.

To be effective, leaders must have the ability to get along with others and relate to their people. **Sociability** is key to leading, managing, and innovating. The level of sociability that a leader exhibits, whether they are more reserved or outgoing, tells us about their desire for interaction with others and their level of comfort while interacting in small or large group settings and formal or informal gatherings. It also speaks to their level of comfort in creating strong, trusting connections, using personal stories to relate to difficult situations, and using humor to relieve tension.

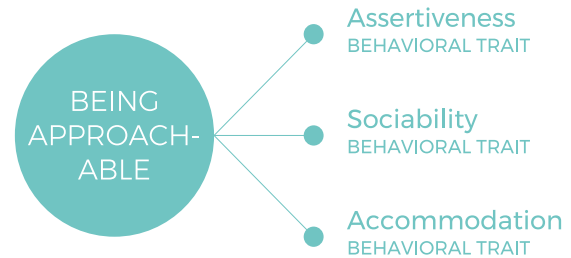
Anticipating the future is a key trait that leaders must exhibit. A leader's place on the **Outlook** continuum determines their comfort in being more trusting or more skeptical of the situation, the facts, or the people they interact with. The outlook and passion of a leader can create "hope in the face of despair." Good leaders know their emotions heavily influence other people's moods and performance as they strive to achieve a common vision.

To organize, persuade, manage resources and priorities, and inspire others, leaders must exhibit **Enterprising** characteristics. Enterprising leaders enjoy being in charge and solving problems by taking risks. They continually present ideas and persuade others to move toward a common goal. They enjoy influencing others to buy-in, calling others to action, and communicating clear and compelling messages that outline their perspectives.

See Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2006). **Inspiring Others Through Resonant Leadership**. *London Business School Review*, 17, 15-19.; Thrash, T., Moldovan, E., Oleynick, V., & Maruskin, L. (2014). **The Psychology of Inspiration**. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 8, 495-510.

## Being Approachable: Assertiveness, Sociability, & Accommodation<sup>15,16</sup>

By being approachable, leaders empower their team members to come forward and get clarification, address concerns, and present ideas. They're open to feedback and they build morale by making others feel listened to. Effective leaders acknowledge their limitations and strengths. They seek feedback from various perspectives to get a diversity of thought, and they appreciate other people's contributions.



Approachable leaders exhibit **Assertiveness** and drive progress and innovation by holding open, frank discussions and by offering team members a voice of their own. Driving employees to a high-level of productivity is a common trait of assertive leaders. Where a leader fits in the Assertiveness continuum determines their comfort level in being more forceful or more unassuming of the situation, the facts, or the people they interact with.

Approachable leaders express **Sociability** by interacting with colleagues and by creating safe, brave spaces that empower team members to share their ideas on how to meet organizational goals. The key ingredient is the positive relationship dynamics that approachable leaders share with their colleagues. Leaders with a well-developed Accommodation style are comfortable fostering a harmonious and productive workplace culture.

Far from being weak, vulnerable leaders express their level of **Accommodation** in being humble, self-aware, and in acknowledgment of their imperfections. They strive for excellence, not perfection, and for “win-win,” instead of “winning.” And they create a space for others to feel safe, share hard truths, feel listened to, and contribute ideas.

See Nielsen, R., & Marrone, J. (2018). **Humility: Our Current Understanding of the Construct and Its Role in Organizations.** *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20, 805-824.; Ito, A., & Bligh, M. (2017). **Feeling Vulnerable? Disclosure of Vulnerability in the Charismatic Leadership Relationship.** *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 10, 66-70.

## Mentoring Others: Outlook, Accommodation, & People Service<sup>17,18</sup>

Effective leaders know that mentoring others is an investment in the future of their organizations. They help team members develop the skills, connections, and confidence to do their jobs more effectively while growing the next generation of leaders in the process.



A leader's expression of **Outlook** is important as a mentor. It allows a leader to help develop mentees' perspectives so they can be more critical and mindful of risks or see the bright side of things in a more hopeful, optimistic way. Where a leader falls on the Outlook continuum determines how they view the opportunity to mentor others and build relationships with lasting impact.

Mentoring can be a challenging, stimulating, and creative exercise in the career development of others. A leader's **Accommodation** level allows them to tend to other people's needs and ideas in an agreeable, steadfast manner. Where a leader falls on the Accommodation continuum might determine how much they want to invest in the cooperative nature of a mentorship relationship. It might also determine how a leader provides the right type and amount of guidance and support—both on a professional and personal level.

Most mentoring relationships last for six months to two years. They take time to develop naturally. **People Service** is a crucial interest for mentoring leaders to have, especially when it comes to making introductions, building a network of beneficial relationships, and recognizing new opportunities for mutual growth. A leader's level of People Service Interest may indicate how curious they are in the needs, aspirations, and professional development of their team members.

See Yost, P., & Plunkett, M. (2010). *Real-Time Leadership Development*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; Newby, T., & Heide, A., (2013). *The Value of Mentoring*. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 26, 141-158.



## No Matter How You Define It, Leadership Is for Everyone

Even when you try and simplify leadership down to its basic elements, it's still a complicated matter. But regardless of how you define it, one truth remains certain—leadership is for everyone.

And while understanding the core skills of leadership doesn't fix all your problems, it provides enough direction and insight for your organization to foster the basic traits that result in effective leadership. You might not know where your organization's leadership journey leads, but with the information provided through the PXT Select Leadership Report, you know it starts on solid ground.

## Our Network Is Your Network

We work with thousands of organizations and industries worldwide through a global network of Authorized PXT Select Partners to evaluate needs and implement talent management solutions that drive results.

To learn more about how our suite of solutions can help you drive success in your organization, **contact your Authorized PXT Select Partner today.**

Success awaits.

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