



LEADING NOW

RELATIONSHIP INTELLIGENCE
AND FOUR TRENDS IN LEADERSHIP

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*Relationship
Intelligence
is developing
authentic
connections and
adjusting your
style to make
interactions
more effective.*

As old models of command-and-control executive leadership become increasingly irrelevant, so, too, do outdated approaches to leadership development. Previously, success was defined by an executive's ability to assess situations quickly, make decisions, take action, and deliver on goals. Now it's based on how well they empower others to do so. This shift in the function of leadership is a direct reflection of the changed nature of jobs and careers. According to a study by Deloitte: "careers are no longer narrowly defined by jobs and skills but through experiences and learning agility." Leaders then must empower their talent to bring their experiences to bear and offer them the autonomy to learn as they go. More than ever before, business performance boils down to people performance.

For team leaders, needs have similarly changed. To solve complex problems, mid-level leaders must quickly assemble and reassemble teams that are often cross-functional, composed of people with diverse perspectives, experience, and talents.

Team leaders must become skilled at fully engaging each individual on the project at hand, while also managing the conflicts that inevitably arise in their fast-paced environments.

With this new function of leadership four trends increasingly separate top talent, and top earners, from the rest. Organizations need leaders who can:

1. Master multiple leadership communication styles
2. Reduce conflict on teams while fostering inclusion
3. Illuminate and eliminate unconscious bias
4. Build trusted networks across their organization and beyond it

Meeting these needs doesn't require separate leadership competency development training. All can be improved in leaders who learn to apply Relationship Intelligence throughout their work day.

RELATIONSHIP INTELLIGENCE AND FOUR LEADERSHIP TRENDS

Common to all of these new trends is the need for leaders to develop two types of awareness: first, how they themselves are intrinsically wired to approach situations, and second, an awareness of how their team members might approach the same situation differently. The Relationship Intelligence afforded by Core Strengths' training cultivates both types of awareness then takes the crucial next step: It develops in leaders the ability to adjust their own style to meet those differences from a place of understanding.



Relationship Intelligence can achieve this because of the information provided to leaders by our Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) 2.0 about their own approaches. Leaders also gain access to similar information (or intelligence) about their team members. Leaders who apply relationship intelligence and use it to create a common language with their teams become more agile and accommodating with one another and achieve better outcomes. They learn to avert the possibility of healthy opposition transforming into conflict, which is essential to keeping progress toward goals on track.

Once Core Strengths training is complete, Relationship Intelligence is reinforced over time through an always-on platform. This mobile-friendly SaaS service gives leaders instant access to the hard data they need to quickly and accurately tailor their approach in meetings, message writing, and in conversations, allowing their communication to more consistently achieve its intended impact. When adopted team-wide, Relationship Intelligence becomes the basis for a common language that allows leaders and their teams to discuss people and personality objectively, which, in itself, can go a long way in preventing conflict and creating a culture of open communication and mutual respect.

By putting Relationship Intelligence to work day-to-day, people can convey what's important to them in ways others with very different motives can more easily understand. In this way, leaders and their team members learn to choose when and how to use certain strengths to more authentically connect with others (give them what they want/need) while also moving themselves toward their own goals (to satisfy their motives). Not surprisingly, Relationship Intelligence supports the practical development needed in each of the new leadership trends. Let's dig into each one.

TREND #1

MASTER MULTIPLE LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION STYLES

At Core Strengths, developing multiple communication styles is completely aligned with our belief that people are capable of accommodating differences in personality and motivation and that doing so increases the effectiveness of both the leader and the team. In fact, our training focuses on how to apply Relationship Intelligence when selecting the best style of communication to achieve better, faster outcomes with others. Many other personality assessment trainings, quite oppositely, recommend that leaders rely nearly exclusively on top strengths within easy reach.

But relying on only a handful of strengths naturally limits a leader's range of communication style. It also precludes them from developing the agility they need to move among different types of people and teams, both within and outside the organizations they lead. This agility is gaining in importance. According to Deloitte's 2018 Global Human Capital Trends report, "Today, successful businesses must incorporate external trends, perspectives, and voices by maintaining positive relationships, not just with customers and employees, but also with local communities, regulators, and a variety of other stakeholders."¹

Our approach inherently develops multiple communication styles, because we look at strengths through the lens of people's motives, and encourage using the full range of them like tools in a relational toolbox. We specifically train for when and how leaders may switch to a different strength, when needed, to satisfy their own motives and/or meet the needs of the people with whom they need to communicate. Moreover, that "switching" is linked by clear reasons



why a leader might choose that strength, so they can access that style while still feeling authentic. This more deeply developed agility moves leaders out of their comfort zone, when it's necessary, without moving them too far from the core strength that got them where they are in the first place. And we all know that, both in life and on the job, going out of your comfort zone is where the magic happens. Echoing this sentiment, an executive-level leader who completed Core Strengths training later in his career was struck by what a different young leader he would have been, if he'd had the training back then: "I wouldn't have spent so many years being such an uncompromising idiot, thinking that was the only way to get people to perform."

TREND #2

REDUCE CONFLICT, FOSTER INCLUSION

Innovation often happens as a result of many divergent views being heard, so leaders need to model for their teams how to welcome and discuss opposing views. This isn't always easy — especially when the stakes are high and the pace is fast — but this aspect of leadership is critical for engaging the different experiences and perspectives that invite innovation and higher performance. Yes, conflict (and people's overwhelming natural desire to avoid it) creates a huge cost in lost time and productivity, but that doesn't even factor the loss of potential for those same teams actually seeking diversity of opinion, style, and input and excelling at inclusion.

A study led by Cloverpop, the enterprise platform for communicating, tracking, and improving decisions, conducted a study analyzing approximately 600 business decisions made by 200 different business teams in a wide variety of companies over two years. The study found that inclusive teams make better business decisions up to 87% of the time; teams that follow an inclusive process

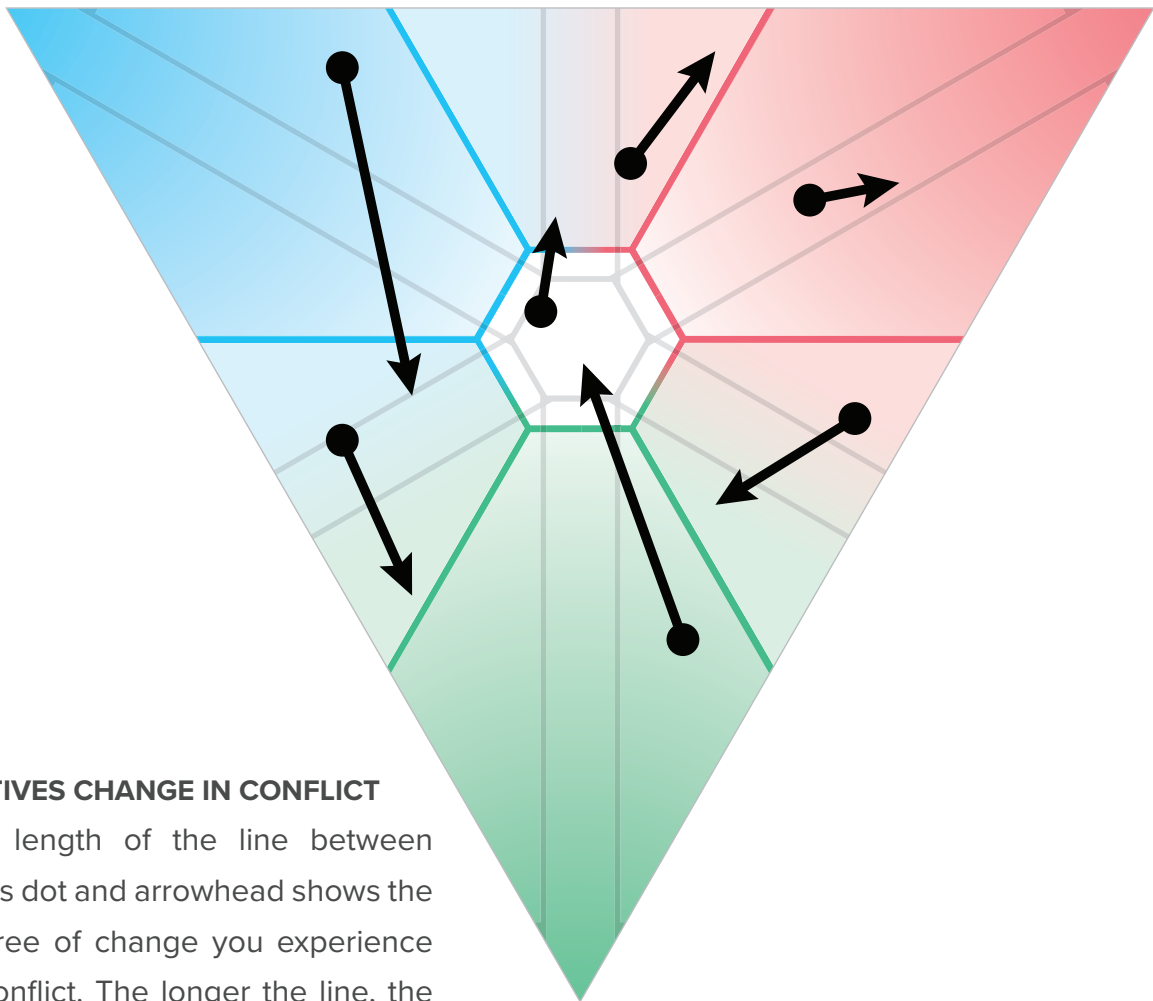
make decisions 2X faster in half the number of meetings. Moreover, the decisions made and executed by diverse teams delivered 60% better results.²

The failure to engage different perspectives may lead not only to mediocrity, but also to interpersonal conflict (or the avoidance of it), if people on a team feel their values are unrepresented and their voices unheard. Relationship Intelligence gives your developing leaders a strong understanding of their own motives and behavior as well as team members (described above) as a foundation, but then goes even deeper into what happens to those motives and behavior when healthy opposition starts to feel personal, our values violated, and two or more people find themselves in conflict.

As part of every assessment, each person (leaders and their team members) receives his or her own “conflict sequence” that tracks to stages of an escalating conflict. Some people first rise to the challenge and assert themselves, others become peacemakers, while still others withdraw to think things through. None of these reactions, however, readily supports open discussion or an exploration of the issue at hand.



It is a powerful game-changer when leaders and teams have the Relationship Intelligence to understand each other in tense situations and correctly “see” each other’s shifting behavior for what it is: simply a response to conflict. Using the common language taught in our training, leaders and their teams can more objectively discuss the “heat in the room” and steer the conversation back to a productive track. This clarity is invaluable because conflict (even perceived conflict) produces an internal



MOTIVES CHANGE IN CONFLICT

The length of the line between one's dot and arrowhead shows the degree of change you experience in conflict. The longer the line, the more visible the change is.

experience in people that surfaces externally in a variety of ways: some visible and some completely inscrutable. This can lead to faulty assumptions about others' behavior, which is often what fuels discord and halts progress. But when leaders give their teams the opportunity to recognize where they, and others, are in their sequence, conflict can become something managed well — instead of something desperately avoided at great cost to the organization.

TREND #3

ILLUMINATE AND ELIMINATE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

The world has come along way in confronting conscious bias in the workplace. This focus on long-standing practices that disproportionately affect one group has had the added benefit of bringing into focus various kinds of unconscious bias that also erode the culture and productivity of our organizations and institutions. Unconscious biases range from the fairly innocuous (Google engineers designed a YouTube video uploading app that only worked properly for right-handed people³) to situations that create outright discrimination (a two-year study in 2016 showed that African-Americans who “whitened” their resumes received more callbacks for interviews⁴). These kinds of biases are problematic at all levels, but their impact is greatest when practiced by leaders.

Specialized training is now available to address unconscious bias in leadership. Speakers like Karen Pressner⁵ have extolled the “flip it to test it” approach: when reflecting on certain behavior with a colleague, you can flip the gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and ask yourself if you would have acted the same way, said the same things, or made the same decision. These kinds of remedies are useful reflection tools. And they might even work in advance of a meeting, or afterward to make amends for inadvertently biased behavior. But finding this level of illumination adequate is missing the point of bias. We don’t want to treat people like we might treat another type; we want to treat people with respect for the very specific humans they are. And this consciousness is the driving force of Core Strengths. When leaders are forced to focus on the motives and style of communication that drive their team members as individuals, unconscious bias is not only revealed but replaced with



an attention to what is going to make the outcome of their communication or collaboration with a particular person the best possible.

Another problem leaders have with unconscious bias is that, even after it's illuminated, it reverts and remains stubbornly unconscious. Even after undertaking training on diversity and inclusion, disciplined reviews of an unconscious bias often fall by the wayside, as so much good training does. A differentiator for Core Strengths training is its innovation for stickiness. Our Core Strengths platform provides a direct portal into the Relationship Intelligence of yourself and others to instantly refresh what was learned in our training. At any moment, in real-time, users can receive specific guidance on how to construct written messages or prepare for a phone conversation or meeting with another person, based in their hard-wired motivations and conflict sequence data. These practical tips can be accessed anytime so that leaders can bring that consciousness to a range of interactions that continually — and consciously — improve the quality of their relationships and decision making every day.

TREND #4

BUILD TRUSTED NETWORKS ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION AND BEYOND IT

The team is now the essential business unit, and networks of teams (what Deloitte in its 2018 Human Capital Trends report⁶ calls the “symphonic operating model” as opposed to the functional “siloes” one) are what drive the ever-increasing collaboration and internal integration our organizations require to succeed. What powers that network is a tremendous amount of ongoing relationship-building based on trust and respect, whether within the C-suite, between executives and team leaders, or among team leaders and their talent. Because it's a network, a

symphony, if you will, it only runs well when people trust one another enough to communicate fully and rely on one another to be accountable and driven.

When teams operate with each member truly working from a place of respect for others, with opposition perceived as healthy—not job-threatening—then greater problem-solving innovation and stronger business performance is possible. This is why Core Strengths training doesn't end with strengths or even the conflict sequence. It also includes a study of overdone strengths, which is the behavior that results when we humans double down on what we perceive as our strengths at ill-fitting times, particularly when other behavior would be much more appropriate. Whether overdone in terms of frequency, intensity, or duration, overdone strengths inhibit trust-building by creating an unstable environment where team members no longer feel safe, valued, appreciated, and understood.

Let's look at a disguised example from our training. Makela is a strong leader, and her SDI results showed self-confidence to be one of her top three strengths. She validated this during her debrief. Her self-confidence in her vision and in her hiring instincts make the members of her team feel secure and excited to collaborate with one another. Makela's self-confidence is clearly a bonding agent that is part of the reason her team always outperforms. But when the team is meeting with an outside vendor that they require as a partner to execute an important project, Makela begins to overdo her self-confidence. When this outside team rightly points out work her team will need to do, instead of listening, Makela starts “winging it,” pretending this is work they have already done. Important discussion and points that other team members try to raise get overlooked as Makela keeps the spotlight on herself. Her overdone self-confidence turns into arrogance, and her team no longer feels



Top 3 Overdone Strengths
Makela Park

SELF-CONFIDENT (Arrogant)

If someone has ever called you a know-it-all or accused you of having a big ego, it's a sign that your self-confidence is getting overdone. Your self-assurance, conviction, sense of certainty, and reliance on your own inner voice can cause you to appear self-absorbed.

If your confidence runs unchecked you can dismiss conflicting ideas or ignore other people's input. At it's worst, you may see other people as incompetent, which leads you to dismiss them entirely, rather just dismissing their ideas.

Your well-placed self-confidence inspires confidence in others. To avoid the downside, focus your conversations on what is right, rather than who is right. Remember that a challenge to your ideas is not a threat to you personally. Show that you are confident enough to allow challenges.

METHODICAL (Rigid)

Processes, schedules, and organizers keep things in order. But if overused, they can become restrictive. When you get too set in your ways, others may see you as rigid and unwilling to deviate from your plans.

You like the predictability that comes from routines. But others see a lack of spontaneity, as though you can't enjoy the moment or go with the flow. When you insist on doing things in a certain order, it can slow things down too much for other people. Where others want to skip a step for convenience, you keep reminding yourself that things should be done right the first time to avoid re-work later.

To help your methodical approach be more acceptable to others, consider expanding the range of acceptable actions. Will small changes really make a difference in the results?

ADAPTABLE (Compliant)

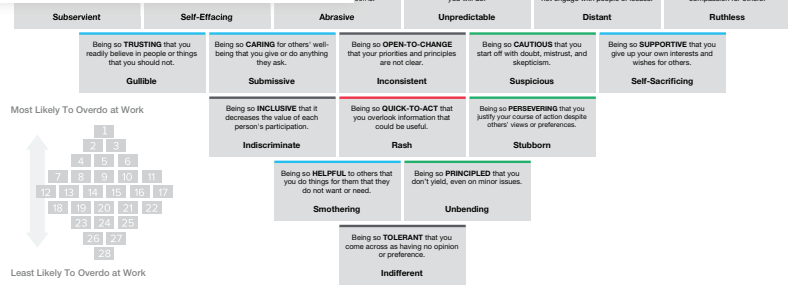
If you've ever been called a chameleon, it could be that people see you as adapting too much to your surroundings. You can do whatever the situation calls for. If you take this too far, you can come off as not having a strong will of your own, complying automatically with the demands of the situation.

In the short run, you follow the path of least resistance, which means you can find yourself doing what's easiest, rather than what's best. In the long run, you may find that you settle into situations or relationships that are acceptable, but not ideal.

To remain adaptable, but not to the point of being unhappy with the end result, you need to consider the long-term implications of your decisions. How could conforming with today's demands limit your development in the future?

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Strength Deployment Inventory 2.0 results provided by PSP, Inc. January 06, 2019 7



secure or cohesive. Some are embarrassed of their leader's behavior. The energy in the room, which was positive and bright at the beginning, has been drained.

If Makela had been aware that she has a tendency to overdo her self-confidence when faced with an emerging set of new circumstances, she may have handled herself and the meeting differently and maintained the high-functionality of her team. This is just one aspect of the value of understanding overdone strengths: It makes individuals the master of their strengths—not the other way around. And this level of self-regulation and awareness goes a long way to deepening the trust among team members as they inevitably join forces with other teams, both internal and external, to get business done.

SUCCESSFUL LEADERS LEVERAGE ALL FOUR

Core Strengths believes that leaders can be well-rounded, without giving up the power of the top strengths that make them who they are as leaders. We also believe they can employ all four of these tactics, without separate training for each one: The new operating model within organizations and the more transparent world we all live in demand it. This passage from the 2018 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends report summarizes the situation well: “Today, successful businesses must incorporate external trends, perspectives, and voices by maintaining positive relationships, not just with customers and employees, but also with local communities, regulators, and a variety of other stakeholders. Building these relationships challenges business leaders to listen closely to constituents, act transparently with information, break down silos to enhance collaboration, and build trust, credibility, and consistency through their actions.”⁷ The stakes are high for companies and the people they employ. The future demands interdependency, cooperation, collective action, and innovation to lead, and that demands competent leaders adept at empowering others and modeling the conscious behaviors that fuel performance.

References

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⁵ https://youtu.be/Bq_xYSOZrgU

^{6,7} https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/HCTrends2018/2018-HCtrends_Rise-of-the-social-enterprise.pdf

“The implementation of the Core Strength training has been transformational to our organization. Core Strengths provides our workforce with the tools they need to be better leaders, better teammates, strengthen relationships and get better results.”

SHERYL D. ROY

GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS CONSULTANT, EXXONMOBIL



“Core Strengths is foundational to our leadership and career development programs. Our managers are excited by what they learn, and are eager to use the tools and resources. The improvement in working relationships and communication have led to increased accountability, collaboration and innovation.”

TIM PERLICK

SENIOR. DIRECTOR, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CME GROUP (CHICAGO MERCANTILE EXCHANGE)



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