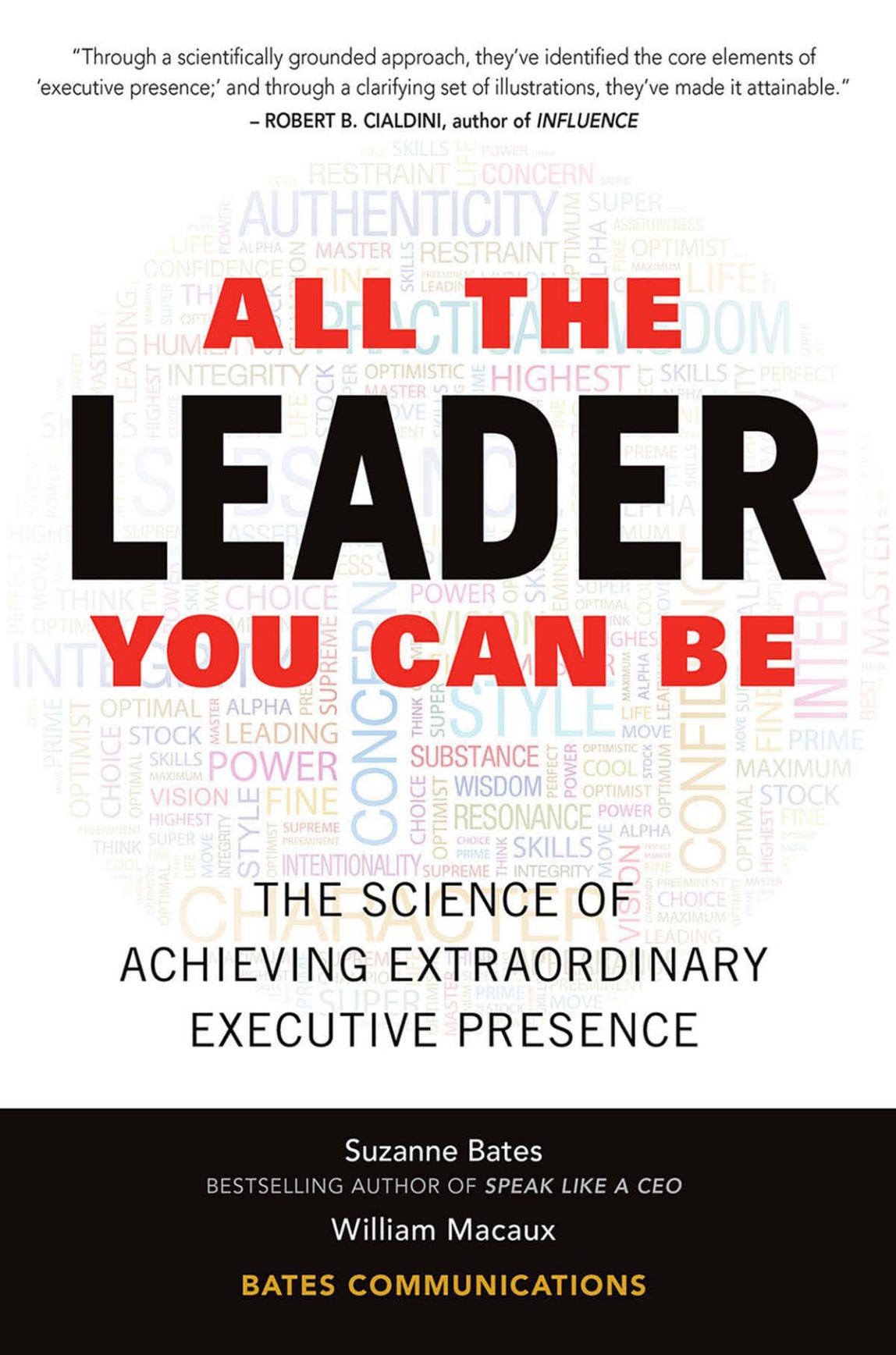


“Through a scientifically grounded approach, they’ve identified the core elements of ‘executive presence,’ and through a clarifying set of illustrations, they’ve made it attainable.”

– ROBERT B. CIALDINI, author of *INFLUENCE*



**ALL THE  
LEADER  
YOU CAN BE**

THE SCIENCE OF  
ACHIEVING EXTRAORDINARY  
EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Suzanne Bates

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SPEAK LIKE A CEO*

William Macaux

**BATES COMMUNICATIONS**

**ALL THE  
LEADER  
YOU CAN BE**

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# **ALL THE LEADER YOU CAN BE**

THE SCIENCE OF  
ACHIEVING EXTRAORDINARY  
EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Suzanne Bates



New York Chicago San Francisco Athens London Madrid  
Mexico City Milan New Delhi Singapore Sydney Toronto

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*To “the people,” Drew and Meghan*

—Suzanne Bates

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We also wish to thank the hundreds of leaders as well as their peers, colleagues, and supervisors who participated in the pilot study and early evaluation of the Bates ExPI, too many to name here. In particular, we do wish to name those who made significant contributions to our early-stage work, including helping us understand how to operationalize the model and assessment in coaching, leadership team work, diversity and inclusion, and high-potential programs. They include Martha May, Jacy Haefke, Michael Stutzman, Anita Flagge, Terry Arnold, Bill Hodgetts, Tim Hebert, Judy Davis, Ann Piepkorn, Diane Pettet, Twanya Hill-Hood, Tom Newhouse, Denise Hughes, Jill Altana, Bridget Penney, Susan Glynn, Louise Korver, Dave Ramsden, Christine Moscaritola, Hariraj Vijayakumar, Melissa Roy,

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To all these professionals and friends, thank you so much.

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## Introduction

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*If we all did the things we are capable of doing,  
we would astound ourselves.*

—THOMAS EDISON

David Marino is a smart, driven, and decisive division president with a knack for grasping complex business issues and making the right calls. He's had a meteoric rise and as a result is regarded as a CEO succession candidate. Yet there's something about David's style that isn't working.

His team appears to be frayed around the edges, running hard and quite irritable. Many outside David's inner circle of direct reports are grumbling that he isn't involving them in decisions, nor is he encouraging them to develop as leaders. Why is an otherwise smart executive struggling to engage a team that had been firing on all cylinders? What should he do to correct this before it permanently damages his reputation?

Alicia Sanchez is six months into a role leading a team of portfolio managers at a global investment firm. Thrust into a high-pressure situation after her boss was fired, she managed to sail through the first couple of months by falling back on her thoughtful style, active listening skills, and calm demeanor. She's righted the ship and brought stability to the team, but now she's at a crossroad.

The honeymoon is over, and a steady stream of direct reports is in and out of her office, essentially challenging the group's lack of direction. Alicia's boss has called her in to say it's time to create a vision. What is holding Alicia back from inspiring others with a plan they can get behind? Can she rise beyond people management to become a visionary leader? It could mean the difference between a promotion and the fate that met her predecessor.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE “ALL THE LEADER YOU CAN BE”

As you move forward in your career, you stand on a bigger stage—the novelty of the job heightens, and the challenges become greater. Whatever got you here—that combination of technical skill, business acumen, and drive to succeed—will only take you so far. In the ranks of senior leadership, what matters most is your ability to influence, engage, align, mobilize, and inspire people to act. This is how we define executive presence. Research shows that there are precisely 15 qualities of executive presence that you can develop to become all you can be.

The challenge, as you’ll learn in this book, is that there’s no single formula for achieving extraordinary executive presence. As David’s and Alicia’s stories illustrate, no two leaders are alike! However, through a science-based approach, we know that there is a tested, reliable model of presence that we can now rely on to map a path—your path—to great leadership.

This model will help you uncover your own executive presence “identity” and leverage your unique strengths to make an even greater impact on the world, your organization, and the people around you. The science of executive presence will also explain gaps that hold you back from achieving your highest potential.

Although there is no “one way” to achieve extraordinary executive presence, this book will provide a singularly potent guide to developing new strengths and standing out in your industry. You’ll find ample evidence that these are the right facets, as told through the stories of leaders like you who found their road map.

Leaders like David and Alicia have found that path forward and have strengthened their presence to such an extent that they’re now identified as senior-level succession candidates. They’ve learned more than they ever knew about how others perceive their presence and impact, and they’ve translated this knowledge into action.

One of the big messages of this book is that by understanding how your intentions as a leader match up with perceptions, you can learn how to flex your style to gain trust, build alignment, lead change, inspire performance, and drive executional excellence.

## WHY WE HAVE HAD EXECUTIVE PRESENCE WRONG

We can all remember good leaders who have derailed or been stuck in a role, not understanding why. Tory Bellingham’s colleagues in finance

described her as an energetic, outgoing, authentic person. She exuded the polish, demeanor, and professionalism that you'd expect in an SVP of a multinational company. Her direct reports would have said she defined executive presence.

However, those in senior management had their doubts. They saw a smart, promising leader who seemed passive and hesitant. They couldn't be more specific than that, but they cared enough about her future with the company to ask her HR business partner to find her a coach to help her with her executive presence. They were clear about one thing—they'd need to see change to consider her succession as a CFO. Naturally, this feedback was confusing to Tory. What exactly did they mean by executive presence?

Executive presence has long been a mysterious "X factor" in leadership. Intuitively, people know it is important, but why? When asked to define presence, most people say, "I'm not sure. But I know it when I see it!" When pressed for a definition, they offer responses such as "commanding the room," "gravitas," "savvy," "charisma," and "polish."

The trouble is that those words need their own definitions! They don't capture the deeper, more profound reasons to care about executive presence. Thinking about it as polish, image, wardrobe, or even confidence fails to acknowledge the nuanced aspects of a leader's impact that matter to driving organizational results. And after all, what leaders care about most is getting results. Shouldn't there be a better definition? Well, yes . . . there *should!*

Perhaps you've been thinking that one of the most common ways to evaluate executive presence, i.e., the 360-degree model, achieves the goal of accurately assessing it. What's missing from typical 360 instruments is the science behind this specific area of leadership presence and influence. Often it is described as "communication" or "influence." But what precisely is meant by those terms? Since the language is often vague, executive presence has never really been measured, which means it's remained a rather elusive concept.

It's not that up to now we've had the definition *all wrong*; but neither does it seem that we've had it *quite right*. And this is frustrating for leaders as well as those who support talent and help leaders develop. They simply haven't had a reliable way to talk about it, or the language to offer specific, actionable advice to leaders like Tory. The picture has been incomplete. It would be like coming upon a partially finished 1,000-piece puzzle, searching for the missing pieces in the box, only to discover they just aren't there.

Our decision to research executive presence grew out of our desire to find the missing pieces and complete the picture. The result of several years

of research, piloting, and work with clients is a science-based model that brings into full view the elements of presence. The model decodes the mystery by identifying 15 qualities that are tied directly to a leader's ability to drive organizational performance.

Many of these qualities are largely unexplored areas of leadership presence, including aspects of character such as Integrity. They also encompass qualities we often don't talk about, like Concern and Intentionality. We don't ignore the more familiar topics like Confidence and Appearance, but they come more sharply into focus in a nuanced definition, and they are directly connected to drivers of leadership performance.

## **ARE WE GIVING UP ON TRADITIONAL WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?**

Jill Cromwell had moved into a strategy role supporting the president of a large division in her company, and as the pressure mounted, her appearance changed. She looked fatigued and sometimes disheveled. Her casual, rather haphazard clothing choices of late did not reflect her status as a senior leader. She was harried and impatient, which made others wonder whether she had it together enough to do the job. What few knew was that in addition to the demands of the job, she was overwhelmed as a single parent who had a son with a serious, chronic illness.

Appearance and wardrobe send such strong signals about our suitability for leadership that they are often the first topics in conversations about executive presence. Appearance *is* an important factor—it represents 1 of the 15 qualities in the model. We are not abandoning traditional ways of thinking of presence. We are simply opening the aperture.

For instance, in Jill's case, it isn't only her wardrobe choices, but her lack of energy and vigor, as well as some related issues of Restraint and Composure, that gave those around her the feeling that she was crumbling under pressure and not up to the task. The familiar executive presence topics like Appearance are richer and more precise when we have a model that gets to the heart of all the reasons why the signals are wrong.

Before we share with you the entire list in Chapter 1, know that all 15 of these qualities of executive presence live within each and every one of us in varying degrees. But we are not born knowing how to use them. We may not be conscious of whether these qualities are perceived as strengths, or what we need to do to unleash them. To be sure, we all have strengths. We

also usually have some gaps. Understanding your strengths and your gaps is the first step to becoming all you can be. And yes, it is possible for anyone to develop all 15 of these qualities of presence.

## WHY WE WROTE THIS BOOK

Discovering the true essence of executive presence is hardly an academic exercise for my team! We came at it with a very practical mindset. We wanted to develop an approach that leaders could use to help them navigate the challenges of their roles and influence outcomes. The decision to define all but one category with a single word is deliberate, as we wanted to make them both instantly recognizable and relevant to what leaders care about most.

I spent the first two decades of my career in broadcast journalism before launching a firm that specializes in communicative leadership. As CEO and founder of Bates, I have led a team that has brought an innovative approach to coaching leaders in impact and influence. Our team has developed breakthrough tools and processes that hundreds of organizations have now adopted in guiding effective leadership communication. I've published several books prior to this one, including *Speak Like a CEO: Secrets for Commanding Attention and Getting Results*.

Each of the management psychologists who helped create and refine the Bates Executive Presence Index (Bates ExPI) has several decades of experience in executive assessment and development, including a wide variety of roles in consulting to and leading others. Collectively, they have written countless articles and white papers, including several related to executive presence research.

In teaming together, our goal is to share how any leader can achieve a powerful brand of extraordinary executive presence. We have drawn on a rigorous process to design a model and operationalize it in an assessment, taking care to tie everything back to helping the leader appreciate why it matters in the context of his or her business challenges.

We like to tell the stories of leaders who are on their way to becoming the best they can be. We've done our best to bring alive the client case studies that illustrate how theory is applied. For us it's not only about helping leaders achieve their personal goals—though that's important; it's also about helping them accelerate organizational outcomes and make an impact on the world.

## CAN YOU REALLY MEASURE A LEADER'S EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?

There has never been a research-based model of executive presence, so we've never been able to measure it. Coaches and those in the field of leadership development have relied on common sense, observation, anecdote, and guesswork. Yet these alone have only resulted in "approximating" EP rather than zeroing in on it. We don't contradict established theories but instead pull things all together, to complete a picture and show how executive presence can be measured and tied to individual and team performance.

It has taken a few years to operationalize our work, pilot it, roll out programs, and evaluate the results. The satisfaction has been enormous. We've seen what a game changer it is for leaders who experience it. Many of them have told us that this fresh way of looking at leadership effectiveness has brought sharply into focus what they sensed but couldn't put their fingers on.

You're undoubtedly familiar with that old adage, "You can't manage what you can't measure," originated by W. Edwards Deming and often reiterated by such luminaries as Peter Drucker, Larry Bossidy, and Ram Charan. The fact that the model is operationalized in a multirater assessment means it provides accurate data that measures the right things. As a leader you expect accuracy in business data, and you should expect the same when it comes to evaluating your performance. That's what we've strived to provide.

In this book we'll document the many ways that measurement can be used to help organizations, too. We'll share stories of how data can be interpreted to understand the reasons teams are stuck, and we'll consider why initiatives fail, engagement suffers, or leadership cultures are not strong. We believe this will help teams understand how they show up to one another and the impact they have on their organizations. There's also some fascinating data to share that's emerging from our research on women and diverse leaders, which we hope will inform high-potential development. And we'll talk about how to benchmark, track, and provide a return on investment for leadership programs.

While we encourage every reader to consider utilizing an assessment-based approach, you will find great value in simply understanding the model. We've written the book in such a way that whether or not you've completed the assessment (or even intend to), you'll be able to reflect on these qualities and think deeply about how they resonate for you. We want to make this book valuable to anyone on a leadership journey, so we

encourage you to explore the concepts and apply what you're learning to your own circumstances.

Throughout the book, we'll reference the Bates ExPI, our multirater measurement tool with which we gathered much of the data and client case studies. More information on the assessment tool can be found at [www.AlltheLeaderBook.com](http://www.AlltheLeaderBook.com). There, you'll also find a quick preassessment questionnaire that will help you view how the various facets of executive presence map to your unique business situation and challenges. The preassessment questionnaire will provide you with insights based on some of the most common scenarios we find our clients face where executive presence becomes most necessary and relevant.

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH

We take a holistic view of the leader as a person and call out qualities often not discussed. As a result, our model of executive presence offers a far richer, more complete picture of each leader in three dimensions: Character, Substance, and Style. Rather than put you into a box and label you, as many assessments do, we acknowledge the unique individual you are. The technical term for this is an ideographic assessment, which we'll explain. The bottom line is that for purposes of assessing executive presence, we believe that labels do not serve leaders well, as the leaders often get results and conclude, "Well, I guess this is who I am!" Instead, this model is grounded in the philosophy that all these qualities are amenable to change. Leaders can be empowered to take action. That's powerful stuff!

A holistic model of executive presence also raises the bar in the assessment and development of leaders. It fuels productive talent discussions and succession planning meetings. Organizations no longer need to be satisfied with a conversation that starts with, "Well, he's a smart guy but not executive material," or "She just doesn't seem to stand out." It levels the playing field for all leaders—and creates a very specific case for what each leader needs to do to influence and drive results.

## NOT JUST A "NICE-TO-HAVE"

Executive presence has been thought of as icing on the cake—a nice-to-have. This is understandable since it's usually discussed in terms of polish, appearance, wardrobe, and communication skills. While these are

noticeable and important aspects of presence, they do not describe all the ways that leaders align effort and get things done. So it is well worth your time to appreciate these qualities. In fact we would argue it is essential.

What's crucial about getting executive presence right is that when you demonstrate these qualities, your organization thrives. You can replicate those great outcomes as you move up through the ranks. Success doesn't depend on your circumstance, and you don't need to leave it to chance. When you understand the impact you have, you can help people navigate change, align effort, overcome obstacles, and achieve extraordinary things. Executive presence is no longer a nice-to-have!

## **DO EXPERIENCED LEADERS NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT EXECUTIVE PRESENCE?**

If you're well along in your career, you may wonder, "Does this stuff matter to me at this point?" "Isn't this for junior managers?" We would say quite the contrary. When you get established in your leadership career, it matters more than ever. The qualities we are measuring are specific to senior leadership.

We would encourage you to keep alive the learning mindset that has brought you this far. Whether you're new to leadership or you're further along in your career, you'll find stories about people in your situation. These are people who've learned a great deal about themselves. As a result of working on qualities of executive presence, they are experiencing the feeling of having greater influence and impact and achieving more satisfaction in their careers.

In *How the Mighty Fall*, Jim Collins's sequel to *Good to Great*, Collins offers research on why this type of sustained development matters even to CEOs and senior executives. Collins writes that while working on ourselves throughout our careers may feel less urgent or glamorous than facing the latest positive earnings call, it is necessary to our long-term success. Examples abound of organizations that have risen and fallen because leaders started to believe their own press clippings. As leaders we have to guard against a state of *hubris* that can sneak in and replace the discipline that got us there.

Avoiding complacency requires a willingness to appreciate how others perceive us. What separates the good from the great, whether you are a CEO, or a senior leader, or a high-potential leader, is the desire to get better

all the time. When you embrace this mindset, you model it for others, creating a culture that strives to be at its best.

## **FOR LEADERS IN HUMAN RESOURCES**

This book also intends to help those of you in human resources looking to ground your organization's view of executive presence in research and data and, as a result, bring robust, targeted development to the organization. HR leaders who have adopted the model and assessment today tell us it has ignited a richer dialogue on executive presence in their companies. Those in executive development, talent management, succession planning, and high-potential development have actually been innovating with us, enabling us to jointly discover what extraordinary executive presence should look like and how it can be realized in their organizations.

HR leaders know executive management is looking for answers, not guesswork. These executives are seeking to understand which qualities of leadership matter most and how leadership development connects to an organization's strategic objectives. Leadership effectiveness matters to them and is becoming for many organizations a significant, board-level issue. There is a need to make better decisions about talent and succession based on hard data. The organization needs your help to get it right. As an HR leader you can arm those in management with insight that enriches discussions and helps them make better, more informed, confident decisions.

## **HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

You may choose to read as much about the science and theory as you wish. Our intention is to provide evidence of the efficacy of the model, but also to bring all that theory alive through the stories of leaders. From time to time we'll stop and cite our own research and that of others so that you can appreciate the richness of the model. Whether or not this interests every reader, we are pretty sure that anyone picking up this book will recognize and connect with the leaders in these pages because they'll be a lot like people you've known. We've taken care to protect their identities and circumstances, so all the names are purely fictional. While we've been true enough to the stories to make them real, we've altered some facts in order to protect confidentiality.

We hope *All the Leader You Can Be* becomes a helpful addition to the libraries of leaders who are wrestling with complex challenges and striving to achieve their highest potential. If you're such a leader, you can feel confident that this approach is grounded in proven science and that you can rely on it.

We also hope the book will be a timely addition to the literature on leadership development, offering insight to those Herculean tasks such as helping leaders who are transitioning to new roles or hitting difficult points in their career. We believe it's going to improve the conversation about the leadership pipeline and succession. It will also have application to employee engagement, diversity, and inclusion.

You can read all the way through or skip around. Here are some suggestions:

- › Every reader should look at Chapters 2, 3, and 4 in Part 1 to understand how we define the three dimensions and 15 corresponding qualities of executive presence—this is important because while the qualities are intuitive, they are detailed and nuanced.
- › Some readers will want to start with Chapter 1 to learn about how we developed the model. We share the theory behind it and our process of researching, validating, and piloting the assessment to bring it to life.
- › Part 2, “Why It Matters,” has four chapters to help leaders see how the model is applied in various situations and in individual development, as well as how it is used in building teams and leading change.
- › Part 3, “How to Get There,” looks at application of the model for senior leaders, high potentials, women, and diverse leaders. We think you'll find some interesting new research that will challenge conventional wisdom.
- › “Final Thoughts” suggests ways to apply what we have learned about executive presence to the challenges our organizations face now and in the future.

We're excited to publish this book because we are committed to helping leaders adapt and grow to become all they can be. You no longer need to settle for fuzzy definitions or homegrown theories about executive presence.

We hope you'll see that we're measuring the right stuff and that it will make a difference in your career.

As Michelangelo carved the *David*, he said that the image lived inside the stone and that his role as an artist was to reveal it. And so it is in our quest to become the leader we were meant to be. Our task is to carve away what is unnecessary and may be hiding the best of who we can be. The leader inside you is waiting to be revealed.

So let's get started by understanding precisely how we arrived at a research-based definition of executive presence.

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**PART**

**1**

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## **What It Is**

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## Breakthrough

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### A Research-Based Model of Executive Presence

*We keep moving forward, opening new doors and trying new things because we're curious, and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.*

—WALT DISNEY

Ann-Marie Livingston told her coach she was on a mission to be promoted to SVP. She was a high-potential leader, having demonstrated what her own firm described as an “off-the-charts” ability to execute. She’d been given a small part of the business and quickly grown it from \$1 billion to \$4 billion. Yet her boss, Tom, didn’t seem eager to discuss the next career move with her.

No longer satisfied waiting for Tom to recognize her readiness for the next assignment, Ann-Marie decided to take the matter into her own hands. She had been told that communication skills were a weak point for her. She wasn’t sure what that meant, but she assumed it was presentation skills. She made it clear when she called our coach that she had “no time for small talk.” She wanted to fix this quickly, and she’d evaluate the coach’s performance based on whether she got that promotion.

The frustration Ann-Marie felt is certainly not uncommon; most leaders have felt at one time or another that they were stalled because their talents weren’t appreciated. Lacking specific feedback and actionable advice, what is a leader like Ann-Marie supposed to do if she wants to move ahead?

As every leader knows, technical know-how and management capability are the price of entry. Succeeding in running a business should position a leader for the next assignment. Yet often there's something else that holds leaders back. This is why we decided to develop a research-based model that would unlock the secrets of executive presence. We wanted to bring science to the task of helping leaders develop the qualities that matter most.

Most people readily accept the notion that executive presence is a lot more than showing up looking and acting the part or even making a good presentation. But what is "it"? As we discussed in the Introduction, there hasn't been a rich, descriptive way to capture the "it" factor in leadership. Describing executive presence was difficult, even daunting, for leaders and those who supported them. However, we felt that with some due diligence and careful analysis, we could turn "I know it when I see it" into a definition that leaders like Ann-Marie could count on.

At the beginning of 2013, we formally embarked on the project, applying a rigorous process to assess what executive presence really is. We hoped that we could develop a research-based model that would be the basis for the design of a multirater assessment tool that measures executive presence. The result was the Bates Executive Presence Model and the assessment tool, the Bates Executive Presence Index (ExPI). The Bates Model (referenced later in this chapter) has been piloted, validated, launched, and tested and is now integrated into leadership development in global companies in a multitude of industries.

We grew even more confident as we tested the model that it would be the answer to evaluating leaders, even top performers like Ann-Marie who had been on the fast track but needed help to move forward. We knew that the reasons leaders advance or not are complex, but we also believed they were discoverable.

We have heard our human resources clients describe how they huddle around the table in executive talent reviews, talking about leaders like Ann-Marie who are "in the pipeline." It's a challenge for HR to explain why a leader may or may not be successful in future roles, even when they're armed with the individual's 360 feedback and results of personality-based assessments. Many of these do not go far enough in helping frame the full picture of leaders like Ann-Marie. They don't get to the heart of what will make her successful in the senior ranks.

At the beginning of our process, we sat down with senior management and leadership development professionals to have them describe the

challenge in detail. We wanted to appreciate how they were talking about executive presence as a factor in leadership success and identify what was missing from their current approach to assessment.

They often described executive presence with a smile—“command of the room,” “image,” and “savvy.” They also used words like “inspiring,” “great communicator,” and “confident.” When we asked, “What does the whole package look like?” they were able to conjure up examples of those who “have it.” They said that they knew executive presence when they saw it *and* that they believed it made a difference.

Executive presence had become a hot topic of conversation when leaders like Ann-Marie were standing on a bigger stage. Such leaders were highly visible but had less opportunity to interact with people one-on-one. The way they carried themselves and responded to situations was put to the test. Under pressure to perform under the proverbial microscope, everything was noted, and the results were often mixed. What was missing was how to describe it.

As a result, senior management and those in leadership development were often at a loss to offer meaningful guidance and advice on executive presence. Since the term was loosely defined and not well understood, they often resorted to suggesting the leader watch and model leaders with a “stronger executive presence” or who “projected the qualities of a senior executive.” But then what? They knew that their advice sometimes landed with a thud and that the coaching and executive presence programs they offered did not yield enough results. They often admitted they were stabbing in the dark.

We wanted to acknowledge this complexity they were noticing and finally make it clear, with a model and language that is both descriptive and intuitive. The model had to be stated in terms of observable behaviors that inform others’ judgments about leaders. The language and questions in the assessment had to sound right to leaders and connect to what they thought was important—a measure called “face validity.” We set out to create a model that both described the nuances of presence and also organized the categories, defined terms, and made sense to leaders.

Our aim, at the end of the research phase, was to create a model that people could look at and declare, “I get it!” and “This matters!” If we could do that, we were pretty sure we could design a multirater assessment and provide leaders with hard data. If we were measuring the right stuff, the data and interpretation would guide leaders toward a productive path of development.

While Ann-Marie's organization had a leadership competency model, which was the basis of her company's customized 360 assessment, the results she'd seen a year and a half earlier hadn't given her a clue about why her boss wasn't promoting her now. We recommended that she complete a Bates ExPI assessment in a pilot program, to get a clearer, sharper view of the qualities of presence and influence that could be at the heart of the matter. After reviewing the ExPI report with her, it was clear why Ann-Marie and her boss were so far apart on her readiness. Her perceptions differed significantly from those of others, including Tom. We learned even more as we conducted our initial interview with Ann-Marie to understand her circumstances and challenges.

## **ANN-MARIE'S CHALLENGE**

What we learned was that Ann-Marie's direct reports were happy to be on a winning team. They would say she was impressive on many levels—energetic, engaging, confident, and self-assured. She always found a way to get things done. But often her style created angst. Progress came at a price. Ann-Marie was not known for her people skills or her humility. She had the answers, and she didn't abide fools. Some people were downright afraid of her. She was impatient with direct reports and could even run roughshod over the best on her team. One of them described her as “maniacally focused.”

Still, her bias to action and her drive for results were often rewarded. Results were results, and they had enabled her to get promoted up through several management positions. Her boss was reluctant to mess with success so the senior managers kept her in the role. But they were concerned about the toll that her style was taking on the team, and privately they didn't think she could take on a larger organization.

Could Ann-Marie moderate her style, improve her leadership effectiveness, and still deliver business results? What exactly would she need to do to change? What qualities of leadership presence did she need to develop to be successful in running a larger, more complex part of the business? Questions like these are the ones we often hear in discussions about high-potential leaders. Leaders like Ann-Marie who are performing and hoping to move ahead deserve better answers. Let us explain how we built the model so we could be assured that we could answer those questions.

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## THE NEXT STEP: CONDUCTING THEORETICAL RESEARCH TO BUILD A MODEL

After the interviews with organizations, the next step in cracking the code of executive presence was to look at accepted scientific theory. This required an extensive review of empirical research in management, psychology, communication, social action theory, philosophy, and ethics. We intentionally cast the net widely into an array of disciplines, because all of them touch on some important aspect of executive presence, including ways we win trust, build goodwill, and inspire the best in others.

In doing this work, we stand on the shoulders of people who for decades have been researching and guiding thinking about leadership. All these experts in leadership and management have advanced our appreciation of what modern leaders must be.

We wanted to understand how psychology could inform us about a leader's presence. We reviewed the research on social action theory, because leadership is a social organizational phenomenon. We looked at philosophy and ethics, because a growing chorus of leadership experts are talking about the importance of character in leadership effectiveness. By melding together this array of seemingly disparate disciplines, we hoped to bring innovation to this field of study.

## A NEW SCIENCE-BASED DEFINITION

As we pulled it all together, the fog started to clear, and we landed on what we hoped would resonate for others as a concise, clear answer to the questions "What is executive presence?" and "Why does it matter?" This is where we arrived and is what we believe gets to the heart of both what "it" is and why we should care:

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**Executive presence:** The qualities of a leader that engage, inspire, align, and move people to act.

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When we returned to test this out in our next round of meetings and conversations with leaders and professionals, we heard an immediate and resounding "Yes!" Heads were nodding, and people told us that it was a relief to have such a simple but powerful way to describe it. What was most exciting was that the above definition acknowledged why executive presence matters and how a leader's presence is tied to organizational success.

## THE NEXT STEP: BUILDING THE EP MODEL

We had scratched out a picture of a leader with three dimensions, based on a working hypothesis that there was more to executive presence than meets the eye. Our intention was to draw a multidimensional model. We wanted to show the overt aspects of presence, such as Appearance, but also incorporate qualities that are fundamental to who we are as people, the qualities that enable us to establish trust and win credibility with others.

We describe these three dimensions as Character, Substance, and Style. Once we had these, we found that the research converged to produce 15 qualities of presence, 5 in each dimension, that describe a systematic way of thinking about presence (see Figure 1.1).

### CHARACTER

Character is a less studied—some would say neglected—topic in leadership research, but now there is a growing body of literature on the role of vital character variables in leadership.<sup>1</sup> Character includes person-based dispositions in moral development, temperament, and interpersonal relations. The five facets of Character that make up this foundational dimension of executive presence in our model are Authenticity, Integrity, Concern, Restraint, and Humility. These variables often figure into models of exemplary leadership.<sup>2</sup>

### SUBSTANCE

Substance includes cultivated qualities of adult development specific to the role of executive leadership: Practical Wisdom, Confidence, Composure, Resonance, and Vision. They are the pragmatic and aspirational qualities of mind (Practical Wisdom and Vision),<sup>3</sup> a mature capacity for risk assessment and prudent decision making (Confidence), and the poised abilities to lead others through tough times (Composure).<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most nuanced facet is the social-emotional savvy to read and respond to others, to connect with them, qualities (Resonance) often categorized under the heading of EQ.<sup>5</sup>

### STYLE

The Style facets focus on the active, iterative ways that leaders encourage a course of execution. The mere physical presence of the leader—his or her energy, demeanor, and nonverbal signals (Appearance)—sets a tone. Then the three interlinked aspects of dialogical communication—Intentionality,

FIGURE 1.1 | THE BATES EXECUTIVE PRESENCE MODEL

<b>Dimensions of Executive Presence</b>			
<b>Facets of Behavior</b>	<b>Character</b> —Qualities of the leader as a person that are fundamental to his or her identity and give us reason to trust him or her.	<b>Substance</b> —Cultivated qualities of mature leadership that inspire commitment, inform action, and lead to above-and-beyond effort.	<b>Style</b> —Overt, skill-based patterns of communicative leadership that build motivation and that shape and sustain performance.
	<b>Authenticity</b> —Being real, genuine, transparent, and sincere in one’s relations with others; and revealing the experience and beliefs that define oneself.	<b>Practical Wisdom</b> —Displaying highly honed qualities of insight and judgment that get to the heart of issues and produce prudent decisions.	<b>Appearance</b> —Looking and acting like an able executive, projecting energy, and handling social situations with tact.
	<b>Integrity</b> —Acting with fidelity to one’s values and beliefs, living up to high standards of morality, veracity, and promise keeping.	<b>Confidence</b> —Being self-assured in decision making and action; ready to accept the risk and responsibility for taking timely action.	<b>Intentionality</b> —Clarifying focus, keeping actions aligned and on track, all without stifling dissent or neglecting needs to adjust course.
	<b>Concern</b> —Demonstrating interest in others, encouraging adaptive development, and promoting a healthy sustainable culture.	<b>Composure</b> —Proving to be steady in a crisis, able to calm and focus others, and to bring objectivity and perspective to critical decisions.	<b>Inclusiveness</b> —Actively involving others, welcoming diverse points of view, encouraging ownership in mission, and empowering initiative.
	<b>Restraint</b> —Displaying a calm disposition, characterized by reasonableness and by avoidance of emotional extremes or impulsiveness.	<b>Resonance</b> —Connecting with others; attentive, attuned, and responsive to feelings, motivations, and thoughts; deepening alignment.	<b>Interactivity</b> —Promoting an interpersonal style of dialog and timely exchange of information and questions to coordinate action.
	<b>Humility</b> —Showing awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses, openness to others, and a belief that all persons have worth.	<b>Vision</b> —Generating an inspiring, enterprisewide picture of what could be; recognizing emerging trends, and engaging all in strategy.	<b>Assertiveness</b> —Speaking up, valuing constructive conflict, and raising issues directly without shutting others down.

Interactivity, and Inclusiveness—sustain focus, check alignment, and ensure engagement. The leader thereby informs adaptive changes and prompts timely course corrections. When doing challenging work, there will be moments of disagreement, tension, and uncertainty, and that is where leaders must be ready to surface issues and pursue difficult conversations without delay (Assertiveness).

### **DIMENSIONS AND FACETS OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE**

Each facet is like a diamond. We measure each in six distinct ways. We do this for a purpose, because each quality of presence is nuanced and multi-dimensional. Like a diamond, a leader can be perceived as having some but not all of the attributes of that facet. A diamond's value is based not only on carat size but on its clarity, cut, and color. A one-carat diamond may be worth more than a two-carat diamond if it's superior in those other attributes, and any diamond could receive an outstanding rating on one element while getting a much lower rating on another.

When we built the model, we made a conscious decision not to be redundant by measuring the same quality of presence six times. We didn't think that approach would offer as rich a view of a leader's presence. Instead, we measured several different aspects of each facet. We wanted to help leaders have a fuller picture of their strengths and gaps in each facet. This specificity would help to guide their development path. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, we'll go in depth in describing each facet of the dimensions and share many examples of the ways these qualities show up as well as how they interact.

### **MEASURING ANN-MARIE'S STRENGTHS AND GAPS**

Of course, looking at a model wasn't going to get leaders like Ann-Marie unstuck or help them become the leaders they could be. It had to be operationalized to provide data through assessment. This way we can learn how others view leaders like Ann-Marie—where their strengths and gaps are and how their self-perceptions and the perceptions of others diverge.

When Ann-Marie completed an assessment, people saw her strengths in the facets of Appearance, Confidence, and Intentionality. The open comments section of the ExPI backed up the ratings in the 90 items on the survey: “You can rely on her to be the voice of reason in difficult times,” and “In a world in which there are too many meetings, Ann-Marie's are always focused and productive.”

The assessment also highlighted lower-rated facets, what you might call Ann-Marie's challenges. Among them was Humility, a category where she also gave herself low ratings. Her boss, Tom, gave Ann-Marie low ratings in Humility as well—interesting, as the topic had never come up in their performance reviews.

While this is interesting, how are we to know that Humility or any other facet as defined and assessed with the ExPI should be relied upon for guiding the development of a leader like Ann-Marie? What evidence is there that Humility is important—or that we are asking the right questions to measure the multiple ways in which it manifests and makes a difference for leaders?

## **THE BATES ExPI: ASSESSMENT, RELIABILITY, AND VALIDITY**

To ensure we were measuring the right variables (facets) for each dimension, we were quite deliberate in our research methods. First, we reviewed the relevant literature, including the best in recent empirical studies and theory development from around the world. We wanted to identify the variables that best represented the content and specified the meaning of each dimension. And we wanted to rely upon variables that were well studied and were shown to be associated with leadership effectiveness.

Next we closely examined how these variables had been defined and how well they conveyed what is typically meant and sought after when stakeholders look for evidence of Character, Substance, and Style. We favored the practical and contextual language of working executives and those they lead. We wanted to ensure that the language was sufficiently nuanced and rang true in the real-world operating environment of business leaders.

In order to further bolster our efforts to define and measure each facet, we enlisted the support of an independent panel of experts, 10 PhD-level experts in executive assessment and development. They independently evaluated the model and a large pool of proposed items for measuring the facets. Not only did they have extensive experience in the technical “art” of leadership assessment; they each had extensive experience in the world of business leadership.

At the conclusion of this rigorous research and development process, we were confident that we had built an assessment that would accurately measure the “right stuff” and do it reliably. But we still needed to prove it in a pilot program. We did that too, and thus was born the first research-based

and scientifically validated assessment tool for measuring executive presence and influence, the Bates ExPI.

It is a multirater feedback survey because it measures perceptions of the leader's impact. It is designed for use with senior executives and those whom management believes may be the organization's future senior leaders. The ExPI measures self-perceptions of the leader and the perceptions that others have of him or her on all 15 facets of the model. It contains 90 items, 6 for each facet. You will find a summary description of the pilot and the robust reliability metrics obtained for all 15 facet scales in Exhibit 1.1.

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**EXHIBIT 1.1** | ExPI PILOT AND RELIABILITY

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Our rigorous research-based approach to assessment design enabled us to ensure what is referred to as "content validity," that is, our ability to measure as fully and completely as we can the phenomenon of executive presence. In doing so, we also made it more difficult to achieve the other key standard of assessment quality, i.e., "reliability."

Just as one can artificially drive up reliability measures, the values of the alpha statistic in the table below, by writing highly redundant items, one can lower the statistic by developing items that are more nuanced and reflect distinct aspects of the facet in question. For that reason, we were especially pleased with being able to achieve both.

Cronbach's alpha is the standard statistical measure of reliability for assessment scales. The evaluation of reliability is fundamental and important because it lets the user know whether the assessment tool in question is stable and can be counted on to produce valid results consistently in repeated trials. It indicates that we can count on it to work consistently over time and across situations.

In our pilot, 100 leaders from 20 companies representing several industry sectors (financial services, life sciences, professional services, high-tech manufacturing, and consumer products) were assessed by over 900 raters. Two population segments were represented: senior executives (55 percent) and midlevel executives (45 percent). Titles for the former participants included SVP, EVP, and other C-level designations. Titles for the midlevel included director and VP.

Most of the companies were global in their scope of operation, and individual leaders represented several geographic regions of the world, including North America, South America, Continental Europe, the United

Kingdom, and Asia. Most organizations were experiencing significant challenges associated with growth and change. Some were undergoing restructuring driven by changing or expanding markets. Virtually all business functions were represented including marketing, sales, finance, operations, engineering, IT, and HR.

Cronbach's alpha was the measure of reliability applied in our analysis of the pilot data. The results reported in the table below indicate that the ExPI is sound in its scale construction. These statistics have been computed on multiple occasions since the pilot and with a much larger sample of several hundred leaders and several thousand raters, and the reliability results remain strong.

Facet	Cronbach's Alpha	Description of Result
Authenticity	.747	Good
Integrity	.875	Good
Concern	.823	Good
Restraint	.846	Good
Humility	.845	Good
Practical Wisdom	.877	Good
Confidence	.821	Good
Composure	.849	Good
Resonance	.823	Good
Vision	.849	Good
Appearance	.834	Good
Intentionality	.815	Good
Inclusiveness	.870	Good
Interactivity	.803	Good
Assertiveness	.789	Good

## WHY THIS MATTERS TO ANN-MARIE

When we think about the leaders whose names come up in succession planning, people like Ann-Marie are normally at the top of the list. They have a track record of driving execution and delivering results. But management needs to take a step back and consider other credible data that will predict their future success. Some are the harder-driving qualities for which Ann-Marie is known. Others are the social-emotional dynamics of interaction, facets of presence where she comes up a bit short.

Intuitively, CEOs and top management, including boards, acknowledge that both the “hard” and “soft” variables of leadership are important. But it was quite important to show that this approach could actually tease out these qualities, and that they were the right ones, because it was grounded in research. We believed that once all this was evident, organizations would be eager to adopt it and use it as a tool to develop their executive talent pipeline.

This proved to be the case because leaders like Ann-Marie want to understand more than just how effective they are in their current roles. They want to know how they’ll do in their next assignment. And their organizations want to know the same thing. For reasons that will become clear as you read on, Ann-Marie’s previously undiscovered gaps would make it difficult for her to win trust and goodwill—or get the benefit of the doubt as she moved to take on a new assignment. She would have a very hard time engaging a larger group, getting people’s best effort, and sustaining momentum over time. But this wouldn’t have been predictable without the assessment.

The ExPI is designed to uncover those harder-to-see, but equally important, predictors of success. Giving the organization, including management, a language for discussing executive presence is likely to make the conversation on the leader’s readiness more robust. It helps management make a thoughtful choice on that leader’s next stretch assignment. And importantly, it helps the leader see precisely what to do to improve his or her impact on an organization.

## **WHY THE EXECUTIVE PRESENCE ASSESSMENT IS REFERRED TO AS AN “INDEX” (BATES ExPI)**

Calling our assessment an “index” is probably worth a brief explanation, since the word choice both is accurate and aligns well with our intentions at a deeper level. This is rather technical, and some would say “geeky,” but we’ll take just a little space here to go into it. The modern definition of an index is associated with financial metrics, such as a single number or statistical indicator that is derived from a more complex formula. An example might be the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which gives us a shorthand indication of how the stock market is performing.

However, the classical and lexical meaning of the term “index” also governs its usage and is on point. Index derives from the Latin *indicare*,

meaning to indicate or to point out—think of the index finger. The ExPI is an assessment tool that points out or indicates qualities of executive presence. Unlike the rather “thin” or abstract meaning of a number or statistic, this ExPI result “points out” descriptively rich or “thick” aspects of behavior in language. The index guides us to practice and master aspects of behavior in situation-specific ways.

This is what distinguishes qualitative research methods from the more traditional methods associated with experimental science, which is largely suited to measurement of quantities. You first have to reduce the qualitative and concrete to the quantitative and abstract. That is where the “thinning” of meaning is achieved that makes quantitative precision achievable.

While such thin meaning is great for explaining things like mass, density, and volume, when you get into the human sciences, using reductionist methods from physical science may mean you lose some of the most important and relevant sources of insight that guide leadership action. Assessments should clarify the original and true complexity of the situation. If they don’t, then you can’t make a case for a path to actionable development.

The explanation above may be more than some readers want to know, but we thought it would be fun to share, and for some readers it is very important. Now, let’s look at one of the distinguishing features of the model and assessment—how it gets to the individual leader’s executive presence identity.

## **WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT ANN-MARIE?**

Ann-Marie might cut a familiar figure in the halls of management of many organizations. Her profile is one we recognize as hard-driving, focused, motivated. These are the leaders who get the tough assignments.

But it’s also true that no two leaders are exactly the same. Ann-Marie is unique. The reasons she has succeeded in her role, in her organization, have to do with the combination of qualities she brings and the situations where these qualities are applied. Likewise, her gaps are her own, and probably explain why Tom was not regarding her as ready for the next assignment.

A month after we began coaching Ann-Marie, that rather impulsive side of her rose up again, and she shared with the coach that she was planning to march into Tom’s office the next day to demand a promotion. She had learned that one of her peers was leaving the company, and

she believed she was the “best, most proven candidate” to take over that business, worth \$12 billion in revenue, four times the size of her current business. Her game plan was to explain to Tom that she “deserved it.” The coach paused after Ann-Marie shared her plan, and responded with a simple observation: “If I were Tom, and you came in to me with this argument, it would not work.”

Ann-Marie was taken aback but realized as a result of the coach’s reaction that she probably did need to rethink it. The coach urged her to look again at the results of the ExPI and consider how Tom might view that behavior. Remember her lower ratings on Humility, as well as Restraint, Vision, and Practical Wisdom? Not only did she need to show more of that in her day-to-day interactions with the team; she needed to appreciate how such an approach would be perceived by her boss, even if it was a personally frustrating situation.

What would make her approach all the more important now was that Tom would be comparing her to the leader who was about to leave. He was in many ways Ann-Marie’s alter ego—notably calm, great under fire, able to help his team navigate changes and make deliberate, smart decisions. Ann-Marie’s driving, take-no-prisoners style would not fly in that environment. She had to address these aspects of her presence, or she would in all likelihood crash and burn.

## WHY WE KNOW LEADERS LIKE ANN-MARIE CAN CHANGE

The Bates ExPI *encourages* expression of the distinctive individual differences that often characterize leadership at the top. A core philosophy of the approach is that we all have our own executive presence identity, as perceived by others. However, it is amenable to change. Unlike DNA, our EP consists of a core set of tendencies we project and convey through our words, nonverbal behavior, and manner of interacting with others.

Unlike biological DNA, our EP is within the scope of our control to shape and hone rather quickly. As you may know, in the field of biology, epigenetics represents the mechanism of adaptive change. However, this takes generations. Changing your EP identity doesn’t take long—especially if you have been provided with data that create a heightened awareness, if you’re able to get help with the right intervention, and if you have supportive people around you encouraging your development. Leaders like Ann-Marie find that these conditions make it possible to experiment, mod-

ify their behaviors, and notice pretty quickly what a positive impact these changes have on the perceptions of their leadership. This encourages them to adapt their style and create new habits of interactions with others.

## LESSONS FROM THE BATES ExPI PILOT STUDY

In addition to our technical goals for validating the ExPI as an instrument, our pilot study aimed to test procedures for maximizing the practical impact of the results for individuals and their organizations. As a matter of fact, Ann-Marie's company became one of the early adopters of the new model and assessment.

The specificity and practical relevance that emerged from the feedback and joint interpretation of results with leaders like Ann-Marie were perhaps the most powerful indications of impact we observed initially. The leaders were simply able to get deeper faster, which enlightened them and motivated them to invest in development. With human resource development professionals, there was another level of impact.

As we sat down to interpret the aggregate data with the early adopters, they affirmed that the ExPI offered a rich, nuanced view of leadership presence, one that was distinct from other assessments. We did this without compromising commitments to individual confidentiality—looking at group themes and reporting what we were learning and how it was connected to pressing business issues in front of them.

One novel element that enabled us to connect the assessment to organizational success was the rigor and discipline of the orientation and interpretation. We sat down with the leaders individually, not only to orient them to the report but also to have them tell us about themselves, their backgrounds, their business imperatives, and their measures of success. These discussions also gave us clues about their readiness, interest, and engagement in the process. Many commented that this was far different from the process of getting other assessment feedback.

This approach also allowed us to develop some working hypotheses about how to interpret the data within the context of the leader's role, key relationships, and business challenges. Doing so made it easier to take an abundance of data and find the vital few themes and leading threads. This process emerged as we met and worked jointly with the leaders.

When we sat down to jointly interpret the results with each leader, we asked questions and listened. This enlivened and enriched the discussion

and enabled us to build rapport and trust. The leaders saw that the data was easily relatable to their current situations. They were already seeing how they might start to experiment with new approaches. Appreciating the relevance of what was in the data made them more inclined to want to pursue avenues of development.

In our meeting with Ann-Marie, we were able to jointly connect the dots easily and figure out how her strengths and gaps would help and hinder her if she were to move into a bigger role. She started to see the validity of Tom's point of view in these areas for development: Restraint, Vision, and Practical Wisdom were legitimate concerns. We encouraged her not to take action right away but to seek to learn from him, and others, how and when her less productive behaviors "showed up" and the impact they had on others. By stepping back and having these postassessment conversations, Ann-Marie could slow down, discover, accept, experiment, and adapt.

As a result of this process, leaders like Ann-Marie who took part in the pilot saw the impact that developing and projecting somewhat unfamiliar qualities of presence could have on their careers. In addition, their sponsors typically shared with delight that their internal clients were already reflecting positive adaptive changes in attitude and action stemming from new and important insights.

The next step for Ann-Marie was to help her build the business case for her promotion. She needed to show that she had a plan (Vision) and the thoughtful approach to executing it (Practical Wisdom) to lead the organization. She also needed to prepare for a conversation with Tom about how she could demonstrate the social-emotional qualities like Restraint and Humility. Ann-Marie took her time to gather information and then develop a proposal for Tom. And she talked with the coach about how to gather herself and prepare for a thoughtful conversation with him.

She now had a plan that highlighted a vision and enterprise view, and this actually made her feel calmer, so she would be able to appear more deliberate in her meeting. She decided to acknowledge some of these shortcomings—that she needed to listen to her team, appreciate other points of view, bring a calm, rational side to deliberations, and not over-react to bad news or stress. During the meeting she asked Tom to notice and make her aware of times when she was hitting the mark and when she wasn't. By taking her time and stepping back (Restraint), she wasn't racing into his office with a demand, but rather, showing up with a well-developed plan (Vision).

## CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PILOT STUDY

Overall we saw that the data from all the leaders was unearthing and explaining those harder-to-get-at notions of how each leader's presence was felt in a situational context. Data made the issues easier to discuss. Pilot participants had a fuller picture of the felt effect of their presence. They understood at a much deeper level how the strengths might be leveraged and the gaps addressed. The discussion within the business context created a better conversation with the leader and the organization.

We were also able to begin to map some of the aggregate themes emerging with groups of leaders in each organization. We could review quantitative and qualitative data to paint a picture of how executive presence might be a factor in enterprisewide leadership challenges. Again, we were able to do so without compromising the confidentiality of individual leaders. Very often this validated assumptions about organizational issues that had surfaced in engagement studies or organizational surveys.

When the pilot was complete, we had confidence that we had a practical, sensible tool for evaluating executive presence, and also for helping organizations explain what executive presence as defined in the model means to their organizations. We discovered it had value not only for each leader in appreciating how his or her presence could drive organizational performance, but also for the organizations in helping to find new ways to think and talk about it.

As a result, many participating organizations started to incorporate this model into coaching and executive development immediately, and they became our partners in pioneering new applications. Throughout the book, you'll read numerous case studies of leaders who have benefited from their organization's willingness to bring innovation to its approaches to leadership development.

We were able to affirm through focused experimentation that the Bates ExPI can be deployed to great effect with an executive leadership population—from high potentials to the C-suite. For these leaders, most of whom had already participated in the early-stage assessment and development experiences, the ExPI added a new dimension to their development at a time when they were expected to have an even greater impact on the organization.

Around the table in discussions about promotion, onboarding, and integration, the ExPI is also creating a new conversation. Those in succession planning and talent management are finding that it guides good

decisions and helps them understand how to help leaders succeed. It also lets them see the other more elusive factors that will help them put the right people in the right place at the right time.

## HOW IT WORKED OUT FOR ANN-MARIE

Ann-Marie eventually met with Tom to share her plan for the new organization. Within a few days, Tom came back and told her he believed that she'd already demonstrated both new awareness and a noticeable change in behavior. A few days later, Tom announced that she would get the promotion, taking over that \$12 billion business. And Ann-Marie now knew she had a supportive boss, as well as the support she needed to maintain the course, including a coach who could help her successfully transition to the new role.

We hope we've offered helpful background on the development of the model and assessment to give you confidence in the credibility of the approach. Again, we know that some readers have a keen interest in the research methodology, while others are anxious to move on and get a handle on these qualities of presence.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Coming next, you're going to meet more leaders who, like Ann-Marie, are on a journey a lot like yours. We hope their stories will clarify why these qualities of presence really matter, how they are tied to career success and drive organizational performance. We hope we'll stimulate your thinking about how to apply the lessons to your own leadership.

In this part of the book (Part 1), we look at the 15 qualities by dimension. Think as you read about whether and how the situations remind you of similar issues you've faced. Consider whether some of these leaders' challenges could describe people you know, especially those who report to you or look to you for advice. We hope that each story will inspire you to see what it means to become all you can be.

Let's move ahead to look closely at the first dimension of executive presence—Character.

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## Character

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### The Fundamentals That Build Trust and Goodwill

*Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there.*

—STEVIE WONDER

Hired as vice president of customer services for a North American manufacturer, Nancy Nissan had a mandate to launch a new national service center. Her background in engineering and her reputation for smoothly managing operations had made her the choice of the CEO and senior team. They felt Nancy's warm, caring, passionate leadership style would be a very good cultural fit. The company was known as a nice place to work; the average tenure of employees was more than 20 years.

Nancy clicked immediately with the 160 employees working under her in the reorganized function. Her peers and direct reports described her as a breath of fresh air, and they loved her contagious enthusiasm. However, 10 months into the role, the new service center was not yet operational. Nancy did not have experience in a startup, and it showed. Her boss and peers were frustrated. They couldn't get a straight answer on the delays.

Human resources suggested that the company hire Nancy a coach. When we came on board, we recommended that she complete the executive presence assessment. Nancy said the results were eye-opening: "What people love about me, they also don't like about me." One of the most important themes in Nancy's report came up in the dimension of Character.

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**Character:** Qualities of the leader as a person that are fundamental to his or her identity and give us reason to trust him or her.

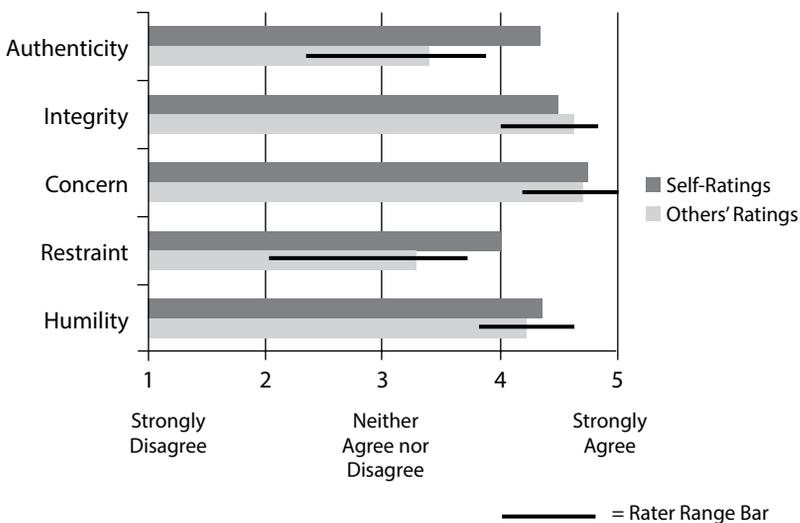
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If we had to sum up the Character dimension, we'd say that it's the trust that wins goodwill. These are qualities we develop early in life, often in our family of origin. A recent study found that when forming our early impressions of others, we rely more on an appraisal of their character than of their personality. Those who have been studying character in leadership have concluded the same thing. Character matters, a lot.

When others appraise our character positively in everyday life, they are more likely to form a bond with us. Similarly, leaders perceived as high in character find people in their organizations willing to go above and beyond to realize mission-driven goals. The binding effect that character evokes is always important. But when things aren't going well, this connection can be even more critical. At these moments others are inclined to dig a little deeper and give their leaders the benefit of the doubt.

As you can see in Figure 2.1, Nancy's raters gave her high scores in some facets of Character, such as Integrity and Concern. However, they gave her very low ratings on Authenticity and Restraint. Let's first focus on the quality of Authenticity as defined in the EP model, to understand what

**FIGURE 2.1** | NANCY NISSAN: ExPI RATINGS ON CHARACTER



it is and how perceptions of Nancy's gaps were hindering her ability to get things done.

## AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is the quality of being real, genuine, and sincere in one's relations and interactions with others. It involves revealing who we are and what underlies our point of view, and it thereby contributes to our overall identity as a person and a leader. Think of the verb "authenticate," which is the act of confirming the true origin and authorship of something.

The construct of authenticity has been defined by some researchers as consisting of four elements: (1) "relational transparency," presenting oneself transparently rather than as a "fake" version of oneself; (2) "internalized moral perspective," a kind of self-regulation that ensures that one operates consistent with his or her values; (3) "balanced processing," objectively considering all data and information when making decisions, even those that may not reflect well upon oneself; and (4) "self-awareness," a readiness and willingness to recognize and reveal one's strengths and weaknesses.

Nancy's issues in Authenticity seemed to fall in the range of relational transparency and balanced processing. Let's dive into that and understand what it means. Nancy was passionate about the mission to launch the customer service center. However, she came across as a bit of a cheerleader, with a frenetic energy that her team did not experience as "real." This prompted people to wonder whether they were getting a "fake" version of Nancy.

Her relentlessly upbeat demeanor called into question the balanced processing. She came into every meeting with the intention to rally the troops, whether or not things were going well. Her direct reports and peers "got" the importance of a "can-do" spirit, but they remarked in comments in the assessment that it felt strange, out of sync, and a little desperate. To paraphrase a popular comedy show, they thought she should perhaps "curb her enthusiasm."

Authentic leadership is tricky for leaders who see their roles as keeping everybody "up" all the time. You might say leaders like Nancy overuse this strength. Of course, leaders like Nancy feel a responsibility to keep their teams feeling positive and engaged. However, the heart of authenticity is to find ways to encourage "authentic dialogue" because it fosters adaptive learning.

A leader who promotes authentic dialogue is less concerned about the means than modifying and encouraging iterative efforts at solving a prob-

lem. In a new business venture, this has to happen, but it was not a skill in Nancy's wheelhouse. She was afraid that if she acknowledged issues, she would be succumbing to pessimism or negativity. The result was summed up in one person's comment: "Nancy isn't on the same planet."

### GETTING "REAL"

We knew that Nancy must be feeling frustrated and afraid, and she confirmed that as we got into the first coaching conversation. The coach explained that in cultivating Authenticity, it's important to acknowledge true feelings and encourage others to do the same. When the leader opens up, others feel less constrained from doing so. This surfaces both rational and emotional issues—and helps get them resolved.

Nancy had been involved in large-scale projects and had certainly felt her share of bumps and bruises. This was relevant to the current challenges, but she hadn't thought to share these experiences with her team. Sharing stories is a very helpful way to demonstrate Authenticity. It works best if the leader takes what we refer to as the "leader as learner" approach, and shares lessons learned. It's okay to talk about both successes and failures, so long as the message is offered with a degree of humility and genuine interest in helping another person.

This isn't always easy for those in executive leadership roles. Often they have never taken the time to reflect deeply on the lessons they learned from previous experiences. We also know many leaders like Nancy, who assume that their stories won't be particularly interesting or relevant to their teams. Yet we know, from almost two decades of working with executives and noting the effects of improving this aspect of communicative leadership, that storytelling is one of the most effective ways to connect with people in an authentic way. Why?

### TELLING THE STORY

Stories engage others and bring balanced perspective. The very act of storytelling creates a natural, relaxed energy in the room. When we hear a story, we put ourselves into the situation and listen as if we were there. If a leader indicates he or she has struggled with challenges similar to ours, we connect with that person more deeply. Stories help us drop the facade of perfection that can put distance between ourselves and others.

The coach helped Nancy see she would be far more effective with the members of her team if she could lower her guard and reach back into her

own life for some relevant experiences that would connect with theirs. He encouraged her to “get real” and share more of herself, to see how much this might shift the dynamic with her team.

Another step Nancy could take was to get in closer touch with her own emotions and appreciate how she was really feeling about where things stood. She had to admit that a lot of things were not working. She needed to own that and encourage her team to speak up, too. She now understood that people needed to be able to trust her appraisals and believe her emotions were real. In a moment, we’ll return to Nancy’s story and the second quality of Character that was a weak spot for her. For now, let’s move on to the second facet in the dimension of Character: Integrity.

## INTEGRITY

Jan Winiiecki was senior marketing director for a global consumer products company. Unlike Nancy, who was a newcomer in her firm, Jan had “grown up” in the company, starting there out of college and moving rapidly up through her function. Jan was content to stay with a stable, mature organization. Her life had grown hectic, with twin teenage daughters under her roof and elderly parents living nearby. By contrast, the job was easy—as she’d become a subject-matter expert. However, when Jan’s company acquired a huge new international business, she was thrust into a more demanding role.

The global marketing group had been asked to analyze the market opportunities and find ways to quickly seize the promise of revenue from new products. The plan was to grow the international side in Asia and South America. As this was all new, Jan found herself working early and late. Her inbox now overflowed with unread messages, and she was not responsive. She soon fell behind on deadlines. Then came a more public failure. Her inability to get organized led to a poor presentation to the CEO and senior management. The people on her team felt she had really let them down.

Jan’s boss, who had always seen her as efficient and productive, was surprised by the change and blindsided by her lackluster presentation. Not knowing what to do, he suggested first that she brush up on her presentation skills and work on her “presence.” She enrolled in our Executive Presence Mastery Program and completed an ExPI assessment.

When we looked at the data, we noticed that the issues went far deeper than her stand-up skill at the front of the room. While Jan acknowl-

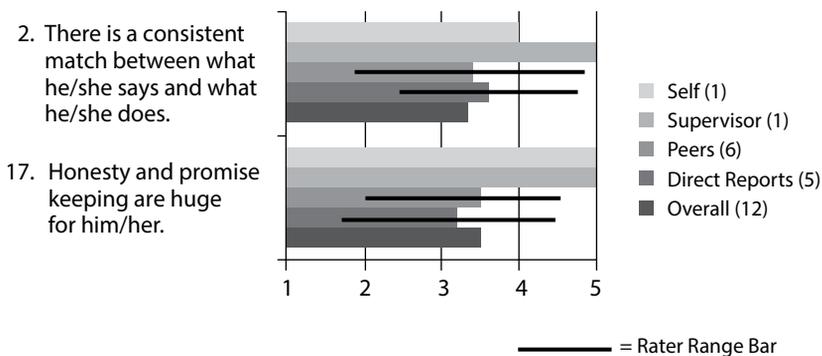
edged opportunities to improve her presentation style, the more pressing issues arising from the assessment seemed to fall into the dimension of Character—in the facet of Integrity.

### A HOT-BUTTON ISSUE

Integrity, as defined in the model, means acting with fidelity to one's values and beliefs, living up to high standards of morality, veracity, and promise keeping. There are few qualities of executive presence likely to arouse more sensitivity than Integrity. It cuts to the core of how principled we see ourselves in word and deed. Perceptions of our Integrity shape our reputation and social standing. Integrity is a source of legitimacy, and a gap in this quality is a distinct disadvantage. In leadership, Integrity, like Authenticity, is important to fostering organizational citizenship (going above and beyond), as well as organizational commitment, engagement, and performance.

Jan's team had notably low engagement. We were able to connect this to her lack of responsiveness. Comments indicated that in addition to her lack of responsiveness, she was falling down on other "promises." She had suggested to several of her people that they would be taking on visible roles on the new strategic initiative, but these opportunities hadn't materialized. As shown in Figure 2.2, two items on the multirater assessment caught our attention: "There is a consistent match between what he/she says and what he/she does," and "Honesty and promise keeping are huge for him/her." Jan was rated low on both statements.

**FIGURE 2.2** | JAN WINIECKI: RATINGS ON TWO INTEGRITY ITEMS



## TYPES OF INTEGRITY

While many leaders like Jan feel the sting when Integrity arises as an issue, they are often unaware of the many ways people assess it. Integrity is about both moral and ethical principles and also consistency in keeping our word. In the first scenario, a lack of what we refer to as “moral integrity” is noticed when leaders make choices inconsistent with the company’s standards, practices, and values. We need not look far beyond the headlines to note CEOs and senior management whose companies have been decimated or destroyed because of their lack of a moral compass.

In these situations, moral integrity is not only doing the wrong thing. It is a tendency to ignore bad behaviors, look the other way, skirt the rules, and disregard situations that put a company in harm’s way. The insidious aspect of this behavior is that it poisons the environment because bad behavior is contagious. When a leader is not guided by strong ethical principles in word and deed, people assume that values apply when it is convenient. Winking at unethical behaviors to get results at all costs creates a toxic atmosphere where it is impossible to enforce ethical, honest, and principled ways of doing business.

Fortunately, Jan’s gaps went to concerns related to something we refer to as “behavioral integrity.” As a busy leader with many personal as well as professional commitments, she had good intentions, but she wasn’t living up to them. She was rationalizing her failure to do what she’d promised. Until she talked with the coach, she hadn’t realized the extent to which she was letting people down. She had developed bad habits as her workload increased and the challenges became more difficult, and now she was dismayed at the extent to which it had damaged her reputation.

## THE IMPACT OF INTEGRITY

A leader’s Integrity, even the behavioral kind, is a yardstick by which people evaluate whether they want to join or stay. They appraise the leader’s promise keeping as well as her likelihood to make decisions in an honest, objective, unbiased way. On the other hand, when they believe they are working in a high-integrity culture, they tend to be happy, fulfilled, and loyal and to uphold and reinforce high standards. Outliers willing to skirt the edges don’t last and have less opportunity to create mischief.

Jan’s action steps were to vastly improve her response time so she didn’t hold up decisions and create delays that made the entire team look bad. Where previously she had considered it no big deal to cancel one-on-ones

with her team, she now appreciated through discussions with the coach that her calendar was a form of promise.

Working with the coach, Jan vowed to acknowledge and handle that disappointment, and let it go. By letting her team have some of the spotlight in presentations and key meetings, she could also lighten up some of her own workload. She felt a burden lifting, and though the new assignment was still going to be challenging, she was motivated. She wanted to demonstrate to her boss and others that she could handle this assignment and prove her leadership.

## CONCERN

David Wynn was recruited to become the chief strategist for an international energy company with the hope that he could bring a fresh perspective to the executive team. David had been a respected external consultant for the energy company, so he already knew the players, and he felt excited about coming in-house to help the senior team accelerate long-term, profitable growth. After several volatile years, there was growing pressure to find more predictable revenue streams. David would also be finding opportunities to improve efficiency and productivity.

David was asked to select his own team of about 14 people from inside the company. He chose a few of the best and brightest upcoming stars from several business units. This gave him an array of experienced, dedicated, motivated leaders. He then went to work on a proposal for a five-year strategic plan.

The new team members were excited about learning about strategic planning and expected to have appropriately visible roles. However, they soon discovered through the grapevine that David was holding private meetings with the very people they had themselves been reporting to. The new team members were mystified about why they'd been left out. They had a lot to contribute in these early stages, and David hadn't even taken the time to brief them when he returned. It seemed he planned to just keep them behind the scenes doing research.

When the coach sat down to talk with David, we learned that as a consultant, he had worked with very small, junior teams and had therefore become accustomed to managing this way, relying on his own analytical capability to get things done. He hadn't realized how different this situation was or how much his team could contribute. Now they were close to

revolt. We suggested that David complete an ExPI assessment and enter the Executive Presence Mastery Program.

### WHY CONCERN MATTERS

The quality of Concern is conveyed as a genuine demonstration of interest in others and their welfare. Concern is present when people sense the leader is attuned to their ideas and feelings. Leaders that exhibit Concern convince us that what matters to us, matters to them. Our interactions with them tend to feel less transactional and more sincere. In the Bates EP Model, the leader's Concern is a key component in a healthy, sustainable culture, demonstrated as encouraging others' development and conveying interest in them as people, not just a means to an end.

At first glance, David's overall scores were middle of the road on Concern, with some highs and lows. When we looked more closely at all six questions, we found a yawning gap between the perceptions of business leaders, who saw David as really interested in them, and those of direct reports, who felt sidelined from the start. Red flags showed up in the assessment's open-ended comments, correlating to two items: "Recognizes the potential in others" and "Takes time to listen and leaves others feeling heard."

It's worth noting, as we pause in the story, that today the global workforce is more educated, diverse, and autonomous than ever before. People expect to contribute in meaningful ways and be offered opportunities to get involved in important and visible initiatives. New generations in particular currently entering the workforce are less hierarchical and more inclined to expect to be included.

Couple this expectation with the battle for knowledge workers who can help companies innovate and drive change, and you see the importance of engagement. It is easy to see how leaders who show up with Concern will play a major role in attracting talent and keeping companies competitive. This type of engagement relies on Concern as a quality of relational interactions, as opposed to traditional "carrot-and-stick" approaches to getting things done. It will attract, retain, and develop next-generation talent.

### INTENTIONS VERSUS PERCEPTIONS

David had also rationalized his approach because he felt a sense of urgency to prove his value and come up with quick answers. He had taken to heart the CEO's mandate to move quickly. He didn't want to drag the team around to early fact-finding and relationship-building meetings. He hadn't

considered how the team could help him build relationships, avoid political land mines, and influence more effectively.

David was initially defensive. He thought this was all about “politics” and “selfish interest.” This seemed out of character, as he had a very pleasant demeanor and good social skills. We surmised that the sense of urgency had clouded his judgment about how to work with the team. Now he saw the rift he had created. He needed to learn to close that rift before the members of his team defected.

### THE ETHIC OF CARE

The ethic of care is grounded in values that affirm the dignity and worth of each person.<sup>1</sup> Referred to as “individual consideration” in the book *Transformational Leadership*, by Bernard Bass and Ronald Riggio,<sup>2</sup> such concern is known to promote organizational citizenship, above-and-beyond commitment and effort, and team cohesion. When it is seen as lacking, leaders may forfeit the advantage that these variables in human performance contribute at just the moment when they are most needed. That was certainly the case with David.

Concerned leaders make time for their teams, bringing them into the conversation and following up on important matters. They take seriously their role in mentoring people, encouraging their development and recognizing their achievements. As a result, leaders that score high on Concern also tend to enjoy strong loyalty from their teams. People say these leaders care about them, not just the work product they can deliver.

Few of us would say that we don’t intend to convey Concern. Many leaders are surprised when they get negative feedback on this facet of executive presence. A multirater assessment can clarify why people have, and what circumstances led them to have, that perception. For instance, often leaders say they care about their people, but their behaviors say otherwise, as they exert pressure to get things done and produce results.

In organizations where people believe leaders genuinely have their interests at heart, they report being more satisfied with their work and are less inclined to look for a position outside the company. Concern breeds a culture of care and cohesion, which is a great tool for attracting and retaining top talent.

### MAKING CHANGES

David was a caring person and saw now how important it was to align his values, intentions, and perceptions. He and the coach talked about how he

could get his team involved. He needed them on his side, and he needed their knowledge of the business and relationships with the players to put together a plan that would win support. He would also need to exhibit some other qualities of executive presence that we will discuss in the chapter on the dimension of Style.

David decided his “do-over” would be to invite each member of the team to meet with him one-on-one. He wanted to get to know the members personally and inquire about their career aspirations as well as their families, hobbies, and passions. He decided to “fall on the sword” about the way he had started and why he had left them out.

The coach helped David consider the reasons he felt a sense of urgency, beyond the mandate he received from his boss. David learned that he also needed to exercise some Restraint so he could manage his strong emotions when they arose. He had to give up the notion that he could or should produce overnight results, which was not easy but necessary.

One simple first step was to address David’s physical well-being. He had not been exercising or eating right during this onboarding period. He knew it was having an impact on him, but he now saw the connection to how he was perceived by others. He was now motivated to exercise better self-care in order to reduce the stress and anxiety. If he could do that, he would have the energy to express interest in others. We cannot focus on how other people are feeling when we ourselves are exhausted and depleted. Self-care would also sustain David over the long term of the strategy project.

## RESTRAINT

Restraint is the fourth quality in the dimension of Character, one that is characterized by moderation and reasonableness. The leader that exhibits Restraint doesn’t lack emotion; she has a capacity for good self-regulation. This leader comes across as measured in her responses. She pauses before commenting and takes time before reacting. The saying “Look before you leap” comes to mind with leaders strong on Restraint.

The quality of Restraint has been valued around the world for centuries: Aristotle referred to it as temperance. Confucius referred to it as moderation. In ancient Greece and Rome, it was considered one of the “cardinal virtues.” In the Buddhist tradition, equanimity is regarded as essential to gaining wisdom.

Remember Nancy Nissan? As we mentioned, the other facet of Character that was not coming through was Restraint. Her inclination to buoy people up and stay positive, combined with a tendency to think out loud, led her to overtalk in meetings and dominate the discussion. Her chatty style was so pronounced that people said it was “crazy making.”

In the Bates EP Model, Restraint is a calm disposition, characterized by tendencies toward reasonableness and avoidance of emotional extremes or impulsiveness. It shows up as a more considered, less reactive quality of personality. It’s regarded as important to relationships and the resolution of conflict. Management scholars in the West and the East have associated Restraint with efficacy in incremental approaches to change. Restraint is also important in ethics, which is one reason it falls into the dimension of Character.

Nancy’s coach asked her about how low Restraint might be affecting her ability to get the new customer center up and running. She saw, from comments on the feedback, that she wasn’t focusing people on the important tasks. People saw her direction as impulsive and sometimes unreasonable. She now realized she would need to work hard to cultivate an air of calm and give the group time and space to deliberate and reach decisions.

### **CAN YOU HAVE TOO MUCH RESTRAINT?**

While Nancy’s challenge with Restraint is one we see often, we also meet leaders who have this quality in spades. Occasionally, too much Restraint can make it equally difficult to win trust. This can come through in comments that people can’t “read them.” If you don’t give off enough verbal and nonverbal clues about how you’re thinking and feeling, people can wonder if what they see is real.

We recall a leader in a start-up venture who had been chosen because of her ability to keep people calm, centered, and focused. However, many of her team members said that when they sat in meetings with her, they had no idea how she was feeling about the discussion. While they appreciated the calming influence, they were yearning for a leader with a little more passion. With so much to do, they wanted to feel more of her energy. While a leader’s poise and self-management can keep things on an even keel, too much is not a good thing either.

### **CAN YOU CHANGE THE WAY YOU’RE WIRED?**

One reason it is challenging for leaders like Nancy to work on Restraint is because it’s a quality rooted in patterns of emotion that often operate

outside of our conscious awareness. She also receives reinforcement when expressing her more spontaneous qualities because they enhance her sociability and are welcomed in social and organizational settings. Self-understanding and self-acceptance are important here.

You can manage Restraint with greater self-awareness and moderation. A good technique is to ask yourself, “What is the most helpful and productive way I can participate in this conversation?” Even if you’re not hard-wired to regulate emotions as you might wish to, guided reflection on your early years can help you understand your tendencies and thereby improve your capacity to self-manage. Research in human development shows how early relationships with our parents contribute to how we manage our emotions. Insight and awareness of these factors often frees us to “redecide” what our options are as adults.

It’s also important for leaders to learn to distinguish the important from the urgent. Civilization has been built through the efforts of those who are motivated and biased for action. It’s only a problem when it is dominating and doesn’t allow other qualities like Inclusiveness to shine through.

### NANCY’S PLAN

Now fully aware of the impediments to successfully launching the new national service center, Nancy was committed to making changes. The coach worked with her to improve the way she managed her meetings. She made more time for discussing issues and weighing pros and cons. She had a legal pad next to her at all times and took notes to remind herself to ask questions and not react immediately when she disagreed or felt people were being too negative.

The coach also encouraged her to pay close attention to the dynamics of interaction in the room. Nancy periodically paused to summarize what she was hearing, and she invited others in the room to share ideas or feelings that had as yet gone unexpressed. The people on her team came around and said they were appreciating this time to discuss issues openly and appreciated her more honest assessments of situations.

### HUMILITY

Doug Kowalski joined a national association two years out of law school after a brief stint in a law firm. He had risen through the ranks to become

chief legal counsel, with responsibility for government relations, ethics, codes, and standards in the field.

The organization had been around for 100 years and had fallen out of step; there were growing pressures from the membership to get with the times and have a stronger voice in lobbying on federal and state regulations. The organization was saddled with out-of-date systems and processes and needed to upgrade its web presence and technology. There was much to be done.

Although Doug had been with the organization for 22 years, he considered himself quite well suited to lead the charge. Quietly he hoped to become the CEO, a decision that would be made in the next 18 months. In spite of his many years as part of a leadership team that ran a rather stagnant organization, he embraced change and saw himself as a good coach and mentor to people.

In any organization that has grown a little rusty and complacent, there will be resistance to change. Those with long tenure did not see the urgency of rushing to take on so many projects at once. They knew the longtime CEO would be leaving, and the sentiment was to wait until the new boss came in. They weren't certain, but suspected that perhaps Doug was angling to prove he was the person for the job. Yet the harder he tried to push the members of the team and force his innovative ideas on them, the more resistant they became. Doug grew openly frustrated, believing they just didn't get it.

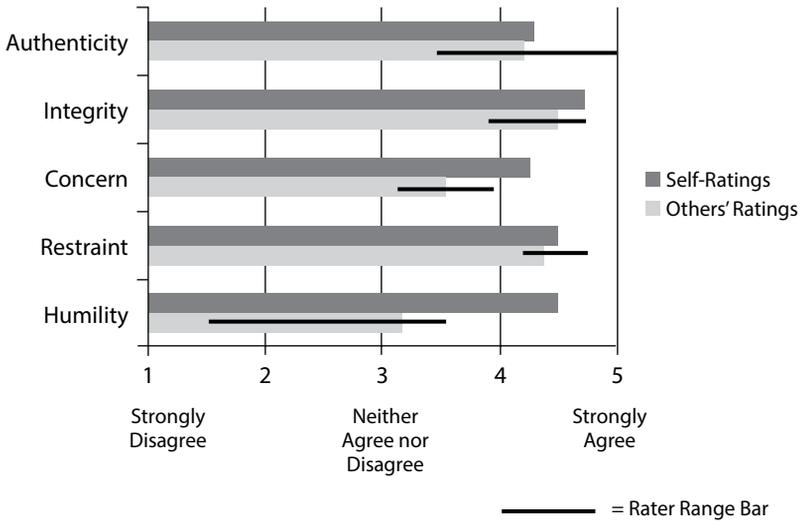
Humility in the Bates ExPI is reflected in a realistic awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses. It's expressed in openness to others and a belief that all people have worth. Leaders strong in Humility tend to have a genuine curiosity about the ideas and experiences of others. Like all the Character facets, it is informed by values.

Humility incorporates the principle of "not knowing," which not only is a hallmark of good leadership, but also is effective in counseling and executive coaching. It emanates from the Socratic observation that unless we are able to acknowledge our ignorance, we cannot learn. Hubris borne of success can precipitate company downfalls in part because it breeds complacency and a neglect of the quality and the frequency of leadership communication.

### **WHAT DOUG'S EXPI DATA REVEALED**

In Figure 2.3, you can review Doug's ExPI ratings in the Character dimension. It's worth noting that in the Character dimension, Doug received

FIGURE 2.3 | DOUG KOWALSKI: ExPI RATINGS ON CHARACTER



respectable scores on Integrity and Restraint. People felt he had the interests of the organization at heart. He had a measured style that usually worked well for him. However, as we saw in the feedback, people felt he was pushing his ideas too hard. They were seeing a new side of Doug that they didn't particularly care for, which showed up in gaps in the quality of Humility.

It's easy to see why Humility is a prized but sometimes misunderstood aspect of leadership. We tend to think of Humility as having an appropriately proportionate and modest view of our place in the world. However, there's more to it than just being down-to-earth. Like all the facets of Character, we've drawn on philosophy and ethics in both Eastern and Western thinking to explain it. Socrates said, "To know, is to know you know nothing." Confucius said, "Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance."

A leader who exhibits humility exhibits a natural inclination to ask others for their ideas and opinions, and it appears to come from a place of acknowledgment that no matter how much we learn, we never have all the answers. Since Doug had spent more than two decades in leadership roles in his organization, he had an abundance of confidence in his own ideas. He was sure he had this thing covered, and all he needed to do was persuade others to get on board.

Open-ended comments on his survey were pretty scathing. “Needs to be the smartest guy in the room, always needing the last word . . .” “The impression is that he’s not fully engaged when speaking with people, even if it’s a topic he’s asked to discuss . . .” Direct reports and peers felt Doug often pulled rank, diminishing their opportunity to air their concerns or offer other ideas. “When asking for input,” said one colleague, “he does not seem sincere. You always feel the decision has already been made.”

### HUMILITY AS A VIRTUE IN BUSINESS

Humility is perceived as a quiet but powerful virtue, noted in many holistic approaches such as those found in *Servant Leadership* by Robert Greenleaf and Larry Spears<sup>3</sup> and *Principle-Centered Leadership* by Steven Covey.<sup>4</sup> Jim Collins talks about Humility in his notion of Level 5 leadership and also in his accounts of why some good-to-great companies fail.<sup>5</sup>

Humility is not only an issue of winning the trust and respect of others; it is also connected to team performance and execution. Research on the effect of CEO humility indicates that it enhances the empowerment, initiative, and integration of top management team members. And it has cascading effects, producing a more positive organizational climate that enhances the job performance of middle managers.

Many people would describe a leader who exhibits Humility as a person without excessive pride or over-the-top self-confidence. It’s certainly a whole lot easier to be around a leader who “isn’t full of himself.” You’ll always see eyes roll when a leader makes braggadocio claims and takes all the credit. A leader with Humility has a realistic appraisal of his or her capabilities.

Leaders with Humility invite others into the conversation because they know they don’t have all the answers. They exhibit a self-effacing, unpretentious quality that prevents hierarchical interactions. It puts everyone at ease to speak up. If leaders don’t need to be right or feel a desire to “one-up” their peers or team members, it binds them all together in times of challenge and stress.

### SHIFTING MENTAL GEARS

Doug needed to reexamine his belief that he had all the answers. He talked with the coach and realized that there were many people who also wanted change and could be allies if he gave them the opportunity. He would have to stop solving every problem and mapping out every project. He’d need to

assign people to take the tasks on, and he needed to support their efforts with guidance and encouragement.

Given his desire to be the next CEO, he was motivated. He knew if he continued this way, he wouldn't be chosen and might even have to leave the organization. He could still be a change agent; he just needed to handle things differently and empower his team.

Leaders like Doug have to let go of needing to be the expert and the one with all the answers. By inviting others to participate, a leader like Doug usually realizes that others have good ideas. As the saying goes, "No one person in the room is smarter than all the people in the room."

There's a Zen story about this:

A professor once visited a Japanese master to inquire about Zen. The master served tea. When the professor's cup was full, the master kept pouring. Tea spilled out of the cup and over the table. "The cup is full!" said the professor. "No more will go in!" "Like this cup," said the master, "You are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

What a beautiful way to conceptualize how leaders can make room for others and leave a legacy of respect and inclusion.

A leader is a more effective force for change when Humility is present. Adopting a spirit of inquiry and a beginner's mindset at the start of projects is helpful. This makes space for other people's ideas and harnesses the energy of all.

### **CAN YOU HAVE TOO MUCH HUMILITY?**

As with any facet, it's possible to go overboard on Humility. For example, if a leader is too deferential to others' views, then others may wonder whether he or she has strong convictions. A leader who underplays his or her ideas may be seen by those in executive management as having too much Humility and therefore lacking in Confidence.

For this reason, it is important for leaders to go back to their raters to understand their reasons for giving ratings and appreciate how the tendencies called out in the assessment play out in future situations. We'll talk further about this in later chapters. The remedy for too much or too little is a healthy balance. Humility and Confidence track together; they are not opposites, but rather, complementary qualities. You can give up the floor

to others and still assert your ideas when the time is right. You can harbor and share well-considered opinions without coming across as having all the answers.

## **DOES IT CHANGE WHO YOU ARE?**

Some leaders worry that in order to change how they come across in the Character dimension, they must change “who they are.” For example, a highly introverted leader who has overstrength in Restraint while scoring lower on Authenticity might fear that she needs to change her stripes and become extroverted. Yet we find plenty of evidence in the fields of psychology and adult development, and also in our practice with leaders, that relatively little in our ways of being as leaders is hardwired.

Indeed, our professional knowledge and experience compel us to assure leaders that addressing aspects of Character can be done without seeming inauthentic. That introverted leader doesn’t need to become an outgoing cheerleader, and she doesn’t need to reveal highly personal information or “overshare” to prove her authenticity. She can find ways to share the rationale behind her thinking or selectively reveal a bit more about herself in ways that amplify her Authenticity while not overrelying on Restraint.

## **SUMMARY**

In closing this chapter, we’d sum up Character as about inspiring trust—which is why it is fundamental. As Steven Covey said, “Trust is the glue of life. It’s the foundational principle that holds all relationships.” The five facets of Character sum up why people are likely to connect with us, feel comfortable with us, and give us the benefit of the doubt. When these qualities are evident, it enables us to build strong bonds and committed followership. And even in these more fundamental aspects of our personhood, we can modify our behaviors and make small but meaningful adjustments that will change perceptions and therefore magnify our positive impact.

In the next chapter, we’ll examine the second dimension of executive presence, Substance, and learn how this dimension’s qualities of mature leadership enhance our presence and drive organizational performance.

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## Substance

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### Qualities That Inspire Others to Go Above and Beyond

*If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more,  
do more and become more, you are a leader.*

—JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

If the first dimension of executive presence is about trust that wins goodwill, then the second dimension, Substance, can be summed up as credibility that inspires action. A leader of substance paints a vivid picture of the future and mobilizes others to give their all. When we asked those we interviewed to describe leaders with substance, they often use words like “gravitas” and “savvy.” What they are expressing, we believe, is the essential nature of experience, intellect, and know-how. We are inclined to follow leaders who are visionary, pragmatic, prudent, and wise.

Substance in the Bates EP Model does not refer to innate intelligence. Instead, it’s about the mature qualities of leadership presence that accrue in us over time. We may be blessed at birth with a fluid intellect or a clever mind. We can benefit from a rigorous academic education and gain expertise through our tenure on the job. But substance in this new model of executive presence is more than that. It is crystallized intelligence, the ability to analyze complex issues and get to the heart of the matter. It evokes a mature, thoughtful way of processing information and finding meaning in it.

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**Substance:** Cultivated qualities of mature leadership that inspire commitment, inform action, and lead to above-and-beyond effort.

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The practical savvy of Substance purchases credibility and respect. It gives us credence with others. We earn it by navigating the terrain of decisions and challenges we face in business. Making the tough calls, resolving messy situations, living with ambiguity—these experiences test our determination, shape our ways of thinking, and hone our judgment.

Our review of theory in the literature led us to five qualities of mature adult development specific to executive leadership: Practical Wisdom, Confidence, Composure, Resonance, and Vision.

Some of these—Practical Wisdom and Confidence—refer to the leader's cognitive ability, while others, Composure and Resonance, go to emotional intelligence, what is often referred to as EQ. Vision has both elements: you need the cognitive side to map a direction for the organization, and you need emotional intelligence to excite people about taking the journey with you. Emotional intelligence notices what is said and unsaid and detects expressed and unexpressed emotions. These qualities bond people to us, helping us to win hearts and minds.

These five qualities of executive presence are critical to navigating change and driving organizational outcomes. When the seas get rough, Substance prevents the ship from being swamped and gets people to work together to get back on course. Whether you are leading a reorganization, introducing a new system or product, acquiring another business, warding off stiff competitive headwinds, managing through regulatory change, or dealing with unanticipated market volatility, Substance will help you chart a course and keep everyone's eyes on the horizon.

Let's take a look at Practical Wisdom, the first of these qualities of Substance.

## PRACTICAL WISDOM

Practical Wisdom is a foundational facet in Substance—few other facets carry as much weight with leaders and those who follow them. It is an effective way to reveal what we know for the benefit of others. This mature wisdom enables leaders to guide people to get to the heart of issues and produce prudent decisions. These leaders ask the question we all wish we'd

asked. They synthesize what is said and offer keen insights, focusing others and helping them process issues more effectively.

Remember Nancy Nissan from the last chapter, who was brought on board from the outside to build a national service center? The CEO hired her because she had a solid background and a track record of excellence in managing operations. Among the qualities that impressed him was her optimism and intellect. He described her as a “strong thinker, with an appreciation for what it takes to realize a strategy.” He had expected her to quickly grasp the business and accelerate the launch. This simply wasn’t happening.

In spite of positive appraisals of her intellect, Nancy received mediocre to low scores on Practical Wisdom. As she and the coach reviewed the findings, Nancy was initially inclined to chalk it up to being a “newbie” at the company. After all, she wasn’t familiar with the people, policies, and culture.

Practical Wisdom is certainly aided by familiarity with a place, but comfort with the people and culture isn’t required to demonstrate wisdom. Nancy brought invaluable experience from her previous work to this new role. There was more to the negative perceptions than her brief tenure. The coach suggested Nancy look at Restraint as the “leading thread” that might explain why her capacity for good judgment wasn’t shining through. “It’s important to acknowledge you’re new to the organization,” the coach advised, “but you can offer Practical Wisdom in most situations if you’re stopping to think and speak in a way that brings insight to the conversation.”

We mention leading threads because very often, though a leader is rated low in one facet, the reason can be found in lower scores on a different facet. Practical Wisdom isn’t usually a leading thread. In Nancy’s case, a tendency toward an emotional response was preventing her from sharing what she knew in a way that was helpful to others. As you read ahead, you’ll start to see how often a low rating in one facet is connected to another.

You’ll recall that Nancy’s overly optimistic assessment of each situation was prompted by a rather impulsive default to making sure people stayed positive, even when the news was bad. We were pretty sure that her auto-response was what caused her to paper over other people’s concerns and barrel through what she perceived as negativity. This was in effect muting her Practical Wisdom. When Nancy was overly exuberant, she came across as naïve and wasn’t able to exercise a more balanced way of conducting discussions, by probing and analyzing the presenting issues.

Like many leaders in a new role, Nancy was very busy trying to get the center launched. People saw her running from meeting to meeting, and she admitted that because she was overbooked, she wasn't taking the time to prepare for much of anything. With her meetings scheduled back-to-back, she had no time to think before she was on to the next task. She rarely read the premeeting materials people e-mailed to her, and yet she was impatient with them when they tried to review the information in the meeting. She wasn't able to manage her emotions to the extent that she would be able to really listen and synthesize what she was hearing. As a result, she wasn't able to offer constructive suggestions or make space for deliberation.

### **BUSYNESS, JUGGLING, AND LACK OF FOCUS**

Busyness is epidemic in organizations today. Most of us would admit that we are juggling a lot and struggle at times to manage the demands on us. Just keeping up with e-mail and getting work done between meetings are Herculean tasks. Reading background material? Preparing for a discussion? Many leaders save that for nights or weekends. If they're lucky, they get some uninterrupted airplane time.

Often, leaders who appear to lack Practical Wisdom are utterly capable but simply hurried. They have the capacity for cutting through the noise and clutter to analyze the issues, but it isn't evident to others because they aren't taking time to think. We all need a daily time with quiet space to gather information, weigh the options, focus our minds, and consider a course of action.

In many organizations, a bias to action drives this pace. A leader who gets things done is well rewarded for moving quickly and driving results. However, this same action bias can also prompt the leader and his or her team to make hasty decisions. Without time to consider issues, they may jump to ill-considered conclusions.

The word "practical" implies action, so Practical Wisdom doesn't stop progress! It informs action and moves things forward in a productive way. Practical Wisdom is aided by a curious mind. Curiosity prompts us to take the time to ask better questions that probe for meaning, deepen the dialogue, and get to answers.

There has to be time and space for the informed back-and-forth that leads to better decisions. Groups need to consider the facts and allow different points of view to emerge. Nancy struggled at first with the idea that she could slow down in order to speed up. By talking with the coach, she began

to see how bringing a deliberative quality to the discussion would help her team reflect and make better decisions.

### **NANCY'S PLAN**

The first step for Nancy was to let go of the belief that the problem was her newness to the organization. The issue was her pace and the underlying emotional intensity stemming from her deficiency in Restraint. This interfered with more deliberate and intentional approaches to work. If she were able to get this under control, she'd be able to draw from that wealth of experience. The coach urged her to start by looking at her calendar with a fresh eye, to schedule time for briefings on issues prior to larger group meetings. They also scheduled time for her to review materials and space after meetings for action items.

In addition, she agreed to change the way she managed meetings, starting with the creation of a timed agenda that left adequate time for discussion on important issues. This would only be effective if she also became aware of what triggered her emotions in meetings. She realized that if she heard unexpected bad news or was surprised, she was likely to react. If this happened, the coach advised her to stop, breathe, ask questions, take notes, and focus on staying calm.

### **CONFIDENCE**

Confidence is the ability to act decisively when situations require action. It's the inclination to take prudent risk and to hold yourself accountable for results. Confidence in a leader inspires others to embrace a course of action and persist with their best efforts, elements of transformational leadership. It encourages resilience in the face of setbacks and mobilizes people to go above and beyond, doing more than they thought possible.

Bill Van Dyke could stride into any room and own the place. His witty style and energetic demeanor left the impression of self-assurance. Bill was also a polished presenter, having honed the skills in a previous career as a teacher. After that he'd gone into social work before landing in corporate sales to support a growing family. A career working with people had taught him how to connect with others and build relationships with clients.

Now in charge of a group of relationship managers, his immediate task was to devise a plan to integrate what they were doing with the practice

areas of the consulting firm. The idea was to get the groups to work together better, to open more doors to meetings with C-suite customers. Bill knew that a great deal was at stake as the company pushed hard to increase revenues by taking advantage of cross-selling opportunities.

Bill's boss, Dave, initially saw him as a rising star with the potential to be his successor. Bill was a lot like him—bold, energetic, and innovative. Dave had assessed these qualities and assumed it would be relatively easy for Bill to parlay them into building relationships within the firm and winning support for the routine, coordinated interaction between relationship management and the practice areas.

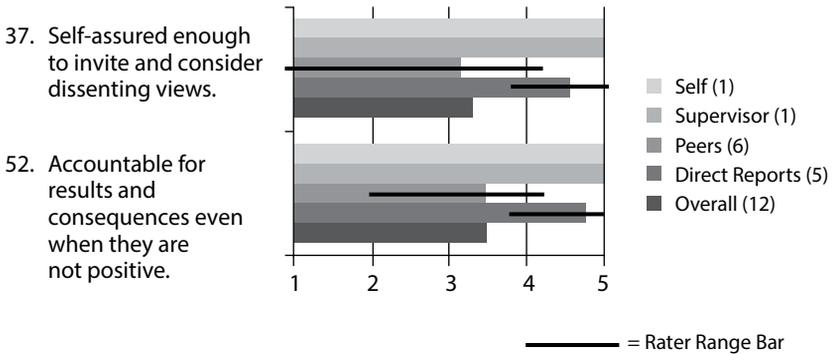
However, Bill was stumbling through minefields within the firm, and there was a great deal of pushback from the practice leaders. They were used to running their own shows and selling their strategies to their customers. They resented the idea of accepting a role as second chair at meetings with C-suite clients that they had cultivated.

Bill had tried to appeal to them by talking about what was good for the enterprise, but they were not persuaded by arguments that cross-selling would be “for the good of the firm.” There were few financial incentives that encouraged collaboration on complex sales. They were under the gun to deliver quarterly results, and they didn't want to send consultants on what they referred to as “fishing trips” with members of Bill's relationship management team.

Dave, Bill's boss, leaped to the conclusion that they just didn't see Bill as one of them. Part of the reason he assumed this was because he judged Bill's appearance to be a couple of notches below that of the rest of the leaders. He didn't look as polished and buttoned up as they did. He appeared younger than his age and wore his clothes two sizes too big.

We affirmed that Appearance was an issue in a review of his ExPI assessment; however, as we suspected, there was more to it. While Bill was strong in the Character dimension in the facets of Authenticity, Integrity, and Concern, his ratings were neutral in the Substance facet of Confidence. This was a surprise to Bill, who had rated himself highly in that facet, as had his boss.

It was Bill's peers, the other practice-area leaders, who gave him low ratings on two items in Confidence: “Self-assured enough to invite and consider dissenting views” and “Accountable for results and consequences even when they are not positive” (see Figure 3.1). One comment in the

**FIGURE 3.1** BILL VAN DYKE: RATINGS ON TWO CONFIDENCE ITEMS

open-ended section was that Bill “lacked the political savvy” to navigate these situations. The coach sat down with Bill to discuss this and understand how he believed these perceptions had developed.

### HOW DO WE DEFINE CONFIDENCE?

Confidence is perhaps the most misunderstood facet in the model. People tend to equate confidence with swagger or bravado. However, as we’ve mentioned, that’s not what we’re measuring when it comes to executive presence. What we’re seeking to appreciate is a quality of mature Confidence that shouldn’t be confused with chutzpah. It’s the product of experience that enables a leader to calmly appraise a situation and take prudent action. Confidence therefore travels well with facets such as Humility and Practical Wisdom.

As you’ll see later, Bill’s lack of Confidence was connected to other facets, including low ratings on Vision. Confidence and Vision paired together breed a distinct kind of optimism in an organization. They ignite a sense that it’s okay to take a risk, try something new, and push ahead. When confident leaders express a frame-changing vision, they inspire those around them to take bold action.

Bill’s lack of confidence came through to his peer leaders in his pushy way of trying to convince them to be enterprise-focused. He was not taking time to consider their situation. In short he was working too hard to “sell them,” and he was impatient in meetings with them. If he was going to turn this around, he’d have to learn new and better ways to influence his peers and win their support.

### BILL'S COACHING PLAN

The coach agreed with Bill's boss that it was important to address the "easy-to-fix" aspects of Appearance. We'll speak more about that in the next chapter, but the upshot was that Bill worked with an image consultant to purchase a business wardrobe that fit him and aligned with the firm's high-quality image. This was a nice quick win. Bill's makeover was noticed and made him feel greater confidence inside.

The greater task as it relates to this chapter on Substance was to address perceptions that Bill was not confident enough to invite dissenting viewpoints, listen, and respond. One rater had commented that Bill tended to "overtalk his peers in meetings" and that he "appeared to avoid the difficult issues."

The coach noticed that Bill tended toward long-winded explanations, even during coaching sessions. She asked to sit in on a meeting with some of the peer leaders. She also listened in on a weekly call. Sure enough, as she suspected, Bill was taking up a lot of the air in the room, overtalking. The coach surmised that most people didn't participate because they wanted to get the meeting over with and get out on time. Bill was initially a little surprised by this observation and said he was unaware of the poor dynamic this created with his colleagues.

In working with the coach, Bill realized that he really hadn't taken time to gather his peers' points of view. The coach recommended he use a tool we call the Audience Agenda System to become more aware of the difference between his own objectives and theirs. Before he went into the next meeting, he could actually leverage some of his assumptions to take an educated guess about what the group's concerns and issues might be. This mental exercise would better prepare him to ask questions and seek to understand.

The coach knew it would be difficult for Bill to stop talking so much, so she recommended he open every conversation by asking the attendees what was top of mind for them, putting that first on the agenda. The coach worked with Bill on how to formulate open-ended questions. When he encountered an opinion that differed from his own, she recommended he stop to ask questions before launching into sales mode to try to persuade others of his point of view.

When you make space for this back-and-forth dialogue, you convey an authentic form of Confidence. According to leadership experts who have studied this process (including Dr. Sean T. Hannah of Wake Forest

University and others), people have greater reason to trust that the solution will be a shared one—that their ideas are being heard and evaluated on their merit before decisions are made. Your Confidence (1) attracts followers and encourages people to stay, (2) boosts the collective Confidence of the group in that the group members are able to discuss and resolve issues, and (3) through reciprocal, reinforcing patterns, heightens organizational performance, as people come to believe that this is their way of getting things done.

Perceptions of Bill's Confidence were also damaged because his peers were well aware that he would complain about them to his team. Upon returning from meetings, he would launch into a blow-by-blow description of how this person or that one didn't "get it." This also harmed his Confidence ratings with his team, who saw it as a lack of maturity. Throwing others under the bus did not inspire their trust that he was up to the job of navigating the politics. They wanted a leader who could bring people together around a common mission. At the moment, his behavior made them feel both helpless to do anything and hopeless about executing the strategy.

The coach encouraged Bill to admit his disappointment in a more mature way by speaking about the facts of the situation and taking ownership of the poor discussions. He had to learn to accept his part and not foist the blame on his peers. The coach suggested he come back from the next meeting, raise a substantive issue that had arisen with the practice leaders, and let his team productively brainstorm to come up with a solution. He could kick off these brainstorm sessions by saying, "I'm concerned about how to handle this situation and wonder if you could help me think out loud and get my bearings." This would demonstrate a mature type of Confidence.

The people on his team responded after the first such meeting and said how much they appreciated the opportunity to help. They came up with good observations and suggestions. This enabled Bill to go back to his peers sounding smart and feeling more confident that he could solve their problems and still move toward the vision of cross-selling. The tenor of Bill's meetings with his peers began to change, and within a few months, several of them were sending their people to Bill's meetings and cross-functional client planning sessions. An ethic of mutual accountability was taking shape.

## COMPOSURE

Mark Dwyer often found himself at the center of the room having fun and telling jokes. Growing up in sales, he was a natural with customers in the wine import business. Mark laughed heartily and enjoyed life. His outgoing personality was such an asset that his boss assumed it would transfer nicely when Bill got a promotion to take charge of a regional sales team in the southern and western regions of the United States.

However, Mark's joking and high emotions were wearing thin on his team. These aspects of his personality had disintegrated into a rather bitter, biting tone. He appeared to be under stress, and his mood could quickly shift when things weren't going well. People saw another side of Mark that surprised them. His high spirits could flip to anger in an instant. He had become highly confrontational when he disagreed with his peers about a decision.

Things had deteriorated to the point where colleagues also dreaded being in a meeting with him. He could turn on a dime, and they were never sure how to react. They tried to avoid crossing him, but Mark still found reasons to blow up. He seemed to be on a mission to call out anyone else's mistake. When he wasn't angry, he was cracking sarcastic jokes. When we looked at Mark's assessment feedback, we were not surprised to find people rated him quite low in Composure.

### HOW SHOULD WE LOOK AT COMPOSURE?

Composure is another cultivated quality of mature leadership. Leaders who project Composure bring a calm, self-possessed state of mind to stressful or uncomfortable situations. Not only are they unruffled by conflict; they make a point to bring down the temperature of the room when tempers are beginning to flare. They think clearly and bring perspective to a crisis. Rather than contribute to irrational debate, they offer reasoning and project stability.

Many people have asked us what the difference is between Composure and Restraint, a facet of Character from Chapter 2. Like all of the Character facets, Restraint reflects a leader's temperament or disposition, while the Substance facets are more situational. The best way to think of Composure is as an unrushed, reasonable, measured, appropriate, and productive response to crisis and challenge. A leader like Mark who is high energy and inclined to show emotion can cultivate a mature response in times of challenge. Training yourself to notice worries but see past the crisis of the moment is a good place to start. A leader who projects Composure reassures others and encourages others' perspective taking.

## WHAT DID MARK DO?

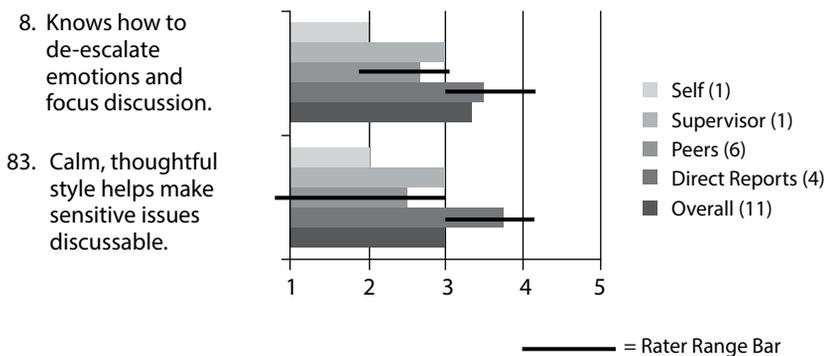
Mark had always felt that he should speak his mind and let people know when he wasn't happy about something. He admitted that the stress of the new job had taken a toll. It was hard to keep his emotions in check. He didn't realize the extent to which this was viewed as hostility by his peers. Mark's approach—to confront people when he didn't agree—was based on valuing honesty and candor. It just wasn't having the intended effect. Instead of earning their respect, his peers thought less of him.

Mark's self-ratings on Composure were even lower than those of his boss and his peers, so it wasn't as if it came as a complete surprise, but he was suffering the pain of realizing how much it had damaged his reputation. While his was an extreme case of lack of Composure, we have found that any leader who gets lower ratings in this area can struggle mightily to maintain others' respect and support.

The coach, Mark, and his boss sat down for a three-way meeting, reviewing the particular aspects of Composure that were challenging: "Knows how to de-escalate emotions and focus discussion" as well as projecting a "calm, thoughtful style [that] helps make sensitive issues discussable" (see Figure 3.2). Prior to the meeting, Mark and his coach had reviewed open-ended comments, which noted that Mark "speaks up and later has to take back support for a position," and he needed to be "attentive to cues from others and recognize the value of silence in some situations."

An example of this was a recent, painful meeting with his peers. Mark had come in prepared to confront a colleague about a "stupid" decision that had incurred shared, additional costs for the entire North American group.

**FIGURE 3.2** | MARK DWYER: RATINGS ON TWO COMPOSURE ITEMS



Mark had “raised hell,” on purpose, to make a point. Upon reflection with his boss and the coach, he admitted it wasn’t that big a deal. They talked about how his boss had rescued the situation, bringing the temperature in the room down by asking questions and focusing on next steps. Mark admitted readily how much more productive his boss’s approach had been. While Mark’s intent had been to send a message, he realized “how idiotic I looked in contrast with the way my boss handled it.”

The coach suggested that Mark begin to notice and model his boss’s behavior. This would require him to employ that silence that one rater had recommended. In addition, the coach recommended that if Mark learned of an issue that was likely to get under his skin during a team meeting, he think it through before the meeting and consider a positive solution.

Much was at stake, as Mark’s boss admitted in the meeting that he was beginning to wonder whether he would need to move Mark back to a sales role. His peers were now leaving Mark out of crucial discussions, and they were no longer coming to Mark’s side even when he had a rational argument. They simply didn’t want to be seen as condoning his irrational, emotional behavior.

### **CAN YOU DEVELOP COMPOSURE?**

An emergency room doctor once shared how she trained herself to stay calm when gunshot victims and heart attack patients were rolled in on a gurney. As her heart rate quickened, she would call on her extensive emergency medical training. Emergency teams drill in these situations by training themselves to recall a sequence of steps for each medical situation. Each step must be followed, and focusing on those steps helps them to bring their emotions in check and direct their energies and abilities to saving a life.

This may be the best example of the learned aspect of Composure. We can train ourselves not only to appear calm, but to feel calm, by establishing and following a process. The coach recommended that Mark have such a plan with clear steps to follow. If he wanted to get engaged in a discussion, he should first acknowledge the issue, then ask questions, and then speak only if he had a constructive suggestion. Rather than blaming others, he should offer solutions. This would help him moderate his tone and keep his emotions in check.

The coach also helped Mark see that sarcastic humor had no place in these conversations with his peers and direct reports. This was another issue

of Composure he would need to manage. Projecting mature leadership did not leave space for clever but hurtful verbal jabs. Staying focused on making a positive contribution would also help him resist the urge to crack a bad joke. Mark was able to modify his behavior significantly, and his boss decided to keep him in the role.

Developing Composure is not a matter of hiding feelings but rather constructively expressing them. For example, if you find yourself feeling frustrated because people are going off topic, rather than letting emotions rule, verbalize what you are noticing, even if the issue is as minor as a discussion that is running amok. You can sit there looking impatient, and or you can say, “I see we’re 15 minutes into the agenda. I don’t know about you, but it seems we are talking in circles. Since we only have 10 minutes left, perhaps we should either table it or make a decision.”

### THE ROLE OF STRESS

We’ve mentioned a few times the impact that stress can have on our executive presence. This is true even in the Substance dimension. Many leaders struggle with Composure simply because they are weary and depleted and are under pressure. Fatigue makes it impossible to perform at our best. We are vulnerable to emotions including anger, impatience, and irritability.

Energy management is a growing field of study, as we learn more and more about the impact that nutrition, sleep, exercise, mental breaks, and personal time have on our well-being. We often spend significant time with our clients helping them to appreciate that it is impossible to run on fumes. Busy executives have to attend to their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health to manage the demands.

A pattern of tense, strained communications impairs performance and predicts burnout.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, Composure is supported by two lines of research: emotional intelligence and the use of mindfulness meditation in business.<sup>2</sup> As reported in *Fast Company*, executives at Google<sup>3</sup> brought in meditation expert Jon Kabat-Zinn, who prescribed mindfulness as a means of self-regulating emotions.<sup>4</sup> The executives found that meditation halted the spiraling levels of stress that can make us vulnerable to losing Composure.

The work of Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in *The Power of Full Engagement* documents how high-performing professional athletes keep themselves on top of their game.<sup>5</sup> They advocate a rhythm of exertion and renewal that enhances flexibility and resilience. This is quite unfamiliar to

many business leaders, especially in the U.S. culture, where hard-driving executives rarely take breaks or go on vacation.

It is imperative for those in senior roles to recognize their limits and develop habits of exertion and renewal to build emotional, mental, and spiritual capacity. Personal and family time, enjoyable activity, and outside intellectual stimulation are not luxuries; they are necessities to a compelling, positive, composed presence.

Mark took the coach's advice to heart on managing stress. He realized that taking on the leadership role and trying to attend to his young family had left him little time for relaxing pursuits. The coach had him put two vacations on his calendar along with several long weekends. After his first vacation, Mark reported that he felt calmer and more positive than he had felt in a long time.

## RESONANCE

Resonance is the ability to connect with others and make them feel heard and understood. It's our ability to attend, attune, and empathize with others' thoughts, emotions, and motivations. Resonant leaders patiently coax an authentic level of engagement with others. They disarm defenses and create an open environment that invites dialogue. Resonance travels well with Concern in the Character category, in that people notice in resonant leaders a kindness and benevolence.

Jonathan Wilson had just been promoted to a senior IT role, leading the development of new user platforms for a healthcare organization. Jonathan enrolled in an Executive Presence Mastery Program, and in advance, he completed an ExPI assessment. Prior to the first orientation call with his coach, Jonathan was already firing off e-mails, with questions revolving around lower ratings on Resonance. He was most concerned about whether the "hits" he took on lower ratings in Resonance came from everyone or just "outliers."

Jonathan was concerned because his new role had thrust him into the limelight with senior leaders in the organization. This would be a stretch assignment, one that would require him to win the confidence and support of those one or two levels up—people who hardly knew him. He would have to work across the enterprise with business presidents and functional leaders whom he would need to persuade to fund new IT systems and support long, challenging implementations.

Jonathan was regarded as an unparalleled technical genius when it came to technology. People sought him out for advice on the most complex challenges, and he was usually ahead of everyone on the answers. His technical know-how gave him a lot of sway with his IT colleagues. It was easy with IT people—they spoke his language.

Jonathan's assessment affirmed that getting beyond his technical role to influence business leaders would be a hill to climb. The open-ended comments from the Bates ExPI included these: "Jonathan can rely too much on persuasion—data points, facts, studies, etc.," and "He doesn't focus on reducing resistance: i.e., he needs to spend more time on understanding others' viewpoints, perspectives—meeting people where they are."

Building coalitions and winning support requires more than intellectual prowess. We have to be attuned to the thoughts and concerns of others. That is why technical experts can find it difficult to transition to business roles. It requires them to bridge what they know and make it relevant to the business. And we all know that many IT projects struggle to get support because IT hasn't made the business case.

### RESONANCE INVITES COLLABORATION

Resonance encourages dialogue and understanding among people who have different backgrounds, views, and objectives. Resonance is important to deepening alignment and forming enduring bonds. It enables leaders to establish an authentic level of engagement with groups and leadership teams.

In this way, Resonance is also a cousin of Composure. Resonance combined with a calm demeanor promotes an atmosphere where people are inclined to listen, clarify, and truly appreciate one another's views. The effect of this is to disarm defenses, reduce resistance, and reach consensus. Think of the positive effect this has on an organization going through a massive transformation, such as an IT implementation.

Jonathan's team was preparing to go out with a recommendation on a new system that would require significant investment from the businesses. While his team believed it was the right solution, implementation would take months and create significant inconvenience for the businesses. Jonathan had planned to do what he always did: prepare a detailed technical presentation on the merits of the system and implementation requirements.

The coach tested Jonathan on this plan by role-playing as a business leader and posing business questions that his listeners would probably ask.

Jonathan was stumped—admitting he hadn't thought about the business issues, let alone prepared answers. Jonathan was a bright, capable guy, but he needed to hone the ability to first consider the business perspective.

### **RESONANCE AND TRANSFORMATION**

Resonance is one of the more vital social-emotional facets of Substance, one that is essential to leaders driving transformation. Neuroscience researchers, including Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee,<sup>6</sup> have concluded that “relationships with resonant leaders are characterized by mutual positive emotions, a subjective sense of being in synchrony with one another.” In this way, resonant leadership is inspirational, is positive in emotional tone (hope), and reflects a personal understanding of what's in people's hearts and minds. It is impossible to imagine a successful transformation unless leaders are attuned with the experiences of others.<sup>7</sup>

Resonance has roots in principles of developmental psychology. From infancy on, most significant advances in human development occur in the crucible of relationships, and much of this occurs through the dynamics of nonverbal communications.<sup>8</sup> The highest levels of human performance are attributable in part to the resonant quality of the relationship one enjoys with his or her leader.<sup>9</sup> This has been posited in theory and proved in neuroscience research.<sup>10</sup>

Like all the other qualities of executive presence, Resonance can be developed. Fortunately, Jonathan, his supervisor, and others were aligned on lower ratings on this item: “Adept at reading and responding to the nonverbal messages of others.” He did have a blind spot. He believed he conveyed “an attitude of tolerance and openness.” His stakeholders did not agree. Said one rater, “Sometimes his questioning and intellect can make others defensive or feel under fire.”

### **A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO RESONANCE**

The comments were across the board on Resonance, and Jonathan was persuaded he needed to work hard on his social-emotional skills. The coach suggested that Jonathan get out of his comfort zone and try an approach that would force him to look up and listen.

Together the coach and Jonathan decided that Jonathan should go into the initial round of the business presidents' meetings with nothing more than a legal pad and a pen in hand. There was no need yet for a PowerPoint until he had gathered people's thoughts on the current issues that needed

to be resolved. There would be plenty of time to present solutions later. The coach also recommended the use of the Audience Agenda System, which would help Jonathan anticipate what the business presidents were thinking about and be prepared to answer their questions.

Audience Agenda is a simple tool—on the left side of the page, you jot down what you want to talk about; on the right, you write down what you believe the audience cares most about. Very often the two are different. We encourage clients to work on the right side in thinking about their audience’s interests. In Table 3.1, you can see an example of how the Audience Agenda System works. On the left side, you can see what a marketing leader wanted to convey when describing a new product launch to the sales team. On the right side, it’s clear that his audience had very different feelings about the product and the launch!

Jonathan used Audience Agenda to prep for his first meetings and found that while he hadn’t anticipated all the issues, he knew more than he thought he did about the business concerns. Now, after the discussions, he had an even firmer grasp of his listeners’ concerns and could look at things from their point of view. The next step was to prepare a business case presentation.

In sharing this tool our intention is to show how structure and discipline in our thinking and preparation for meetings can help us tune in

**TABLE 3.1** | EXAMPLE OF THE AUDIENCE AGENDA SYSTEM

<b>My Agenda</b>	<b>Audience Agenda</b>
This new product is great, as is our new process.	This product <i>stinks</i> . You create things in a vacuum.
You’re going to be really motivated by what this new product can do for clients.	Will this help me reach my quota?
You now have everything you need to go out and sell, sell, sell.	I’m bored by all of your stats and numbers. Inspire me to go out and sell.
This year is different: We have a whole new approach.	When will this be over? I need to make client calls.
Marketing is here to support you.	Marketing is clueless: You’ve never sold for a living; you have no idea what it’s like to sell this stuff.

and project Resonance. Any strategy that prompts you to consider others' points of view will help you prepare and convey this quality.

## VISION

You'll recall Bill Van Dyke, who was on a mission to persuade practice leaders in his firm to cooperate on an integrated approach to C-suite sales. Bill was working on showing a mature Confidence by interacting differently with his peers—not “selling them” on an idea, but rather, inviting them to weigh in and confidently coordinating a productive discussion.

The second theme that arose in Bill's ExPI was Vision. His peers didn't really understand what he was trying to do. The members of his own team were only slightly clearer about the plan even though they worked under him and were responsible for executing it. Bill considered Vision one of his strengths, as he was a creative thinker, unafraid to challenge the status quo. He was surprised by the ExPI feedback that Vision was low.

The items under Vision that were lowest included “Paints a vivid and compelling picture of what could be” and “Strong thinker with an appreciation for what it takes to realize a strategy.” In the open-ended comments, raters suggested that he “create greater clarity with regard to mid- and long-range plans” and have “greater consistency in message and direction.” These items spoke to a need to have a plan and to inspire others to get behind it.

### THE DUALITY OF VISION

Vision is equal parts strategic thinking and inspiration. Vision paints a compelling picture of a future state and also mobilizes action. Clarity plus inspiration moves people to act. One without the other is not enough. The plan points people in a direction; the belief ignites energy.

While Bill had a knack for looking out at the landscape of the industry and understanding emerging trends, he was having trouble expressing how it would benefit his peers. Sure, he was a creative, bold thinker, but he appeared naïve and almost oblivious to their circumstances. For instance, changing the way they did business would not work without an overhaul in incentive compensation, which the firm had tried before without success.

Bill's idea was not clear, and he hadn't solved for the compensation issue, meaning that for the practice-area leaders, it didn't seem doable. It was an admirable idea, but he would need to get real and make sure this enterprising approach had a chance to take hold. This aspect of the facet

is important to recognize—it is vision for a purpose, inventing, enterprising, and plotting a doable path forward. We’re reminded of the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Keep your eyes on the stars and your feet on the ground.”

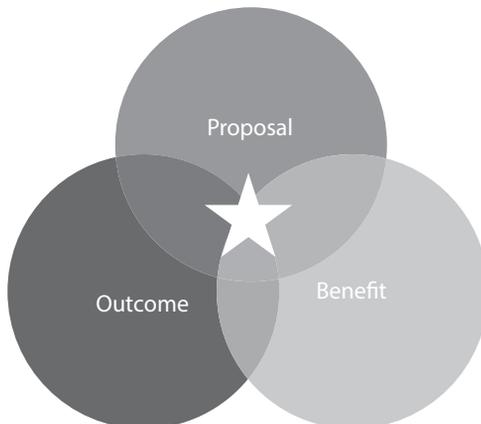
### METHODS FOR DEVELOPING VISION

Bill needed to take the time to clarify the plan in a way that addressed enterprise concerns and then communicate it effectively. He would need to share a crisp, clear picture and a realistic plan that got people to say, “Okay, let’s go!”

The coach introduced another communication tool we teach called the Big Idea (see Figure 3.3). This tool is designed to distill complex ideas into a single, compelling, provocative statement: 25 words or less. It can be a messy, creative process, but it yields great results, as you boil down the plan to three parts: a proposal, outcome, and benefit—for that audience. Stating it in no more than 25 words requires you to capture the essence and nuance—and without sacrificing complexity and richness to keep it memorable and crisp.

Bill’s big idea when finally distilled was this: “By introducing our clients to an array of our firm’s exceptional thought leaders, we will serve the client better, creating strong bonds and long-term relationships that drive sustainable, profitable growth. Later, Bill outlined steps including a proposal to change the compensation structure—demonstrating that he had

FIGURE 3.3 | THE BIG IDEA



listened to the practice-area leaders and incorporated their suggestions into the plan. They now saw a higher purpose for cross-selling and a path forward to achieving a common end.

## **SUMMARY**

Substance isn't about being born with smarts. We win respect and earn credibility by exhibiting a mature, crystallized intelligence. We leverage the qualities of Substance to chart a course and breed optimism. Substance helps others find meaning and purpose in their work and inspires their commitment. Therefore, it is essential to aligning an organization to drive toward important, worthy goals. The qualities of Substance inform what people do and why it is important. These qualities give others the confidence to believe in a course of action and embrace the challenge.

As important as these five qualities of Substance are to setting direction and inspiring commitment, they are not alone sufficient to build momentum and sustain performance over time. To keep an organization moving ahead, we must also appreciate the qualities of Style. Read on to understand how the last five facets of the model enable organizations to get things done.

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## Style

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### The Secret to Getting Others to Get Things Done

*It always seems impossible until it's done.*

—NELSON MANDELA

If Character is about trust and Substance is about credibility, the way to think of Style is its role in driving execution. Since leaders cannot do the work of the organization, and must instead inspire others to take on those tasks, the qualities of presence in the Style dimension are essential to getting things done. These are the communicative expressions of leadership presence that focus people's energies, harness their efforts, ignite creativity, and translate it to action.

The word “Style” is commonly used to describe a person's wardrobe and grooming—as in a “stylish appearance.” A more accurate and complete definition of style is “a way of doing things.” This comprehensive description captures the intent of what Style measures in the Bates EP Model.

Perhaps you know leaders whose presence and energy are so contagious that these leaders can shift a room as soon as they walk through the door. That's one powerful expression of Style we'll talk about in the first facet, Appearance. Other facets of Style ignite action, align effort, and drive results. Style describes ways we engage others, coordinate activity, promote dialogue, surface and resolve conflict, and sustain alignment. We define it in the model this way:

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**Style:** Overt, skill-based patterns of communicative leadership that build motivation and shape and sustain performance.

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Style matters greatly in driving organizational performance. If you're a leader who engages others with an interactive, conversational style, you are far more likely to be successful in navigating your team through challenges and staying on course. Style qualities help you rally people to the cause and sustain progress over time.

Ahead in this chapter you'll see examples of how these qualities help you check and recheck alignment, empower others, and encourage ownership of outcomes. The Style facets orchestrate the work of the enterprise in challenging times and drive excellence in execution.

The five facets are all aspects of action and doing: Appearance, Intentionality, Inclusiveness, Interactivity, and Assertiveness. Let's begin with Appearance to explore the many ways people connect our physical presence to leadership effectiveness.

## APPEARANCE

Maat Gupta was recruited to a senior role in finance within a large U.S. transportation firm. He came in as number two in the treasury function. It was understood that he was the likely successor when his boss retired in 18 months. Maat hit the ground running, getting to know the team and developing a plan to improve outdated systems. His caring, kind manner and calm, respectful demeanor were assets on his executive "balance sheet."

Maat thought everything was going well. Then one day about three months into the role, his boss called him in and suggested he needed to project a "stronger overall presence." What did it mean? Maat immediately suspected this comment was a covert way of suggesting he lose some weight. Could that really be it? Whatever it was, it was no small matter. He noticed his boss was spending far less time with him. There had to be more to it than his weight. He decided to enroll in our Executive Presence Mastery Program.

The first thing we noticed about Maat was that he was well attired and nicely groomed. While he may have wanted to lose weight, his weight wasn't a significant detraction. However, his clothing was too large, which had the effect of drowning him. Interestingly, though, his ExPI results were

high when it came to “looking the part” of a senior executive. So what was the real issue that was bothering his boss?

Appearance is a potent factor in our evaluation of a leader, and like the other facets, it is multidimensional. As such, it is associated with the leader’s capability, suitability, readiness, and willingness to lead. Appearance encompasses projecting a healthy, vital, alert, vigorous demeanor. Vitality attracts others and gives them reason to engage with you. It tells a story about how you see yourself in the world.

### ZEROING IN ON THE REAL ISSUE

Maat’s team appreciated many aspects of his executive presence. He had a calm, relaxed way of handling difficult situations without getting ruffled. In answer to the question “What enhances this leader’s presence?” people wrote, “extremely likable,” “projects a caring attitude,” “pleasant and kind,” and “personable, thoughtful, and respectful.” It’s worth noting that we don’t usually see such over-the-top praise related to facets such as Concern, Resonance, and Composure.

What was detracting from Maat’s presence? The issues fell squarely into the Appearance facet, but not in the way he’d assumed. His voice was so soft that even in a small room we had to strain to hear him. He was rather sedentary, moving around little and exhibiting a rather low level of energy. Though he insisted he was delighted with the job and excited about the opportunity, his lack of vitality masked the enthusiasm.

Appearance in the Bates EP Model considers posture, facial expression, voice, and overall demeanor as clues to the leader’s vitality. Inferences that others make based on these nonverbal signals are so powerful that they are linked to assessments of fundamental professional capability, including a leader’s preparedness, readiness for action, and ability to organize and galvanize effort. Those inferences extend to assumptions about a leader’s personal ethic and commitment to self-care.

### THE ROLE OF ENERGY

A leader that doesn’t appear on top of his game and ready for the day will be less visible. This is one reason smart, thoughtful professionals get passed over on promotions and opportunities. Meanwhile those who bring energy into a room tend to get noticed and evaluated as “executive material.”

Maat was so low-key that we wondered whether this was the reason his boss was avoiding him and potentially second-guessing his suitability

for succession. Among Maat's lowest-rated items on the Bates ExPI were "Looks healthy, alert, expresses himself/herself with vigor." He received lower ratings on "Aware that his/her dress and demeanor sends a message, sets expectations." Open-ended comments included "soft-spoken, so you need to listen closely" and "does not have a commanding presence."

Issues of energy can arise for leaders like Maat when they are very highly rated on Restraint and Composure. Their calm disposition can be confused with a lack of passion and enthusiasm. But energy issues also arise when a leader faces a great deal of stress and challenge, as we've discussed in other case studies in the book. You'll recall leaders we've introduced who were struggling with a difficult new assignment, an unexpected crisis, or even personal issues. These situations also affect our energy in a noticeable way.

Leaders who show up looking worn out and ragged can cause others to conclude they are not up to the assignment, unprepared for the challenge, and in over their heads. Direct reports, peers, and managers may conclude they were promoted too fast or were not a suitable choice. In a later chapter we'll talk about the phenomenon of inflection points, as one of the warning signs is a lack of energy. We'll discuss how to navigate these challenges and develop new skills and approaches that improve others' perceptions of our readiness to lead.

### **HOW DOES A PROFESSIONAL WARDROBE FIT INTO DISCUSSIONS ON APPEARANCE?**

There's no question that professional image, including clothing and grooming, is an important aspect of Appearance. Image has significant power and symbolism in executive leadership. Over the years when managers and HR supervisors have called us to work with their leaders, they've sometimes tentatively mentioned wardrobe and image as areas of concern.

While they know intuitively how much it matters, they may be reluctant themselves to bring it up with the leader. They are afraid of saying the wrong thing and are not sure how to explain why it's important. They struggle to explain whether or how it is tied to the leader's ability to drive outcomes. But in fact we know image matters in evaluations of a leader's judgment, readiness, and capability, which in turn becomes a factor in whether that leader can earn respect and be seen as effective.

The Bates EP Model defines the Style facets, including Appearance, in a way that gives leaders and organizations plenty of reason to understand why the facets matter and to care about them. Appearance is wardrobe and

much more—it's also the leader's energy and "fitness for duty." The language of all the facets is potent and connects directly to executive effectiveness and performance.

### HOW CAN YOU LEARN WHETHER APPEARANCE IS A DETRACTOR OR AN ASSET?

It is important to solicit constructive feedback on your Appearance and also to give feedback to those who report to you. If you are a manager with a team member who is not appropriately dressed or looking healthy and alert, you do that individual no favors if you ignore the issue and hope it will go away. You can talk about it in terms of the significant symbolic and real impact that a leader's Appearance has on others. When it comes to wardrobe, as well as posture, grooming, and voice, people are far better off understanding what is influencing perceptions about them.

Relying on an assessment that calls out specific, research-based aspects of Appearance can make it a lot easier to start the conversation. The point is to have constructive dialogue and to give actionable advice, such as the suggestion to work with an image consultant. In coaching programs we have often found that the positive changes that result from addressing aspects of energy and Appearance represent "early wins" as they are indications that the leader is alert to the importance of self-care and appreciates the practical, social, and symbolic importance. An improvement in Appearance communicates attention to other aspects of leadership presence, including a leader's ability to adapt to his or her environment and represent the firm's brand.

### DOES APPEARANCE REALLY MATTER?

For those who believe Appearance *shouldn't* matter, our response is, whether or not you believe it should, it *does*, a fact widely affirmed by credible research. Implicit leadership theory has shown that "representations unconsciously held by followers . . . help distinguish leaders from non-leaders." This is yet another reason it is so important to provide leaders with multirater feedback. It makes them aware of blind spots that are often significantly affecting how others evaluate their competence, capability, and suitability for the role, so they can take action.

Appearance isn't just about what others think of us. It's what we think about ourselves. You know yourself that when you've had more sleep, get more exercise, or purchase new clothes, you feel great when you look in the mirror. This profoundly influences the energy you project all day long.

As Virginia Woolf once wrote, “Clothes have, as they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world, and the world’s view of us.”

### MAAT’S FIRST STEPS

Maat worked with our wardrobe consultant, who took him to a tailor to be measured. At home she had him try on clothing, discard what didn’t fit, and put it on hangers to be given away. Together they made a list of items he needed, and then they went shopping at a fine men’s store to make new purchases. As often happens, after putting on the new suits, Maat felt great. He walked out of the store in a new suit, with a spring in his step and a smile on his face. Since he was no longer drowning in his clothes, he looked 10 pounds slimmer. The expert also helped Maat build his wardrobe of suits and ties, to be sure he was covered for business casual, business social, and resort wear for off-site meetings and golf outings.

While many leaders like Maat might assume that their weight is an issue, dressing well is a very effective way to manage impressions and convey strong executive presence. Choosing clothing that fits well, is made of fabric that drapes well, and is appropriately stylish makes a big difference. You can feel good and look good at any weight so long as you take care to make good selections that flatter you and reflect well on your leadership brand.

The coach also worked with Maat on voice exercises and diaphragmatic breathing. The objective was to help him project his voice across the room. While this didn’t feel natural at first, Maat agreed to work at it and to practice the exercises to master the technique. Maat also signed up for our program on how to “speak like a CEO” to get tips on front-of-the-room presence. Among the lessons in the course was advice on commanding the room with posture, movement, and gestures. Maat appreciated getting guidance on how to project energy on stage and found it helpful to every situation, including informal meetings.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU WANT TO RAISE YOUR ENERGY LEVEL

There are many ways for leaders like Maat to raise their energy level and bring more vitality to their work and interactions with others. Maat admitted he was doing little physical activity and eating poorly. It had been a year and a half since he had taken a vacation. It’s important to begin overhauling your energy by tuning in to your physical, emotional, and mental rhythms, paying attention when you become depleted and tak-

ing steps to rest and rejuvenate. It is very easy for high-powered leaders to work well beyond normal physical and mental limits and not realize how depleted they are. If you tend to work long hours and take few vacations, you are vulnerable to living life not only feeling depleted but projecting a poor overall presence.

While maintaining physical and mental health could be a challenge for leaders in any culture, in the United States, 85.8 percent of males and 66.5 percent of females work more than 40 hours per week. According to the ILO, “Americans work 137 more hours per year than Japanese workers, 260 more hours per year than British workers, and 499 more hours per year than French workers.” So U.S. leaders may want to pay particular attention to the challenges they face in maintaining energy over time. While it is possible to work hard for short bursts, these habits have long-term impact on our health.

Making time for you and for family and friends, as well as for physical activities, nutrition, personal pursuits, reading, and relaxation, greatly enhances your energy and appearance. Self-care is part of good executive self-management. Executives do not get extra points for working until they drop or showing up exhausted. Smart leaders understand that they need reserves to draw upon to go the distance. It is essential not only to your health but also to your ability to cope, remain composed under fire, shift others’ emotions, and create a stable work environment.

## **ETIQUETTE AND PROTOCOL**

One final aspect of Appearance that we would like to briefly mention is the leader’s attention to business etiquette and social protocol. Since there is much to know on this topic, we won’t take a great deal of time here, but instead we encourage readers to become well acquainted with executive manners and behaviors. Knowing how to comport yourself in every situation is another indication of your suitability and readiness for senior roles.

There are many excellent resource books available. Take time to read up and also to observe executives around you who know what they’re doing. If you are uncertain about a protocol, ask. Whether or not you know what to do, people will be watching and drawing conclusions.

In the C-suite, protocol is rarely discussed but always noticed. Many a story has been told of CEOs taking prospective hires to golf, dinner, or a social event, only to decide by the way they comported themselves that they weren’t suitable for the job.

If we could sum up etiquette, it is the way we demonstrate respect for ourselves and others. We often incorporate protocol training in executive programs and provide an expert to work with leaders and teams on dining and meeting etiquette.

Our clients always tell us that even when they knew the basics, they learned something. For example, one group of executives in a global company had never learned how to eat Continental style, which is prevalent in Europe and elsewhere. Learning international protocol is critical if your business is global. As their CEO told us, “I need them to be able to travel to Europe, sit down with titans of industry, make a toast to a king, or go to a golf outing with a client and be completely appropriate.”

## INTENTIONALITY

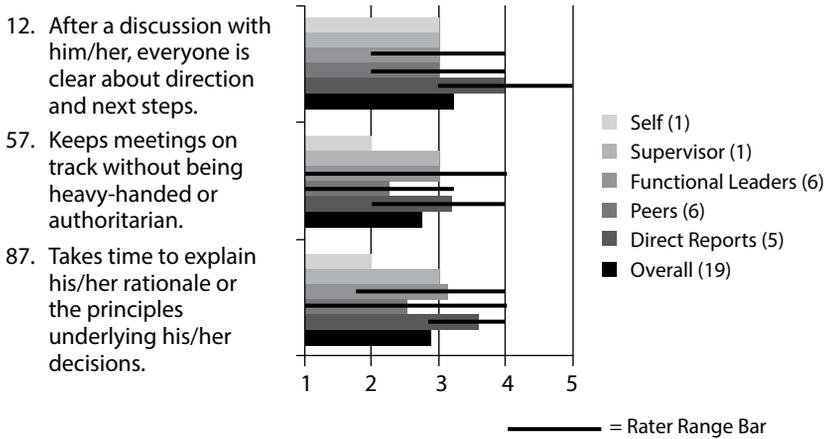
When we met Marcie Miller, she had recently made a sideways move within a healthcare company from VP of sales to VP of operations. There were very good reasons for accepting a lateral move. Marcie’s boss, the president of the company, was grooming her as his successor. The scope of the role was much larger, with responsibility for several functional teams: regional services, finance, IT, customer engagement/social media, and human resources. Marcie had a full plate. The regional services group alone had 18 directors.

Marcie was a high-energy leader accustomed to working hard, but she was pushing to get acclimated, working seven days a week. In sales leadership, Marcie had excelled because she had been successful in sales and had been able to transition to leadership where she held others accountable for delivering results. But she didn’t know the other functions, and they were complaining that they couldn’t get decisions from her.

When the coach reviewed her strengths in the ExPI assessment with her, they were plentiful and included Humility, Concern, Authenticity, and Confidence. Among Marcie’s lower scores was Intentionality, where even she had given herself low marks. Among the items they noted were “After a discussion with him/her, everyone is clear about direction and next steps,” “Keeps meetings on track without being heavy-handed or authoritarian,” and “Takes time to explain his/her rationale or the principles underlying his/her decisions” (see Figure 4.1).

Other lower-rated facets included Practical Wisdom, Resonance, and Vision. Interestingly, this is not an unusual pattern. Like Practical Wisdom, Intentionality is generally not a “leading thread” in the ExPI feedback;

**FIGURE 4.1** | MARCIE MILLER: RATINGS ON THREE INTENTIONALITY ITEMS



it usually is more of a consequence of flat sides elsewhere in the model. Though the reasons vary from leader to leader, communicating a vision and providing wise counsel require a leader to be intentional in the way she directs action.

### WHAT IS INTENTIONALITY?

It can be helpful to think of Intentionality as a purposeful kind of vision. In fact, we sometimes refer to Intentionality as “Vision with a small ‘v.’” Intentionality provides a compass for the organization’s energies, pointing people down a productive path so they focus their effort and time on what matters. It serves to clarify direction and keep actions aligned and on track. An intentional leader guides others on a path forward.

However, Intentionality should not be confused with directive, authoritative leadership. What we’re measuring in the ExPI is perceptions of the leader’s ability to enable an ongoing course of execution<sup>1</sup> without stifling dissent or neglecting the needs of others. It’s getting alignment with a constructive back-and-forth that surfaces issues and yields the best ideas and solutions.

Leaders strong on Intentionality clearly articulate the mission, goal, strategic objective, or project outcomes to align others’ actions. Their communication gives purpose and meaning to the group’s activity, which inspires greater effort. People describe these leaders as deliberate and purposeful. It’s a rewarding experience to work with such a leader, to understand the plan and your role in executing.

There is an iterative aspect to Intentionality as well, since circumstances and priorities change. The intentional leader sustains effort over time by making sure people leave each meeting realigned and ready to flex. Intentional leaders are attuned to what has changed and how to correct the course. They are also adept at communicating the “why” of an initiative, in order to build and sustain momentum. They respect others’ intellect and talents and empower them to act.

### **MARCIE’S CHALLENGES**

Marcie had been successful with her sales team because the task was familiar—she had spent many years in sales and sales leadership. In the new role, she wasn’t surefooted outside the realm of landing business and driving new revenue. She was afraid to make the wrong call on other decisions. She shared with the coach that she felt frenetic in her leadership team meetings. She admitted that she did not go into meetings clear about the desired objectives and outcomes. She was simply reacting to what was said without putting forward a plan of action or giving clear direction. After 10 months, comments on her leadership recommended that she “be clear about her vision.”

Marcie realized as a result of the feedback and discussion with the coach that she had to take time to get briefed on the issues and get clear about her viewpoint. She had been intentional in her sales meetings, and she simply needed to transfer this skill to running other parts of the business. She had to have in mind the overall enterprise objectives, know how each proposed project fit in, and guide the team to set priorities and action steps.

### **EXHIBITING INTENTIONALITY WITH BETTER MEETINGS**

A sophisticated approach to planning and running meetings is essential to projecting Intentionality and directing people toward a goal. If you begin with the end in mind, it is far easier to prepare an agenda and keep your objectives in mind during the course of discussion. Marcie’s coach first worked with her to help her review the enterprise vision, review the current top projects, and understand how they fit in. She then worked with the coach to prepare agendas that left time at the end of each topic to confirm understandings and set timelines, expectations, and shared outcomes, to confirm they were all “on the same page.”

The coach recommended that Marcie also honor one-on-ones with her direct reports. She had been canceling these because she felt she was too busy. The coach helped her see how to use them to get briefed on the key

issues, learn more about each function, and get on top of the initiatives. Among the best practices the coach recommended was for Marcie to let her direct reports know that they should send agendas for their one-on-ones in advance, along with background materials. This would help Marcie catch up and appreciate some of the underlying issues before she convened the team.

### CAN YOU HAVE TOO MUCH INTENTIONALITY?

Low scores on Intentionality can also arise when leaders are overcontrolling. These leaders are so prescriptive and detailed that they don't empower people to do it their way. You may recognize this type of leader because he or she is doing all the talking. Her statements are heard as demands, and questions can even feel pointed or accusatory. This makes others tense, nervous, and defensive. A heavy-handed, top-down, authoritarian style does not invite participation or create shared ownership.

There's good reason why a directive style doesn't help you build momentum and sustain effort. First, if you're the only one talking, you can't check alignment or notice whether people are on board. Second, you create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety, and when people are fearful, they do the minimum or nothing, afraid to make a mistake. At best, they will *comply* with your directives, but they will do so without a sense of *commitment*. That's the difference between what Bernard Bass describes as transactional leadership and transformational leadership.

Even leaders with a positive attitude can come across as domineering. Recall Nancy Nissan. Her excessive energy, passion, and desire to succeed overwhelmed her team. They believed that her drive was fueled by anxiety. She wanted quick wins. She didn't want to hear about problems, and as a result, her team didn't have the opportunity to have the back-and-forth that enables problem solving. After a while they stopped making suggestions.

As a leader, if you suspect you are dominating your own meetings, it's important to develop the discipline to stay quiet and encourage others to speak. Before making statements or passing judgment, solicit others' views, and encourage them to propose solutions. Ask questions to ascertain where there is agreement, and work to gain mutual understanding and internalize shared meaning.<sup>2</sup>

### NANCY'S EPIPHANY

Reviewing the ExPI assessment helped Nancy understand the difference between her intentions and others' perceptions. She now saw how her bias

to action and urgent drive were viewed as “trying too hard.” In research the solution can be found in what’s called the “intentionality paradox.”<sup>3</sup> Basically, leaders who want to be intentional may need to ease up on that drive in order to allow room for others to be intentional. A simple way to say it is that a goal-driven leader can learn to communicate intentionally without making people crazy.

It’s also worth noting that like other qualities, e.g., Inclusiveness, perceptions of Intentionality can suffer when a leader is seen as lacking in Restraint. So if Nancy could amplify her Restraint as more of a leading thread, it would be likely that perceptions of her Intentionality would improve as well.

Nancy did struggle to make these changes in her behavior, and she had several setbacks. Fortunately the president of the company was willing to provide her with longer-term coaching and also to mentor her to develop in these areas. Sometimes leaders do find it difficult to modify their behavior, but Nancy was ultimately able to draw on her skills as a sales leader to bring discipline, focus, and accountability to her management of other areas of the business as well. Her boss said had she not exhibited the determination to get past this hurdle and learned to be effective, she would not have stayed in the role.

## **INCLUSIVENESS**

David Marino was a smart, driven, and decisive leader with a knack for remembering and interpreting vast amounts of data. People were wowed by his ability to quickly grasp complex business issues, weigh multiple options, and move forward in a timely way on decisions. These qualities propelled David to become a division president at a young age. His boss imagined Dave would be running a larger and more significant organization and would eventually move up to join the executive management team.

However, David’s boss and the SVP of HR had noticed lately that something about David’s style of interaction wasn’t working. They couldn’t put their fingers on it and were reluctant to raise the issue because they didn’t want to rock the boat. David was exceptionally talented; the business was hitting the numbers; and in fact, the division’s success was supporting a few other divisions of the company that were struggling.

One of the symptoms of trouble they noticed was that the members of David’s team were frayed around the edges, running hard and seeming irritated and impatient with one another and their own teams. After 18 months

under David's leadership, they didn't have the same esprit de corps that they'd had before he was promoted. Under his predecessor there had been much more positive energy, patience, and even courtesy toward one another. In addition, David's team members had complained that he wasn't developing them or giving them chances to step up and take on interesting assignments.

Interestingly, people had always described David as an exceptional leader, in part because he was a "good and active listener." They complimented his ability to take in the information, ask smart questions, and process quickly. In reviewing David's ExPI assessment, the coach noted one of his lowest ratings was in the facet of Inclusiveness. Could this be a clue about what it was in David's style that wasn't working?

### **HOW DO WE DEFINE INCLUSIVENESS?**

Inclusiveness describes the way an executive actively involves others to generate a broad array of opinions and diverse points of view. Basically, it means that you're able to get the right people to the table—or reach out to the right stakeholders—to make sure people have a voice and a stake in the discussion. Inclusiveness is essential to building support for initiatives and getting the best of people's thinking and effort. Inclusive leaders tend to bring a lot of people into the discussion. They are approachable and convey the sense that all views are welcome.

Inclusiveness is positively associated with feelings of psychological safety. If people don't feel included, they do not feel safe, but rather, begin to speculate and become fearful of "what is really going on." This lack of information may also come across as an attempt to protect them from the truth or hide the truth, which also damages trust and reduces engagement.

### **A BIT OF A SHOCKER**

On Inclusiveness, David's direct reports gave him very low ratings on these two items: "Others have learned they can speak up and approach him/her with ideas" and "Expresses a refreshing curiosity and interest in the ideas of others." How did this match the feedback he'd had for years, that he was a good and active listener? Frankly, David was shocked. It stung!

The ExPI assessment was the first feedback that had highlighted this area of development for David. One rater described him as arrogant. Dings to his Integrity also hit him especially hard. He called it a "lightbulb moment." But he wanted to understand, so he and the coach took a deeper dive into some of the other facets to help them appreciate what was happening.

For example, David's overall Integrity scores were high. But direct reports gave him a low score on one Integrity item: "Can count on him/her to do the right thing, even if it costs him/her dearly." On Concern, the group also gave David low ratings on "Takes time to listen and leaves others feeling heard." These single items gave us more clarity.

In Table 4.1, we show David's lowest-rated items across all 90 items on the ExPI. We include a summary of the highest- and lowest-rated items in each ExPI report, and we often can see themes that cut across the facets and dimensions, showing how interconnected they are.

David asked his coach to attend one or two of his meetings to observe his interactions with the team. The coach noted that initially David set the stage and asked good questions. However, in each meeting there was a moment when David seemed to stop listening and appeared to fake interest the rest of the way through. Once he had made up his mind, his facial expression turned vacant, as though he were just waiting for people to finish so they could move on.

### WHY INCLUSIVENESS IS A CHALLENGE FOR SOME LEADERS

Many hard-driving leaders like David with quick, analytical minds wrestle with this facet of Inclusiveness. They rely on themselves and trust their own analytical abilities. Once they've processed the facts, they're ready to declare and get on with it. This is good for efficiency, but it doesn't create empowerment. This style is not conducive to getting others to take initiative and solve problems together.

David admitted that he had an inner circle of people that he tended to turn to for their views. Comments in the open-ended section indicated that people outside that inner circle did not feel their contributions mattered.

**TABLE 4.1** | DAVID MARINO: LOWEST-RATED ExPI ITEMS

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#### Overall Ratings from Others (Average Scores in Parentheses)

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**Concern**—33. Takes time to listen and leaves others feeling heard (3.09).

**Interactivity**—56. Really listens when others are speaking and notices what may be unspoken (3.17).

**Inclusiveness**—88. Expresses a refreshing curiosity and interest in the ideas of others (3.3).

**Integrity**—47. Can count on him/her to do the right thing, even if it costs him/her dearly (3.42).

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The impact of this behavior, we suspected, was that some talent was being wasted, some people were less engaged, and David might actually be at risk of losing them.

Leaders can find it challenging to be inclusive when they move into larger roles. They have more people to manage and include, and they are coordinating multiple projects, sometimes across time zones and with people of diverse cultures. It requires a conscious effort to identify and reach out to so many stakeholders and actively involve and solicit their points of view. This is why it is so important for management to have what are referred to as “organizational conversations,” that make employees “full-fledged conversation partners.” It raises levels of emotional engagement, which in our model of executive presence moves people to act.

An inclusive approach keeps information flowing and helps with problem solving. A leader who keeps people in the loop is more likely to rally the troops. Though decisions and actions must be expedient and some matters closely held, open communication works in good times and even better in bad. Peter Drucker wrote extensively about how this attribute of inclusivity unleashes creativity, to the point where it would replace “economies of scale” as the key competitive advantage in the twenty-first century.

### **A FRESH START ON INCLUSIVENESS**

David now knew that he couldn't fake listening. Working on body language was only a Band-Aid. Pretending to listen wasn't working; his team was able to read him and pick up on the moment when he had “made up his mind.” As he put it, he was an excellent listener—until he stopped listening!

The coach noted that David's capacity for analysis and perspective taking would be an asset. He could use his questioning skills to have deeper conversations with members of his team and learn how he could do better. He and the coach discussed how Humility might also play a role in considering what others had to offer. He would be viewed as more inclusive if he could verbalize appreciation for various viewpoints and take time to hear out a variety of ideas.

The change was so dramatic that within a few months, the people on David's team were saying that their meetings were “the best ever.” The team also seemed to be working with a renewed sense of purpose and energy. David noted that he was finding his patience paying off as he learned more from the quieter members of the group, and they felt more inclined to open up.

## DIALING IN TO SOLICIT OTHERS' IDEAS

You may recall Doug Kowalski from Chapter 2, who was working on the facet of Humility. Doug's challenge was to drive change into a stodgy, 100-year-old organization, but he was the guy with all the answers. Doug also had low scores on Inclusiveness. Comments in the open-ended section indicated that people felt he needed to be the "smartest in the room and have the last word." Interestingly, prior to the feedback Doug also had thought of himself as a very good listener.

Doug's coach helped him see that not including others made his ideas orphans; people felt no ownership and, therefore, weren't getting behind the projects. Doug's call to action was to get at Humility by making it a point to be inclusive. He knew it wouldn't be easy. "Part of me says, 'Shut up and listen' . . . but I don't always know how."

The coach encouraged Doug to ask more questions and to listen without jumping to quick conclusions when other people spoke. The coach also asked Doug to use Resonance to dial in and pay attention to what was unsaid and to make "process observations" aloud when he noticed that someone might be quiet or hesitating to contribute. The coach assured him that once people felt it was safe, they would speak up. Doug could then encourage them to own projects, and this would energize them to get things done.

Both Doug and David needed to consciously and deliberately include people to gain a broader perspective. Fairly or not, some leaders develop a sense that they have their "A" players and "B" players, and they may begin to be inclusive with the former but not the latter.

This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy: the more you exclude people from key decisions and assignments, the more you perpetuate their belief that you don't see their value to the organization. While it always feels comfortable to have "go-to" people who mirror your thinking, beliefs, and values, exclusion kills engagement and shuts off the flow of diverse viewpoints and helpful information that aids good decision making.

## INTERACTIVITY

Joshua Hunt joined a large, multinational consultancy after a career as an accomplished industry analyst. Entering the organization, he knew he would have a lot to learn about navigating the politics and knowing the players. While it was helpful to have worked with some of the senior leaders, he didn't know everyone. But he could come and go on projects. "A big part of

my job now,” he told his coach during the ExPI orientation call, “is influencing others. I am quite new to the company—and haven’t gone through the organization’s stages of development as other practice leaders did.”

Joshua shared with the coach that he had a cautious and careful nature, which is why he had thought it would be smart to sit back and observe before making any moves. While this had been a good theory, he now suspected that he had taken too long. People in the organization didn’t know him, and he found it was especially difficult to develop peer-to-peer relationships with colleagues in other practices. When the coach reviewed Joshua’s ExPI report with him, Interactivity was neither high nor low overall, but the coach suspected that if the two of them looked at individual rater groups, down to the item level, they might learn more.

### THE SOCIABLE ASPECT OF STYLE

Interactivity is among the most sociable of variables in executive presence. It implies accessibility, a frequency of communicative action, a personable style of relating to others, and attunement to the spoken and unspoken elements of communication. Leaders strong in Interactivity employ a conversational style that puts people at ease and encourages them to speak up and be heard. While these leaders utilize all forms of written, electronic, and formal communication, they also tend to be personable, approachable, and easy to connect with in person.

Interactivity places a premium on timely dialogue and exchange of ideas. It combines what we often refer to as communicative action with strategic action, promoting mutual understanding of where we are going and why. This facet is essential to having influence, being persuasive, and driving outcomes.

Joshua had given himself a perfect score on all six of the items under Interactivity. As he and the coach reviewed others’ ratings together, they noted that Joshua had some blind spots. His lowest item overall on Interactivity was in “Encourages and expects frequent interaction to coordinate action and sustain alignment.” Another significant gap between Joshua’s self-appraisal and peer perceptions was in “Quick to notice and address barriers to interaction.”

### HOW INTERACTIVITY DRIVES PERFORMANCE

Research in motivating language theory has shown that Interactivity, the act of communicating to drive outcomes, goes to the heart of organiza-

tional performance. It also has sweeping impact on employee engagement, retention, and innovation. It encompasses three distinct kinds of communication: (1) direction-giving speech that reduces uncertainty, (2) empathic speech that expresses respect, and (3) meaning-making speech that reinforces cultural norms.<sup>4</sup>

Interactivity is not just about quantity of communication; it's also about quality. While there is a frequency and cadence to Interactivity, it doesn't imply communication that is rushed, hurried, overly urgent, or impersonal. It's easy and conversational, not formal and hierarchical. Interactivity means paying attention to feelings and thoughts and taking the time to coax out unexpressed thoughts and be in the moment with others.

As the coach talked with Joshua about his first few months in the new role, he learned that Joshua had not actively reached out to meet with his peers, the other practice leaders. Consequently, the people in this rater group said he wasn't connecting with them and seemed distant and apart from the team. The supervisor also gave him a low rating on the item "Listening and noticing what may be unspoken."

### AN ENEMY OF INTERACTIVITY: MULTITASKING

We suspected after reviewing the results that the appraisals of Joshua as distant and inaccessible could be attributed to his style in meetings. People said he often sat down at a conference table, popped open his computer, and worked as others spoke. He would drift in and out of the discussion. It wasn't clear to us why others put up with this rude behavior, but Joshua had assumed what he was doing was all right since no one raised objections with him. Meanwhile his boss and peers saw him as disinterested and unprofessional. This also manifested itself in low scores on Resonance: "Fully present and attentive when engaging with others."

It isn't unusual to see busy leaders multitasking in meetings and on phone calls. However, there's plenty of proof that this is not productive. A growing body of research suggests we cannot accomplish more than one cognitive task at a time. Studies show we can engage in a physical activity and cognitive activity with success. We can run a vacuum while talking on the phone or paint a room while watching a ball game. But when it comes to work that requires brainpower, we are able to conduct only one *mental* activity at a time. Those who frequently switch tasks lose as much as 40 percent of their productivity.<sup>5</sup>

Multitasking is epidemic in many organizations, a symptom of a larger issue of poor meeting management, priority setting, and cultural norms. As you've no doubt noticed by now, we often start by looking at a leader's calendar. We review activities and challenge the person to delegate, delete, or delay unnecessary meetings. Many meetings can be cut from 60 to 30 minutes. Every leader needs more white space for thinking activities.

Getting the calendar under control is a necessary step in eliminating the felt need to multitask. It can be a difficult habit to break, but it is critical, as it goes to organizational productivity as well as the ability to influence and make an impact. The leader who cannot manage time and is not tuned into the room will eventually be regarded as unfit for that level of leadership.

People don't give leaders a pass on checking phone and e-mail messages while in meetings. In essence, with some exceptions, people don't believe you're any busier than they are. At best this behavior is regarded as inconsiderate, and at worst it leaves the impression that a leader is a poor manager of time or simply self-involved and disrespectful.

If you've ever sat across the table with a teenager who is texting throughout a meal, you know what it feels like to have this technology barrier between you and others. While some team leaders have firm policies against computers and mobile phones in meetings, it's worth setting your own standards and protocols, regardless of company policy, so you convey to others that you are fully present and ready to engage.

Once again, a review of Joshua's lowest-rated items revealed developmental themes that spanned across all three dimensions and appeared to be related. As shown in Table 4.2, Joshua's flat sides were showing up well beyond the Interactivity facet.

**TABLE 4.2** | JOSHUA HUNT: LOWEST-RATED ExPI ITEMS

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**Overall Ratings from Others** (Average Scores in Parentheses)

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**Resonance**—9. Fully present and attentive when engaging with others (3.2).

**Humility**—65. Believes that all persons deserve respect: all colleagues deserve to be heard (3.37).

**Inclusiveness**—44. Uses an approach that empowers others to participate in important matters (3.39).

**Interactivity**—89. Quick to notice and address barriers to interaction (3.5).

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However, this represented good news as well: If Joshua could address this developmental theme, others would be likely to perceive him more favorably on any number of facets in the three dimensions. As a result, he could hope to see improvement in his ability to generate trust, credibility, and execution by tackling this one theme.

### **STEPS JOSHUA DECIDED TO TAKE**

Joshua was determined to do better and build strong relationships throughout the organization. The nonnegotiable item on Joshua's action plan was to leave his laptop in his briefcase, sit up to the table in meetings, and be fully present and participative. This single change had an immediate positive impact on his peers.

In addition, since one of his peers had commented that "his visibility as a leader is quite low" and that he tended to "stay out of the mainstream," Joshua talked with the coach about ways to get acquainted with his peers. He decided he would both meet individually with them and also offer to come in and give a brief informal talk to their leadership teams. He felt he would be comfortable if he could make the meetings meaningful by exchanging ideas—and perhaps find mutual interests and opportunities.

When we recommend that leaders reach out to meet one-on-one with their peers and also meet with their teams, the leaders find that these efforts are so appreciated that they are reciprocated. If you go in to present and discuss an issue with your peer's team, he or she is likely see the value in showing up for your presentation when there's good reason to do so. Inviting peers to informal get-togethers with your team can be a very effective way to encourage Interactivity among your direct reports and increase communication and mutual understanding.

### **ASSERTIVENESS**

Most of us understand Assertiveness as the willingness to speak up and get one's ideas on the table. It would be a mistake to confuse Assertiveness in the Bates EP Model as being aggressive or brashly outspoken. On the other hand, it's more than simply speaking up once in a while in a meeting.

Assertiveness as defined by our research is the ability to be direct, forthright, and willing to raise issues without unnecessary delay and also to work through differences constructively. This type of Assertiveness takes a reasonable tone, speaks up for a rational purpose, and puts just the right emphasis

on the relative urgency and importance of the matter at hand. Assertiveness reflects confidence and builds others' confidence in us.

In some industries (including the sciences, medicine, engineering, and others) where precision and accuracy are essential, the habit of “putting the elephant on the table” is a positive habit engrained from the earliest days of one's education. However, when some technical professionals move into leadership positions, they may not realize they need to modify their styles to invite the participation of others. The best form of Assertiveness leads to constructive dialogue and appreciates many points of view.

### THE SCIENCE OF CONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE

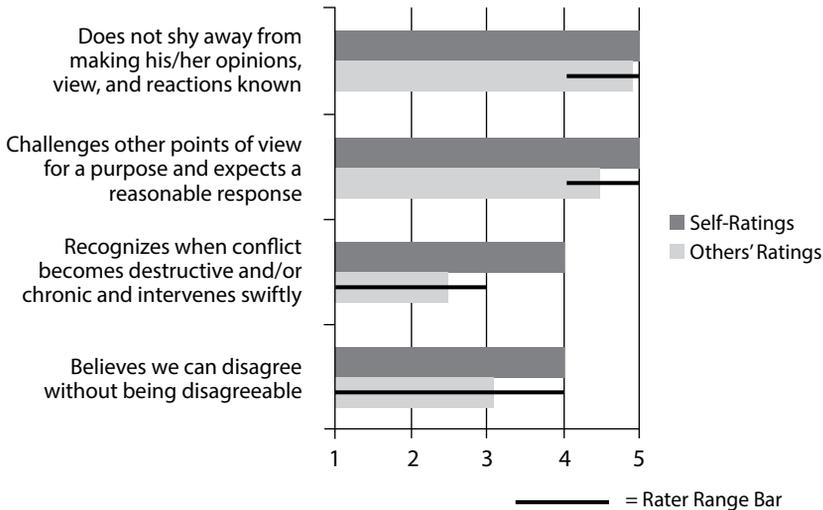
Andrei Petrov was a PhD leading a team of eight researchers in an early-stage, start-up medical devices company. His team was part of a newly formed group whose mission was to explore long-term innovations that might pan out as commercial products after a decade or longer. Andrei was a veteran scientist, but he was new to the organization and the team. Prior to that, he had managed only small teams of two or three, and he had been known for avidly arguing for and defending his group's interests. He was relentless in debating issues, often refusing to end a discussion until others gave in.

The members on Andrei's new leadership team interpreted his relentless arguing as his having little interest in their ideas or opinions. Sure they admired his brilliant mind, but it wasn't safe to disagree, and the discussions weren't collegial. Interestingly, Andrei's ExPI assessment was neutral on Assertiveness, neither high nor low overall. But as shown in Figure 4.2, when we looked more closely, we noticed that was because some items were wildly divergent from others.

Leaders are sometimes confused when they see results like these on one facet. How can you get high and low scores on different items in the same facet? To answer that, once again consider the diamondlike aspects of each facet, measuring different aspects of each. Andrei was perceived as quite capable of putting the proverbial elephant on the table, but he was asserting his opinions to the point where he shut down discussion.

While he received high scores on “Does not shy away from making his/her opinions, views, and reactions known” and on “Challenges other points of view for a purpose and expects a reasonable response,” he was rated low on items such as “Recognizes when conflict becomes destructive and/or chronic and intervenes swiftly” and “Believes we can disagree without being disagreeable.”

FIGURE 4.2 | ANDREI PETROV: DIVERGENT RATINGS ON ASSERTIVENESS



While Andrei's intentions were to get to the "right answer," his team didn't know how to handle him, short of adopting the same relentless debating style. Those on the team who were higher in Composure and Restraint simply didn't want to engage. They avoided entering the fray. This was having a significant impact on overall team dynamics. They simply weren't working well together.

### STRIKING A BALANCE

According to the model, an assertive leader has opinions but exhibits a balanced way of managing interactions. This leader employs the force of reason, without the force of intimidation or a disrespectful tone. Assertiveness taken to an extreme (at which point it may no longer be true Assertiveness) not only can shut down dialogue; it can also send conflict underground. One of the most important qualities a leader can show is an underlying tolerance for tensions and discomfort.

When the coach was in the room as a team facilitator, she noted that Andrei's colleagues and direct reports would try to cajole him to lighten up and get in sync with the group. However, these lighter touches didn't change his behavior. Open-ended comments from the ExPI had suggested he needed to "listen to others, incorporate their ideas into his," and "have a more strategic and global view as to what we are trying to do."

Many of us have known leaders who are belligerent, bullying, and rigid to the point where they alienate people and make enemies. Coaching can help these leaders to moderate their behavior, by making them aware of the impact of the behavior and then helping them to develop the skills of questioning, listening for meaning, and expressing appreciation for others' points of view.

### **WHAT IF A LEADER ISN'T ASSERTIVE ENOUGH?**

The other side of the coin in Assertiveness is a tendency to avoid putting issues on the table. If you happen to be one of those people who tend to avoid difficult conversations, it can be as debilitating as destructive conflict. When hard topics do not get discussed, tough decisions don't get made. The secret to overcoming avoidance is to notice where there is disagreement, vocalize it, and be purposeful and thoughtful about guiding candid discussion.

If you know it's already on everyone's mind, it's better to raise it. Unlike wine, problems don't get better with time. Recent research shows us that effective levels of leader assertiveness have to be balanced, not too low or too high.<sup>6</sup> A high level of assertiveness can worsen relationships, and a low level of Assertiveness can result in a lack of clarity in roles, goals, and procedures, all of which can limit goal achievement.

In a future chapter we'll talk more about the impact of Assertiveness and other qualities of Style on group and team performance. Suffice it to say, as Cynthia Berg has observed, it is important for groups to "develop" facts rather than to merely "present" facts.<sup>7</sup> That is, different people from different disciplines all come to the issues with a distinct point of view and a different set of facts. A key factor in getting to a solution is for a group to develop a common set of facts that will support a decision that everyone can stand behind.

A leader demonstrating an appropriate level of Assertiveness will get that conversation rolling so the group is encouraged to tackle the tougher issues first when they merit discussion. Andrei had his work cut out for him in this regard, as he was trying to undo a lifelong professional habit. His coach helped him begin to appreciate that there can be a dynamic, energetic quality to encouraging debate, one that includes and respects everyone. They worked on how to be direct without being disagreeable and how to impart a positive tone, even when the idea wasn't great or the options weren't ideal. Leaders like Andrei can learn to say what they mean but to do it in a way that promotes collaboration that accelerates performance.

## SUMMARY

In summary, all the Style components are necessary in helping a leader to coordinate, align, and engage. They help leaders tune in to get things done. These leaders go beyond directing activity to noticing and responding to verbal and nonverbal cues. This enables them to notice shifts that affect mood and signal growing frustration, resistance, or tension in the organization.

When leaders exhibit strength in this dimension, they rally people around causes, encourage timely action, and promote ownership of outcomes. The way to think of all these dimensions is the Goldilocks principle: not too little, not too much, but just right.

Now that you're familiar with how we define all three dimensions and 15 facets of executive presence, it's time to turn to their application to common leadership challenges. We'll start by examining how the qualities of executive presence can help you in successfully transitioning to a new role.

**PART**

**2**

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## **Why It Matters**

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## Starting a New Role

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### Executive Presence and Early Wins

*Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.*

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Jeff Shepherdson was a rising star in human resources, handling rewards and compensation for a large insurance company. The senior executive team business leaders were impressed by Jeff and tapped him to work on an important enterprise project connected to one of the company's three critical growth strategies. Within weeks, Jeff found himself in meetings with the CEO and senior management, discussing the objectives and aims of the project. Right after that, the CEO took Jeff under his wing as part of the company's skip-level mentoring program. These were exciting times.

The CEO and senior leadership had recognized Jeff's exceptional analytical capability. He had a quick, decisive mind. Still in his late thirties, Jeff had cultivated the capacity to sift through and interpret complex data and make it business relevant. He had the courage to put forward bold proposals that informed decisions. He asked penetrating questions that moved the conversation forward. He often seemed a step ahead of others in summing up and articulating a rationale for recommendations.

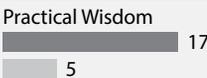
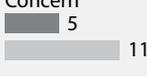
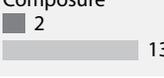
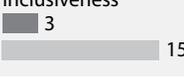
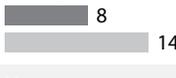
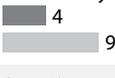
As part of Jeff's development, the organization asked him to attend a leadership program and complete the ExPI assessment. Unsurprisingly, Jeff showed up strongly in the Substance category of the ExPI, especially

in Practical Wisdom and Confidence. Those are what we refer to as spinal qualities—enabling leaders to focus dialogue, cut through clutter, offer insights, and inspire bold action.

In the Style category, Jeff’s driving qualities were also evident—strong in Intentionality—in making others feel clear about next steps and accountability. He received high marks in Assertiveness, especially his ability to get issues on the table and make them discussable. Interestingly, his qualities aligned with the leadership team’s qualities. It was no surprise that his strengths were recognized. We mapped the aggregate strengths in a frequency distribution chart for the team, a visual that enabled us to compare the team’s scores with Jeff’s. There were many parallels—he was “one of them”—making the CEO’s interest in Jeff understandable.

This team frequency distribution can be seen in Figure 5.1. It shows the five highest-rated facets and five lowest-rated facets for all 26 leaders on Jeff’s team. The reason this becomes interesting is because it can explain a phenomenon in corporate life—leaders tend to promote others who are like them. This also means that it is harder at the organizational level to recognize what might derail a leader like Jeff in a new role. Senior management may assume he has what it takes, only later to be disappointed.

FIGURE 5.1 | TEAM FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION

Character	Substance	Style
<b>Authenticity</b> 	<b>Practical Wisdom</b> 	<b>Appearance</b> 
<b>Integrity</b> 	<b>Confidence</b> 	<b>Intentionality</b> 
<b>Concern</b> 	<b>Composure</b> 	<b>Inclusiveness</b> 
<b>Restraint</b> 	<b>Resonance</b> 	<b>Interactivity</b> 
<b>Humility</b> 	<b>Vision</b> 	<b>Assertiveness</b> 

■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as highest-rated

■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as lowest-rated

## WHAT COULD DERAIL JEFF IN THE NEW ROLE?

Just as the organization had a culture of leadership with strengths and gaps, there were signs of “latent gaps” that could prove to be risk factors threatening to derail Jeff’s meteoric rise. The project would require him to collaborate with leaders and build constituencies across the organization. Among peers and direct reports, Jeff was respected for his intellect but sometimes dismissed as someone who was out for himself. He received lower scores when it came to Humility, Concern, and Restraint.

Those who worked side by side with Jeff every day didn’t see him quite the same way as senior leaders did. For instance, they didn’t feel he was open to other points of view. A former boss wryly observed that Jeff “seemed to have all the answers.” Further, Jeff had a hard time restraining his emotions when he felt impatient with those he didn’t think were keeping up. He didn’t even have to roll his eyes to convey quiet exasperation when the discussion lingered on what he considered a matter already decided.

Jeff’s Confidence was a double-edged sword because he was usually the first to speak up with a recommendation. ExPI feedback in the Concern facet was a red flag, as Jeff held the reins tightly with his own team and rarely expressed a lot of interest in the ideas or motivations of the team members. They had little latitude to do it their way, so their meetings with him were largely transactional. He would quickly move through agendas and ask for report-outs, commenting only to evaluate and redirect people’s activities.

Inclusiveness was also an issue for Jeff. He was reluctant to let his team “waste time” brainstorming problems he’d already solved in his own mind. With little opportunity to experiment with alternative approaches, the members of the team were not learning to problem-solve, and many were feeling demotivated, as evidenced by manager-level engagement scores. They didn’t think they’d ever have a chance to prove their worth and shine.

Jeff’s peers appreciated the perspective he brought to complex issues, but they were miffed by his lack of interest in their ideas, as well. They interpreted his reliance on his own judgment as disrespect for them. Most were a little older and had more tenure than Jeff, and their view was that he was missing the nuance of situations by relying on his own analysis.

In the first meeting of the leadership development program, Jeff acknowledged the feedback but expressed tremendous reluctance about going back to speak with his raters and get clarity about the reasons for their perceptions. He referred to their comments as “negativity” that stemmed

from “professional jealousy” because of his meteoric rise and special relationship with the CEO.

His interpretation was not borne out in the ExPI data and comments. What came through was *not* that people resented his success; his directs just didn’t believe he cared about them or trusted them to do the job, and his peers didn’t believe he respected them enough to listen to them.

### ANALYZING THE “CONSTELLATION” OF JEFF’S EXPI RESULTS

While it’s helpful to think of the impact of any leader’s discrete highs and lows when it comes to the facets, it also can be useful to consider them more holistically. What is the interplay of a leader’s strengths and gaps? Do we see themes that cut across multiple facets or dimensions? Are there ways in which a leader’s “flat sides” may be likely to mute his or her strengths?

As we try to gain an appreciation for a leader’s situation, we sometimes construct a “constellation” like the one in Figure 5.2, which basically is the model with circles indicating highs and lows. We highlight the five highest-rated facets and five lowest-rated facets in one visual. Jeff’s constellation demonstrates how a visual like this can help you start to see patterns.

Even without knowing too much about the business issues that Jeff is wrestling with, you can see where he might be doing well and where he might be running into trouble. There are real strengths through the Substance dimension, suggesting that Jeff has a good deal of credibility

FIGURE 5.2 | JEFF SHEPHERDSON’S “CONSTELLATION”

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity	Practical Wisdom	Appearance
Integrity	Confidence	Intentionality
Concern	Composure	Inclusiveness
Restraint	Resonance	Interactivity
Humility	Vision	Assertiveness

— = Highest-rated facets

--- = Lowest-rated facets

among stakeholders. The combined strengths of Confidence and Vision, as well as Intentionality and Assertiveness, give you the sense of a leader with a plan who can drive things forward.

On the other hand, we see no highs and several lows in the Character dimension. This would make you wonder how much trust and goodwill Jeff has with others. With lows in several social-emotional facets across all three dimensions, we might also infer that Jeff has risen on the strengths of his “hard facets” but that his trajectory to the top may be at risk if he is not able to tune in and be attentive, aware, and responsive to others’ feelings and to the concerns of the many stakeholders on the project.

### **WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF JEFF’S BEHAVIORS?**

It was helpful to look at the back of the report to understand the specific behaviors that were shaping impressions. Jeff’s raters said they often left conversations feeling he had little time for them and more important things to do. If discussions went too long or if he didn’t feel people were getting it, he doodled on a notepad. He would listen to a point and then lean over and whisper to a colleague how he thought this decision should go.

This was helpful because it guided a discussion on the impact these behaviors must be having. Sure, Jeff could analyze issues, but over time, he wouldn’t be able to marshal and sustain support for his plans. The impact of Jeff’s overreliance on certain qualities of presence wasn’t yet evident to him, or his CEO.

An enterprise project of this magnitude would require more than analytical capability and a bias for action. Jeff would need to take time, solicit views, build trust, demonstrate respect for others’ viewpoints, and develop a plan that was more than a product of his own analysis. To do this, Jeff would have to address some of the social-emotional aspects of his leadership. He would also have to do a better job building relationships with peers and direct reports so he had a team and colleagues behind his plan.

### **HITTING AN INFLECTION POINT**

The moment we are describing in Jeff’s career exemplifies a phenomenon we refer to as an inflection point. It arises when a leader takes on a new role or when circumstances change to confront the leader with greater complexity and challenge. Jeff’s practical, driving instincts were admirable but

would be insufficient to influence multiple stakeholders and win hearts and minds. He would need to develop psychosocial aspects of behavior in order to win trust and inspire others to accept joint ownership of the plan.

As we like to say, the softer qualities of executive presence are just as important as the harder ones when it comes to achieving outcomes—the so-called soft skills are certainly no easier to demonstrate, but they are equally wired to the bottom line of business. Many fast-rising leaders like Jeff, who have relied solely on the driving facets, can hit a proverbial brick wall if they don't learn this early enough in their careers. Leaders like Jeff may also struggle to accept the social-emotional qualities of leadership as anything more than “nice-to-have” qualities.

Maybe you recognize Jeff as similar to a leader you've worked with—perhaps you even see some of yourself in him. A leader like Jeff can hit an inflection point with little warning because the organization tends to support a style like his. In these situations the organization promotes leaders for their ability to closely analyze a situation, employ rational-logical thinking, and swiftly take action. But these qualities are not sufficient to engage others, align interests, and harness the energies of an organization.

Jeff's strengths in the Substance dimension had helped him earn credibility but not the trust and goodwill associated with strength in the Character dimension. In Substance, while Jeff saw relatively good ratings in the Vision facet, this was because of his extremely high ratings on the more cognitive items. His scores on the more emotional-inspirational Vision items were significantly lower.

## **HOW SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL QUALITIES HELP TRANSITIONING LEADERS**

The so-called soft factors measured by the ExPI are grounded in the less obvious dynamics of thought, feeling, and action. These qualities inform our ways of thinking. They show up as an ability to handle ambiguity and navigate uncertainty, the ability to bring calm and focus to crisis or remain humble in appreciating that we don't have all the answers.

The social-emotional qualities make it possible to get our bearings in a new assignment by noticing what is said and not said. They enable us to connect, build trust, and win the confidence of others more quickly. The softer side of executive presence encompasses motivational dynamics; these qualities rely less on positional power and develop other ways to exert influence.

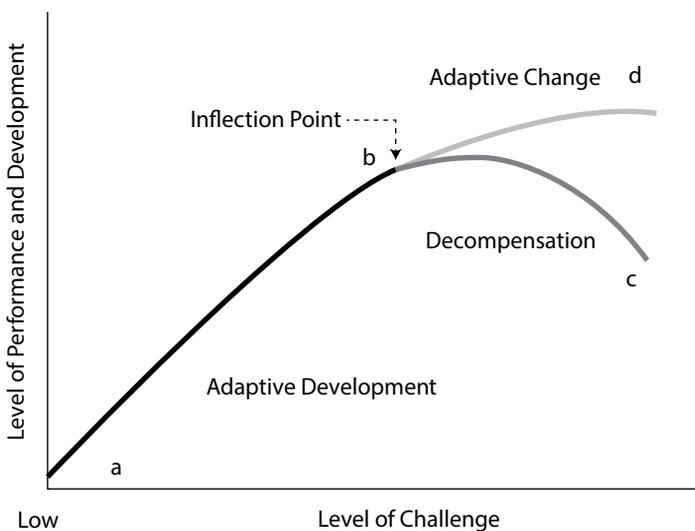
In a brand-new role, we must understand motivational dynamics to influence widely across an enterprise and engage others who have their own challenges. We have the capacity to influence when we listen, understand, respect, and notice expressed and unexpressed interests and concerns. It is not enough to notice; we must verbalize, surface, and resolve roadblocks early on. A leader like Jeff moving onto the enterprise stage would need to quickly adapt to avoid a painful public failure.

### THE CHALLENGE-DEVELOPMENT CURVE

Inflection points can arise immediately after a leader takes on a new assignment, or after a few weeks or months have passed. Informed in part by the research of DeRue and Wellman (2009), the Challenge-Development Curve illustrates this phenomenon (Figure 5.3). This illustrates how challenge can encourage what's called adaptive development.

The challenges stimulate us and help us become better and better, honing our skills and capabilities, up to a point. However, there can come a time when obstacles and challenges overwhelm us, and our “go-to” approaches don't work. That's when we begin to decompensate. We can start to look tired or act a little ragged around the edges. People notice we aren't at our best.

FIGURE 5.3 | CHALLENGE-DEVELOPMENT CURVE



This phenomenon can be explained simply. The strengths we have relied on, ones that were sufficient in a previous role, may not be enough to help us succeed when we stand on a bigger stage and have more responsibility. We may not realize what has happened and therefore be perplexed about the fact that what we're doing isn't working so well.

We may even blame others or outside forces, avoiding looking inside at our own behaviors. It can come as a surprise because while most people anticipate a brief learning curve in a new role, they don't expect the fundamental qualities of their leadership presence to be insufficient for the next assignment. As things get worse not better, their performance may suffer, and they may be the last to notice.

The dynamics of an inflection point are the interaction between stress and performance, represented in Figure 5.3 as an inverted U-shaped curve. Increasing levels of challenge stimulate learning and development up to a point b, beyond which further increases in challenge overwhelm us (b–c). Absent some kind of an intervention, we can find ourselves on the other slope of the curve, which we refer to as decompensation.

Decompensation is quite literally losing the capacity for adaptive response to challenge. When the organization notices this is happening to a leader, it is important to intervene right away, before others lose faith and become discouraged. As a leader in a new role, if you notice some of these signs of decompensation, you should not hesitate to reach out and ask for help.

Help can come in many forms, from coaching to mentoring to advisors and peer mentors. It is important to assess what's happening and understand what gaps need to be addressed. This is only possible if you have a clear-eyed view of the way your actions and behaviors are being interpreted. At that point you can seek helpful interventions such as coaching and mentoring. As wise people have observed, doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity.

Assessment can help you understand and anticipate what challenges might arise, beyond simply learning the function and getting to know the people. The ExPI is interpreted in the context of the anticipated business imperative and challenges. You can avoid hitting that proverbial wall after taking on a new role by getting guidance before you start a new job. It's best to know early on, before you hit the inflection point that can quickly make you frustrated and exhausted. It also helps you avoid wasting the honeymoon period in a new role. You're on your game from the start.

## HOW A LEADER MOVED THROUGH AN INFLECTION POINT

Thomas Perry had a reputation as a brilliant if perhaps eccentric IT whiz on a team of talented technical experts. As a result, he was chosen to oversee the creation of the company's future IT platforms. He would be leading an extended, multiple-disciplined team of 250 people including 34 managers. The pressure was on, as the company had fallen behind on its technology platform and this was having an impact on its distribution partners. The CIO and senior team were counting on Thomas's exceptional technical capability and nimble, creative mind to turn things round.

Thomas described his enthusiasm as an 11 on a scale of 10—it was a job description he would have written for himself. He had lots of ideas and plenty of confidence in his ability to lead a transformation. It would be a complex, multiyear project that would require him to orchestrate the work of a much larger team than he'd ever managed. He would not only need to solve for the platform challenges; he would have to persuade an array of busy business leaders to fund the changes.

Thomas was self-aware and self-effacing in his appraisal of his gap areas even before he completed a formal assessment. He had been told many times that he was a “pretty poor communicator.” It had been suggested that he work on his presentation skills, and now it was more important than ever to be good on his feet and develop skill in the art of influence.

As we reviewed Thomas's ExPI assessment, we affirmed the good news, that the team members saw him as a brilliant technical expert, the best they'd ever known. They respected him for his raw intellect and meticulous preparation, as he was always the most informed person in the room. Thomas was also strong in the Character dimension—he received high marks from all for being guided by a strong moral code and being good to his word (Integrity) and having the company's and his people's best interest at heart (Concern).

## DECODING VAGUE FEEDBACK WITH THE EXPI

As we sought to unravel the communication issue, our curiosity was piqued when we noticed lower ratings on Practical Wisdom. This might be initially puzzling when a leader like Thomas is the knowledge expert in the room. The problem, we learned from the comments, was that Thomas got lost in the weeds. He failed to manage conversations so that he and others could get to the heart of a matter. His meetings tended to be highly technical and

rambling. People often left a meeting with Thomas feeling confused about the next steps and longing for a decision. Thomas's Practical Wisdom was lost in translation. Even he admitted that when he spoke, he sensed people were not listening.

The open-ended comments from peers and supervisors were hard-hitting. People were weary of his theoretical explanations and felt helpless even when they pushed for concrete ideas and examples. In response, Thomas would pull out another PowerPoint slide with more data. "Abstraction and going too much into the details clutters his communication," commented one supervisor. "Attempts to build relationships with data and does not know when data is important and when dialogue is appropriate," said a peer.

Thomas's front-of-the-room style compounded the issue. When he sensed he was losing his audience, he would talk faster, never pause, and try to cram more into the presentation. He would refuse to make eye contact or acknowledge hands in the air. Thomas received low marks on Resonance, primarily because people didn't feel he was paying attention, let alone clarifying and giving indication that he had heard their concerns. The question was why was Thomas unaware of the impact of his behavior? He cared about people and the organization but was alienating others. He was out of touch with the people he would most need to influence.

### LEADING THREADS

Identifying the leading threads, or the facets that are primary and secondary, can help us guide a leader's development. As we mentioned in an earlier chapter, figuring out what is primary can prompt or aid learning in other facets, as well. In the example above, we might assume that for Thomas, Resonance is the biggest challenge, but in fact the issue is more fundamental and goes to Composure.

When Thomas was interrupted by comments and questions, he would quickly feel himself getting irritated and impatient. Others noticed this as he ignored them, kept going, or rushed past questions to get back to his data. They also noticed that if he did engage in a discussion, it quickly became an emotional debate.

We hypothesized that Thomas was a passionate leader who felt so strongly about his recommendations that he was unable to appreciate how he could be more persuasive by exhibiting greater Composure. If he could learn to anticipate issues and prepare, he could reduce the tension and, even in the moment, be prepared enough to de-escalate his own emotions.

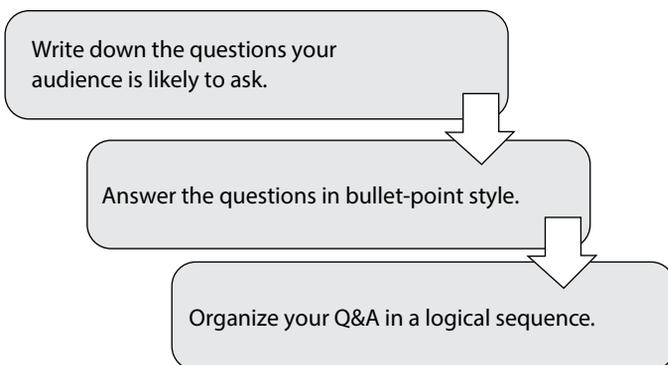
The problem was that in a heightened emotional state, Thomas simply couldn't listen and respond appropriately or focus discussion. If the solution was obvious to him, why wasn't it obvious to others? As Thomas talked with the coach, he realized this tendency could really hurt him in meetings with senior leaders.

### HOW THOMAS CHANGED HIS APPROACH

The coach and Thomas spoke at length about the fact that business leaders probably did not care one whit about the technical solutions. They wanted to know how Thomas could solve their business problems. But what did Thomas know about that? What ideas could he generate right there on the spot? He admitted he *had* to learn more in order to know how to respond—and also stay calm and focus the conversation. The coach recommended that he tap into the very curiosity that had made him such a technical whiz and deploy it to develop an interest in the business. In so doing, he would be better able to engage his listeners, rather than be inclined to defend his point of view.

Thomas was actually quite energized by this challenge, once he understood it. The feedback and interpretation helped him see for the first time how he needed to adapt both his formal and informal communication style. For his first meetings he simply jotted down questions he expected, using a tool we have called Quick Prep. We recommend that leaders anticipate questions they will be asked, and then organize their responses in a logical sequence (see Figure 5.4).

FIGURE 5.4 | THE QUICK PREP METHOD



Guided by this, Thomas put together a few slides that prompted dialogue. The meeting plan left lots of time for discussion to gain mutual understanding. Thomas, like another leader you've already read about in this book, had previously found it difficult to let go of a long-held belief that data persuades people to a course of action. This approach enabled Thomas to appreciate both the logical and emotional issues at hand. Once he had the experience of applying the Quick Prep Method to focus dialogue on others' interests and feelings, he experienced the way it also focused him and helped him manage his emotions.

## **STANDING ON A BIGGER STAGE**

It's probably evident by now that many leaders hit an inflection point when they find themselves after a promotion standing on a bigger stage, where the stakes are higher and their words and actions have a greater impact. It would be ideal to have unlimited time in a new role to get your footing, make mistakes, and not have them be public.

The reality of ascending to a bigger role is that the moment the promotion is announced, you're cast in the spotlight. People who have never met you are asking questions and sharing information about you, whether or not they know you well. The time is short, and if they notice you faltering in important ways, they will pass judgment.

Each time you step onto that stage and work to gain your footing, it's important to be aware of how you're doing with others. Soliciting their input and feedback in the first few weeks and months on the job can make you aware of issues and head them off. You'll have to work at it. The paradox of a promotion to a bigger role is that while more people are watching and listening to you, you are at a greater distance from them. Living in the proverbial fishbowl requires you to actively reach out so you can appreciate perceptions.

## **WARNING SIGNS OF INFLECTION POINTS**

When we show leaders the Challenge-Development Curve as we have over the years, almost all of them can recall observing a leader fail in a new role. They readily admit they themselves have felt they were at these points in their own careers. We have yet to talk with a leader unable to recall and recount examples of avoidable failures due to a deficiency of skills. In this

**TABLE 5.1** | WARNING SIGNS OF AN APPROACHING INFLECTION POINT

<b>Signs of Building Stress and Declining Coping Resources</b>	<b>Specific Indicators</b>
Pattern of declining leadership/managerial performance	Especially in areas expected to be strengths
Noticeably less effective overall cognitive function	Problem solving, judgment, decision making
Myopic point of view, lacking context and perspective	Constricted view, less imaginative/open, out of touch
Nonverbal style/messages are more negative and troubled	Tone conveys tension, anxiety, and impatience
Emotional reactions are out of proportion to the issue	Quick to anger, discouragement, and frustration
Defensive reactions increase in frequency and intensity	Rationalization, blaming, denial, and retreat
Significant changes in mood, demeanor, appearance	Personal presence lacks energy, focus, freshness

connection, they readily resonate personally with the typical warning signs of an approaching inflection point (see Table 5.1).

As you review these triggers, you may realize you've been at these points many times yourself. That's the time you want to immediately engage a coach, mentors, and others. These conversations can help you to validate your own experience.

For example, if, like Jeff, you realize you have a hard-driving tendency, you may find just talking with a leader who has a more holistic approach to leadership reduces your stress and opens your eyes to effective new approaches. You may find that in talking with a trusted peer, you can clear the fog in your brain so you clarify next steps and get reenergized.

## **BUILDING THE SCAFFOLDING**

It is well established in the management literature that over 40 percent of executive hires fail within the first 18 months, and their failure is often due to interpersonal style issues and insensitivities that strain relationships and alienate support. When you find yourself standing on that bigger stage, it is

vital to build scaffolding to support you in good times and bad. A support system can also be your eyes and ears to how others are thinking, feeling, and reacting in those first few weeks and months, and reflect back to you how your words and behaviors are being interpreted.

While some organizations prefer not to hire a coach for a leader in a new role until the leader has his or her “feet on the ground,” it’s precisely those first two to six months when the new leader needs support. Coaches, mentors, peer mentors, supportive managers, HR business partners, and others can help you get off to a faster start and overcome the challenges of your new role.

Many leaders are accustomed to relying on themselves. If they haven’t experienced the support of coaches, mentors, and managers in the past, they may not realize how helpful it is to have a team around them when they hit those inflection points. Supporters can flag issues before they become full-blown problems. Once perceptions are formed, they are difficult (though not impossible) to change. The rationale and impetus for offering early interventions to leaders in new roles is to help them glide through those inflection points.

If one-on-one coaching is not an option, new and transitioning leaders can benefit tremendously from the right group development. When we work with leaders in a group setting, we suggest that through their partner and small-group work, they identify some peer mentors. Peer mentors can help us whether or not they face precisely the same challenges, simply by being good listeners, reflecting back what they’ve heard, and offering advice from their own experience. Having a sounding board becomes more and more important as you rise and face greater complexity in your work.

Whatever experience you’ve had up to now, it isn’t too early to take the advice and begin to build a strong, reliable support system. When you earn a new assignment, you’ll already have the people in place to navigate transitions smoothly. You can always seek out additional resources as you go. You don’t need to go it alone or wait until the dust has settled in a new job.

## **HOW JEFF SHEPHERDSON ADAPTED IN HIS NEW ROLE**

With these concepts in mind, let’s look afresh at Jeff Shepherdson, who we introduced at the beginning of this chapter. Jeff acknowledged that he had for some time been feeling the emotional toll of less-than-ideal relation-

ships with his peers and direct reports. By ascribing their reactions to petty jealousy, he had no friends at the office and was missing out on the meaningful relationships that help make work worthwhile.

As a result, Jeff wasn't enjoying work and often went home feeling emotionally depleted. This was affecting his relationship with his spouse and young children. He was showing many of the signs of hitting an inflection point, especially in sending negative verbal and nonverbal signals and demonstrating a myopic point of view.

Lacking close, trusted relationships at work made him feel discouraged and anxious about his ability to drive change. He also believed he didn't have leeway to make a mistake because others would not give him the benefit of the doubt. If he didn't adopt a new attitude and start to take a different approach, it would be a long, lonely road.

The coach guided Jeff through a reexamination of the importance of the social-emotional qualities of leadership. Jeff realized how much he did care about his team and peers and how he needed to take time to listen to them. He now appreciated that it wouldn't just make him more effective; it would lift an emotional burden.

## **GOING BACK TO RATERS**

As part of our process we recommend that leaders go back to their raters after receiving feedback to get additional guidance on how they are showing up. These conversations help them understand at a deeper level how to adapt and improve in the gap areas.

An added benefit of these conversations is that they help you build stronger relationships with key people around you. Those who've taken time to complete an assessment appreciate being asked to engage in a follow-up discussion, and as a result, they are almost always willing to become a trusted partner in your development. Welcoming a rater's input affirms your appreciation for the person's insights, which has the effect of deepening the quality of relationships.

Going back to raters can feel uncomfortable, especially for leaders not accustomed to receiving feedback of this nature. If you've never before opened yourself up to a discussion with a peer or direct report that touches a shortcoming, it can feel risky. This was the case for Jeff. He was initially reluctant because he distrusted his peers' and direct reports' intentions as petty and competitive.

The coach helped him appreciate that keeping the results under wraps and avoiding conversations wasn't the answer. People had already weighed in and were probably waiting to see how he would respond. The simple act of going back to ask others to elaborate on their feedback could actually have a very positive impact. It might be the catalyst to change the dynamics of his relationships.

Whether or not you complete an assessment like this one, our advice is that you routinely seek thoughtful discussion on appraisals of your performance. If you can learn to ask the question—and drop your guard to listen to the response—you'll find that most people are thoughtful and constructive and are willing to help. Sometimes they'll admit that it takes two to tango and that they've played a part in a situation. Actively soliciting advice, admitting you don't have all the answers, demonstrates humility and increases others' respect for you.

Jeff did believe others had much to contribute. He was tired of feeling that he always had to have the answers. The coach encouraged him to start with a low-risk rater, someone he trusted, and practice asking questions and opening up. After just a couple of meetings with his own team, he not only felt he understood better; he was beginning to see that the team was willing to take on more of the responsibility for running the function while he was assigned to the special project.

## **WHAT CHANGED FOR JEFF AND THOMAS?**

Feedback, discussions with raters, an action plan, and six months of coaching helped Jeff completely alter the negative dynamic with his peers. He began to ask people's opinions, incorporate their recommendations, and reserve his point of view until others had weighed in. He took the attitude that others might surprise him if he let them speak first. There was no need to prove himself to anyone by having the first and last word in every conversation. Jeff took notes in meetings to focus his mind and be able to reference what had been said. He started to give others credit for their ideas and encourage them to take action and experiment.

Thomas felt more confident going into meetings with stakeholders about the technology projects. He was able to avoid the mistakes of the past and change perceptions of his "tin ear" to business concerns. He was asking questions, and he was listening. His view of feedback on "poor communication" had changed—it was about his presentation style, but so much

more. Armed with feedback and the coach's advice, he was able to follow an actionable path to and build good relationships with business leaders.

## SUMMARY

Much is at risk when a leader begins a new assignment. Impressions are formed early and are difficult to change. Most leaders have less time than they believe to assimilate the demands of a new role. They can hit inflection points early. Assessment, coaching, mentoring, and development opportunities are relatively low-cost interventions compared with the high cost of replacing a leader.

If you're new in a role, it's normal to feel at once elated to have the opportunity and also vulnerable to the hazards of the unknowns. There's a lot of pressure to prove yourself early, and you don't always see problems coming. If you notice the warning signs of an inflection point, you may be reluctant to solicit feedback or even admit to yourself that you could use some help. But that's precisely the right course of action. Build a scaffolding of support that will help you sail through those inflection points.

What happens after you're well established in the new role? It turns out that challenges can arise at any time! In the next chapter, we examine how the Bates Executive Presence Model helps you project the qualities of leadership effectiveness in facing a new and daunting challenge.

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## Moving Ahead

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### Executive Presence When Facing New Challenges

*Every adversity contains, at the same time, a seed of equivalent opportunity!*

—NAPOLEON HILL

After obtaining her MBA, Alicia Sanchez joined a large investment bank, seizing the opportunity to take assignments outside the United States in Latin America and in Europe. After nine years she had hefty global money management experience. Just a few months after returning home to the United States, her boss was fired and she was promoted to a senior role in portfolio management. The opportunity came along so suddenly that she didn't have time to prepare—her boss left on Friday and she took over Monday morning.

The first few weeks were spent putting out fires. A parade of people streamed in and out of her office for weeks on end. Alicia was at the office until late in the evening catching up on her work and preparing for the next day. Having responsibility for a team much larger than she'd ever managed, she found it challenging but stimulating to get the ship back on course and bring stability to the team.

As challenging as it was, the crisis atmosphere of the first 10 months played to Alicia's strengths. Having cut her teeth on the trading desk in high-pressure environments, she was admired for her self-discipline and control (Restraint) and for never getting ruffled (Composure). "Calm and

matter of fact whether talking about billion-dollar deals or plans for the weekend,” said one colleague. People saw her as open to others’ ideas. Her highest marks came in Inclusiveness and Humility. “Strong listener,” “good at collaborating,” and “not oversure and unwilling to hear others’ opinions” captured the gist of it.

The initial firestorm passed. Just as Alicia felt she was finally getting a handle on things, her boss, the global head of the investment management group, sat her down to give her some friendly advice: “Time to pull up, get out of the day-to-day, and start defining where you’re going for your team.”

Alicia realized that the people on her investment team were sending a similar message. They had been bombarding her with requests to sign off on some new investment ideas they had. They felt that the organization was losing its competitive edge and that they should take some risks. They wanted Alicia to advocate for this with her boss and executive management. Alicia wasn’t prepared to go to bat for these proposals because she wasn’t sure how these risks aligned with market perceptions of the firm’s value proposition.

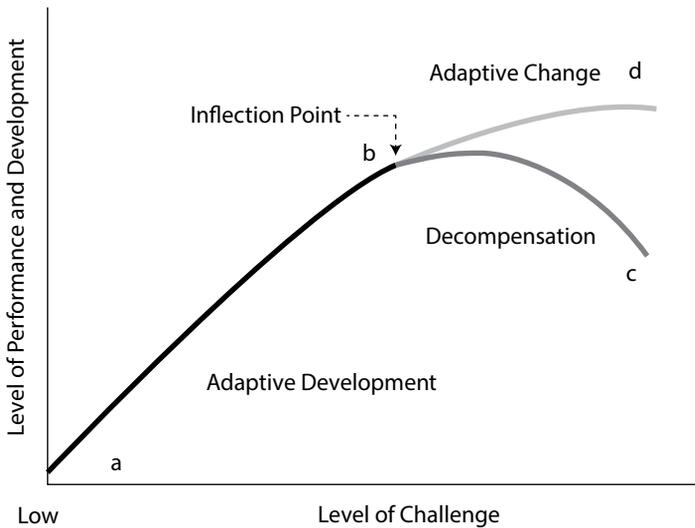
Though she had always thought of herself as strategic and decisive on investment decisions, Alicia was surprised to find that she felt paralyzed by the strategy question. She simply didn’t feel she had the “time to come up with a vision.” The pressure was so acute, she was starting to dread going to the office, knowing that her day would involve rather heated discussions with a few of her more vocal portfolio managers. It was long past the honeymoon period, and they wanted to see some leadership. She needed to get clear on where to take the group.

Early in our research we learned something interesting—namely, that executive presence matters when leaders come up against new challenges. It’s true that when we are presented with new circumstances, we can grow into a role. However, sometimes it can feel rather daunting. Alicia wasn’t sure how to work her way through this one, but she felt she should know how. Her self-reliance was working against her, as she believed all she needed to do was go off and develop a vision and come back from the mountaintop to communicate it.

What Alicia needed was a better approach—she needed to learn how to develop a visionary mindset and engage others in developing a vision.

We return for a moment to the Challenge-Development Curve (see Figure 6.1). Alicia’s six months on the job had gone well to a point, but she hadn’t anticipated that the demands would change once she had brought

FIGURE 6.1 CHALLENGE-DEVELOPMENT CURVE



order to the team. She needed not only to be alerted to the expectation that people expected her to have a vision; she needed to learn a process for thinking and creating a powerful picture of a future state and engage others in driving toward that end.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, the Challenge-Development Curve acknowledges that in times of increasing levels of challenge, we are stimulated to a point (b) beyond which further increases in challenge overwhelm us (b–c). This curvilinear relationship between challenge and development (a–b–c) can be moderated by access to resources, such as expert advice, stakeholder feedback, joint problem solving, and mentoring. These effects are represented by the light gray line (b–d).

## THINKING DIFFERENTLY

For a time during the transition, it had been sufficient for Alicia to rely on familiar managerial skills that had made her successful in other roles. She normally could get thorny issues on the table and handle difficult people. But the overwhelming task of making decisions about the group's investment philosophy was highlighting an underdeveloped aspect of her leadership.

Alicia had assumed that once the crisis of instability had passed, things would be smooth sailing. She didn't even realize that she would need to

shift her attention to working on the longer view for the organization. She had remained focused on day-to-day management, doing what was most familiar to her. Getting the advice from her boss to “pull up” gave her a jolt, and she felt uncertain about what to do next.

What happens when leaders like Alicia encounter peak moments of challenge and don’t acquire new skills? Many of them falter and have a difficult time recovering. They need to find a safe harbor where they can step back and look at their leadership differently.

### WHERE ALICIA FOUND HELP

Not long after the meeting with her boss, Alicia enrolled in our Executive Presence Mastery Program and completed the Bates ExPI assessment. She now saw the gap in Vision with greater clarity. Still, she was suffering this, unsure of what to do next.

The issue was not Alicia’s intellectual capacity or experience in the industry. Those who knew her admired her knowledge of the business, markets, and clients. She received high marks in *one* aspect of Vision, as a strong thinker who had knowledge of industry trends. “Alicia quickly gains respect in a first meeting because of the depth of her knowledge,” commented her supervisor. “Strong working knowledge of how to get things done and get the right people involved,” said a colleague.

Overall, though, Vision was a gap for Alicia in one aspect—her ability to paint a *vivid picture* of what could be and to “make daunting goals realistic, exciting, and achievable.” “Alicia needs to clearly articulate goals,” remarked one rater. “Needs to be more of a strategic, inspiring leader,” said another.

### ALICIA’S CONSTELLATION

As we saw in the previous chapter in the case of Jeff Shepherdson, sometimes it can be helpful to use a constellation visual of a leader’s highest- and lowest-rated facets to get a snapshot of how the person’s executive presence is perceived by others.

Let’s take a look at Alicia’s constellation (see Figure 6.2). Her scores on Vision were low. But the constellation pointed out other gaps. Her lowest-rated facets were in the Substance dimension, explaining why she was struggling to establish credibility in this more senior position. In Resonance, her lower ratings came in the item “Makes you feel part of something bigger, important, and meaningful.” There were also concerns about her ability to read nonverbal signals.

FIGURE 6.2 | ALICIA SANCHEZ'S "CONSTELLATION"

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity	Practical Wisdom	Appearance
Integrity	Confidence	Intentionality
Concern	Composure	Inclusiveness
Restraint	Resonance	Interactivity
Humility	Vision	Assertiveness

— = Highest-rated facets

--- = Lowest-rated facets

The lower ratings on Practical Wisdom were also interesting, especially given her acknowledged expertise in the industry. Why wasn't that translating and being observed by others as wisdom? A closer look at the items revealed that her Practical Wisdom was not evident because she didn't always ask the right questions. She received low scores on "always seems to be one or two steps ahead in thinking things through." It wasn't that she *lacked* wisdom; she wasn't demonstrating it through her behaviors.

### HELPING ALICIA ADDRESS HER CHALLENGES

As we began working with Alicia in the program, it was clear that she was used to solving her own problems. She thought if she could just get off for a long, uninterrupted weekend, she could come back with a plan. When she shared this with a group of leaders at similar levels in other organizations during the Mastery Program, they were understandably skeptical. Most shared in their own experience that visioning is not an exercise to be done alone. Many of them had developed visions through a facilitated process with their teams.

What Alicia was able to discover in this safe environment was how leaders like her had tackled similar challenges. This facilitated conversation in a small-group setting crystallized how she needed to first change her thinking before she could change perceptions of her leadership. She had to appreciate the value of building a shared vision that would align and

mobilize her team. As the group pointed out, she could leverage some of her strengths including her calm, rational side and good listening skills. A collaborative approach would take the pressure off her to come back with a perfect vision, and instead it would create a plan that her entire team could embrace.

## HOW A CEO OVERCAME AN INFLECTION POINT

Lindsey Baker was long established in her business as CEO and founder of a human resources consulting firm. She had started her firm after 25 years in a law practice specializing in labor disputes. Though she had little business experience, she was motivated and passionate, and her company grew beyond her expectations. It was exciting to discover leadership talents she didn't know she had.

In the early years of her own business, she did it all—client work, marketing, sales, and business management—but as the firm grew and attracted great clients as well as talent, she built a leadership team. Like many successful entrepreneurs, Lindsey maintained very high standards; excellence, commitment, and integrity were among her highest values.

This pursuit of excellence had helped the firm to earn a stellar reputation among the small and medium-sized clients it served. However, all this success came at a personal price. The work ethic that had helped her pull a small organization up a hill was unrelenting. She couldn't give herself a break. Her active mind made it difficult to sleep through the night. Managing a larger organization was taking a toll. Though she generally had an energetic, optimistic outlook, fatigue made her irritable, and she often snapped when things didn't go as planned.

Her ExPI feedback report affirmed exceptional strengths in Vision, Practical Wisdom, Appearance, and Confidence. People said her “boldness, vision, energy, creativity” and “willingness to take risks,” as well as her “down-to-earth personality and perseverance,” were big pluses. “I would have to say that Lindsey is the best leader I've ever worked for,” said one. This may explain why the team had a strong esprit de corps, with high employee engagement and practically zero turnover.

The driving traits were also balanced nicely with Humility. “She is able to look at herself and the firm objectively and admit to limitations as well as to affirm strengths.” Though people told her they had never worked for anyone who had higher expectations, most saw it as a plus for the organiza-

tion. “She projects confidence, optimism, and determination, all of which model for others a strong work ethic and commitment.”

However, when fatigued and under stress, Lindsey’s high expectations tipped into a tendency to deliver withering criticism. “She can be unnecessarily harsh and critical to the point of being toxic. It shuts down conversation and creates a situation where you do not want to engage with her,” said one rater. Lindsey received low scores on Composure and Restraint. Her lowest ratings came in the items of “Aware of emotions but not dominated by them” and “Knows how to de-escalate the situation and focus discussion,” as well as “Speaks her mind without shutting others down,” an aspect of Assertiveness.

### LINDSEY’S CONSTELLATION

Let’s take a look at Lindsey’s constellation, shown in Figure 6.3, to see if we can get a more holistic sense of what’s going on and how the facets interact with each other. What jumps out at you when you look at Lindsey’s highs and lows as a whole? We can see real strengths in the spinal facets of Practical Wisdom and Vision, and this is nicely complemented by Concern. This is significant: she’s a hard driver. If she hadn’t had that complementary strength in Concern, Lindsey might have failed because she would have burned people out. But they always knew she had their best interests at heart.

FIGURE 6.3 | LINDSEY BAKER’S “CONSTELLATION”

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity	Practical Wisdom	Appearance
Integrity	Confidence	Intentionality
Concern	Composure	Inclusiveness
Restraint	Resonance	Interactivity
Humility	Vision	Inclusiveness

— = Highest-rated facets

- - - = Lowest-rated facets

On the other hand, Lindsey's flat sides appeared to be diminishing her strengths. A lack of Restraint and Composure was probably caused by her physical and mental depletion as well as her natural tendencies. Lindsey's raters felt the brunt of her displeasure when they didn't get it right.

It's not unusual to see a high in Confidence combined with a low in Composure. Confidence is partly about decisiveness and being able and willing to take action without delay or procrastination. Composure is more about being deliberate, thoughtful, and not prone to reactivity.

How can a leader possess both qualities, you may ask? That's one of a few balancing acts we see in executive presence—knowing when you need to take decisive action versus “slowing down to speed up.” Another balancing act would be Authenticity versus Restraint: knowing when you need to speak up and let your feelings and opinions become known versus when you would be better off holding back to question, listen, and understand.

#### **FATIGUE AND STRESS EVEN AT SENIOR EXECUTIVE LEVELS**

It certainly wasn't news to Lindsey that she needed to manage the drive that had long been her friend as well as nemesis. As a result of the ExPI assessment and feedback, she decided to ramp up her commitment to exercise, and she added yoga to her routine, which she found to be helpful as a form of mindfulness and rejuvenation. She rekindled her interest in reading and made more time for it.

Still, while these efforts at self-care made a difference, Lindsey felt she didn't have fatigue or driving emotions under control. She talked with a coach who pointed out that the demands she placed on herself had to be addressed if she was to reap the benefits of better self-care.

#### **CHANGING LONGTIME HABITS**

Now in her mid-fifties, Lindsey had never truly understood the impact that her drive to succeed and the unrelenting pressure she placed on herself had on those around her. The ExPI feedback helped her see that her behavior was more hurtful than she had imagined. Whatever self-care steps she had taken, she was still prone to worrying and to suffering sleepless nights. If she couldn't let go of the perfectionism, she wouldn't be able to manage the emotions. She wanted to conquer this and be a consistently positive presence in the lives of her employees.

The question was how to address it—what interventions might work best? We decided to look more closely at the ExPI results to appreciate the

attitudes and other factors that were holding her back from becoming the entire leader she wanted to be.

Lindsey had obtained input from raters outside her firm—colleagues in her professional community and members of a nonprofit board she had led for two years. Those groups had a decidedly more positive view of Lindsey’s emotional stability. They saw her frankly as a rock that had exuded calm in a crisis and was able to check hasty or impulsive action (Composure).

We learned that Lindsey had led this nonprofit organization at a particularly challenging time after the sudden departure of the former president. She had navigated the group through a tough period when finances were challenged and membership was declining. She had led the board to return the organization to a period of stability and growth. How were we to account for the difference in her demeanor with the nonprofit group versus her own firm?

As she talked with the coach, she realized there were important differences. She felt detached from the nonprofit in a way that actually freed her to keep emotion in check. But she couldn’t separate herself from her business. It was a living embodiment of her vision and values. Compounding her anxiety was the fact that early in her adult life she’d been through an extremely challenging financial time. Any perceived threat to her business, including being disappointed by an employee’s performance, triggered negative emotions.

Since Composure was perceived as a strength in her volunteer life, the question became, would it be possible for her to adopt a calmer, less reactive state at work, too? Lindsey knew *how* to be calm, but certain triggers were bound to set her off. She could draw on the experience but knew she also needed to anticipate the triggers that could send her emotions reeling.

## MAKING REAL, LASTING CHANGE

While many of us have found reason to “fake it until we make it,” there comes a point when we need to address the underlying causes of our thinking and behaviors. No less a leader than Abraham Lincoln said, “You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.” And research in management has borne this out. People can distinguish those who are faking it from those who are not, and they commit most fully to competent and authentic leaders.

Lindsey’s coach observed that because he had known her for about a year, he had noticed she had a tendency to “work until it hurt.” She con-

fessed that her work life had been heavily influenced by her father, a self-proclaimed workaholic. He once experienced an episode of such extreme exhaustion that his doctors were forced to make him choose: a vacation or a trip to the hospital. Lindsey had absorbed that work ethic and thought of it as a driver of her success. She was again aware that this overstrength would need to be brought in check.

Her coach's words about working until it hurt stimulated deeper reflection. What did Lindsey really want to accomplish? What would stand in her way? And what could help her? She was fortunate to have leaders on her executive leadership team who were not shy about giving her feedback. She asked them to let her know when her emotions were getting the best of her—and they obliged.

When she took an overly hurried and directive approach during one of her executive leadership team meetings, a member of the team took her aside later and let her know privately that this behavior had the effect of “shutting him down.” Another leader told her after she reacted harshly to a proposal in an impromptu meeting, “I understand you're upset, but you're not listening.”

Asking for and getting timely feedback is another intervention that works to curb longtime habits. We need people around us who will give us timely feedback and remind us of our intentions. Her team's willingness to do this helped Lindsey become more mindful of the impact she was having.

Her coach recommended that she spend more time in reflection, to open herself up to change. She recommitted to her yoga practice and gave herself permission to take weekends off, go on long walks, and have more fun. When she did find herself in periods of long, hard hours, she planned a vacation or long weekend to balance it out. Most important, she worked hard to avoid being so hard on herself and expecting perfection.

## **BELIEVING WE CAN CHANGE**

Seasoned leaders may be well aware of their tendencies but believe that at their age and experience, they can't change. That's why it's important to have the assessment and a conversation with a coach to appreciate how small changes can make a big difference. By choosing just one or two development themes, the leaders can focus on experimenting without becoming overwhelmed. A good assessment enables leaders like Lindsey and Alicia to focus on a couple of things that really matter.

## A LEADER ENCOUNTERS A PERFECT STORM

Sometimes a perfect storm of career and personal challenges can highlight challenges that were latent. Jill Cromwell moved from the West Coast corporate headquarters to the East Coast to support the president of one of the company's largest businesses as the VP of strategy. Initially things went well, but after 18 months, the pressure mounted as the parent company experienced flat growth and set aggressive growth goals for her group.

Jill had come in and assisted with initial strategy discussions, helping the president get off the road, away from the tactical and focused on a vision. She had been helpful in steering the team forward to pursue new markets for its existing technologies. The president felt he had a partner at his side.

What Jill could not have anticipated when she accepted the assignment was that the team would have significant turnover and that the turmoil would be ongoing and disruptive. She was at odds with several members of the team now.

At the same time, her son developed a serious, chronic illness, and as a single parent, managing the array of doctor's appointments and juggling her schedule took an emotional toll. Without family around, she had no backup, and since she worked long hours, she had developed few friends outside of work. She did not share her circumstance with her boss, and only a few knew of her situation.

When we met Jill, she looked utterly disheveled. She was dressed very casually and almost carelessly for the corporate environment where she was working. She was in and out of a facilitated session with her team, answering e-mail and taking calls. Even while in the room, she was disruptive, having lengthy sideline discussions with a peer. We now had two distracted leaders around the table.

We were informed that her boss had noticed the issue and was beginning to question whether to keep Jill in the role. He'd been the target of her emotional outbursts when she couldn't reach him immediately to discuss an issue. Other members of the team were noticing that she was "stressed to the max."

## SIGNS OF BUILDING STRESS AND DECLINING COPING SKILLS

As we've mentioned in the previous chapter, there are predictable signs when a leader is experiencing unmanageable stress and showing a declining

capacity to cope. These include lapses in leadership and managerial performance that would be expected to be strengths, as well as a noticeable loss of cognitive function like problem solving, judgment, decision making, and perspective taking.

A leader experiencing such stress may come across as narrow-minded, rigid, and unbending. She may seem pessimistic and, therefore, less imaginative in solving problems. She may withdraw and become less available or, conversely, grow more demanding and intolerant. Communication may seem tense, anxious, and impatient. This inflection point snuck up on Jill. Though she was experiencing stress, she believed she was managing it okay. Now it was jeopardizing her job.

On a positive note, Jill's peers recognized that she was a passionate leader with energy on "topics near and dear to her heart." Assertiveness was a strong suit: "not afraid to speak up" and "willing to take the lead on tough challenging issues," said others. People appreciated her sincerity and said they could take her at face value (Authenticity). As a colleague put it, "What you see is the real her." They praised her upstanding Character, saying she considered the consequences of her actions and matched what she said with what she did (Integrity).

Concerns about her emotional health were stated this way: "Appears overwhelmed at times—rushed and overbooked," commented one. "Doubting herself" and "coming across as abrupt, too challenging and at the same time, questioning herself," commented others. Table 6.1 shows a handful of representative comments that we heard in response to one of the ExPI's open-ended questions: "What is it that most detracts from the presence and impact of this leader?" These open-ended comments often give us some color behind the number scores on the six items for each of the 15 facets.

An additional theme that became evident in the feedback was that her boss was not seeing her as visionary ("Knows the industry, latest trends, and where things are going"), which was fundamental to her strategy role. Failure at this would surely put her job in jeopardy.

We hypothesized that similar to Lindsey's case, the reasons for her low ratings on Vision, Appearance, and other facets had more to do with the lack of Composure and Restraint. Her emotions were getting in the way of stopping to engage in thoughtful interactions. She was reactive in situations that required calm and focus.

**TABLE 6.1** | OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS FOR JILL CROMWELL**What is it that most detracts from the presence and impact of this leader?**

"Often disheveled and distracted during meetings—frequently glances at her phone, even during one-on-ones."

"I find myself walking on eggshells around Jill, especially when something has gone wrong that has to be addressed. Others avoid her, not wanting to set her off."

"Jill prides herself on telling it like it is, but the downside of this is that she wears her emotions on her sleeve and it tends to shut down dialogue."

"Appears overwhelmed at times—rushed and overbooked."

**THE IMPACT ON THE ORGANIZATION**

It's worth pausing for a moment to consider the impact that Jill's flagging performance was having on the organization. Her peers were excluding her and her president was avoiding her so that they wouldn't have to deal with her fragile emotions. As a result, she wasn't contributing to important discussions. She was no longer in a position as a strategist to be a sounding board to the president.

When good people falter, it is important to help them. In the face of such personal adversity, any of us can become less effective and eventually marginalized by others. Jill loved her job, and she wanted to get back on track. Fortunately the organization wanted to invest in her, and she accepted the help of a coach. She started by setting up a system of daily care for her son, which reduced some of her anxiety about balancing work and home obligations.

At the coach's suggestion, she started exercising four to five times a week, a habit she had never developed, and noticed this also reduced her stress level. As her physical health improved, she got more sleep, and she also began to dress more carefully for the office. As she began to take better care of herself, she started showing up in meetings better prepared, with more energy. She was alert and calm and appeared "ready for the game."

Jill also decided to leave her mobile phone in her handbag during meetings, a step she had regarded initially as symbolic. She didn't want to be tempted to engage in side conversations. Interestingly, once the habit took hold, she found it had far more than symbolic value, as it calmed her down. She hadn't appreciated what an emotional toll that constant

attention to e-mail and text was taking. “I feel calmer and more present with people,” she told her coach, and vowed that this new behavior would become a best practice.

As a result of her work with the coach, Jill said, “I feel so much better that I now know how to keep things in perspective, even when they look a little bleak.” What could have been a “showstopper” in Jill’s career had been addressed in time, and she was able to go on and become a highly effective member of the team. When she renewed her agreement to work another six months with the coach, they had a new and more exciting task—to work on developing a strategic plan for her division.

## **A LEADER SEEKING A PROMOTION DISCOVERS WHAT’S HOLDING HIM BACK**

David Wu was a rising executive with a growing list of responsibilities in the finance department at a global financial services organization. David’s initial motive for getting a coach was simply to “get a seat at the table” on a high-visibility, enterprise project. As a VP he had demonstrated leadership in handling budget management, vendor management, and real estate, and now he wanted to get noticed outside of finance.

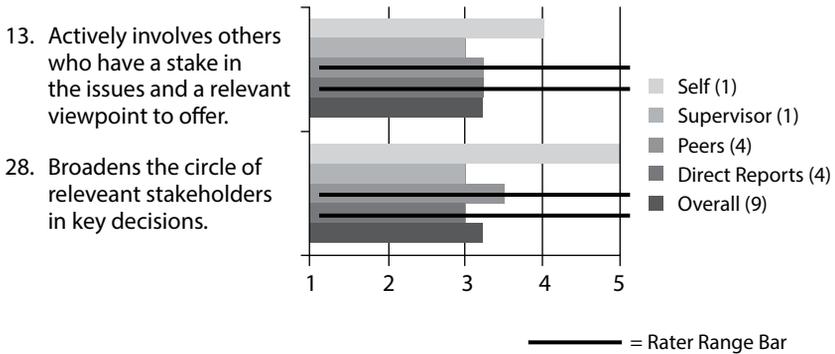
David’s immediate boss was harboring doubts about his ability to advance, concerned about the rumor mill of disgruntlement among his team and with peers. The ExPI report revealed that opinions varied widely among both rater groups.

This was particularly true in appraisals of his ability to actively involve others (Inclusiveness) and to welcome diverse points of view—the range within was from 1 to 5. In Figure 6.4, you can see how divergent the ratings were across the board for some key items on this facet.

What was detracting from his presence according to his raters? Some commented that he seemed unable to “listen and process other points of view that are different than his own” and that he “should trust the expertise of individuals.” The coach wondered whether David might be playing favorites.

One thing was clear. Not everyone was a fan.

As you recall from the chapter on Style, the Inclusiveness of an executive’s presence speaks to how he is thought to actively involve others, whether just to generate a broad array of opinions or to get the best of everyone’s effort. A comment that particularly stung David was “Sometimes

**FIGURE 6.4** | DAVID WU: RATINGS ON TWO INCLUSIVENESS ITEMS


feels he needs to explain things the way he would to his child.” One can imagine that this tendency would have to be curbed if he were to branch out and lead an enterprise project.

### INTENTIONAL BEHAVIOR, UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

We were curious about whether David was leaving people out through an unconscious bias, because of a lack of awareness, or by intentional omission, since that would make a difference in the coaching advice. When David and his coach sat down to jointly interpret the data, David readily admitted that he was intentionally excluding people. He thought of it as a strategy to make him more efficient. He had divided people into “A” players and “B” players and relied on the A players almost exclusively to get things done right.

The trouble was that his favorites were obvious to everyone, and the fact that he did this had unintended consequences. Not only were those outside the inner circle suffering from lack of attention; even those he included felt uncomfortable about being the chosen ones. The coach asked whether perhaps he was creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. How could those who were excluded have a chance to develop and prove their capabilities?

At some level David was already aware that this approach could backfire. His own self-evaluation comment read, “Need to develop better interpersonal relationships with peers and direct reports.” He was aware that he might lose some people on his team and that this would have a negative impact on team morale. His company did not pay top salaries, so attracting and retaining talent was emphasized in this company as a nonnegotiable leadership capability.

### PERCEPTIONS OF A LEADER'S READINESS

David felt it was expedient to rely on a few “smart” people, and he had gotten away with having favorites for a long time. He believed it led to efficient decision making; yet now it could be the behavior that would undermine his next promotion. It's worth noting that the word “inclusion” often evokes conversation around the table about cultural and gender diversity and can be dismissed by some leaders.

However, what is measured in our EP model is far broader and even more profound in its consequences. If the leader does not reach out to solicit opinions and invite discussion, others are acutely aware they lack status. This has an impact on engagement, as talented people leave. This is why low ratings on Inclusiveness, like Concern and other qualities of executive presence, can be a significant issue for rising leaders.

There is a body of management theory, leader-member exchange theory, that explains this behavior. A deficit in Inclusiveness can systematically limit the effectiveness of executives because it limits their reach. Those who do not fit the natural preferences of the executive are not able to fully benefit from what the leader has to offer. In its less effective form (with lower ratings) in choosing (even if habitually and implicitly) to affiliate with some and not others, the message is loud and clear.

### COMMITTING TO A DIFFERENT STYLE OF LEADERSHIP

In talking with the coach, David realized that he hadn't really given some people enough of a chance. Further, if he didn't practice inclusion, perceptions about his limitations would persist. He would demoralize the group, the low engagement would hurt his reputation, and he wouldn't get the chance to prove himself at the next level.

Through coaching conversations, he became aware that his reasons for tapping favorites had to do with a desire to “guarantee” good outcomes. He preferred the comfort of a smart inner circle and had not given others a chance to prove or disprove his judgments about them. The coach encouraged him to recall a time when he himself was on the outs—it turned out he'd had a boss who had not put him on the A team, which had hurt him. It had been the deciding factor in his leaving the job. Through this reflection he gained a more empathetic view of what it must be like to be pigeonholed as a less talented member of a team.

David was strong in Resonance and Vision, and these were qualities the coach encouraged him to leverage as he included and involved others. He

had the ability to share an inspiring picture of the future that others could embrace if he had them in the room. Once again, we had a leader who might be able to leverage strength (Vision) to address a gap (Inclusiveness).

## SUMMARY

At inflection points, sometimes our habits of mind and interpersonal behaviors must be addressed. We may have “competing values” (e.g., “just getting it done”) that need to be reconciled with other values (e.g., “being an inspiring leader”). A higher purpose can move us to change.

David began with a goal to get noticed but realized he’d need to cultivate a higher purpose—to engage and inspire others. Doing so would help him achieve his own aspirations. Lindsey had a strong sense of purpose—to build a respected organization with a positive, productive culture. She realized that she could only succeed if she tempered her emotions and created a safe environment where people could make mistakes and not experience harsh retribution.

Throughout this chapter, you will observe our underlying view of human nature. We believe that if any healthy, high-functioning leader is willing and has the right support, he or she can cultivate an effective level of executive presence. Nothing about our executive presence is preestablished. We all have the capacity to change and grow.

The good news for leaders like Alicia, Lindsey, Jill, and David is that they can get beyond inflection points with the benefit of specific feedback and the right interventions. If they commit to a course of developmental action, the changes they make can dramatically increase their leadership effectiveness as well as their quality of life.

Now that we’ve explored how assessment and coaching aid the development of individual leaders, it’s time to look at how the Bates Executive Presence Model can also provide insight and direction to leadership teams.

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## Building Teams

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### Executive Presence in Dynamic Interaction

*Individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.*

—VINCE LOMBARDI

The leadership team of a start-up research group inside a global medical devices company was meeting to review its list of pursuits. The eight scientists that gathered around the table were passionate about the mission to improve human health and were committed to bringing cutting-edge research to the organization. Each had hired his or her own exceptional group of talented, energetic researchers for discrete work streams. These young scientists represented the best and brightest, and they were motivated to make a difference.

After a full year they'd catalogued their opportunities to death. But that's where it ended. Nothing had been done to determine the priorities. Each leader was fighting for turf, making rational arguments for worthy early-stage projects. The leaders respected one another, but they were also competing for resources. You could see the wheels of progress grinding to a halt.

The senior leader of this team was responsible for other lines of business, so the members of the team didn't see her often and had been largely left on their own. In the vacuum of leadership, one of the more senior members of the team had stepped in to take on the responsibility for setting agendas and managing meetings. However, his positional power was lim-

ited, and he was not able to corral his peers. The team was going in circles, and no decisions had been made. An hour after he left that meeting, he got us on the phone to talk about a leadership program.

With all the promise that this start-up organization had at inception, it wasn't going to move beyond hiring and making project lists. The scientists were not operating as a team, and soon it would catch up to them. There was plenty of individual commitment and effort; however, the parent company was asking questions about their progress and beginning to wonder when the company would see a return on the investment.

## **WHEN A GROUP MUST BECOME A TEAM**

This story is not so unusual. The industries and players may change, but the challenges of becoming a team are constant. Many teams never become cohesive, collaborative, coordinated units. The team members may agree heartily in principle on a mission but be so focused on managing their own functions that they fail to come together around the greater good.

It's challenging to become a cohesive, collaborative unit (team). The skills of working together do not come naturally. Imagine the plight of several outdoor enthusiasts who decide they want to climb Mount McKinley. They have a burning desire to get to the top, but first they need to learn how to do it by working together. Otherwise they won't reach the top, or even survive the climb.

## **EXECUTIVE PRESENCE AND TEAMS**

So far we've presented executive presence as a set of individual qualities that align, inspire, and move people to act. For instance, Character facets distinctly define who the leader is and what he or she cares about and has reason to value. Philosophical and psychological identity theorists propose that character, being rooted in moral values, answers more directly than any other layer of our being the question of who we are, what we stand for, and why we should be trusted, respected, and believed as leaders. As individuals we are free moral agents.<sup>1</sup>

But what about teams?

It turns out that we can define teams by looking at an aggregate view of their qualities of Character as well as Substance and Style. We discovered this when leaders started asking us to assess their teams as part of individual development, and we looked at their highs and lows as a group.

We realized that the model and assessment were distinctly useful in helping teams understand the impact they were having on the organization, as well as how they were showing up to one another. It helped explain why many times they were actually operating as a rather loosely aligned group. Their individual priorities were their primary concerns, and their qualities of leadership may have been impeding their collaborative efforts.

Even authors like Jon Katzenbach, who have expressed skepticism about top management's capacity for teamwork, allow that there are moments when it is particularly critical for the senior management group to function as a team.<sup>2</sup> And it was just these kinds of situations that we were hearing about as we began to apply our Bates Executive Presence Model to individual members of senior leadership teams, or SLTs.

In one case where we brought the model of EP into our analysis of a team, the company's market position was eroding, and as a result the company was not profitable. It had missed the market on mobile computing. It was time for the SLT to address strategic direction. The team needed to guide the company to become innovative again. The members of the team would need to do some hard work together, to explore and evaluate options efficiently. They would have to become far better at surfacing the real issues, discussing problems, and working together.

Consider for a moment the potential role of just *one facet* from the model, Humility, for this SLT. The team's legacy strengths and winning ways were now no longer sufficient. The team members would have to recognize the reality that all innovations have a shelf life. And for them it was time for a new wave of innovation.

Their leaders and key contributors must let go of pride, which blocks fresh thinking, and explore new possibilities. Their Confidence must be grounded in the courage and determination to find the next big wave.

We also worked with a defense manufacturer whose pipeline of business was shrinking due to Department of Defense budget cuts. Management wanted to develop new markets globally and look for opportunities in the commercial sector of the economy, as well as grow by acquisition. As with the previous team, there was a pressing imperative for those on the team to work together. The team would need to agree on how to consolidate operations and improve efficiencies. There would be difficult conversations and trade-offs. All the leaders would have to sacrifice in the service of a greater good. Legacy issues that divided business units needed to be transcended.

Unless the CEOs in both organizations understood the barriers to the team's interactions, they would not succeed. Prior to this time the CEOs had harbored a view that it was sufficient for their leaders to primarily run and manage their functions and businesses. By appreciating the group's profile in executive presence qualities from Concern to Resonance, Interactivity, Inclusiveness, Assertiveness, and Restraint, they could get to the heart of the reasons why the teams were not functioning at a high level. Fortunately, both of these CEOs felt a rising sense of urgency to promote teamwork. In this context, questions of executive presence take on a more collective meaning.

A team has to ask itself, "How are we showing up to our respective units *and* to the enterprise when it really counts?" Becoming aware of the qualities of executive presence makes the team members more aware of the evolving dynamics that create cohesion and build team discipline. Let's consider how it makes sense for people to function as a team and to be concerned about their executive presence as a unit. We'll look mostly at an SLT and use our medical devices group as a case study. We hope you'll see how it applies to most teams.

### TEAMS AS "REPRESENTATIONAL GROUPS"

Senior executives wear two hats. They are expected to represent their specific functional area or business unit *and* represent the interests of the entire enterprise. Some researchers labeled this need to balance two often-competing roles as "organizational ambidexterity."<sup>3</sup> They are responsible for organization-wide planning and decision making. The bulk of their energies, however, when push comes to shove, will often go to their unit-specific goals and priorities. You may recognize a team like that or even find it describes your team today.

Representational dynamics where team members focus on their own units operate at a less conscious level. Legacy mindsets may predefine engineering, sales, operations, and marketing and cause SLT members to listen and interpret with filters. Competition for resources among business unit general managers may constrain their readiness to sacrifice for the good of the whole. They may worry about getting the short end of the stick on funding and talent.

Compensation, careers, recognition, and other rewards are at stake. These dynamics can be destructive when they go unacknowledged and unmanaged. Members lose sight of the big picture, withhold information,

and become dismissive of other points of view. If you've ever been part of a team that operates this way, you've probably noticed how the corrosive effect can "trickle down," causing tensions at lower levels.

How do you address these dynamics? You have to begin with the idea that it is best for members to openly acknowledge the fact that they wear two hats. For example, a sales leader may address her peers as follows: "I know that in sales we're concerned that this approach to distribution of product may alienate some of our customers, but I recognize that there are other views on how this change may actually maximize customer satisfaction." Put it on the table. By making it "discussable," you immediately reduce suspicion and enhance trust. Facets of Authenticity and Integrity play an obvious role here.

It's good to remember and appreciate that everybody on the team was shaped by a different, diverse set of experiences, priorities, values, facts, and assumptions that we bring to each team deliberation. Finance brings its facts to bear, and operations and marketing bring different facts to the discussion. Each may assume its facts are the truest or most important facts.

## THE ROLE OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

From our early work with teams, we started to see the importance of assessing a team's readiness to work together through the lens of executive presence. When the members of a group need to undertake close collaboration and strive together to achieve a common goal, their ways of showing up to one another and interacting with one another are paramount to their success.

Let's face it: as a leader you can't meet your own goals, aims, and interests if even one of your colleagues is doing poorly. At some point, it all falls apart. Everyone's interests are connected to the rest. Focusing only on your own independent aims, incentives, and motives will not assure the success of the enterprise. If everyone on the team is to commit to and sustain the work on shared goals, you're all going to need to understand how to work with one another. That brings us back to our medical devices team.

## GETTING STUCK

The de facto leader of the medical devices group who called us explained that one challenge was that the group members were all seasoned scientists and researchers but that they had little experience in senior leadership. Vying for resources had for them always been sport. They'd reached

a stalemate over how to select and fund projects and didn't know how to work together as leaders. Competitive interests were the only driving force, as they had never established common objectives. Their deliberations were now largely unproductive.

Nearing the 18-month mark, the budget and even the mission were being scrutinized at the C-suite level. Their present mode of operation as a group was unsustainable. While they were excited by the mission, they needed to organize as a team, acknowledge the common mission, and channel their intellectual firepower into effective organizational leadership.

Over the years we've known leaders who are content to have their "teams" operate more as a group—holding them to reporting in but not believing it's worth the effort to try to get them to work together. Often, however, as this team did, they reach an inflection point where they realize it is now an imperative. They decide to confront the challenges holding them back. They have to figure out how to make individual sacrifices and solve problems together.

## **COLLABORATIVE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAMS**

Just like others who work with senior management,<sup>4</sup> we've learned to appreciate how vital enterprise imperatives, such as critical decisions about strategic direction in times of uncertainty, make collaboration at the top a must. This is the team's key responsibility and fiduciary duty. If you don't believe it's worth working together as a team, you have stacked the deck against this possibility from the outset.

Teamwork is based on shared strategy—vision, plans, and commitment to goals—and it requires collaborative conversations. These conversations are not simply information sharing; they involve dialogue and surfacing of differences. That requires making the effort to understand each other's goals and challenges. Teamwork emerges from a vigorous give-and-take that creates mutual understanding and transcends divisive group interests. Cultivating that kind of style calls for certain facilitative skills.

Building a shared purpose and vision requires a deeper conversation of the following questions: "What are we trying to accomplish? What will we gain from working together to achieve this? What do we want to build, attain, or create by working together? What will it cost the organization if we do not work interdependently?" The discussions must go deep enough

to identify and examine the potential losses and gains that will be required to realize the common goals.

Absent deeper conversations, we only achieve the veneer of teamwork. Lacking full participation, team interaction may end up being dominated by a few. Others may retreat, and this can end up yielding safer but less substantive discussions. Neither new nor shared ways of thinking emerge.

## **MASTERING TEAM DYNAMICS**

Mastery of team dynamics requires both strategic thinking and executional elements of action. It's important to acknowledge that every team's needs for development vary, based on the team's composition, context, current state, and goals. That's why assessment is a vital first step in the process.

It's helpful to think about what makes teams effective. There are three dimensions of effectiveness, which interact and overlap in any situation where a group has to become a team. These represent interdependent functional capabilities. They are (1) strategic direction and alignment, (2) relational dynamics, and (3) executional excellence in realizing goals over time.

### **I. STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND ALIGNMENT**

While there may be a mission and even a detailed strategic plan, it always has to be translated to a powerful, compelling, and actionable statement for the organization. Even if the leadership group has clarity about what business it is in, who the customers are, and what the customers value, the group still has to translate this for the rest of the organization.

This translation must happen at the senior-leader level and again be made relevant for each function and business unit in the organization. This ensures the cascading of important messages in a way that guides action and energy throughout the enterprise, down to the level of individuals. Without this, teams cannot harness the purposeful and energetic effort of the organization.

Even when a strategy document exists, it often has not been translated by the team into a crisp set of objectives and measures of success. We've heard about many a 100-plus-page strategy document sitting on a shelf. Many leadership teams admit they haven't taken the time to boil it down and communicate it to the organization so it is relevant to each business

and function. They may themselves be at a loss to summarize it or convey the reasons the company is going in that direction, let alone explain in clear terms how they will get there.

#### IMPLICIT VERSUS EXPLICIT TEAM MISSIONS

Any leadership team must come together to do some hard work to achieve this end. It is sometimes a messy business to understand how each leader sees the vision, mission, and imperatives. We may believe we are all on the same page, only to discover that our interpretations of the strategy are different. We need to debate and reconcile differences and agree on a unified direction that can be communicated in one voice.

Often this knowledge and understanding exist at an implicit and less fluent level, which may be enough to guide our individual action but may fall short of the collective communicative leadership required to focus and inspire an organization. That was the case with the medical devices group. Initially when we asked about the group's mission, we heard, "Oh, we're clear on that," but just to be sure, we asked each member to jot it down on a piece of paper.

As we went around the room asking each individual to share it out loud, the responses were connected but not cohesive. Each added a twist, often related to his or her area of research. At the conclusion, we commented, "You're all right, and yet they're all different, aren't they!" After a good laugh, the group members had good reason to roll up their sleeves and create something great together.

Now they *wanted* a pithy, powerful mission they could all agree on, one they could communicate to the entire organization. With that kind of energy and focus, we were able to facilitate this within about three hours. They were able to articulate the mission, vision, and strategic objectives, in timelines of 1, 3, 5, and 10 years. This was an accomplishment that amazed them on many levels.

After 18 months of meetings, they finally were beginning to see themselves as one team with a plan. Better still, the 10-year mission they agreed upon just about took their breath away. "If we could accomplish *that*, it would be amazing!" they told us.

At this moment they seemed to have a rush of collective energy. The buzz in the room was palpable. Of course, they also had a sobering realization: if they didn't do this work, the parent company would probably lose

faith and defund the group. Their exciting 10-year mission would never be realized. The urgency of working as a team had finally hit home.

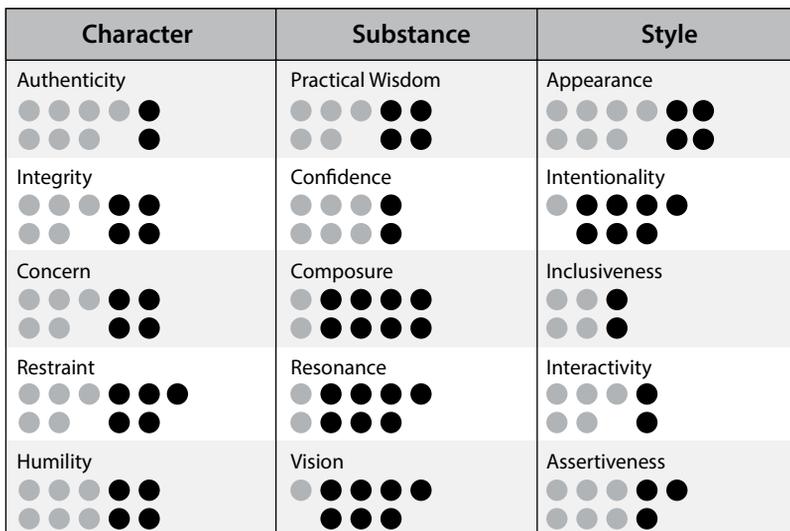
HOW EXECUTIVE PRESENCE HELPED

This discussion took place after each member of the team had completed an assessment and talked with a coach. The members were now ready to see how their collective strengths and gaps might be hampering their work as a team. Data from the ExPI assessment interpreted in group-level themes showed, among other things, that they were perceived by each other and the organization to be low on Vision. Now the work on the strategy document took on even greater meaning.

This was a breakthrough, as you'll note when you review the group aggregate diagram in Figure 7.1. The gray dots represent the five highest individual strengths; the black dots represent the five lowest individual gaps. Vision is low or flat (it doesn't show up) for all but one leader.

While Vision jumps out, there are some other gaps worth noting that would hamper team dynamics and the team's effectiveness as a leadership group. It was a mixed bag across the Character dimension, which raised a flag about the issue of mistrust among the members of the team. Our

FIGURE 7.1 | GROUP-LEVEL THEMES FOR THE RESEARCH TEAM



- = A leader for whom this is one of the highest-rated facets
- = A leader for whom this is one of the lowest-rated facets

hypothesis was that individuals were entrenched in their own functional viewpoints rather than embracing the goals of a cross-functional team. There were issues in Integrity, Concern, and Humility.

Lower ratings in the areas of Resonance and Intentionality also indicated that there was little real dialogue to appreciate one another's perspectives. Without more frequent interaction and active listening to appreciate each other's concerns, interests, and motivations, the team members would not be able to work together effectively. Open-ended comments affirmed that they were perceived as pushing their own agendas.

#### HOW THE DATA INFORMS ACTION

This story illustrates how ExPI data can help the members of a team who are struggling to establish strategic direction and work together. The data awakened them to the risks and galvanized them to pay attention to the warning signs. They now saw how their group patterns were helping and hurting their ability to address timely, critical, and urgent matters. Inspired to work on the mission and vision, they also noted other weaker areas that made collaboration and progress toward their aims difficult.

For instance, while Practical Wisdom and Confidence were assets on the whole, these could be overplayed as people fought hard for their ideas. Composure and Restraint were low, which we noticed in the passionate and emotional way that the individuals on the team engaged in heated debates. This leads to our discussion on relational dynamics.

## 2. RELATIONAL DYNAMICS

Relational dynamics is about how teams interact. You've probably been on teams that do this well, and others that don't. Human beings unfortunately aren't always inclined to work together. At times, studies show that leaders are motivated to generate division rather than qualities of cohesion and cooperation that produce team bonds.<sup>5</sup> They do so for fear of losing their power.

Acknowledging this is important to creating positive, productive team dynamics. However dysfunctional, we all have security needs that can affect us when entering a group. The competitive factor was certainly evident with our medical devices team. The participants had plenty of reason to protect their own turf. The incentives were to prove their ideas, get more funding, attract top talent, make discoveries, and get credit and recognition for their own teams.

IS EVERY TEAM COMPETITIVE?

Though our case study provides an extreme example, any CEO or senior leader with a team has likely encountered the dysfunction that occurs when competitiveness runs rampant. Teams are made up of individual, high-powered, hard-driving leaders who are also human beings—they want to make their mark.

We can help a team by assessing and noticing interaction and underlying dynamics at work. The ExPI and other assessments give us a snapshot of likely patterns. As we work with a team, we can notice how those are playing out in the way they work together (Figure 7.2).

If you were advising this team, you'd want to notice how the members bring up and discuss issues, assert a view without shutting others down, find common ground, and agree on a path forward. This medical devices team got the ExPI data right away and said it explained a lot about the competitiveness.

STRENGTH AREAS

We reviewed the aggregate data in advance and then tested our hunches with the team members, prompting them to weigh in and interpret the data for themselves. We came to agreement on the patterns of behavior they wanted to address.

FIGURE 7.2 | ASSESSING THE RESEARCH TEAM

Character	Substance	Style
<b>Authenticity</b> 	<b>Practical Wisdom</b> 	<b>Appearance</b> 
<b>Integrity</b> 	<b>Confidence</b> 	<b>Intentionality</b> 
<b>Concern</b> 	<b>Composure</b> 	<b>Inclusiveness</b> 
<b>Restraint</b> 	<b>Resonance</b> 	<b>Interactivity</b> 
<b>Humility</b> 	<b>Vision</b> 	<b>Assertiveness</b> 

- = A leader for whom this is one of the highest-rated facets
- = A leader for whom this is one of the lowest-rated facets

Driving forces that the team members believed should *enable* their success as a team included:

- › The group on the whole was strong in Authenticity, which was rooted in their training as scientists and researchers. With a highly honed ability to examine facts dispassionately and stay true to what is known, they were committed to finding truth. Being real, sincere, and genuine in their interactions could enable good team dynamics.
- › Assertiveness was another strength that could enable the team to “get the elephant on the table” and surface and discuss issues. Some members struggled with when to moderate their tone and demonstrate a more thoughtful, resonant style of debate.
- › Appearance showed up in the team’s vitality, passion, and energy. If combined with greater Intentionality, these qualities enable teams to build and sustain momentum. Vigor and commitment are helpful when teams encounter obstacles that are inevitable in an endeavor where there are many unknowns.
- › Confidence boded well for the team members for meeting challenges pragmatically and holding themselves as a group accountable for decisions and actions. They were ready for the challenge, and Confidence could help them maintain the optimism needed to take bold action and make prudent decisions.

#### GAP AREAS

Gap areas to address included:

- › Vision required strategic thinking and also developing an inspirational message. It would require commitment to work together on the big picture and then communicating it to the organization as a unified, exciting, achievable future state worth pursuing.
- › Resonance was an issue because the group members identified most strongly with their own functions and had a powerful drive to achieve as individuals. They needed to pay attention to what others might be thinking and feeling to build bonds and deepen alignment. They would have to be able to clarify unexpressed concerns and promote real dialogue.

- › Composure and Restraint would be essential to navigating through the challenges, upheaval, and change that characterize any start-up operation in a scientific field. The group was inclined to heated debates, and often people did not back down. They'd have to de-escalate emotions so everyone could positively contribute.
- › Intentionality was critical because it would be required for them to take the vision and create and sustain momentum toward execution. While it wasn't the primary theme, it was important for the team to acknowledge that as they moved forward, they would need to be able to discuss things with a back-and-forth style that didn't close off debate.

### 3. EXECUTIONAL EXCELLENCE

As Aristotle put it, "Excellence is an art won by training and habituation." What the philosopher sought to explain was that we are what we repeatedly do—therefore excellence is "not an act, but a habit." To collaborate effectively, teams have to establish repeated patterns of communication, which at first requires conscious effort but eventually can become almost effortless. Habits they form can help them check alignment, identify and work through issues, and stay productively engaged.

To drive executional excellence, the medical devices team would have to commit to working on Resonance, Restraint, and Composure to reduce the level of turmoil and calm the room during debates. The team would also have to look to the Style side in Inclusiveness and Interactivity by having more frequent full-group meetings. Since the members of the team were in the early stages of learning to raise and discuss issues, they'd need time and practice to get better at it.

We encouraged them to look at the meeting calendar and set up both weekly project meetings and monthly strategy sessions. A more formal structure for their meetings and interactions would bring discipline to their deliberations and help them work through issues together.

#### STAGES OF LEADERSHIP TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Now informed by the ExPI data and motivated to work together, the members of our medical devices team still had to admit they were in the early stages of developing as a team. We shared with them a well-documented view of the stages of a team's progression, beginning where they were to becoming high performing.

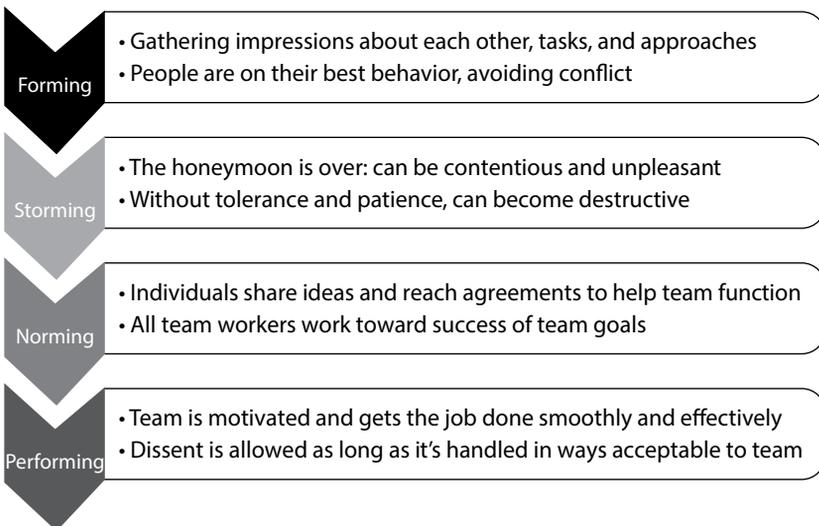
It would be much easier if all the dynamics (individual, interpersonal, and the group as a whole) that were involved in forming as a team and becoming effective were obvious and clear. Too bad! Human beings are too complex for that. We have to understand what happens at a less conscious level, and with this knowledge we have to anticipate and notice signs of progress and the predictable “growth pains” involved in the development process.<sup>6</sup>

Among the established models of team development, the Tuckman model remains the most familiar, intuitive, and popular in group dynamics and team development circles.<sup>7</sup> The most common use of this model follows a sequence of four stages known as forming, storming, norming, and performing. The stages apply to senior leadership teams as much as they do to any other kinds of work groups or teams in the workplace. These stages are briefly described in Figure 7.3.

#### GETTING BEYOND “STORMING”

It’s been well documented that 60 percent of leadership teams fail to advance beyond the storming stage. There are a number of potential underlying causes, and there are implications for how the ExPI may be a way of mitigating or solving these problems.

**FIGURE 7.3** STAGES OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT



Source: Bruce Tuckman, *Developmental Sequence in Small Groups*, 1965.

We have developed our own set of approaches to assessing the stages of a team's development, not limited to the ExPI but also encompassing observation and the use of other assessment tools as well as interviews with internal and external stakeholders. We assessed our medical devices team to be stuck in a ping-pong pattern between forming and storming.

The reasons a team gets stuck can be related back to the Challenge-Development Curve, which is familiar to you by now as a way of describing inflection points for individuals. Groups hit them, too. Without intervention, the medical devices team was destined to decompensate.

The team members had to suspend their current ways of thinking and hit the pause button on their debates to get perspective on how to get things done as a team. They had to calmly consider how to prioritize projects. Through this process they would learn about managing conflict, collaborating, and owning decisions together. It's hard work, but it's worth it! Research on team development and performance indicates that teams that stay together over time develop a performance advantage.

Of course as time moves on, it is not unusual for new team members to join and others to leave. These are also inflection points that should be respected, as they may mean the team will have to cycle back through the stages briefly to again reach higher levels of performance. There is certainly a good argument to be made that periodic infusions of new blood, while sometimes requiring more effort, provide the group with fresh perspectives and potentially additional strengths it can appreciate and leverage.

## **DO OPERATIONAL GROUPS ALSO HAVE TO WORK AS TEAMS?**

While we've offered this case study to explain how the ExPI helps senior leadership teams, the same qualities of executive presence can help functional groups become high performing. Wherever strategic clarity, relational dynamics, and executional excellence matter, the Bates Executive Presence Model is relevant.

If you're wondering where and how to utilize the Bates Executive Presence Model, consider how other teams must drive organizational outcomes: sales, marketing, human resources, finance, IT, and all the other functions have strategic objectives of their own tied to enterprise goals. Each of these has a distinct and meaningful objective, common tasks, and leaders who must become a well-aligned and coordinated leadership unit. They need insight about how they interact and develop a capacity for constructive conflict to become high functioning.

## ADVICE ON GETTING TO HIGHER PERFORMANCE

If you're tackling the challenge of improving team performance, we encourage you to take a fresh look through the lens of executive presence. Here are a few steps to take:

- › Recognize where you are in the Tuckman stages of development.
- › Find practical reasons to collaborate, understanding what aim or outcome it will serve.
- › Recognize qualities of executive presence that are collectively helping and hindering progress.
- › Imagine what it would look like if you were collaborating and leading well.
- › Track your team's progress by benchmarking data.
- › Commit to ongoing development with coaching and facilitation.
- › Measure your success to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- › Sustain the effort and keep recommitting to becoming a high-performing team.

## SUMMARY

Teams gain valuable insights and begin to appreciate their individual and collective qualities of leadership by completing assessments, discussing the findings, and gaining fresh perspective. The Bates Executive Presence Model informs how to make teams work more effectively. This is a starting point to create strategic direction and alignment that enables executional excellence in realizing goals over time.

Assessment creates the "trail map," and then it's up to the team to commit to the task of strengthening gaps and improving team dynamics. In the long run it is well worth the effort, as teams work faster, better, and more effectively.

In the next chapter we'll look more closely at the executional excellence concept. How do the qualities of presence enable leaders and teams to get things done?

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## Leading Change

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### Executive Presence in Driving Results

*Change before you have to.*

—JACK WELCH

Amanda Richards glanced nervously at her watch and realized nearly a full hour had passed in her client update meeting with a large global organization. As a seasoned professional covering the Midwest for her financial services firm, Amanda had been well trained to take care of her clients. She responded when they had problems and worked to correct issues.

Of course, there was always a new product her company was pushing. On this trip her boss had suggested she introduce a new actively managed financial product. Given the tension in the room, this was unlikely to happen. This client would be in no mood to be sold on a new strategy when performance was questionable in the strategies the company was already invested in.

The meeting with this CFO and investment manager was designed as a standard six-month review of the portfolio performance for investment products in the 401(k) plan. The CFO tapped his pencil on a legal pad as he ticked off a list of other concerns—high fees and service issues. Amanda suspected that her firm was going to lose at least some of the business.

Amanda tried to smile and interject but couldn't get control of the conversation. Whenever she did get a word in, she was talking too fast and sounding defensive. She'd handled difficult meetings in the past, but

this was especially tough. Her mind drifted for a moment to starting a job search. A friend had gone to a competitive firm where the investment returns were better and he didn't have to defend poor performance.

## TURMOIL AND CHANGE

There's no doubt the financial services industry and those who work in it have had to navigate a long period of volatility. The financial crisis of 2008 forced firms like Amanda's to manage risk and adhere to more stringent regulatory requirements while trying to protect their margins. They cut costs and raised fees, but that worked only to a point. Eventually there was no more to cut. They realized that to compete for business, they would have to be client-centered, appreciating client needs and understanding how to address them.

The old-style sales meetings where they brought product managers to show-and-tells on their investment strategies wouldn't fly if the client didn't think those strategies aligned with its interests. Selling the features of the new, new product would fall on deaf ears. That's because, as it's been well documented, buying habits have changed in every industry. Consumers have immediate access to information online. Both retail and business consumers are in the driver's seat. Salespeople need to differentiate their firms by taking time to ask questions, listen carefully, understand issues, and act as trusted advisors in the sales process.

Amanda's firm had recently embarked on a project to transform the sales culture to acknowledge the new reality. The company's own research showed that clients currently viewed the company and similar firms as transactional vendors. Management at Amanda's firm was aware that it had work to do to engage clients in a strategic dialogue and differentiate the firm's brand. Amanda's boss, Darren Michaels, and his peers, who reported up to Jack Myers, had already started the process by hiring an outside firm to create new, more client-centric marketing books that their sales and client service professionals could refer to in preparing for meetings.

The firm spent heavily on this project and came away with big books that articulated a value proposition for all types of clients. These approaches leveraged assumptions about each industry and the reasons for buying. By laying all this out, the firm hoped to give its salespeople a leg up in preparing for a strategic dialogue, and thereby move the conversation with clients away from short-term performance issues and fees. If the firm could be seen

as a strategic partner that could listen and tailor solutions, it would differentiate itself and build and sustain client relationships.

After the rollout of the marketing materials, not much changed. Darren and Jack were beginning to realize that this significant investment was not moving the needle. Their people had to change. They needed to develop peer-to-peer, advisory relationships. Amanda and her peers didn't have many relationships at the senior level of their client companies. In addition, client management was chaotic. With a variety of managers calling on clients to sell the company's products, clients were confused about whom to call.

Top management decided the next step was to train people to become strategic partners. The executives reorganized the global function, in part to make it clear who owned client relationships. Now the truly difficult step was to help their people build skills and become trusted advisors. This is when they called on us. They were interested in understanding how qualities of executive presence could win trust from C-suite buyers.

## **INFLECTION POINT FOR THE ORGANIZATION**

Just as people and teams hit inflection points, so do organizations. Challenges arise as legacy behaviors and cultural norms fail to meet the demands of a changing marketplace. There is significant cost, time, and sustained effort required to move people from one way of doing things to another.

Jack's team had tackled the easier parts but now knew the transformation would not be complete without addressing perceptions about the individual team members. The members of the team were drawn to look at qualities of Character, Substance, and Style as a pathway to effect the transformation.

So we entered the picture with the active sponsorship of top management. We recommended that the company pilot our approach to developing strategic client relationships, which included an initial assessment. We began with a pilot of 18 client managers to validate the approach.

## **GATHERING DATA**

We have to acknowledge, of course, that this is about more than the ExPI assessment. Think of the Bates ExPI and similar assessments as referring to instruments and their application as tools for obtaining a specific kind of

data. A broader kind of assessment encompasses a multimethod strategy for gathering the kinds of data and information that will inform an overall approach to development that drives organizational change.

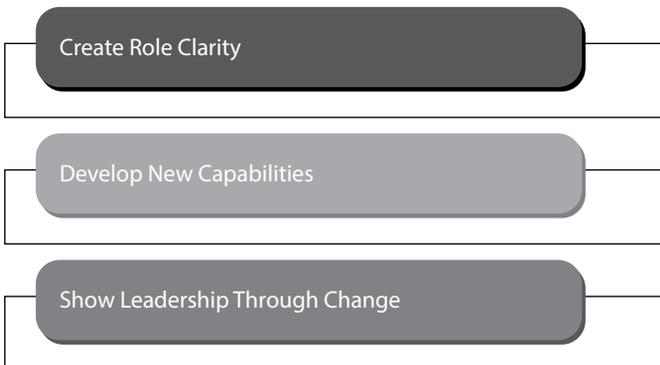
In essence, we conducted an ExPI assessment but broadened it by incorporating stakeholder interviews and other client data to develop a strategic view of the current situation. This helped us understand the organizational context, network of relationships, resources required, business imperatives, and leadership challenges that the managers in the pilot program would face.

One of our objectives was to get to a deeper level in appreciating some of the long-held norms and assumptions that were holding them back. We wanted to paint a picture of what the team would look like a year from now if the pilot participants were successful. It was frequently the case that at the end of the interview with a senior leader, the leader would tell us that even he or she had gained a lot of clarity about the issues at hand. The assessment process in itself was crystallizing.

At the same time, we learned a lot about the systemic barriers. As is often the case when change is required, legacy culture and an operating style were complicating factors. After we summarized our findings, we sat down with Jack and Darren and his peers to jointly interpret what we heard. As shown in Figure 8.1, we were able to place the many comments we heard about the team's desired future state into three buckets:

The group needed to *create role clarity*. There was often confusion about who was supposed to be doing what when it came to helping a large, com-

FIGURE 8.1 FROM THE STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE: STRATEGIC BUSINESS IMPERATIVES



plex financial services organization connect with the appropriate parties on the prospect or client side. The stakeholders believed that there needed to be more internal dialogue, navigation, and collaboration to make sure the right hand knew what the left hand was doing.

Next, the team needed to *develop new capabilities*. While many in the group were good at managing relationships, most could use work at conducting difficult conversations with clients and in getting out of the weeds to speak at the kind of strategic level that would resonate with senior leaders at their target companies. Many of the qualities of executive presence came into play here.

Third, the management team would also have to develop qualities of executive presence in order to *show leadership through change*. The same qualities of executive presence that could help sales professionals improve client relations could also help them guide their teams in times of change and challenge. They would need to model executive presence qualities such as Composure in order to help their teams see change not as a threat but rather as an opportunity.

At the end of a fruitful and wide-ranging discussion about the stakeholder perceptions, we had a consensus around the basic design for the client-facing development program.

### CREATING SPACE FOR REFLECTION

It's worth pausing to recognize what was happening in that room with Jack, Darren, and colleagues. The back-and-forth is a dynamic process that becomes its own catalyst for change. The same effect, it may go without saying, is not achieved when leaders get reports dropped in their laps. We came with insights *and more questions* to prompt perspective taking. We created a "solution space."

Interestingly, this is directly related to our own model—leveraging aspects of Practical Wisdom in problem solving. We find that when we apply natural curiosity inquiry with management and "practice what we preach," not only does the experience help us get to the heart of the matter, but the power of it is noticed. Leadership teams want to adopt it. The very process of solving the problem hones one of the critical behaviors they'll need to drive change with their own teams. Asking questions and making space for discussion is not simply a skill—it is a quality of exceptional leadership.

### WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT THE SALES TEAM

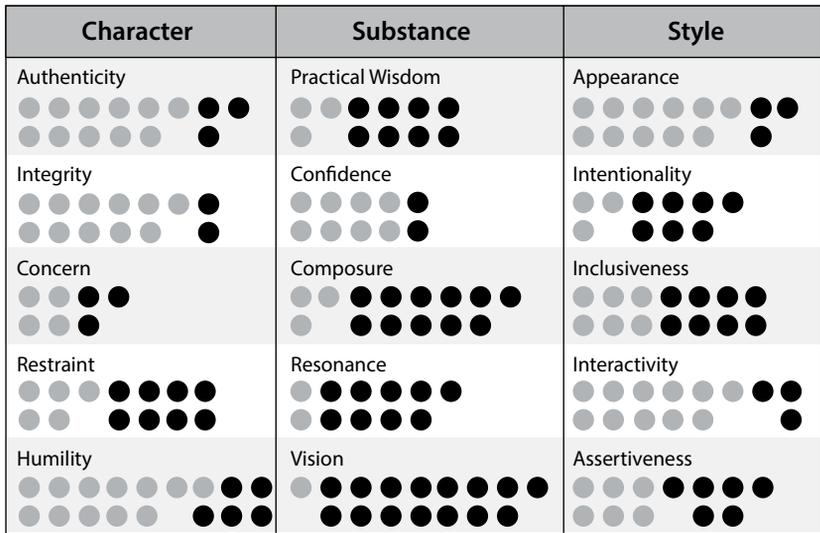
Take a look at the graphic frequency plot of highest-rated and lowest-rated facets of executive presence for the pilot group in Figure 8.2. In the figure, gray dots signify the highest-rated facets, and black dots signify the lowest-rated facets. So for 1 of the 18, Vision was rated among the top 5, and for 15 it was among the lowest 5. For the rest, it was neither high nor low.

Here’s how we interpreted the results by dimension to help the sales team and management appreciate how their strengths and gaps were helping and hindering the transformation:

#### CHARACTER

In this dimension the team’s strengths were Authenticity, Integrity, and Humility. This would imply a positive appraisal of the team’s trustworthiness and tendency to treat others with respect. Concern is an expression of care for others. It is a more muted facet in these results. We can extrapolate that this is because those in client service were pretty task-oriented and less inclined to have strategic dialogue. Low Restraint ratings suggest that in general the people on the team had a mild tendency toward reactivity, meaning they would leap to action to fix a problem quickly, rather than deliberate about what to do.

FIGURE 8.2 | HIGHEST-RATED AND LOWEST-RATED FACETS FOR THE SALES TEAM



● = A leader for whom this is one of the highest-rated facets  
 ● = A leader for whom this is one of the lowest-rated facets

## SUBSTANCE

In this dimension we found Confidence frequently called out as a high-rated quality of the pilot group. However, Practical Wisdom was a lower-rated aspect of presence, as was Vision. What emerges is a picture of a group of salespeople who act with Confidence (e.g., in a reactive service orientation) but who may overindulge that and come across as service-oriented and technically competent but not necessarily as a peer and confidant to C-suite clients. The black dots in Composure indicate less readiness to read nonverbal messages, manage emotions (self and others), and facilitate calm focus, which would be necessary to strategic dialogue.

## STYLE

In this dimension we saw mixed results. Appearance ratings suggest a high level of appropriate concern in showing up and setting an energetic, professional tone, a plus. Interactivity ratings indicate that the participants were practiced at setting a regular pattern of communication with those they do include. However, the lower Intentionality ratings reinforce our hunch that some were more reactive, not as purposeful in setting an agenda and shaping direction. Harkening back to Amanda's discussion with the CFO and his team is a good illustration. Inclusiveness ratings are mixed and may reflect that many but not all in the group have adhered to the old ways of doing things. As Jack and the team acknowledged, the business had been organized in silos. Their people were not practiced at orchestrating resources for a common purpose.

## ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS FROM THE DATA

We were able to notice how strengths and gaps informed other issues, including how they aligned roles with the management's new strategy.

- ▶ The new vision called for *a more strategic level of engagement* and the capacity to represent the firm's breadth of capabilities. Ratings in Vision indicated that this was an area with opportunity for development.
- ▶ Client survey data collected by the company indicated that clients wanted a single, executive-level point of contact, someone able to represent all the firm has to offer. Intentionality and Inclusiveness ratings showed that work needed to be done there as well.

- › Finally, with *quality of relationship* identified as important, low ratings in Composure and Resonance signaled the need for development in social-emotional skills. An atmosphere of calm and an attitude of attentiveness are necessary conditions for promoting *deliberation and clear thinking* in a strategic-level dialogue with a C-suite client.

### JOINT INTERPRETATION OF FEEDBACK

As we talked the findings over with management, Vision emerged as a major theme of relevance. *Everyone* in the pilot group participated in the interpretation of these assessment results, and all were energized by the discussion.

This is largely because the group members were jointly interpreting the data with us. They didn't experience the resentment that many groups feel when consultant findings are brought down from "on high." The process made them part of the solution. They were ready to drill down to analyze their results.

As you can see in Table 8.1, they tended to score lowest on the Vision items that were more emotional and inspirational while getting substantially higher scores on the Vision items that were more cognitive and rational. They were excited to pursue this because as you can imagine, they wanted to be seen by their clients as visionary! It stemmed from aspirations to play at the top of their game.

**TABLE 8.1** | ITEM-LEVEL ANALYSIS

Facet	Defining Traits
Vision	<p>Lowest-rated Vision items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Paints a vivid and compelling picture of what could be."</li> <li>• "Makes even daunting goals and aspirations seem realistic, exciting, and attainable."</li> <li>• "Portrayal of goals and plans is both credible and inspiring."</li> <li>• "Creates an enterprisewide view of challenges and opportunities."</li> </ul> <p>Highest-rated Vision items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Knows the industry, latest trends, and where things are going."</li> <li>• "A strong thinker with an appreciation for what it takes to realize the strategy."</li> </ul>

## POTENTIAL BARRIERS

As part of the discussion, we identified potential barriers that explained what was getting in the way of a readiness to express Vision as well as Practical Wisdom. The people in the group had developed a view that too many things were hard to change. You might hear a client relations manager say, “That’s just the way it is,” or “This is just who I am.” As you can imagine, that could be a real barrier to transformation.

Beliefs about yourself and your situation can limit your readiness to adapt. We wanted to help this group appreciate how much was within its span of control. Remember, the Bates Executive Presence Model is founded on the principle that we can change perceptions by changing behaviors. Here are some of the barriers we heard expressed that needed to be addressed:

- › **“Not enough time.”** Client service issues must be solved quickly or they will escalate.
- › **“Everyone is busy.”** All contributors in all disciplines have more to do than time to do it.
- › **“Clients want everything now.”** They too are under time pressures and checking boxes.
- › **“Clients aren’t interested in the bigger conversation.”** They are working on a to-do list.
- › **“Fee issues.”** They just want to reduce the cost for *this* product or service.

These sound like complaints! But by getting them out in the open and acknowledging they exist, we can begin to address them. While there was a pervasive feeling of frustration that circumstances were “managing them,” the team members were motivated and eager to regain a sense of control. It was our job to create some space for reflection on circumstances and help them consider how changes in mindset and behaviors could improve the situation.

## FACILITATED PROBLEM SOLVING

Here’s how we used a process of exploration to change paradigms on two of the issues above—and opened their eyes to exciting, inspiring, and “doable” avenues of change:

### “NOT ENOUGH TIME”

This was a common theme for most in the room. We agreed that it might be possible to exercise some influence on select client situations if we saw the time issue as more than a circumstance, but also as a mindset. Then we asked the participants to consider which client situations could be viewed differently. By reframing the barrier as a mindset, we changed the conversation and shifted the mood. People were more upbeat and solution-oriented. We asked how they could approach these particular client situations differently and treat them as opportunities to deploy a strategic mindset and relational style.

Through a facilitated process of wisdom sharing that we've referred to previously, we stimulated reflection. We suggested members of the group present a time challenge, and then we invited others to ask clarifying questions, share some of their own experiences, and recommend courses of action. Through it, the members of the group also validated for themselves that they did indeed have more Practical Wisdom than was being seen by their stakeholders.

### “CLIENTS AREN'T INTERESTED IN THE BIGGER CONVERSATION”

We used the wisdom-sharing process to address some of the other circumstances the group thought were barriers to change. Many in the group felt clients weren't interested in talking strategy until we reframed the issue. Bigger conversations would likely be of greater interest to C-level client decision makers. Perhaps the group members weren't meeting with the right people. By reframing the issue and engaging in wisdom sharing, they felt an increased sense of control.

As we explored the nature of the identified restraining forces, we were able to help the participants disconfirm some of their assumptions about how universal and insoluble the barriers were. The group members also discovered how stimulating it was to use a different kind of inquiry and discussion structure, one that relaxed defenses, increased the solution space, and made it possible to deepen learning. They found it heartening to realize that they were not alone. They had each other and a new way of thinking about those inhibiting forces.

## THE LEADERSHIP FACTOR IN DRIVING CHANGE

Leaders like Darren and Jack who are responsible for organizational change know that their barriers can feel insurmountable. The setbacks are often painful and the measures of success elusive. We have to address the underly-

ing institutional elements that we suspect can drive change. For Jack and the team, this included reorganizing, creating a new go-to-market strategy, and taking other steps such as aligning bonuses and incentives—all legitimate levers for driving change.

But they'd already done all this, and change wasn't happening. Most of these elements were in place; yet they had not yet taken into account the human factor in change leadership. The client managers couldn't do anything themselves about structural, organizational, and cultural barriers. However, they could understand how their qualities of executive presence impacted these things, and consequently they could change the way they showed up and communicated with clients, interacting to get a different result.

One of the catalysts for change was the new language of executive presence and influence that Jack and Darren and their teams were adopting. The Bates Executive Presence Model gave them a way of thinking about themselves differently and more expansively. The insights they gained from discussing strengths and gaps ignited a belief that they could alter the dynamics of these client relationships. They needed to model and promote the qualities of interaction that they wanted their client managers to use with clients.

## HOW HUMAN SCIENCE HELPS TO DRIVE CHANGE

When we talk about change, we have to remember that behind that change are human beings. In the disciplines of management and psychology, there has been a turn to more qualitative methods of interpretation of data to make sense of human behavior, whether in commerce or in our personal lives. It's a messier phenomenon to change behaviors.

Human beings are intelligent, social, and emotional forces at the individual, group, and enterprise level. We form a point of view and are not always conscious of our motivations. We reveal ourselves differently depending on the dynamic of each relationship.

As "messy" as human science is, for Jack, Darren, and the team, the model and data brought about a breakthrough. They saw how they could apply such insights about behavior, influence, and impact to their challenge in a very practical way. They embraced it as a model to improve interactions with their clients and drive different, better outcomes.

Even before we began the training with the client managers, Jack's leadership group told us that they'd learned more about their team than they'd ever known, which would enable them to promote new behaviors. They were ecstatic to have a fresh lens on their strengths and gaps.

Another benefit was that the management team's heightened awareness of the value of Practical Wisdom was coming into play in their leadership of the function. Let's take a brief moment to explore how Practical Wisdom would help them to drive this transformation.

### PRACTICAL WISDOM AS A WAY OF FIGURING THINGS OUT

Any executive team charged with leading large-scale, significant organizational change can appreciate the role that Practical Wisdom plays—it helps us figure things out! After all, not all challenges are the same. We have to apply what behavioral scientists refer to as practical philosophy. Some have suggested that there are three distinguishing marks of practical matters: “(1) they change over time; (2) they are inherently ambiguous; and (3) they have non-repeatable elements.”<sup>1</sup>

Let's look first at how Practical Wisdom helps Amanda. Amanda realizes that while her clients may have some similarities, they are different. Client A has a history and circumstances that are different from those of Client B. Each client works for a company whose strategies, financial pressures, market challenges, and attitudes toward investment, as well as stakeholders, customers, and employees, are distinct and ever-changing.

Sorting out these differences isn't a simple sorting of apples and oranges; it's a diagnostic discovery process. And consider this—her clients' needs have probably changed since she last met with them. It's a dynamic situation that requires consistent attention and consideration.

Now let's talk about Jack and his team. They're trying to support Amanda and guide everyone in roles like hers. Wisely, they've done a lot to put structure in place. They've spent time and resources categorizing clients' needs by industry sector and product line.

But they've realized it hasn't produced change, nor will it suffice. They've built the scaffolding for change, but in some respects those are the crudest of starting points in the “figuring-out” process. The PowerPoint, marketing materials, and sales playbook won't enable them to uncover the individual client's motivations, interests, and priorities.

This is where the core virtue of Practical Wisdom comes into play. It is something Aristotle called prudence (*phronesis*). It is a cultivated quality of discernment—noticing the most significant aspects of the situation—and the ability to apply one's knowledge, experience, and values to make a good (prudent) decision.

One of the changes in human behavior that Jack and the team need to encourage is for Amanda and others to bring pragmatism, perspective, and prudence to their interactions with C-level decision makers. They would win trust through thoughtful, client-centered dialogue, empathizing with each client's specific challenges and needs. Amanda has to interpret, diagnose, and adapt her recommendations to demonstrate that she's attuned, even spot on, with the client. If her insights are not client-centered, they will not be seen as practical by the client.

You can see now why we speak of Practical Wisdom as the way we show insight and understanding. Wisdom is seeing the parts in relation to the whole and understanding how the whole is greater than the arithmetic sum of the parts. It is reflected in our ability to anticipate potential consequences, not just because they are logically inferred, but because we've seen them before and discern them again, and with a nuanced difference. Practical Wisdom is revealed in the quality of questions that we ask. It is not the product of an algorithm.

For those who would like to understand a little more about Practical Wisdom, here's a theory that may interest you.

### **THEORY OF PRACTICAL WISDOM**

Research by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey indicates that we can approach this complex social encounter from one of three modes of meaning making or interpretation.<sup>2</sup> We can assimilate all that we observe, sense, and hear to a framework that has been prescribed as a standard model for interpreting client matters ("socialized mind").

We can interpret what we observe and experience in client encounters through a personally authored framework of meaning ("self-authoring mind"). Or we can step back and recognize that our way of construing things, whether through socialized mind or self-authoring mind, is one among many ways to make sense of experience ("transformative mind"). This last mode frees us to discern other points of view.

So again, what does this tell us about Amanda's situation? The whole idea of approaching her meeting with a "transformative mind" may sound a little arrogant or presumptuous, right? Well, it might if Amanda didn't also have a little Humility working in her favor. As it turns out, the members of the client relationship team, on the whole, have a lot of it, which means they're not likely to go into that meeting with the CFO or finance SVP

throwing their weight around and exhibiting excessive hubris. That would be risky to the trust they're working so hard to build.

But Amanda can use facilitative power to produce a higher quality of trust, greater clarity of insight, and a far greater sense of alignment with her clients. She can be the active agent, taking charge of the meeting by promoting this kind of dialogue that recognizes many views. The resultant insight, understandings, judgments, and decisions are the product of two more fundamental forces—the client's implicit knowledge and wisdom and Amanda's capacity for "not knowing."

The principle of "not knowing" is used in certain forms of therapeutic dialogue and problem-solving dialogue. It is not being coy or cute. It is grounded in the belief that by suspending one's inclination to know, one places a productive burden of discovery on others, which activates a unique kind of empowerment. Yes, it also feels quite satisfying for the client when done effectively. Facilitating from the standpoint of *not knowing* does actually require another kind of *knowing* about how to stimulate a reflective-dialogical process of discovery.

So here we see that Practical Wisdom in our Bates Executive Presence Model and the qualities of discernment, deliberation, and prudential judgment that Aristotle referred to are driving forces of change. This will liberate the team's adaptive potential to play the role of strategic advisor. As a matter of fact, it changes a paradigm that many have long held—instead of meeting the clients "where they are," the team must itself facilitate a shift in relational dynamics through communicative leadership and qualities of executive presence.

### THE ROLE OF VISION IN ADAPTIVE CHANGE

When we think about driving change, we have to start somewhere and go somewhere. What purpose do vision and strategy serve for leaders and organizations? They're forward driving and directional. There is a tendency to think of vision as something far out there in the future. We think of strategy as an "activity" that we undertake periodically—perhaps even just once a year—when we are looking at the big picture and longer term. That may be how it happens in most organizations, but it's actually not a great way to go about things. Given the pace of change in business, we need to frequently adapt.

*Adaptive change* involves a new conceptualization of the problem and solution possibilities. When we are simply applying established procedures or practices to a new problem, it may be more accurate to define

that change, as Ronald Heifitz and his coauthors describe in *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, as a *technical change*.<sup>3</sup>

So how does Vision come into play for Amanda, Jack, and Darren?

Jack, Darren, and the senior leadership team have problems to solve and need to create a larger frame of reference, more mental space for perspective taking, and more breathing room for discussion. To lead change, they need to acknowledge that their current ways of thinking, relating, acting, and feeling don't always work.

It takes time and a safe space to consider, deliberate, and make shifts. Remember the meeting we described, when we were there enabling space for dialogue? They all acknowledged that was something they rarely took time to do. They loved it.

### HOW CAN JACK APPLY VISION?

Jack can start by thinking about Vision not as a once-in-a-while event but as a way of considering how to present business challenges. He might leverage qualities of presence such as Inclusion, Interactivity, Resonance, and Humility. He can create conditions where all his team members, in formal and informal settings, can picture an end state that liberates them from the way they're attached to doing things. After all, these attachments can be constricting forces that choke creativity.

Leaders like Jack can think of strategy not as a plan on paper but as a rational, purposive mindset. It's the way we "operationalize" and keep going at it to meet the end goals. The word "strategy" is derived from the Greek *strategia*, referring to the art of being a troop leader, general, or other military commander. In keeping with its word origin, excellent strategy implies cleverness, skill, and cunning—what we might characterize today as innovation.

If Jack and the team confine their strategy sessions to yearly, or even quarterly, off-site meetings, these formal, occasional interactions are conducted in rarefied air—sometimes the worst place to foster creative thinking. They'll be better served regarding vision and strategy not as an annual event on the calendar but as an everyday mindset.

What happens if they do? They'll ignite creativity and build the mental capacity and emotional energy to sustain cultural transformation. When those in management make this shift, they model a way of functioning. To have an executive title and role is one thing; to activate the executive function of one's mind is another matter.

### HOW CAN AMANDA APPLY VISION?

Now let's get Amanda in mind again, as we define the role of Vision in the changes she wants to make. Again, her clients are different, and the landscape is ever-changing. As rational as a strategy may be, in its highest form, it's a deviation from the norm and involves a nonlinear shift in thought.

It is not too difficult, then, to see that Amanda might solve a serious business issue for her clients by indulging in moments of playful thought, imaginatively trying this, then that, and picturing how alternative courses of action might generate consequences. She might have set the table differently with the CFO prior to the meeting, by speaking in advance with him about strategic issues. She might have managed some of the service and fee questions prior to that meeting so that she could focus the discussion on higher-level problem solving. She might have asked different questions at the meeting and listened differently for problem-solving opportunities, demonstrating Vision and Practical Wisdom that would put her on a peer-to-peer level.

### APPLYING LESSONS OF VISION AND PRACTICAL WISDOM TO YOUR OWN CHANGE INITIATIVES

As you consider how to effectively drive change in your organization, you're undoubtedly seeing how these lessons apply. It is not such a daunting task when you understand how the qualities of executive presence enable organizational performance.

Any given team's or group's collective strengths and gaps can be interpreted and addressed, to unleash the forces that drive change. It works best when you engage all the people on the team in interpreting the results, so they can see for themselves what they can change, and then you can coach them to develop new behaviors and skills.

We have watched how this process unleashes energy in organizations. We have seen how the model helps catalyze change when people understand qualities such as Practical Wisdom, Confidence, Composure, and Resonance. Assuming that you have an enterprise-level vision and strategic direction, bringing it alive may be less a task than a leadership mindset that prompts constructive change in behaviors.

Change requires adopting mental models and new ways of framing issues. It requires quality imaginative thinking and creative problem solving. By understanding your own strengths and gaps in the harder and softer

aspects of executive presence, you can be the kind of leader that creates space and unleashes energy that empowers your organization to achieve a vision.

## SUMMARY

The Bates Executive Presence Model, interpreted in the context of a current, timely business challenge, enables organizations to break through barriers that can seem immovable. Our example focused on one client with the themes of Practical Wisdom and Vision since these were salient for the client. Each organization can identify a set of themes.

We don't have control over outside forces, and these will continue to buffet our organizations and challenge our leadership. External factors will always be situations to manage, not problems to solve, because change is constant. We can navigate change by leveraging the power of executive presence to influence, align, mobilize, and move people to act.

Now that we've looked at several typical situations where the Bates Executive Presence Model can be applied, we'll move into Part 3—"how to get there."

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**PART**

**3**

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## **How to Get There**

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## Executive Presence for Senior Leaders

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### The View at (and of) the Top

*Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.*

—JOHN F. KENNEDY

It's been our observation that great leaders make a commitment to learning and becoming the best they can be throughout their careers. Qualities such as Vision, Confidence, Practical Wisdom, Humility, Resonance, Composure, and others are essential as you rise to the top. The Bates EP Model was designed specifically with the demands of executive leadership in mind. In senior leadership, you must understand how to energize, align, inspire, and move people to act.

In a very large organization, a senior leader will never meet all the people who come to work there every day. Even in much smaller organizations, a senior leader doesn't interact with everyone on a daily basis. Seen from afar, an executive leader has to be mindful of the messages he or she sends. Assumptions about the leader are based on limited contact and secondhand information. This is precisely why it is important to act and speak in ways that positively amplify your leadership brand.

### CAN SENIOR LEADERS GET STUCK IN A RUT?

Of course! As a matter of fact, we're especially vulnerable as we get closer to the top because it's more difficult to hear the truth about how others view our leadership effectiveness and impact. And because we have a lot of expe-

rience, we tend to rely more and more on our own judgment. And we're all human. We're not perfect. Success can lull us into believing that we have things fairly well figured out. We can grow pretty confident that our way is the right way.

This is precisely why it is important to adopt a learning mindset and invest in leadership development throughout your career. While some senior leaders tend to see leadership programs as something for high-potential leaders, there's plenty of advantage for senior leaders themselves to have coaches, mentors, and advisors. It never gets easier at the top, and it never gets less lonely. As you face greater levels of challenge and novelty, it's important to be able to examine your assumptions from time to time and challenge yourself to get better.

## THE STORY OF AN ACCOMPLISHED LEADER

Tom Janus had risen to vice president in a large, family-owned company. He was aware there would be no more upward moves as these promotions only went to family. So although he was happy in the job, when he was introduced to a medium-size, closely held manufacturer where the CEO was looking for a seasoned number two, he jumped at the chance. Tom was attracted to a larger role in a smaller firm. He assumed his decades of experience in senior leadership in a larger company would enable him to immediately add value and help drive growth.

Sure enough, during his first three years, the new company grew at a decent pace. However, privately, Tom continued to be a little daunted by how steep the learning curve was. Fortunately he and the CEO worked hard to build a strong partnership. They appeared to balance each other. Tom had that learning mindset we talked about. As part of his development, he agreed to go through an ExPI assessment and coaching.

Tom was open to feedback and didn't expect any surprises, since over the years he'd been through a number of leadership assessments. Sure enough, the ExPI affirmed the strengths he believed he had. What was surprising was that some of these turned out to be overstrengths. While his optimism, joy, and positive attitude had always been his greatest assets, he was learning for the first time that he might have been relying too much on the facets of Concern, Resonance, and Humility.

How could this be? After all, these were fine qualities! What people said enhanced Tom's executive presence were qualities such as "high-energy

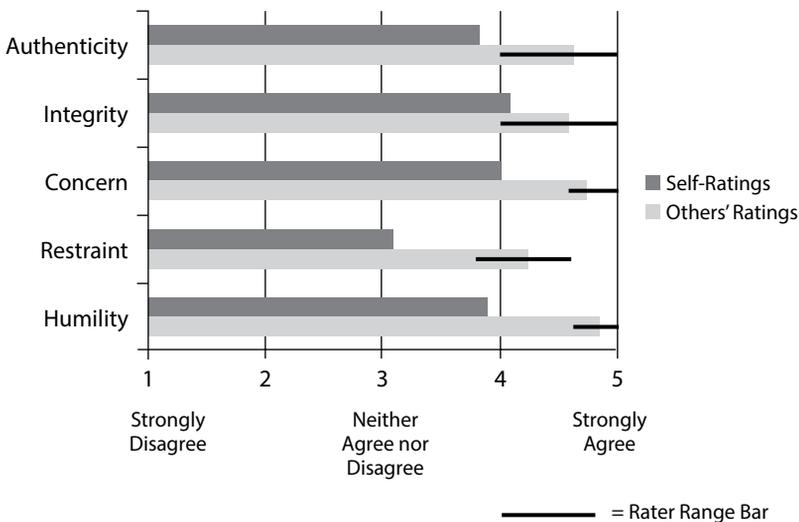
personality” and “positive mental attitude.” They said, “Tom is great at making others feel valued, heard, and appreciated,” and “Tom rarely gets angry and does a really good job of smoothing things over when there is an element of conflict or disagreement.”

Tom also rated himself a point or two lower than other raters on almost every facet. Tom had a bunch of what we call “happy blind spots,” as you can see in Figure 9.1. When a leader consistently underrates himself as Tom did, it can be a good thing, as he or she can stop worrying that these are issues. At the same time, too much Humility can mask other strengths, as you’ll see.

### WHERE WERE THE REAL GAPS?

Tom had many fine qualities; however, he was surprised to be rated lower in Practical Wisdom and Intentionality. When he received his report, he went through with a yellow marker and highlighted several of the comments about what detracted from his presence: “Have a more thorough and well-grounded presentation/discussion of the company’s strategic mission and goals for a future state.” “Build a case—based on linked business and financial building blocks—and not just an emotional argument for success.” He was struck by his boss’s comment that he could “keep developing

FIGURE 9.1 | TOM JANUS: EXPI RATINGS ON CHARACTER



strategic capabilities and industry-specific knowledge in order to manage the drivers of growth.”

These observations stung. Tom was briefly stopped in his tracks by the truth of it. He knew these were essential qualities in a company president, and he thought that they were strengths. His previous CEO had often sought him out for advice and counsel. Why were perceptions so different in his current role?

As he and the coach talked about the comments and what might have led to these perceptions, they found a few clues. One rater put it this way: “Occasionally he gets a bit ‘pie in the sky’ and too far ahead of the team in terms of where we are in achieving our goals and objectives.” Another said: “One of Tom’s biggest strengths is painting a picture of the vision, but he’s sometimes . . . not using his ability to set a realistic direction.”

What became apparent was that Tom’s overreliance on fine qualities was muting some of those facets that he now needed to call on as president of the firm. His upbeat and sometimes overly optimistic predictions were not allowing Intentionality and Practical Wisdom to shine through. Tom saw himself as the “positive guy” whose job was to model caring, concerned leadership. It was important to him to build a culture that respected others, looked at the positive side when the chips were down, and persevered.

Meanwhile, Tom had been relying on his CEO boss to be the “voice of reason” and allow him to be the guy who brought people “up” by painting a rosier picture. Yet the people on the team were looking for a more realistic, grounded leader—one who certainly believed in them and saw a bright future but could also bring a thoughtful perspective. It was clear that he needed to build some more credibility with the team, by demonstrating those qualities of judgment that had served him well in other roles.

### **WHY TOM WAS NOT DEMORALIZED BY THE FEEDBACK**

Tom’s reaction to the assessment data was a testament to his humility and capacity for learning and self-reflection. Within a couple of days, he’d had enough time to think about what he’d learned. He walked into the CEO’s office to tell him that he was reenergized. The feedback had gotten to the heart of a nagging feeling he’d had since he started. “The reality that confronted me was that I had far more potential as a leader,” Tom explained. “The scope and breadth of the responsibility hit me like a brick. Fooling myself was no longer an option.” Tom resolved immediately to take his leadership to the next level.

One reason we believe it is important to share this story with senior leaders is because it's likely that even if you've completed your firm's 360s and some other assessments, these may not yet have gotten to the heart of some of the hardest-to-describe aspects of great executive leadership. It's worth considering for a moment whether you might connect with Tom's experience of realizing he was too reliant on a few "brand" elements of his leadership. Prior to completing the ExPI, Tom had never had direct feedback on these gap qualities of executive presence. He was also happy with the person and leader he'd become. He hadn't been aware of perceptions. He assumed his caring, concerned style of leadership would be sufficient to get things done.

Whether or not you've completed an ExPI assessment, we would recommend that you reflect on the qualities of executive leadership that we now know from research are essential to driving organizational performance. Underlying gaps can be addressed. We all have areas of strength; however, as a senior leader it's important to try to bring new qualities to bear in your work.

You may be stronger on the more spinal qualities like Confidence, Vision, and Practical Wisdom but need to develop the social-emotional side of your leadership. You do not need to change the core of who you are as a senior leader to adapt and grow. Tom realized it was possible to strike a balance between his softer and harder-driving sides. He was motivated to make a difference.

### **JOLTED INTO A NEW REALITY**

In addressing the gap in Practical Wisdom, Tom realized he had plenty of experience in solving thorny business problems. He'd also demonstrated Intentionality in previous roles, starting and completing long-term projects in other firms. It occurred to Tom that what was holding him back from *demonstrating* these qualities in his new role was that he was not spending time forming and defending his opinions on business decisions. He was deferring to a strong CEO with well-formed views. Compounding perceptions was his high level of Humility. What motivated him to change was "the difference between regret and complete self-assurance that I gave it all I had."

Tom reviewed the ExPI data with the CEO and learned that his boss had actually been frustrated that Tom hadn't been weighing in with his own opinion on issues. The CEO had hired Tom for his business experience and had expected him to play a bigger role in guiding decisions with a thought-

ful examination of each situation. He wanted to see Tom apply a practical mindset and careful analysis. He felt that they could accelerate business growth if Tom could contribute more to the strategic discussion.

This conversation prompted by the assessment “jolted me into a new reality,” said Tom. “Being an analytically minded math major, my first reaction was to break these down into parts. What do they mean fundamentally? How do they apply to my quest for leadership excellence?” Great leadership had been redefined for him in this role. “Game on,” he said. “I felt a sigh of relief. It was eye-opening.”

Tom credited the coach for encouraging him to share past stories of leadership experiences to draw on strengths that would help him adapt in the new role. The coach also asked tough questions, such as, “Why do you think you rated yourself lower in every category than others did?” which Tom struggled to answer, until he realized that he valued humility and didn’t want to overstate his strengths. He was able to realize that while Humility is an admirable quality, like any other, it can dominate to the point where it mutes other leadership facets.

### **MAKING SURE FEEDBACK IS MEANINGFUL**

If you’re thinking about how to get meaningful feedback, Tom’s story will resonate whether or not you’ve completed an executive presence assessment. You need to begin with a fact-based analysis of your strengths and areas for development in the current role, as the perceptions of others may differ from your own. This could be because those qualities valued in previous roles are assumed, and new ones are required. While you may not always be surprised, it is important to take note of gap areas and think about how you might address them.

Often when we sit down with senior leaders for the first time, we’ll hear, “This isn’t really news to me,” or “I’ve seen all this before.” While it can be comforting to look for affirmation of feedback you’ve heard in the past, it’s important to dig deeper. With good interpretation there is always something to learn from an assessment. It takes time and thoughtful partner discussion to glean insights that aren’t obvious at first glance. That’s why it’s important to have a skilled coach who can guide you to appreciate the deeper meaning.

### **WHAT ELSE CAN A TALENTED, SEASONED COACH HELP YOU DO?**

A talented, seasoned coach was able to help Tom see that the reliable qualities of leadership that he thought of as his brand were not all that was

required. Likewise, you can bring in a coach to help you avoid the pitfalls of relying too much on your own perceptions. While most senior leaders are accountable for their business decisions, a change in circumstances can still cause them to blame outside factors or situations out of their control. In Tom's case, a strong CEO had changed the work environment for him, and he needed to find his way back to a role where he was providing Practical Wisdom and insight. As a senior leader you can open yourself to a path of development simply by acknowledging what's changed.

We know some leaders seek out a coach who is familiar with the organization, its politics, and its culture, while others do not believe this is as important. There can be opportunities or risks either way. A coach who is too well ensconced in an organization may know too much and be less inclined to challenge your assumptions. A coach who is not informed about your organization may need more time to get up to speed. These are questions to ask a coach before you enter into the engagement so that you are aware of the risks and can address them.

A good coach should bring a balanced perspective, judgment, and insight. You'll find the facets measured by the ExPI can also be a good guide to qualities you'd like to see in a coach. For example, you want a coach who brings both Confidence and Humility to the discussion. The coach should listen closely while challenging your assumptions. A coach should also demonstrate Resonance—an appreciation for your thoughts, feelings, and motivations. And you should expect a coach to exercise a high level of Practical Wisdom—the ability to cut through the clutter, focus on what matters, and help you frame situations in a way that changes your perspective.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCOPE OF WORK BE?**

We've found that it is best to keep the scope of the coaching program reasonable, especially at the outset. We often recommend sticking with two coaching themes, or areas of development. By focusing your action plan, you are better able to make real headway and feel a sense of accomplishment. Prior to beginning in earnest, it is important identify actions, timelines, measures of success, and advisors who can help you.

Tom identified two themes—Practical Wisdom and Intentionality. He also looked at those strengths as something he could both leverage and watch. He wanted to be aware of a tendency to overrely on qualities such as Concern, Resonance, and Humility. He now knew that these could mute the qualities of executive presence he sought to project.

In deciding on these themes, Tom thought a lot about his motivations: “I explained [to the coach] how being my very best leadership self was critical. I didn’t want to let anyone down. I felt it important to keep focused to stay ahead of the growth curve and to participate with my boss, rather than relying on him to realize our strategic vision.”

With those themes in mind, he began to explore in depth what might be preventing him from demonstrating these qualities. In an early coaching conversation as he talked about the “wins” in past roles, he realized that it had been right around year three when his Practical Wisdom had emerged. In other words, he would hit his stride at the three-year mark. “I realized that even in high school and college, that third-year phenomenon was my rhythm,” he said.

Now at the three-year mark in the new role, Tom felt empowered and ready to look for opportunities to assert himself in discussions. He had in fact learned a lot about the business, and it was time to test that knowledge. He decided to write down thoughts on key issues so he felt more prepared for these discussions, and he found that to be very helpful.

Being open to the feedback and discussion about past experiences had led to a real breakthrough for Tom. However, it isn’t always that easy, especially when leaders are not accustomed to opening up to assessment and coaching.

## **WHEN LEADERS ARE NOT OPEN TO FEEDBACK**

Jeff Shepherdson, whom you’ll recall from Chapter 5, was on a stretch assignment to prepare him to take on a senior staff role. Jeff had never before received feedback from a multirater assessment, and initially he was pretty dismissive of the results. While he acknowledged the validity of the assessment, he wrote off the lower scores—attributing the blunt comments from his raters to envy over his fast rise and close relationship with the CEO. He really believed that the messages being sent were a product of personal agendas.

In this frame of mind, Jeff was not eager to go back to his raters and ask them to clarify their feedback. The coach sensed that Jeff was humoring him when he discussed setting up meetings with those who had provided feedback. His hunch was correct; after several weeks, Jeff still hadn’t followed through to set up those meetings. What was causing this trepidation?

There can be many reasons why leaders don't want to have these conversations, not the least of which is that they simply are not accustomed to opening up to people about what they consider their failings. Jeff had been a rising star all his life and had rarely received corrective feedback from anyone. This was uncomfortable for him.

### **HOW TO GO BACK AND TALK WITH RATERS**

It isn't that easy even for the seasoned leader to initiate conversations with raters who have provided feedback. After all, it requires us to admit that we're not perfect! Immediately after receiving a report, we may thumb through and have all kinds of reactions. It may cause us to feel confused, angry, frustrated, or even resentful. We work hard every day and strive to do our best. Don't people appreciate how difficult our jobs are?

Acknowledging the difficulty posed by going back to raters, we have developed an approach that works well even for those unaccustomed to seeking and receiving feedback. First, we remind them that it is healthy to remember that those who provided feedback did so with the intention of supporting the leader. The raters took the time to answer each question and write additional commentary they hoped would be helpful.

The best way to approach anyone from whom you seek feedback is with genuine curiosity. Believe you will learn something that you can consider and take in or discard. Our motto in these matters is no matter whom you sit down with, ask real questions and "seek to understand." What this means is that you need to walk into the room wondering what would cause a certain perception. Ask that individual to help you appreciate the situations where this behavior is noticed. Tell yourself you're there to learn, not defend your actions or explain perceptions.

A good way to start a conversation like this is to state your intention up front, just as we've suggested here. Let the raters or trusted advisors know that you appreciated their participation and would like to learn more. Assure them that you are eager to hear their view and encourage them to be open. Seeking to learn will shift the dynamic as people immediately respect your courage in seeking candor.

You want to seek additional feedback in a timely way, when the experience of completing an assessment is still fresh in the raters' minds. Although there is no time limit on seeking feedback, you may find it gets harder, not easier, to start these conversations as time passes. You get busy and begin to rationalize that it isn't important anymore.

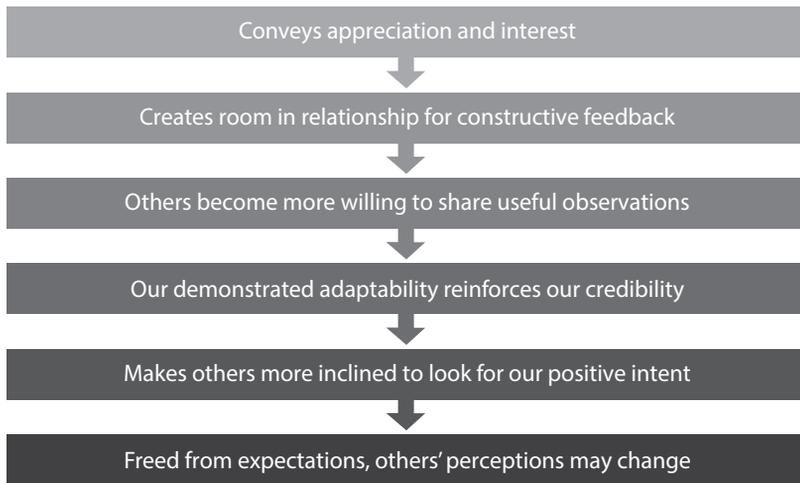
Some leaders believe the best way to handle feedback is to demonstrate they've learned by changing their behavior. The trouble with this is that you can be wrong about when people observe the behavior or what you need to do to change. Another mistake leaders make sometimes is deciding to call a meeting to thank everyone and let people know "message received." This can have the opposite of the intended effect—it can be perceived as dismissive. And if people don't see changes, they will assume their advice fell on deaf ears.

It's far better to acknowledge that even when you receive a report, you probably don't have the full picture. You may learn that people have formed impressions that can be easily altered with a simple change in behavior. For example, a leader who gets low ratings on Integrity might discover that the issue has been the number of times he has canceled a weekly one-on-one. Another leader may learn that low ratings on Concern came because he has not asked about that individual's career aspirations.

#### **WHY FOLLOW UP WITH RATERS?**

Like Jeff, many leaders are hesitant to follow up with raters. However, there are plenty of good, rational reasons to do so (see Figure 9.2):

1. When we approach these conversations with care, genuine curiosity, and a nondefensive attitude, it lets others know that there is room for constructive feedback in relationships; it can be used to make things better.
2. When others are assured of our positive intentions, they may become more forthcoming and more willing to offer subsequent observations that may help inform our leadership.
3. When our subsequent attitude and actions show that we are trying to adapt our approach based on the feedback and follow-up discussion, it reinforces our credibility.
4. When others attribute sincerity, intentionality, and credibility to our developmental efforts, they are more likely to give us the benefit of the doubt and to look for our positive intent.
5. As these kinds of changes begin, many discover that they have liberated themselves from a yoke of old assumptions, expectations, and reactions—others' perceptions can change!

**FIGURE 9.2** | WHY FOLLOW UP WITH RATERS?

### FLAWED LOGIC AND POOR ASSUMPTIONS

Our inhibitions to seeking feedback are often based on flawed logic (see Table 9.1).

Research indicates that those who follow up with their feedback providers are more likely to sustain and accelerate development. Going back to your raters (whether using the ExPI or any other multirater assessment) is the way to develop self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to perform in a particular way. When we have self-efficacy, we have confidence in our ability to exert control over our motivations, behaviors, and environment. Seeking guidance from others exudes a high level of confidence and demonstrates self-efficacy.

When working with senior leaders, we've found six steps that enable rich, robust conversations (see Figure 9.3):

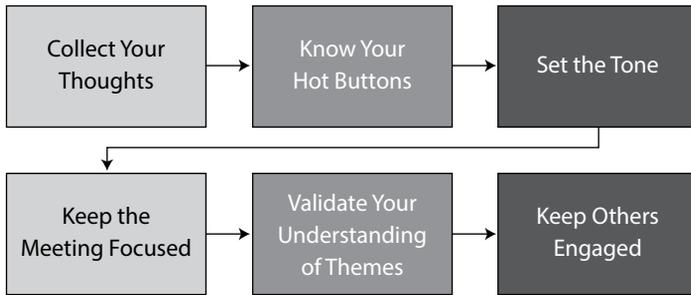
1. **Collect your thoughts.** There are a number of helpful things to do right after you have received your feedback, but rushing into conversation with feedback providers is not one of them. First, seek to understand the feedback data. Second, get help from an objective third party (coach) to interpret the data and identify key themes. Third, identify the insights and questions you would like to discuss.

TABLE 9.1 | INHIBITIONS TO PURSUING FOLLOW-UP

What Inhibits You	The Truth of the Situation
<p>1 If I explicitly acknowledge my vulnerabilities and explore them in the presence of a colleague, it may cause me to seem weak in the colleague's eyes, to lose face, or to suffer embarrassment.</p>	<p>Taking the initiative to open a discussion on patterns of behavior that detract from our desired impact on others demonstrates confidence, adaptability, and sincere concern—nothing to be embarrassed about.</p>
<p>2 It's hard to know how others may react; I'm concerned they may respond defensively. They might also minimize or deny issues, or alternatively seize the opportunity to "rub it in."</p>	<p>There are many ways to broach such discussion that greatly reduce the likelihood of encountering such reactions. This also is not the inclination of most people we approach. And ultimately we reserve the prerogative to choose whom to engage.</p>
<p>3 The conversation may go in a direction I don't want it to; e.g., it may lead to differences of opinion, tension, or expectations that I cannot agree to or measure up to.</p>	<p>The aim of follow-up conversations is to validate our own interpretations, or not, and seek with genuine curiosity to obtain another person's point of view. In so doing we arrive at deeper mutual understanding.</p>
<p>4 Talk is cheap; if others have an issue with our behavior and have already given us feedback, why would they want follow-up conversation? Isn't it time for us to just do it?</p>	<p>Ultimately, others will judge us by our actions, but if we "just do it" and our understanding of "it" is not correct, then we will not have accomplished much.</p>

2. **Know your hot buttons.** Explore your feelings about the feedback, especially the aggressive and defensive feelings that lead you to explain or justify why the feedback is faulty or untrue. Take this step well before you talk with feedback providers. Work through your concerns with an objective third party (coach). Then set these feelings aside. They will only interfere with constructive, productive communication. Managing your emotions will also give you a greater feeling of confidence and self-control.
3. **Set the tone.** Thank your feedback providers before you meet. Let them know that you will be taking time to reflect upon the feed-

FIGURE 9.3 | RATER CONVERSATION PROCESS



back and you will be getting advice on how best to use it in your ongoing development. Let them know that you will be reaching out to talk with them in a week or so to discuss what you have learned and how you intend to use it. Resist the temptation to simply thank people and let them know in one way or another that you “got the message.” This can have the opposite of the intended effect, which is to open dialogue, not close it off.

4. **Keep the meeting focused.** Choose one theme or area of development that you want to explore with that individual, to focus the conversation and deepen the dialogue. Resist the temptation to bring in the full report and go through it, especially if your intent in doing it is to show you also got some “good ratings.” Meet in a place where you will be free from distractions. Be positive in your verbal and nonverbal behavior. Get to the point. Don’t say, “I already knew all this,” as statements such as this tend to close off dialogue. Emphasize what you *gained* by way of insight—the feedback that was affirming and the themes that suggested opportunities for enhancing your presence and impact.
5. **Validate your understanding of themes.** Validate your understanding of the development themes and how they might be addressed in specific, work-relevant situations and interactions. Go into conversations with a genuinely curious mind. Seek to understand. Frame these understandings as tentative, as working hypotheses. Ask for input: “What do you think? Am I on the right track? Is there something you might add concerning the theme or how to address it?”

- 6. Keep others engaged.** The end of a meeting should really feel like the beginning of a new chapter in your relationship. The person not only has provided emotional insight but typically has also made an emotional investment in you and your development. This is a real gift and should be treated as such. As you leave the meeting, assure the individual that your intention is to begin on a sustained course of adaptive development. Let the people you speak with know that it will take time and that you will appreciate their ongoing support. Remind them and yourself that change is a challenge and is iterative—you'll have successes and setbacks, and you want to hear about both. Ask them to stay involved and engaged as you reshape your style of engagement with them. That's what leaders do!

### **JEFF'S BREAKTHROUGH**

Jeff talked through these steps with the coach and decided to identify one rater he thought he could “trust.” The coach walked him through a few possible scenarios to help him get over his reluctance. If he didn't approach this individual, what conclusions might that individual reach about Jeff's suitability for leadership? What hope did that individual have that Jeff would address the issue? On the other hand, if Jeff did approach this individual, how likely was it to change their relationship for the better?

Sure enough, when Jeff worked up the courage to have a conversation with this first individual, he came away with some insights. He deemed it a helpful, if somewhat painful, conversation. The practice gave him confidence that he could handle the next one. Though he didn't always agree with people, he did realize that he was wrong about their ulterior motives. He discovered that they had a genuine interest in his development and that they were coming from “the right place.” He felt a surge of confidence because he'd been able to raise the issue and listen to what people had to say.

### **TOM'S ACTION PLAN**

Though Tom had had several epiphanies, there was more work to do. He needed to have a longer conversation with his boss about the dynamic between them. His boss had his own development issues—as a founder, not only was he opinionated, but he also had a bias to action and was quick to

decide before soliciting Tom's advice. Since Tom and his boss both saw an opportunity to develop, they could help each other and hold one another accountable.

Tom said it was a challenge to remain vigilant about his development. "Focus and reflection are hard," said Tom, "particularly given the demands on my time." Working on Practical Wisdom and Intentionality required him to take time out of the office to read, reflect, and develop a viewpoint. He needed to be bolder when in meetings with senior leaders and to jump into the discussion sooner.

Tom also had to keep tempering the tendency to sound too "pie in the sky" when speaking with the team. He learned that by preparing for staff meetings differently, he could offer a balanced perspective while still maintaining that positive outlook. Tom said that the clarity of the feedback and the actionable advice of the coach became a guidepost. "Clarity is energy. Awareness is energy. Knowing what it takes to get where you truly want to go, and believe you must go, is energy," he said.

When senior leaders engage in meaningful paths of adaptive development, they often say it is one of the most satisfying experiences of their careers. Once they begin, they compare it to getting into shape and doing a workout. The more successes they have, the more empowered they feel to keep going. Experimentation leads to practice that becomes a habit.

Eighteen months after Tom began the work with the coach, he and his CEO sat down and agreed much had changed for the better. Tom was contributing more thoughtfully to strategic discussions and was more confident when offering his opinion. People were coming to rely on his appraisals of business opportunities and factoring that advice into their deliberations. Not coincidentally, the company's growth accelerated, as the team went forward confidently on a new strategy.

The CEO attributed much of this success to a deepening of his partnership with Tom and the quality of their strategic deliberations.

"I now believe that I can achieve excellence in leading this company," said Tom. "I can see success. I believe I can get there. More important, I no longer focus on the obstacles and convince myself privately that limited success is okay. I focus on the goals and jump over, run through the obstacles knowing that we will succeed."

## SUMMARY

Accomplished senior leaders who make the time and put in the effort can keep growing, and in so doing, they help their organizations to thrive. Hang on to that learning mindset throughout your career, and seek to understand the impact you have on others. As Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw said, “Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.” The Bates Model of Executive Presence offers senior leaders new ways of looking at their leadership and changing themselves, so they can change their organizations.

Now that we’ve seen how senior leaders apply the Bates Model of Executive Presence to becoming all they can be, let’s build on this by looking at the application of the model to developing high-potential leaders.

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## Executive Presence for High Potentials

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### The Next Generation

*Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.*

—WILL ROGERS

Paul Hanson poured a cup of coffee and scanned the familiar surroundings of a training room he'd visited many times. Sitting down where he found his name on a tent card, he greeted longtime colleagues from corporate headquarters and a few others he didn't know as well who had offices in other parts of the United States.

The banter about projects and pursuits, spouses and kids was welcome. Whatever the next two days held, he thought he would enjoy spending time with his class of high-potential leaders. The topic of the day—executive presence—well, that was new for him. Paul had completed an ExPI assessment and was intrigued, but he wasn't entirely sure how executive presence could be taught.

### ON THE FAST TRACK

Globally, a record amount of time and money is being invested in high-potential leaders like Paul who are on the fast track in their companies. They're attending programs and working with mentors and coaches, even as their capability and readiness are being evaluated by their organizations.

Still with all this development activity, it is difficult to evaluate the efficacy and impact. Leadership development professionals and their senior management are asking, “Are we spending *their* time and *our* resources wisely? How do we know that what we’re doing addresses the most pressing needs of the business? What are the indicators of success?”

We have observed that these are difficult questions for organizations to answer, which means almost annually, they review, revise, rearrange, rework, retool, and re-review. When it comes to programs on executive presence, few stay with a single approach for long. We suspect this is because up until now it has been difficult to connect it to business results and measure the impact.

As we have rolled out programs for high-potential leaders, we have been careful to design in the business relevance and to track and measure impact. At the end of this chapter, we’ll talk more about program review and measurement. Our objective has been to address the plentiful skepticism about whether you can teach executive presence at all, as well as whether you can connect it to business outcomes and measure results. Senior managers have a right to expect these questions to be answered so they have a rationale for the investments and documentation of results.

It has been important both to work closely with organizations to design meaningful development tied to strategic business objectives and to track results for groups of high-potential leaders like Paul and his colleagues. What we’ll share in this chapter is our approach to building a robust learning program based on the model and assessment that would finally answer the question “How do we know we’re getting a return on our investment?”

### INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT IN A GROUP PROGRAM

Prior to the program, Paul and his colleagues had completed a Bates ExPI as well as orientation and interpretation calls with a certified coach. This was a familiar routine; Paul had completed other assessments over the last few years—to the point where he had experienced a degree of “assessment fatigue.”

He and others in the program commented in this first round of discussion that this experience was different. We asked, “What was helpful about this assessment and feedback?” and many said it had provided new insights. Many mentioned that the feedback felt more personal, specific, and actionable. These were not typical topics that arose in discussions with their managers or formal performance reviews in their organization.

What did we already know about Paul as he came into the program? He was perceived as a bold, no-nonsense leader, able to set clear direction and quickly make the tough calls. His ability to assimilate complex data and communicate it up to senior levels made him a standout even among his peers. Leading the commercialization of his company's services, he was responsible for a team of 175. He also was in charge of coordinating a matrix of shared services from marketing, supply chain, and distribution.

Paul felt pretty secure in the knowledge that his style of leadership was valued by the organization, though he thought there were issues he wanted to work on. Paul mentioned that the feedback from his supervisor, peers, and direct reports affirmed what he understood about himself—they respected his confidence in decision making and his clarity of purpose. He was surefooted and capable of making the tough calls, and he took full responsibility for outcomes.

On the downside, it was a high-pressure environment, and Paul was aware that his temper could flare with his team. It had been a long three years: the company had experienced no growth, and it was pushing hard to drive innovation. Competition was fierce, and as a public company it had declared that Paul's line of business was part of the strategy to drive profitable growth.

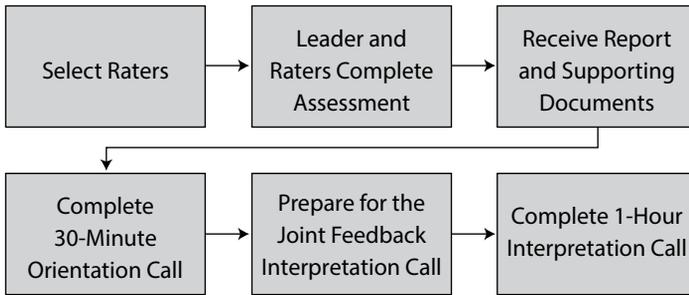
Paul thought that his team knew him pretty well and that they understood it was a tense time. However, when he talked over the feedback with the coach prior to attending the program, he saw that the impact of his behavior was far more negative than he had imagined. So he had come into the room that day with a clear, balanced view of areas of strength and opportunities to grow. He still doubted he could change much, but he was open to learning and of course always wanted to earn the respect of his team.

### **PREWORK OFFERS INSIGHTS**

Prior to the program, the other leaders had an experience similar to Paul's. They received (1) a detailed report of their ExPI results, (2) one-to-one guidance and tools for completing a self-directed analysis of the results, and (3) an in-depth joint interpretation session with a certified PhD-level Bates assessment provider. The process is captured in Figure 10.1. We had documented group themes, and we'd taken care to relate the ExPI data to the individual's role and business imperatives.

The prework set the table for the group learning and coaching to follow. This group would be completing a second ExPI at the end of the six-month program. We expected to be able to answer the questions "What has

FIGURE 10.1 | ExPI ASSESSMENT PROCESS



changed and what hasn't? What interventions are working for this leader and for the group? What progress can we document that demonstrates this group has improved its overall presence and influence?"

### BENCHMARK: GROUP-LEVEL ExPI THEMES

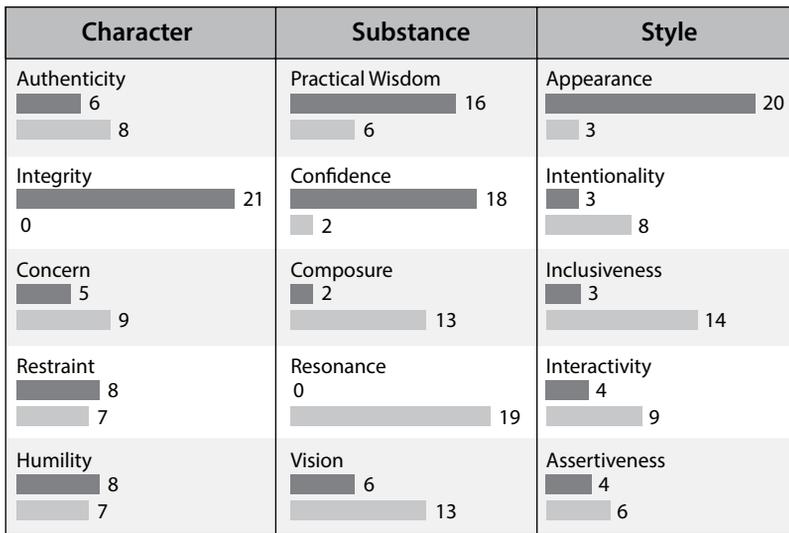
When aggregated, the benchmark individual ExPI data illustrated how this representative group of high-potential leaders was collectively showing up in their interactions with all parts of the organization. Since there was adequate representation of the functions, businesses, and sites, we could rely on the data to reveal significant trends in the leadership culture. Although they did not interact as a team and team dynamics was not a primary issue, it was still enlightening to notice patterns of behaviors and to analyze the impact this had on organizational success.

The graphic in Figure 10.2 reveals a pattern of the five highest-rated facets and lowest-rated facets for the 24 people who completed the ExPI. The dark gray bars represent the sum total of the five highest-rated facets for individuals in the program, while the light gray bars indicate the total for the five lowest-rated qualities of individuals in the program. You'll see, for example, that Integrity showed up as one of the highest-rated facets for 21 of the 24 individuals in the group, while Resonance showed up as one of the lowest-rated facet for 19 of the 24 individuals in the group.

### HOW WE INTERPRETED THE DATA

We reviewed the data on our own several weeks prior to the workshop, discussing a few hypotheses about what the group data was telling us, then preparing questions and discussion points to share with the company's leadership development team and sponsors in senior management. In a series

**FIGURE 10.2** TEAM FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF HIGHEST-RATED FACETS AND LOWEST-RATED FACETS



- = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as highest-rated  
 ■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as lowest-rated

of executive briefings, we obtained their initial reactions and incorporated these into a written report.

In the discussions, we were looking to learn how key leaders in the organization interpreted the strengths and gaps, within the context of the organization's history, culture, and business drivers. We wanted to understand how they saw what the ExPI data really meant in the context of the current strategic plan.

Checking our initial assumptions brought the picture into focus and gave us confidence that we had a bead on the organization. Now we'd share it with Paul's cohort, and we hoped to stimulate conversation about how their executive presence as a representative group of leaders helped and hindered organizational performance.

### HOW THE FINDINGS CREATED A BUZZ

We opened up the first day with a review of the Bates Model of Executive Presence so that everyone would be grounded in the facets and had common working definitions. Then we revealed the chart showing the frequency distribution of the group. Eyebrows went up! People nodded and looked around. There were murmurs of "Wow!" and "Whoa!" as well as

“Well, that explains a lot!” There was a quality of instant recognition, and the room started buzzing with speculation. What did it mean?

After the buzz died down, we facilitated a more structured discussion, asking the participants to share their thoughts on these questions:

- › Across the group, where is this team perceived to be strongest?
- › What are the most common development themes?
- › What are the implications of this particular distribution of strengths and development themes?
- › Collectively, what is the impact of the fact that areas such as Integrity, Appearance, Confidence, and Practical Wisdom are coming across strongly to the stakeholders of these business leaders?
- › Likewise, what’s the impact of the lower ratings in facets such as Resonance, Inclusiveness, Composure, and Vision?

Though they’d never seen the data, they found it easy to connect the higher and lower facets to their business challenges. To see how others viewed them as a leadership group was fascinating. As current and future senior leaders, they had plenty of reason to care. They were on the front lines and felt the truth of these insights. It was a bonding experience to explore the issues together.

Next we shared highlights from the briefings we’d provided to senior management to offer our joint view of the data. We were again testing this against what the participants believed to be true, and of course, we were looking to stimulate deeper discussion. We reminded them that their individual ExPI reports might vary significantly at times but that it was worth understanding perceptions of their executive presence as a group. It was a fresh way to explore organizational dynamics, culture, and challenges as they looked to make an impact as individuals and as a group. Here are the highlights, broken out by dimension:

#### CHARACTER

Integrity is strong in the character dimension; the other facets are neutral.

- › High scores in Integrity would indicate that others trust your intentions. People appreciate that you do what you say you will do, and they find virtue in your values.

- › You're seen as keeping promises and "walking the talk."
- › In the other four facets of Character, no single facet stands out, suggesting the group would benefit by reflecting on what facets, other than Integrity, in the Character dimension would enable the organization to accelerate performance.

## SUBSTANCE

Practical Wisdom and Confidence are strengths,  
but the group is low in Resonance.

- › The Substance dimension reflects perceptions of the group's credibility with noteworthy strengths as well as some significant gap areas.
- › You show up strong in the "harder" facets like Confidence, meaning people see you as decisive and action-oriented and able to take prudent risks.
- › They appreciate your Practical Wisdom in that they see your insight and judgment.
- › Vision is a mixed bag since people experience the cognitive side of your ability to paint a future state, but they're not as inspired as you'd want them to be; they want you to be able to make even a daunting goal seem realistic, exciting, and attainable.
- › Your lower ratings in Composure convey that your raters don't see you as able to shift others from a reactive to a positive state of mind, and a culprit in this could be stress. They also don't see you on the whole as resonant or tuned into their concerns, feelings, and nonverbal cues. In Resonance, we also see that they don't feel they're part of something big, important, and meaningful.

## STYLE

With the exception of Appearance,  
most of the Style facets could be amplified.

- › On the whole, the results in the Style dimension suggest a group that makes a positive initial impression but may fall short when it comes to many behaviors that are key to execution.

- › Appearance reflects not only attire but also healthy noticeable vigor, readiness, and energy; you certainly are seen as looking “ready for the game.”
- › Beyond that, though, no Style facet is truly strong. With Inclusiveness in particular, you’re not regarded as genuinely curious about the ideas of others.
- › Your ability to empower others and be seen as approachable could be improved.
- › Results on the other Style facets are mixed but trend somewhat negative.

### JOINTLY INTERPRETING THE DATA

The trends were compelling, but the data we presented prompted more questions. We looked at an anonymous selection of open-ended comments from the ExPI reports that could explain people’s reasons for giving lower scores. Table 10.1 shows some typical examples.

Among the topics that arose during the joint interpretation was the frustration the group members felt in having responsibility without ultimate authority over decisions. They were often waiting for more senior leaders; they felt caught in the middle and as if they could not respond.

**TABLE 10.1** | EXAMPLES OF OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

<b>Resonance</b>	<p>“A poor listener: Often cuts people off before they can finish their sentences; seems at times to only value his/her opinion.”</p> <p>“Needs to guard against being so decisive and ‘in charge’ that it unknowingly hinders open discussion or transparency involving thoughts on alternate courses of action.”</p>
<b>Intentionality</b>	<p>“More often than not, I leave a meeting with _____ more confused than when the meeting started.”</p> <p>“Complex situations frequently remain complex after discussion: more clarity about direction and next steps would be desirable.”</p>
<b>Vision</b>	<p>“His/her formal communication style can be dry, very detailed, and uninspiring.”</p>

Further, they didn't always control their own calendars on meetings with senior leaders and travel, which made it difficult to make themselves easily available. This was a valuable discussion on external factors that we all had to acknowledge before we could discuss what they *could* control.

As you'll recall from the previous chapter, our intent was to get these circumstances out in the open and then reframe them in a way that enabled clarity about what they did have in their span of control.

For instance, they realized that they did have some control over their own time and could probably take more care to express Concern for their teams' welfare. Though there was always pressure to perform, they could take more than the usual "seven seconds" to celebrate a win. They realized that a command-and-control style of leadership was not empowering their teams to make decisions, which created more pressure on them.

If this wasn't impetus enough for change, they'd also recently been made aware that employee engagement scores had dropped again the previous year. Attracting and retaining top talent was a major challenge for everyone in the room. Many of the qualities of executive presence could be seen as a solution to that problem.

### WHAT THEY FELT GOOD ABOUT

Paul and the group were pleased to see strong ratings in Integrity. Comments from the ExPI reports showed that members of the group were highly regarded in this important aspect of Character: "Builds trust with stakeholders by extending trust to others" represented the collective view.

They were pleased that people recognized their high energy and inclination to take action. Comments like "quick to grasp the issues," "always studies the issues and comes ready to contribute," and "capable of working long hours without losing energy and focus" were met with a smile.

### WHERE THEY HAD TO ADDRESS COLLECTIVE GAPS

The group members were dismayed that others experienced their collective style as abrupt and rather terse, with comments on their being "poor listeners" who were inflexible, prone to "have their minds made up," "cut people off," and "jump to conclusions." They couldn't deny a general tendency to "dominate discussion" but were a little wounded to learn that this could come across as "self-serving."

They were good sports and took it as a challenge. They got a good laugh about one anonymous comment—that one of the members of their

group was “attached to his phone,” which frankly they felt could have been attributed to any one of them. What did it mean? As one of these leaders summed it up, “We’re losing people.”

Returning to what they could control, travel was an issue, as was the fact that they weren’t getting enough sleep and were depleted. However, by noticing the impact their fatigue and busyness was having on their teams, they were inspired to manage their calendars better. They took to heart a comment about how difficult their teams found it to “include them in day-to-day business,” which made it hard to “get input on decisions.” They all realized this was “creating bottlenecks” that were impediments to “progress on time-critical issues.” They were a little surprised how much the stress was “written all over the face” as they allowed their “emotions to take control.”

Among several other topics, they wanted to discuss why Confidence was perceived as an overstrength for many in the group. A typical comment cautioned one leader to “guard against being so decisive and ‘in charge’ that it unknowingly hinders open discussion or transparency.” The raters seemed to be saying, “We have ideas to offer, but we can’t get heard.” Those in the leadership group did not argue with this view; they just had never thought about Confidence this way. In their organization, confident decision making was how they believed leaders got to the top.

### WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Whew! After an hour and a half of discussion, we had only scratched the surface. There was considerable agreement about what was working and what wasn’t. Certainly there was great appreciation for the differences between the intentions of the group members and others’ perceptions. All agreed it would be too daunting a task to tackle everything at once.

Further, our primary purpose was to give each leader an opportunity in a group setting to work on individual strengths and gaps. Sometimes those strengths or gaps aligned with those of the group, and sometimes they didn’t. It was easy to conclude that we wouldn’t try to settle every question raised by group feedback—or try to change the culture overnight.

The first step would simply be to stop and notice, acknowledging existing perceptions and the impact they were having on leadership effectiveness. It would be stimulus for individual work in the group setting. We went into the individual work with the collective agreement that everyone was in it together. So what was next? The work of changing an organization

begins with each leader. As Tolstoy put it best, “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

Each leader had established two individual themes during the private session with a coach. We explained how we would work together to help one another in this session. The discussion had built trust and common bonds, so people now had good reason to engage and learn.

## START WITH STRENGTHS

The learning in the Executive Presence Mastery Program focuses on helping leaders appreciate their strengths, look at their gaps, understand the impact, create an action plan, and leave feeling empowered to change.

We start by exploring strengths because so many leaders take them for granted. Discussing strengths builds self-confidence, reduces defensiveness, and also encourages some intimacy in the group setting. Each leader chooses his or her highest strength in each category, and in a group setting we talk about how this resonates in the individual’s leadership. We also talk about how any facet could be an overstrength.

## CIRCLE YOUR STRENGTHS

As we mentioned, leaders tend to look at assessments and ask themselves, “What am I doing wrong? Tell me how to fix it!” That’s precisely why we ask them to return to their reports and circle their strengths on the model we provide (see Figure 10.3).

- › Paul and each leader were asked to consider what it meant that these five facets were perceived to be their strengths, and they even were asked to consider how the “constellation” of strengths complemented one another.
- › We gave them time to choose one of their strengths and read about it in the ExPI Development Guide. We suggested they choose a strength that they could leverage with a new constituency or in a new situation.
- › Next they discussed their chosen strength with a partner. The conversations got the room buzzing again with a lot of positive energy. Though a few of them were old friends, many didn’t know each other well, so the discussion on strengths helped them get to know one another and generate some mutual respect.

FIGURE 10.3 PAUL HANSON'S STRENGTHS

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity	Practical Wisdom	Appearance
Integrity	Confidence	Intentionality
Concern	Composure	Inclusiveness
Restraint	Resonance	Interactivity
Humility	Vision	Assertiveness

Partners are not passive listeners; they probe for meaning as they listen, respond, and inquire as the partner shares a story. They help their partner appreciate the power of that strength in a new situation and how it can be leveraged. By the end of a brief discussion, the group is energized and you see people already making notes in their action plans.

With all that positive energy and after a healthy lunch, Paul's group was ready to tackle the next task.

### CLOSING THE GAPS

The next step in the process is to acknowledge areas of improvement and in a group setting begin to explore how to adapt and grow. Once again, participants were invited to look at their ExPI reports and note the three lowest facets. Figure 10.4 shows how Paul's constellation of strengths and gaps looked when he completed the exercise.

### LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS

Once they had chosen a gap that was interesting to explore, we introduced Paul and the others to a process we call Leadership Pathways. This is a method for exploring people's development opportunities. It relies on inquiry and storytelling. Leaders recall experiences that might explain how the perceptions were created that led to their gaps, inviting the partner to ask questions and then working together to develop some insights about

FIGURE 10.4 | PAUL HANSON'S STRENGTHS AND GAPS

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity	Practical Wisdom	Appearance
Integrity	Confidence	Intentionality
Concern	Composure	Inclusiveness
Restraint	Resonance	Interactivity
Humility	Vision	Assertiveness

— = Highest-rated facets

- - - = Lowest-rated facets

what happened and why, what impact it had, and how it applies to a current challenge.

When they come into the program, some leaders wonder whether they have any stories to tell. After teaching storytelling for decades, we have concluded that if you're breathing, you have stories! It's a matter of first creating stimuli that prompt recollection and then creating time and space for reflection that generates insights.

Most leaders who experience this process are surprised that it is as easy as it is to find stories and talk about them with a partner or in a small group. They realize that they otherwise might never have taken time to draw meaning from these experiences. In the safety of a structured, facilitated, and supportive session, it is easier to explore mistakes, mishaps, missteps, and painful memories and, with the support of a peer, to mine them for insight.

### STIMULATING READINESS

The stories become living case studies. Working with a partner, each leader shared a story and explored its lessons as well as how the lessons could be applied to a current or impending challenge. This interactive approach is effective because it relies on active collaboration between leaders rather than the passive approach of listening to a lecturer expound on leadership theory. This process leverages the knowledge of a peer partner and acknowledges that there are many ways to get to an answer. There's no smooth path to knowledge.

In these mastery programs, we often refer to the words of philosopher and educator John Dewey: “We do not learn from experience alone, but from reflection on our experience.” This opportunity to share, discuss, explore, and reflect on learning is very powerful. Often, at the end of the first exercise, leaders tell us they’ve never had such an opportunity.

### **OWNING THE SOLUTION**

As human beings, our natural tendency is to look to external explanations that justify or rationalize our choices. We talked in this book about how common it is for smart people to look at situations and say, “If only it were this way, I could act or react differently.” The next step in the dialogues is to acknowledge that while external forces are always a factor, we must own the problem and the solution.

This is easier for some than others. But group dynamics often take hold, and people begin to encourage their colleagues to look within themselves. We recall working with another group of highly educated leaders who were certain that their circumstances included insurmountable barriers.

During the facilitation, one participant continued to insist that nothing could be done. The facilitator encouraged him to keep talking. The longer he spoke, the quieter the others in the group became. They were no longer agreeing it was impossible to fix. Finally one spoke up and respectfully challenged him to reexamine that view; others chimed in. This is a great example of peer learning at its best.

### **THE POWER OF THE FACILITATED PROCESS**

Nancy was a high-potential leader who wanted to work on projecting Resonance. Her team was in the midst of a massive technology change. She’d become aware that her team members felt she was out of touch and lacked confidence in them.

In a facilitated session, Nancy shared with other leaders a story about a decision she made to switch vendors on the project. It had seemed to her like a no-brainer, but her team was upset when she “announced” the decision. Nancy shared with the group that she was surprised the people on her team were distressed—she’d had experience with all three vendors and wanted to save them the aggravation and time.

Clarifying questions from the group focused on Nancy’s motives for jumping in and making the decision. Did she trust the members of her

team? Were they capable? Had they expected the decision was theirs? Nancy admitted that deep down, she wasn't sure they were capable of reaching the "right" decision in a timely way.

The group also wondered whether Nancy was aware in the moment that the people on her team were upset or whether she had to be told (Resonance). She admitted she'd rushed the announcement at the start of a Monday staff meeting and had only become aware of their distress later, when one brave direct report approached her to say that the group felt it was being micromanaged.

In the next round, other leaders shared similar experiences. Several could recall situations when they had made the call without input from their teams. They admitted that while it was expedient, in each case it had deflated their teams. The sharing of these stories helped Nancy feel better. It seemed just about everyone had "been there, done that!"

When the leaders moved to the final round of offering suggestions that they themselves would be willing to follow if they were in her shoes, the suggestions were practical. "Let people know whether they have the decision-making rights" and "Give them an opportunity on a low-stakes decision" were two of the suggestions. When Nancy tried to interject, the facilitator reminded her to listen with an open mind and, for now, to suspend judgment.

The group members also suggested that Nancy might be acting out of a sense of urgency that might not be real. They proposed that she start to change her view of her role, from the one who made all the important decisions to the leader who coached and mentored others to get there.

After the wisdom-sharing roundtable, Nancy thanked the group for helping her see that managing her emotions was the starting point for changing her behavior. She had a goal to adopt a less directive style of leadership, and she physically relaxed as she described it to the group. She felt that pushing decisions down could also help her find time to work on Vision, another development goal.

One interesting footnote about the wisdom-sharing process: a number of times, participants have told us that listening to others share their stories and go through the process was at least as valuable as sharing their own stories. As one participant told us last July on his postmastery coaching call, "It was reassuring to hear that other leaders in very different companies and industries are wrestling with the same issues as me. And I realized that no matter how impressive they are, all leaders have areas where they want and need to get better."

## TRACKING PROGRESS

We began this chapter saying how important it is to track the return on your investment in these high-potential programs. Simply tabulating evaluation forms and having follow-up conversations with participants will not get to insights about what changes and why.

One way we have been bringing the return on investment (ROI) into focus is by tracking progress, reviewing the key themes in each leader's action plan, and monitoring the coaching template notes to review the critical incidents. We also interview stakeholders who are in a position to notice. Tracking leading as well as lagging indicators of progress is next. We must mutually establish up front what we are measuring to be sure they are the right things—connected to business results.

Understanding the key imperatives makes it easier to establish these indicators. We know that if a company is looking to realize value from a merger, for example, certain qualities of executive presence emerge as critical—measuring progress in Interactivity, Inclusiveness, and Resonance could be a good leading indicator of success.

Similarly, if improving employee engagement is important, we may look at the individual and group-level themes and decide it is especially important to track qualities such as Humility, Concern, Resonance, Composure, and Vision.

Whatever the objective, ROI can be measured by establishing the objectives, understanding what matters to organizational performance, tracking the data, and noticing what interventions work.

## HOW DID PAUL AND HIS COLLEAGUES DO?

The program that Paul and his colleagues completed included virtual coaching to support their development. The organization was able to track their progress through a process similar to that we've described above. Coaches working individually with the leaders, post-mastery program, completed standard reporting templates after every coaching session, recording qualitative observations.

The coaches reported highlights of each leader's biweekly progress on his or her two development themes. They noted important developments (critical incidents) that were indications of setbacks or progress. They were tracking the work streams connected to these development themes, so we could clarify how the participants' development activities were tied to driv-

ing business results. The coaches also tracked each leader's insight, attitude, motivation, effort, skill, effectiveness, and timeliness, relative to the first coaching session.

As a result, not only were we able to provide the organization with an aggregate look at initial ExPI scores, we also could track the critical incidents, report trends, and document breakthroughs. We could connect progress in each facet to driving organizational results.

## ADVICE FOR HIGH-POTENTIAL LEADERS

We've spent most of this chapter talking about leadership programs. As an individual high-potential leader, you may or may not have opportunities to attend leadership development programs. You may be wondering what you can do to invest in your own development and use the Bates Model of Executive Presence as a touchstone.

Here's our advice:

- › If you've been identified as a high-potential leader, congratulations! This is an exciting time in your career. You have this recognition, and perhaps there is also a program that will offer you a level of support. Your job is to make the most of whatever is offered.
- › It's likely that as a high potential, you will be given stretch assignments. Accept these and do all you can to contribute. Identify people who can help you succeed. Reach out for support and feedback as often as you can.
- › If you are asked to attend a program, throw yourself into it, come prepared, do the homework, and take time to reflect on what you've learned. Get to know others in the program as you can support each other informally, or do it formally through peer mentoring.
- › You should expect a valuable trade for your time, in addition to opportunities to network with your peers. Programs can be a day or two, or they can stretch out over six months or a year. Expect to be challenged; if you aren't, speak up and ask for what you need. You should see both immediate and long-term value from what you are learning.

- › Don't be afraid to ask for expert guidance, whether that is getting a better interpretation of the data from an assessment, creating an action plan, or doing the work with the help of internal and external coaches. There is nothing worse than getting assessment data without proper follow-up. It is frustrating and largely useless unless you have a path to development.
- › Whomever you work with, facilitators, coaches, or peers and colleagues, open up to them so that you can get yourself out of your own head, examine patterns of thinking, and discuss fresh approaches.
- › Programs like this are not always easy or comfortable. They should challenge you and make you think. At the same time, whenever you are participating in a leadership development experience, it should also be structured, confidential, and safe.

Finally, if executive presence has been raised as an opportunity for development, ask those in a position to notice to be as specific as possible. Review the model of presence and ask yourself how you might rate yourself in these areas. Ask people you trust to weigh in. What specific behaviors should you look to stop, start, or continue? What would look different six months from now if you were really “showing up” with qualities such as Vision, Resonance, or Concern? If it is an option to complete an assessment as part of your development, we provide guidance at the end of the book on how to launch the process.

## SUMMARY

It's exciting to be identified as a high-potential leader, as it opens the doors to learning experiences and new opportunities. As a high-potential leader, don't be afraid to look at your strengths and gaps and try new approaches. Formal training is just one avenue. If such a program is not available in your company, find mentors, peer mentors, and sponsors in the organization to help you.

This is also an exciting time for organizations when it comes to bringing executive presence programs to their curriculum for high-potential leaders. You can now be confident in documenting results. Armed with an assessment based in science, you can measure and track a leader's develop-

ment. This in turn ensures that you can evaluate your success and demonstrate ROI.

Now that we've looked at the "how" of helping senior executives and high-potential leaders develop executive presence, it's time to tackle one of those burning questions that has arisen since we began our work in the field of executive presence. One of the hottest topics in leadership development today is whether there is a difference between men and women. In the next chapter, you'll discover what a fresh look at the data on men and women reveals.

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## Executive Presence for Women

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### So Much for Conventional Wisdom

*The enemy of conventional wisdom is not ideas  
but the march of events.*

—JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

#### KASEY

Kasey Carson walked briskly from behind her desk, inviting our executive coach and one of her direct reports to have a seat at the executive conference table. Prominently placed at the center of that table was a bonsai tree, a symbol of realism in miniature. To explain, “Oh, Kasey keeps it there to remind us to get real and bring the idea down to size.”

Kasey had joined the company six months earlier, establishing excellent rapport with her team and becoming a close advisor to the CEO. What people enjoyed about her style could also be overstrength. On the positive side, she was creative, energetic, and intellectually curious, and she enjoyed brainstorming. The other side of the coin was that these qualities sometimes frustrated and exhausted her team, as she was always “chasing the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow,” as one direct report put it.

Kasey was aware that she could confuse people and wear them out if they were not clear about priorities. The bonsai tree was a visual cue to self-manage this tendency. It was especially important as she took on the task of transforming the function. She would need to keep things moving forward by breaking plans down into doable steps.

Kasey's strengths in the ExPI included Humility, Concern, and Resonance. People knew she cared about them and was easy to approach. One rater put it this way: "Kasey's someone everyone can relate to."

Among her highest-rated facets? Resonance! Among the lowest? Intentionality.

## JANE

Jane Davidson breezed back into her office after a meeting with her CEO, feeling good about the next leg of her career. The CEO had just informed her that the board of directors had approved his proposal to grow Jane's division by acquisition. The company had a few potential acquisitions in sight and expected to complete the first transaction within a couple of months. Since Jane was president of that division, she would be leading the execution once the deals were signed. While she had proved herself able to lead sales growth, bringing organizations together through a merger would test her capabilities.

Jane's boss described her as someone who always had "clear focus." "She keeps things on track and is always on top of her game," he said. These hard-driving qualities would be helpful, but Jane tended to lean hard on her driving, pragmatic qualities. She could be tough on people—and though they respected her, they sometimes feared her. She didn't have a strong social-emotional side. This could present a challenge in connecting with people in a new organization, winning trust, appreciating their cultures, unearthing issues, and addressing obstacles to full integration.

When the CEO suggested a coach, Jane didn't hesitate. "Of course," she said. "What an opportunity." Our coach was struck by her ability to quickly process information, get to the heart of a matter, and apply prudent judgment. She was self-aware and welcomed feedback from the ExPI. Not surprisingly, she was not regarded as particularly attuned and responsive to people's ideas and emotions.

Among Jane's higher-rated facets? Intentionality. Among her lowest? You guessed it again—Resonance—the direct opposite of Kasey Carson's.

## A TALE OF TWO SENIOR WOMEN

So here we have the tale of two senior executive women who are successful by any measure. Both are delivering results. Both are valued by their CEOs.

Both are getting things done. If you met them, you might even say, “Wow, two peas in a pod: smart, dynamic, energetic, confident, high powered—exceptional.”

Yet when we assessed their strengths and gaps, we saw that each of these leaders was quite distinct. They both certainly had the energy, intellectual capacity, and drive to be successful in their current roles. However, to transform an organization or successfully integrate companies, they will each need to address the flatter sides of their own executive presence. And interestingly, they have very different opportunities for development.

Had we not been able to analyze ExPI data and through our interviews appreciate the relevance to each leader, it would have been difficult to offer them meaningful direction. Their respective CEOs might have been surprised if Kasey or Jane faltered, and they likely would have been unable to provide guidance to either leader about how to stop faltering. It's easy to imagine either or both of these leaders hitting an inflection point, which would have had consequences for their organizations. The ExPI brought them clarity and helped formulate a plan for their own paths of development. This illustrates why individual assessment is essential to giving leaders good guidance.

### **ExPI CONSTELLATIONS FOR KASEY AND JANE**

As you review the constellations for these two leaders (shown in Figures 11.1 and 11.2, respectively), you'll see at a glance where they are the same and where they differ.

They are opposites in Resonance, Humility, and Intentionality. Appearance is a common strength. Inclusiveness and Interactivity are gap areas for both.

Even this doesn't tell the entire story. For instance, though both received low scores in Inclusiveness, the reasons for these appraisals were different. Kasey's lower ratings were a result of inviting too many people to meetings, making it difficult for all their voices to be heard. Jane was dinged for doing the opposite; she invited so few people to weigh in that many felt excluded from her inner circle. This illustrates how individualized assessment and interviews with leaders serve to put the findings into perspective and get to the heart of issues.

FIGURE 11.1 | KASEY CARSON'S CONSTELLATION

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity	Practical Wisdom	Appearance
Integrity	Confidence	Intentionality
Concern	Composure	Inclusiveness
Restraint	Resonance	Interactivity
Humility	Vision	Assertiveness

FIGURE 11.2 | JANE DAVIDSON'S CONSTELLATION

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity	Practical Wisdom	Appearance
Integrity	Confidence	Intentionality
Concern	Composure	Inclusiveness
Restraint	Resonance	Interactivity
Humility	Vision	Assertiveness

— = Highest-rated facets  
 - - - = Lowest-rated facets

### WHAT DO THESE TWO STORIES TELL US ABOUT ALL WOMEN EXECUTIVES?

When we analyzed the aggregate data on all women who have completed the ExPI assessment, it revealed the basis of a perplexing dilemma for organizations. How do we help women move into management and senior management? Women have long been viewed as a rather homogeneous group, with similar needs for development. We believe that these per-

ceived similarities are not as important as the differences between women. Organizations can no longer fail to acknowledge this if they're going to truly help women advance.

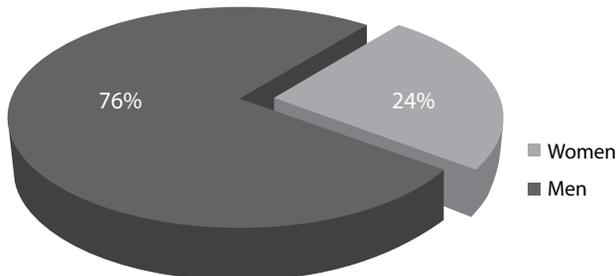
There is ample evidence that what has been done up to now has not had the hoped-for impact. The number of women in senior management roles has shown little improvement in recent years, despite focus on it, according to an article published in *Forbes* magazine in 2014. In many parts of the world, recent developments in employment law and corporate policy have promoted women's status in the workplace. For example, a law passed in Japan in August 2015 obliged most companies to set numerical targets for the employment and promotion of women.

Still, according to a 2014 annual survey, released March 7, 2014, the *Grant Thornton International Business Report* showed that the ratio of women to men in senior roles is both lopsided and unchanging. When it comes to women in senior roles globally, the figure is stuck at 24 percent, the same as in 2013, 2009, and 2007 (the numbers fell in 2011 and 2012, when women were hard hit by the global economic crisis). (See Figure 11.3.)

The Center for American Progress reported in 2014 that in the United States, women are 47 percent of the labor force and 49 percent of the college-educated, entry-level workforce. Women also earned more than 44 percent of the master's degrees in business and management. Yet they were only 14.6 percent of executive officers, 8.1 percent of top earners, and 4.6 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs.

Regionally, Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia lead the way on women in senior management, with 37 percent and 35 percent, respectively. Russia has the highest proportion, at 43 percent, followed closely by Lithuania and

**FIGURE 11.3** | SENIOR LEADER ROLES BY GENDER, GLOBALLY



Source: *Grant Thornton International Business Report*, 2014.

Latvia, Georgia, Armenia, and Poland. Women in Japan hold just 9 percent of senior roles, with almost no change from a decade ago.

Developed countries have relatively fewer women in senior management. Across the Group of Seven industrialized nations, 21 percent of senior roles are held by women, compared with 32 percent in the BRIC economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China). One reason for the lower percentage in the industrialized nations may be the development of the nuclear family and the resulting lack of childcare, as well as lower aspirations among women in the West compared with women in developing economies where strong growth and cultural shifts are fueling female ambition.

## HOW DO WE HELP WOMEN MOVE AHEAD?

It is important to acknowledge areas where there has been progress in recent decades. The gender wage gap has narrowed, and the percentage of women moving up in the ranks of management has steadily risen. But most in management today wonder how to create conditions that enable more women to advance. By one estimate, it will take until 2085 for women to reach parity with men in leadership roles in the United States.

While it is not our intention here to attempt to explain all these trends, it stands to reason that one drag on progress is a view that women as a group have similar needs for development. The data just doesn't bear that out. The result of this mindset is that the interventions don't work as they should.

For instance, while most large organizations enthusiastically sponsor corporate women's networks, many in corporate human resources and executive management would agree they'd like to see more return on that investment. After well more than a decade of actively promoting these networks, women are not rising much faster through the ranks. While we don't mean to imply there's no benefit, it's been our observation that such forums can actually perpetuate stereotypical ways of thinking about women, even among women.

As a woman-owned firm, we have often been invited to work with women, provide women's workshops, and speak to women's networks and conferences. As enjoyable as these events are, we grew uncomfortable with a subtle undercurrent that pervaded many of these gatherings—the idea that women have similar deficits that hold them back from advancing in senior ranks.

While it is self-evident that the experience of being a man in the workplace is distinct from the experience of a woman, we think it's dangerous to see women as a group needing to be "fixed." It's the collective approach to developing women that needs to be fixed.

Now, having had the opportunity to look at the data and coach women based on the ExPI assessment, it's helped us appreciate that the only effective way to help them advance is to treat women as individuals. Frankly we think that it's time for an overhaul of women's leadership development. If the one-size-fits-all thinking doesn't change, the interventions won't change, and organizations will continue to be disappointed.

### WHAT ABOUT ALL THE RESEARCH OUT THERE ON WOMEN?

There's been plenty of very good research and writing on women and leadership. Books including *The Confidence Code* and *Lean In* have drawn renewed attention and interest in helping women move ahead. We'll talk more about how that factors into our interpretation of conventional wisdom. For right now, we want to emphasize that we hope our research, which pertains to executive leadership, will be seen as complementary.

There is a great deal of what you might call conventional wisdom out there, and we aren't necessarily taking issue with all of it. On the other hand, we believe some of the popular literature can have the effect of becoming self-fulfilling prophecy. Commonly held beliefs about women can hinder them from advancing through senior ranks.

We decided to subtitle the chapter "So Much for Conventional Wisdom" because we think some of the findings will shake things up, as you'll see below. And this isn't an academic exercise for us. We hope these less conventional ways of looking at women in leadership (see Table 11.1) will influence the way organizations look at women's programs in the future. So here goes.

#### "SO MUCH FOR CONVENTIONAL WISDOM" HEADLINE #1:

There Aren't Obvious, Important Differences in Perceptions of Executive Presence, by Gender

Yes, you're reading that correctly. Our study of empirical research on variables that measure executive presence did not reveal any obvious and highly important patterns of differences by gender. It may not be what you'd expect to find based on the popular literature. But when it comes to busi-

**TABLE 11.1** | SO MUCH FOR CONVENTIONAL WISDOM:  
SEVEN HEADLINES ABOUT WOMEN LEADERS

- 1 There Aren't Obvious, Important Differences in Perceptions of Executive Presence, by Gender
- 2 Gender Differences Aren't as Obvious as Cross-Cultural Differences
- 3 There Can Be More Important Differences Among Women Than Between Women and Men
- 4 Women's Self-Perceptions Don't Necessarily Correlate with How Effective They Are as Leaders
- 5 People Don't Rate Women All That Differently Than They Rate Men!
- 6 There's No Significant Difference in *Perceptions* About Women's Confidence Versus Men's
- 7 It Isn't Just the Feminine, Relational Qualities of Interaction That Make a Difference

ness leadership and how others appraise executive presence, any differences are subtle and seem to be of negligible consequence.

Does that mean there are no differences in perceptions? No, like other researchers and practitioners in leadership, we believe that our gender is an important part of our identity as individuals and that “leadership is identity work.”<sup>1</sup>

But data analysis indicates that any differences based on the gender of the leader being assessed are small. While they may register as statistically significant, they do not rise to the level of practical significance, as measured by well-accepted “effect-size” statistics.

Specifically, there are differences on ExPI items (35 of 90) and on several (7) of the 15 facets of executive presence. And in most cases these differences focus on the social-emotional and relational (feminine) qualities of leadership that are becoming more representative in the leadership models today. The magnitude of this difference (i.e., effect size) is basically trivial. We did find differences by rater group, which we will discuss later.

“SO MUCH FOR CONVENTIONAL WISDOM” HEADLINE #2:

Gender Differences Aren't as Obvious as Cross-Cultural Differences

Yes, the data suggests that you're going to notice cross-cultural differences more than gender differences. We didn't go looking for this—it simply showed up as we analyzed the data and applied our findings to populations of leaders.

We saw the differences clearly, for example, in one comparison of Latin American and North American executives (male and female) in a large global company. The most notable differences by far were between cultures. We observed similar differences when working with Asian companies and companies with a presence in Asia.

**“SO MUCH FOR CONVENTIONAL WISDOM” HEADLINE #3:**

**There Can Be More Important Differences Among Women Than Between Women and Men**

We mentioned that there are some differences in the way women and men show up, but they aren't nearly as pronounced or consequential as the differences *among women*. This phenomenon, known as “intersectionality,” is exemplified in the complexity of challenges that exist for white women compared with women of color.<sup>2</sup> Let us explain.

It stands to reason, just as one example, that a white Anglo-Saxon woman raised in a family of wealth and privilege (which of course is only a small percentage of all white women) brings a different life history to her career and leadership pursuits as compared with an African-American woman raised in the projects (also only a portion of women of color) whose early development was importantly influenced by participation in Head Start and social assistance.

We want to emphasize that when it comes to leadership, neither of these women automatically enjoys a particular advantage. We simply note that because their experiences in life are different, they therefore may have developed different strengths and also may have potentially different gap areas. We know women in leadership roles who fit both of those profiles and are very successful.

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ADVANCING WOMEN?**

While there is no particular advantage in leadership in having one experience over the other, we need to appreciate that *gender may or may not be the major difference in how these two women are viewed*. The differences among women need to be understood at the individual level. The only way to do this is through individual assessment, interpreted only in the context of their personal histories.

These differences must be discovered in order to guide women forward on a path of development. The ExPI can give us a rich look at their strengths and gaps, as perceived by various stakeholder groups, but we also

must understand internal and external factors that have shaped the individual, as well as the context of their roles and the business imperative. This has important implications for how we help women advance. Organizations need to get a firm grasp on how these differences in personal experience account for reasons for their advancement.

Understanding the differences for women of color is important, since they face a wider gap.<sup>3</sup> According to the Center for American Progress, women of color make up one-third of the female workforce; yet they represent 11.9 percent of management and leadership positions.

### HOW ARE WE DOING SO FAR?

We imagine you may be a little surprised so far by our “So Much for Conventional Wisdom” observations. They don’t make the task of developing women leaders very easy. How do we design programs for all women leaders when they’re all different? We believe the first step in refreshing the process is to acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all view of women’s needs limits our ability to make a real difference. If we offer all women the same skill-building workshops and similar advice, it’s bound to be wrong for some or many of them.

Significant resources are being invested in sending women through leadership programs. The data suggest that there may be better ways to do it and get a real return on investment. Shepherding women through group training without the benefit of individual assessment promotes the idea that women as a group need to be fixed. It may be “easy” to provide women with classroom skill building, but they may be sitting in the wrong courses! *Without also having the benefit of individual assessment*, we would argue that many women’s leadership programs could be counterproductive to the aims of the organization.

### A STORY ABOUT GOOD INTENTIONS

A few years ago, we were invited to help design and deliver an executive presence program, as part of a global conference for a top consumer brand company. This worldwide training series for women identified as high potentials was already pretty much planned. What the group in leadership development wanted to do was fill a two-hour slot. The meeting planners had chosen several other modules that every woman would attend, from how to speak up in meetings to negotiating skills and managing up.

It would be hard to argue that these topics do not arise for women, as they do for men. Many women would undoubtedly benefit from these courses. Our suggestion was that it would be more effective to first assess which women needed these courses. We suspected some would and some wouldn't.

Individual assessment would help the planning team identify additional courses that would be important to other women. The organization could offer a menu of courses that matched a variety of development needs.

While it made sense to the members of the planning team, we still met with resistance from them. In spite of their appreciating that this approach would give them assurance that all the women's needs were met, resulting in a better return on investment, they perceived that the cost of this program would be too high. While there would be added cost to provide assessment, they could not see their way through to put their resources toward raising each woman's awareness of her own strengths and gaps. Since the program was about to launch, they went forward with their plan.

Still we believe that going forward, organizations are going to realize that they need to help each woman, to help all women. Sending all women to a program on speaking up in meetings is not the answer. Some will already be strong in qualities like Assertiveness, Confidence, and Intentionality. They may need to focus more on qualities such as Resonance, Humility, and Concern. The more tailored women's programs can be to each woman's needs, the faster they'll help each woman advance.

If the ultimate aim is to provide ROI on programs for women, there is no ignoring the significant differences among and between women—and the need to design programs accordingly. If you can make the leadership development experience meaningful for each woman, even in a group setting, she'll have her own road map for success. It is now possible to do this, and we hope we've made the case for a reexamination of current approaches. We heartily support having women's networking groups as a way to build relationships, identify mentors, and be inspired by talks from senior women who've already advanced. It's just important to go the additional mile to provide each woman with a path forward.

## HOW WOMEN VIEW THEIR OWN EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

There are some very interesting data to review on how women view their own presence. What we're looking at here is not how women compare

themselves with men, but rather, how women rate themselves versus how men rate themselves. And the news is good.

There is a statistically and practically significant difference in only 1 facet out of 15, Intentionality. Women tended to rate themselves lower than men rated themselves.

There are differences at the item level worth noting. Even in reviewing these we want to emphasize that while they're interesting, we would not characterize them as highly significant.

### THE 10 PERCENT DIFFERENCE

At the item level, there were “practically significant” differences on 9 of the 90 items in the survey. First let's look at the items in which women rated themselves higher than men rated themselves. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of item-level differences by facet.

#### RESONANCE (1)

Women tended to see themselves as more capable when it came to “Adept at reading and responding to the nonverbal message of others.”

#### INTERACTIVITY (1)

Women also tended to more favorably view themselves when it came to “Encourages and expects frequent interaction to coordinate action and sustain alignment.”

#### APPEARANCE (1)

Women more often than men rated themselves highly on “Aware that his/her dress and demeanor send a message, set expectations.”

Here are the items where women rated themselves lower than men tended to rate themselves (again, the numbers in parentheses indicate the number of item-level differences by facet):

#### AUTHENTICITY (1)

Men had a higher opinion of their Authenticity when it came to “Sincere, I can take what he/she says at face value.”

#### INTENTIONALITY (2)

Men also rated themselves higher on the scale on “After a discussion with him/her, everybody is clear about direction and next steps.” Additionally,

men's self-ratings were higher on "Asks questions that confirm mutual understanding of goals and plans."

#### RESTRAINT (2)

Women tended to rate themselves lower than men did on the item "Aware of emotions, his/her own and others, but is not dominated by them." Likewise, women's self-ratings were lower on "Others find that his/her deliberative style clarifies their thinking."

#### VISION (1)

Women also gave themselves lower scores than men did on "Knows the industry, latest trends, and where things are going."

### INTERPRETING HOW WOMEN SEE THEMSELVES

Interestingly, areas where women rated themselves higher also tend to follow familiar notions about gender differences. The Resonance item that involves reading and responding to nonverbal behavior and the Interactivity items that emphasize frequent interaction for coordination of work with others tend to reflect a perceived strength in the social-emotional aspects of working together. *Women seem to see themselves as a more collaborative and facilitative presence.*

The three items associated with Intentionality and Vision would seem to reflect a tendency for women to rate themselves lower on the task-oriented aspects of subject matter and focused action. We find it quite interesting that although many women consider themselves to be pretty intentional when it comes to coordination and management of their family schedules, they do not perceive Intentionality as a strong suit at work. It's worthy of discussion.

The "Vision thing" is also interesting, and perhaps it would align again with familiar notions about gender differences, in other words, how women generally see themselves and how both men and women tend to think of women. But we do know, as you'll see in a moment, that this item in Vision was also generally viewed by bosses and direct reports as only a slight gap for women.

The Authenticity rating may signal a less direct and matter-of-fact style of interaction that is affected by the sensitivity we associate with a facilitative approach to leading others. In other words, if a woman is putting others' interests, needs, concerns, and emotions ahead of her own, she may be

keeping her own feelings under wraps; and being aware that she is doing this, she may feel she isn't "being authentic."

### INSTANCES WHERE OUR DATA SUPPORTS "CONVENTIONAL WISDOM"

In any case, these results generally track with prior research that indicates women self-rate lower than men when asked about their performance. Additionally, the results support the popular literature that argues that women can struggle with expressing their confidence.

This also aligns with psychological research that indicates that self-esteem issues are more prevalent among women and that narcissism at the executive level of leadership is more prevalent among men. And this is important to understanding how organizations can function better. Recent research has shown that the most narcissistic CEOs tend to have a larger gap between their compensation and that of their leadership team in comparison with less narcissistic CEOs.<sup>4</sup> This narcissism also has been shown to have adverse effects on risk taking and team cohesion.<sup>5</sup>

#### "SO MUCH FOR CONVENTIONAL WISDOM" HEADLINE #4:

Women's Self-Perceptions Don't Necessarily Correlate with  
How Effective They Are as Leaders

*When it comes to an appraisal of their own effectiveness as leaders, the gender factor either is nonsignificant or favors women leaders.* What we mean is, no matter how women feel on the inside, they can be viewed as effective. Let's face it: both men and women hit rough patches and struggle with their confidence. A lack of inner confidence isn't necessarily gender-specific. Men can feel it too. This conjures up some of the old adages about courage. As author Susan Jeffers once said, "Feel the fear and do it anyway."

#### "SO MUCH FOR CONVENTIONAL WISDOM" HEADLINE #5:

People Don't Rate Women All That Differently Than They Rate Men!

We were very interested, of course, to appreciate what the ExPI data analysis would reveal overall about whether people view men and women differently when it comes to the qualities of executive presence. We looked at "supervisor" ratings to see how bosses looked at men versus women.

While conventional wisdom might be that bosses must *surely* see female leaders very differently than they see male leaders (after all, isn't this one of the challenges for women in getting ahead?), it turns out that the

only facet-level difference that reached statistical *and* practical significance was Appearance, and for that facet supervisors rated women *higher than men on all six items*.

We think this should be very encouraging news for women in leadership as they move up through the organization. In general, when given the opportunity to assess a woman's qualities of leadership using a science-based model, bosses weren't noting differences that should hold women back any more than they hold men back.

### THE 10 PERCENT DIFFERENCE

We do want to emphasize that what we've said above doesn't mean there are no differences at all. A closer review of the data exposed some differences at the item level all worthy of note. In some cases, bosses overall rated women higher, in others, lower.

If we take it all the way down to the item level, collectively women tend to agree with what supervisors tend to say about women in regard to 2 of 90 items. At the item level, there were practically significant differences on 10 of the 90 items in the survey, or what we'd again call that 10 percent difference. Table 11.2 summarizes them.

Let's take a closer look, first at where ratings tended to be higher for women.

TABLE 11.2 | GENDER DIFFERENCES ON THE ExPI

#### Items on Which Women Are Rated Higher than Men

**Inclusiveness**—"Recognizes that inclusion implies a tolerance for different ways of doing things."

**Appearance**—All six Appearance items, reflecting higher ratings on looking healthy, alert, prepared, looking the role, using appropriate voice tone, and aware that dress and demeanor send a message.

#### Items on Which Men Are Rated Higher than Women

**Practical Wisdom**—"Able to appraise a complex situation and go directly to the heart of an issue."

**Restraint**—"Others find that his/her deliberative style clarifies their thinking."

**Vision**—"Knows the industry, latest trends, and where things are going."

## APPEARANCE

Bosses rated women higher than men on all six items in this facet, which included looking healthy and alert, using appropriate voice tone and mannerisms, being prepared, being level-appropriate in style, looking the role whether in casual or formal settings, and being aware that dress and demeanor send a message. We're not sure what message that sends to men, but if you're a man reading this, it might be worthy of attention!

## INCLUSIVENESS

Only one question surfaced in the survey where women were viewed differently and higher by their supervisors: "Recognizes that inclusion implies a tolerance for different ways of doing things."

## WHAT ABOUT WHERE SUPERVISORS TENDED TO RATE WOMEN LOWER?

### PRACTICAL WISDOM

A single item, one out of six in the facet, was rated higher in men than women: "Able to appraise a complex situation and go directly to the heart of an issue."

### RESTRAINT

Again, a single item, one out of six in the facet: "Others find that his/her deliberative style clarifies their thinking."

### VISION

And finally, a single item in this facet where bosses tended to rate women lower: "Knows the industry, latest trends, and where things are going."

## WHERE WOMEN TEND TO AGREE WITH SUPERVISORS

The two items we mentioned on which supervisor ratings align with the self-ratings of women are in Restraint and Vision. When you look at the item in Restraint, you may wonder whether women generally believe they need to slow down, pace themselves, and make time and space for the consideration of ideas. You could postulate that for some women this is a product of perceived stress, physical fatigue, or perceived time pressures to get things done. Once again, this is where it's important to understand an indi-

vidual woman's personal history and current environment and then to have an assessment conversation to appreciate the full context.

Women also tended to agree and rate themselves lower on the Vision items of being on top of industry trends. We can again just posit that women aren't taking the time, or making it a priority, to read, get out of the office, and attend industry conferences; get to know others in the industry; and be involved in other activities that stimulate thinking about strategy and trends.

You could hypothesize that for some women, this could be a result of the "doing" approach to management, as some women moving up from management to leadership don't easily let go of tasks. Managing this tendency and delegating enables a leader to devote time to more strategic ways of thinking and communicating. Again, you'd need individual assessment to know.

To address issues such as these in a programmatic approach, we would encourage organizations to get more context. Perhaps through ExPI assessment, interviews, and surveys, they could gather data that would assure them they are providing training based on fact, not assumption. The data might also point to cultural and business norms that could be addressed at the organizational level.

## **ACKNOWLEDGING THERE CAN BE A MALE-DOMINATED CULTURE**

Our research is not industry-specific. We don't mean to imply that in many organizations there isn't a gender bias. We drew our data from several major sectors of the economy. We can reasonably hypothesize that bias does exist and that some rating differences are the product of bias stemming from a traditional gender-related view of competencies.

Role congruity theory in management research posits that women are stereotyped as kind, helpful, concerned, and sympathetic (*communal*) and men as competent, aggressive, decisive, independent, and forceful (*agentic*). The theory argues that the traditional model of leadership favors the latter.

If there is gender bias in an organization, then one practical strategy to address it is to try to understand it and then confirm it or not, at the individual level. Let's say a woman gets feedback from her boss that she has interpreted as reflecting gender bias. The boss may have that bias, or he may not realize the bias exists at an unconscious level. At any rate, she's received

feedback that she doesn't understand. She can confirm or disconfirm that feedback. If she and her boss sit down to have a discussion, they can determine together whether the belief is true.

As a practical matter, how would that happen? Maybe the female leader goes in for a meeting after she's received her assessment, seeking to understand why he rated her lower on Vision. As we've suggested in previous chapters, she prepares herself, has questions ready, and goes into the conversation with an open mind. She might ask:

- › “What would that look like if I were more on top of industry trends and where things are going?”
- › “From your standpoint, how would I express that kind of insight and knowledge in a leadership meeting?”
- › “Are there some specific areas of industry and market knowledge that you would encourage me to focus on?”

If she were soliciting her boss's advice on exercising Restraint, she'd probably want to ask questions such as these:

- › “What would you notice if I were doing a better job of deliberating and clarifying others' thinking?”
- › “Can you describe a time when you believe I could have been more deliberative in my approach?”
- › “Is there anyone in our organization who comes to mind when you think of an example of doing that very well?”

Sometimes the very act of setting up a meeting and confronting the issue directly has a positive effect. The boss perceives that the woman leader is confident enough to assert herself and humble enough to seek advice. The door's been opened to a productive dialogue. Postassessment, and after a robust development conversation, they have a mutual understanding of the steps she needs to take. They have action steps and agree on how the progress will be measured.

A wise friend of our firm who speaks on the topic of truth puts it this way: “The truth is not simply what is said, but what isn't said.” In developing women leaders, we can do more harm to people by not surfacing issues and talking about them. We can hold back the cause of advancing women and diverse leaders simply by trying to spare their feelings. A

research-based model and common language help make that conversation possible. Managers and leaders can be having a lot more of these kinds of conversations.

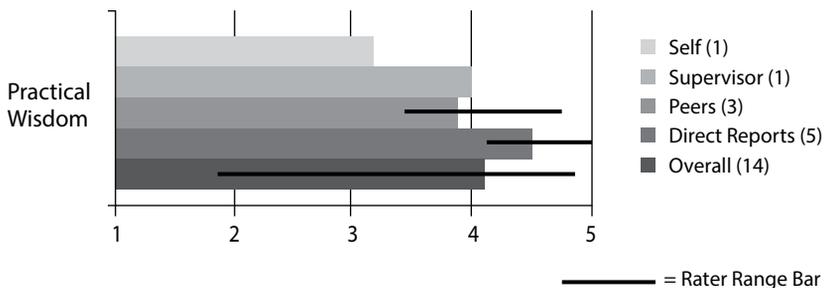
### HOW ONE WOMAN LEADER BROKE A BARRIER

Tory Bellingham was in some ways a happy fish out of water, as a senior leader in corporate finance in a global information services firm. Tory was a business leader who transferred into the function. Her colleagues who came up through finance, accounting, and other technical fields tended to be a little more introverted and less expressive. Tory's peers and supervisor described her as passionate, genuine, authentic, and influential. And these weren't her only strong suits.

Tory was also appreciated for her ability to think and speak clearly and concisely; more than one rater in her ExPI commented on how consistently "well prepared," "knowledgeable," "calm," and "professional" she was in every business setting. This is why we were curious to see that Tory rated herself considerably lower than her supervisor did, or for that matter her peers and direct reports, in the facet of Practical Wisdom. You'll recall in our research that we found an item in Practical Wisdom where women tended to rate themselves lower. As shown in Figure 11.4, Tory's self-appraisal was lower than her raters' appraisals on every single item in the category. What was going on?

In her first interview with the coach, Tory shared that she didn't feel like she was ever the "expert" in the room. She was sure that people deep down discounted her opinion, so she often, almost reflexively, qualified her advice. The coach asked about why she thought that she needed to be the technical expert. This made her pause. "You're right," she responded. "I

FIGURE 11.4 | TORY BELLINGHAM: RATINGS ON PRACTICAL WISDOM



realize that my role as a leader is to lead, and I can certainly listen and apply my experience to issues.”

This was the right time for Tory to review her action plan with her supervisor and ask whether he had noticed this. It turned out he had, and he was also able to assure her that he had faced a similar dilemma until he realized that he could not, nor would he want to, be the technical expert on anything in the function. His job was to lead!

Her boss had also noticed that Tory had a tendency to qualify what she said with statements such as “Well, I’m not the expert here,” or “You guys know a lot more about this than I do, but . . . ,” and he told her that this could be perpetuating impressions that she was not confident. Had they not had this conversation, it’s easy to imagine that this habit of speech could have become an impediment to her advancement.

In addition, her boss admitted that he was “part of the problem” since he tended to step to the front and deliver all the presentations to the executive team, especially when there was potential controversy. He now saw that to help Tory be viewed as a confident leader, he needed to step back and choreograph these presentations to increase her visibility and let her shine. Tory’s boss was now fully engaged in her development, and they were on the same page about what to do.

### PEER AND DIRECT REPORT RATINGS

When we analyzed how peers rated women leaders, we arrived at the same patterns of differences that have already been reported for supervisor ratings. With direct reports it was only slightly different. Their ratings revealed differences for all the same items in Appearance, Practical Wisdom, Restraint, and Vision, but the difference for Inclusiveness did not rise to a level of significance.

### IS IT ALL ABOUT CONFIDENCE?

We mentioned at the outset of this chapter that there’s been a long-running conversation about women and confidence. Assertiveness, self-advocacy, and self-esteem are familiar themes in books and magazines. It’s never a bad thing to encourage women to believe in themselves or discover their untapped potential. And as we’ve already acknowledged, women do this at times in the face of an adverse environment.

The rallying cry from *The Confidence Code*, by authors Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, is confidence.<sup>6</sup> Its simplicity as a theme is intended to

evoke focus and action. The authors refer to a simple definition of confidence that they found helpful: “Confidence is the stuff that turns thoughts into action.” One researcher they cite adds that this might imply additional qualities like persistence and courage. This is where it gets more complex. Confidence isn’t so simple after all!

Kay and Shipman’s idea makes perfect sense—a link between confidence and action. “Confidence is a belief in one’s ability to succeed, a belief that stimulates action.” They cite an important corollary from another academic researcher: that the result of low confidence is hesitation and inaction. Much of the research out there, however, has been conducted in academic settings with students. So it’s important, but it might not always be relevant to the situation of practicing executives in midlife.

That’s why in our Bates Model of Executive Presence, we decided to address Confidence. It matters to men and women. It is 1 of 15 factors important to projecting executive presence. It is one quality of leadership that speaks to our credibility as leaders. And . . .

“SO MUCH FOR CONVENTIONAL WISDOM” HEADLINE #6:

There’s No Significant Difference in *Perceptions* About Women’s Confidence Versus Men’s

We understand that on the face of it, that’s a provocative statement, but it’s what the data show. *In our model, Confidence was not a facet of presence for which we found a significant difference based upon gender.* Why is that? We believe the answer to that question involves an important distinction.

The distinction we have in mind is that between the self-concept that leaders privately harbor in their minds and hearts and the social self they project in their presence as leaders. When Kay and Shipman frame confidence as a belief in one’s ability to succeed, it has a very personal and pervasive meaning. They have been quite candid about disclosing self-doubts. They have also elicited such candor from other successful women leaders concerning what they privately think and feel versus how they “show up” as leaders in highly visible roles.

Framed in this way—conceptualizing confidence as belief that stimulates action—is to treat confidence as a universal sense of self-efficacy that would have relevance to all facets of one’s presence and one’s approach to leadership action. An important contribution of their work is in prompting women to explore their underlying and less conscious sense of self, so they can raise their own awareness about the way they think about their readiness to lead.

It is this *inner sense of self-doubt* that may explain the tendency for women to report lower self-ratings compared with the self-ratings of men generally. The findings we reported concerning women leaders' tendencies to self-rate lower on Authenticity, Restraint, and Intentionality may reflect an internalization of learned social roles that may inhibit confidence as defined by Kay and Shipman. A virtue in the work of these authors is that they encourage women to challenge these self-limiting assumptions by taking action.

### IS THERE A FEMININE ADVANTAGE?

In the research literature, you often find mention of a so-called feminine advantage.<sup>7</sup> The advantage concerns a more collaborative and empowering style of leadership. It's been argued that this style of leadership is responsive to the needs of those firms operating in today's faster-paced global marketplace.

Frequently, organizations today are flatter and require a more participative and open approach to communications and coordination. This is consistent with the research we did when emphasizing an active, dialogical quality of leadership under our Style dimension. However . . .

#### "SO MUCH FOR CONVENTIONAL WISDOM" HEADLINE #7:

It Isn't Just the Feminine, Relational Qualities of Interaction That Make a Difference

We found research arguing in support of a dialogical approach that was conversational and less formal.<sup>8</sup> However, it was not characterized as being masculine or feminine. It did emphasize nonhierarchical patterns of interaction as a way of advancing decision making and action in more efficient and effective ways. In one example, intentional, inclusive, and interactive patterns of relating to colleagues made leaders more effective in navigating the challenges of postmerger integrations.

What's worth flagging here is that it was not *only* the feminine, relational qualities of interaction that were highlighted, such as empathy, collaboration, and inclusiveness. There was also great attention paid to how leadership attended to and responded to signs of tension or conflict.

In this connection, Assertiveness was identified as a critical factor in adaptively working through the differences one might encounter when leading change or merging cultures and operating practices. The leaders who were particularly effective were those who actively sought to surface

issues earlier, before they went underground and created chronic patterns of divisiveness. Is that feminine or masculine? Or is it simply adaptive?

Some recent meta-analytic studies from psychology and management addressed the role of gender in leadership and considered decades of theory and research.<sup>9</sup> A meta-study is a compilation of many studies. In their meta-study, Anne Koenig, Alice Eagly, Abigail Mitchell, and Tiina Ristikari concluded that leadership has been defined largely in masculine terms and that this definitional bias is likely to persist for some time, especially in male-dominated industry sectors and operating environments.

Koenig and her coauthors also noted that characterizations of leadership are changing: “Our conclusion is that leadership now, more than in the past, appears to incorporate more feminine relational qualities, such as sensitivity, warmth, and understanding, thus adding them to the masculine dominance and strength qualities traditionally associated with leadership.”<sup>10</sup>

Another meta-analysis conducted by Samantha Paustian-Underdahl, Lisa Walker, and David Woehr examined over 90 studies, most in actual business operating environments. It concluded that “when all leadership contexts are considered, men and women do not differ in perceived leadership effectiveness.”<sup>11</sup> The study cited experts who agree that it is too stereotypic and simplistic to attribute the effectiveness of leadership to gender-based characteristics alone. The researchers insist that contextual factors must be taken into account.

## HOW DO WE BEGIN MAKING SENSE OF ALL THIS?

The questions that arise in developing women and diverse populations are relevant and legitimate. If the workplace tends to favor those from one cultural tradition, gender, or ethnicity while marginalizing others, these systematic disadvantages should be corrected.

Outdated views may also prevail for people of color and other minority groups. If we characterize any group as less able, it is likely that women and diverse leaders will come to believe some of it and form associated doubts about their capabilities, whether consciously or unconsciously. This is a stubborn kind of self-limiting belief to overcome.

So what are our recommendations on helping women advance, given all this?

What may be more important than most steps we can take is twofold: (1) that those looking at the leadership pipeline become aware of how

legacy mindsets and culture can exclude individuals and styles and (2) that they adopt an attitude of openness, curiosity, and pragmatism in their evaluations of women leaders.

It's also important to note that while women and diverse leaders care about being respected, rewarded, and included, they don't need everyone to "love them" so much as they need a critical mass of support and encouragement, even if it comes from just two or three people. They're more likely to stay with an organization where they feel an attachment to the mission and feel there's a reasonably fair opportunity to prove themselves.

We all want to feel heard, understood, and acknowledged for who we are. We characterize this as *acknowledgment*, fundamental to the experience of *respect*. This pairing of *acknowledgment and respect* and *affirmation and encouragement* is basic to our view of how a corporate environment exemplifies openness to diversity. In any organization where women and people of color are underrepresented, we can assume it's possible that they may be feeling unacknowledged. Offering assessment and development to high-potential leaders is a form of acknowledgment and respect.

Assessment provides women with affirmation that they are acknowledged and understood, as well as a belief that they have standing as a person, in all of their differences. Coaching enables a woman to become fully conscious of how her life and experience have shaped her. In a coaching relationship, the diverse leader can find emotional safety to explore her personal history and appreciate how her identity has taken shape.

Over time a coach can genuinely resonate with the leader and form a purposeful alliance with her. Having that history makes conversation about her aspirations, goals, and interests more meaningful. The motivations and values that underlie her personal and career goals will be more accessible and understandable. Where organizational norms may skew in a masculine direction, the coach's role can be to help the leader not sell herself short.

If you've identified a woman or diverse leader as a high potential, you have reason to invest, and it merits the attention of a sponsor and mentor. In many cases, there may be two or more people who play mentoring roles, but there should be one sponsor. The sponsor, often the leader's supervisor, is accountable on behalf of management to ensure that the company's investment of time and resources is well focused, sustained, and coordinated and that it is paying off. The role of sponsor and mentor might be styled after the relational approach to coaching.

## SUMMARY

The Bates EP Model is useful in developing a diverse pool of leadership talent including women. The cases we've mentioned here are but a few of the many where we've applied this new way of thinking of executive presence to help women in global companies. It relies on a holistic, highly individualized interpretation, acknowledging that women are different, just as leaders are different.

We've offered data, observations, and some not-so-conventional wisdom that set the record straight about how women in leadership are perceived and how organizations can change the conversation about women. We've looked at the broader body of research on gender differences in leadership and hope all this stimulates some new thinking about how to design women's leadership programs.

We have some additional insights to offer based on research on other underrepresented groups of leaders. We take that up in the next chapter, looking at how a new Bates Model of Executive Presence can reframe views of helping diverse leaders advance and building a more inclusive, welcoming culture.

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## Executive Presence and Diversity

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### It's a Global World

*If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.*

—JOHN F. KENNEDY

Daniel Jackson had been with a global energy firm for 18 years when we met him. An African American from a small rural town in the Deep South, he had grown up in a tight-knit ethnic community within a still quite segregated society. His parents prized and encouraged education. Daniel did well in school and discovered a keen interest in mathematics and in education. Inspired by an attentive and caring teacher, he went to college with every expectation of becoming a teacher. And he did, for a while.

But soon after he got married and he and his wife started to plan a family, Daniel decided to change careers and go to work in corporate America. Eventually he relocated to the Mountain West where his career took some interesting turns. He took a position in purchasing, which later became “supply chain,” and through this transition he discovered that he had a knack for supervision. He was likable and was quickly noticed as someone with potential.

After multiple rotations in operations over the course of several years, he advanced until he rose to the level of vice president of supply chain. His boss, Dave, gave Daniel every indication that he was being groomed to succeed Dave as the next global head (SVP) of supply chain. Fast-forward a

couple of years, when there was a transition at the CEO level. Dave believed this would also be a good time for him to retire. It seemed like the moment Daniel had been waiting for.

However, Daniel grew concerned when the new CEO announced that the company would be doing an external search. Yes, Daniel would be included as a candidate, but things seemed to have changed. The positive signals that he expected were weaker and less frequent. Then, the other shoe dropped. A new SVP was hired, a white woman.

As part of a program of leadership development, Daniel was offered an ExPI assessment and was provided six months of coaching. The coach met with him at headquarters in Utah to interpret the feedback he had just received.

Prior to their first meeting, Daniel was courteous, but the coach noted he had some ambivalence about the coaching experience. His coaching was being sponsored by his new boss. She felt that there was a significant distance between them. He seemed to be holding back in team meetings and not executing on projects. She and some of Daniel's colleagues felt he was not fully engaged. She liked him, respected him, and wanted to help, but she felt stuck.

Daniel's low self-ratings in Confidence and Assertiveness caught the coach's attention. Daniel rated himself much lower than anyone else did. Also remarkable was a sizable gap between his boss's ratings and his self-ratings on Authenticity and Humility. Daniel rated himself much higher on both.

What was going on here? The coach had two initial thoughts. First, the person Daniel thought he was (his self-concept) was not the person that his supervisor was seeing (his social self). Second, it seemed that Daniel's sense of self-efficacy had taken a nosedive. He was confused about how to handle the gulf between himself and his new boss, and he wasn't even sure how things had reached this point.

## **DANIEL'S CONSTELLATION**

Daniel's constellation gives us a lens on how his stakeholders perceived him (see Figure 12.1).

### **DIALOGUE WITH DANIEL**

The coach's approach with Daniel, as with all other clients, was to engage authentically with genuine concern and curiosity. The coach wanted to hear

FIGURE 12.1 | DANIEL JACKSON'S CONSTELLATION

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity	Practical Wisdom	Appearance
Integrity	Confidence	Intentionality
Concern	Composure	Inclusiveness
Restraint	Resonance	Interactivity
Humility	Vision	Assertiveness

— = Highest-rated facets

- - - = Lowest-rated facets

his story, his life experience, and the forces that had shaped him and made him the man he was. Even before they met face-to-face, the coach arranged to talk with him by phone. Daniel was open and willing to trust, and they soon were speaking freely. This told the coach something right away.

His hypothesis was that something had happened that caused Daniel to retreat. There had to be a reason for the rupture in the relationship with his supervisor. Although Daniel admitted he was disappointed by not being selected for the SVP role, he had actually gotten off to a reasonably good start with his new boss, Barbara. Then something had happened. She was given the impression by others that Daniel had acted in a manner that sabotaged her efforts at change. It turned out not to be true, but she acted on her impression.

This event and the strain and emotional distance it created came through in the first face-to-face meeting as Daniel and his coach jointly interpreted his ExPI feedback. There were misunderstandings and damage to undo. But that was “out there” in the social space of their relationship. The coach wanted to understand what was happening inside Daniel. How was he making meaning of these experiences—the dashed hopes, the effort to make a good start with Barbara, and then this perceived breach of trust?

While it may not have been initially evident to all involved in Daniel's career development, you'll see how race and ethnicity were factors to be considered. The social and cultural circumstances of Daniel's life made his experience more complicated and difficult.

We'll return to Daniel shortly. Before we do, we would like to take a moment to talk about how matters of diversity and inclusion create distinct challenges for diverse leaders like Daniel. We'll offer a rational analysis of diversity and inclusion ideas, explore real-life implications in two other case studies, and then suggest how insights from the Bates Model of Executive Presence can help.

### **WHY ASPIRATIONS FOR DIVERSITY REMAIN ELUSIVE**

While organizations today are embracing diversity and inclusion as a solution to business challenges, bringing that solution to life remains an elusive aspiration. How can we level the playing field? What is hindering our efforts? Is it possible for diverse leaders to be seen for who they really are? What role does a model of executive presence play?

Let's begin with a few reasons why we see diversity and inclusion as a challenge for organizations.

#### **HAVING THE CONVERSATION**

It's still difficult, even today, to have a real conversation about diversity. In our work, we've noticed that the issue of diversity remains within the realm of human resources or the chief diversity officer. As a result, issues of culture, race, and ethnicity are not as easy for diverse leaders in the business to discuss with a supervisor who is not like him or her. It's also difficult for these leaders to raise issues in organizations with a predominantly white management team. In order to make progress, organizations and leaders must make these differences more discussable, which means moving into their "discomfort zones."

#### **VIEWING IT AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUE**

Another barrier to progress is an inclination to view diversity and inclusion as matters of organizational policy. It would be easy if mere policy declarations were enough; however, we can't ignore the fact that real change requires examination of our individual attitudes and beliefs.

Even those of us who are well intentioned must learn to "catch ourselves" in moments when we are at risk of having our unconscious biases, assumptions, stereotypes, or projections inform our words and actions. It's all too easy for our unconscious assumptions to cause us to misunderstand or underestimate those who look, speak, or act differently.

## MENTAL MODELS

Another challenge to breathing life into diversity and inclusion is our mental models. Research indicates that “being white” is a key element of the de facto “prototype” or mental model of what a leader looks like in Western society.<sup>1</sup> Empirical studies bear this out.<sup>2</sup> Some suggest that “perceivers or potential followers are less likely to authorize people of color as leaders,” while other research finds that “positional leaders of color, such as managers, may face challenges to their leadership that white leaders do not.”

You’ve probably heard the term “white privilege.” How does it show up in business and leadership? Eagly and Chen provide a social-psychological explanation of how this phenomenon manifests in the context of business leadership: “The potential for prejudice is present when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that is incongruent with the attributes that they believe are required for success in leadership roles.”<sup>3</sup> Simply put, if you are not a white male, you are not seen as being a fit for leadership.

## RACE RELATIONS

In 2015, we attended the 19th Annual Corporate Diversity & Inclusion Conference in New York.<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of the first day, a black minister stood and asked for a moment of silence to acknowledge a terrible murder that had occurred the evening before. Nine African-American people who gathered in peace for Bible study in a historic southern church were killed by a white male they had just welcomed into their group. He was acting out of racist attitudes and beliefs, and nine good people were dead.

We don’t pretend to have special expertise on race relations in the United States or globally. However, as much as any of us would like to believe that a legacy of racial prejudice has receded into the background, or that we have entered a postracial age, incidents like this prompt conversation on the cultural divide.

Most of us would agree that over the last few decades, social, cultural, and societal changes have shaped policies that better address barriers to diversity such as hiring and promotional practices. The cause of diversity has advanced, if not as fast as we’d hope, at least episodically. At the same time, it appears that race and ethnicity continue to inspire social divisiveness. To believe that all people don’t make judgments based on demographic differences would be naïve.

Why should we care about these matters? It seems impossible to have a conversation on diversity and inclusion practices in business without acknowledging the state of race relations in the United States—and globally. We must factor the impact of such events into the discussion to gain a realistic perspective. Otherwise we won't get beyond merely talking about diversity in the abstract and actually find practical answers.

### **CAN WE CHECK OUR BIASES AT THE DOOR?**

It's safe to say that it's virtually impossible to check these biases at the door as we enter our organizations each day. So we have to catch ourselves and reckon with these unconscious beliefs. We have to do this diligently and repeatedly as we review talent. We have to remember them as we try to understand the experience and behavior of others who look different from us. It takes conscious intervention to break the mental, emotional, and social habits these biases spawn.<sup>5</sup>

This is why we and our clients have begun examining how the Bates Model of Executive Presence helps check our biases and provides an unbiased lens through which we can see diverse talent and better understand the situations that may be holding people back. Later we'll also share case studies of how organizations have used the ExPI in helping diverse leadership teams confront challenges.

### **THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Diversity and inclusion are not do-gooder causes. There is growing evidence that having a diverse workforce drives business results. The vast majority of global companies indicate there is good reason to understand and address diversity.

According to one recent Deloitte survey (as cited in Bersin),<sup>6</sup> 71 percent of companies (mostly global or multinational) aspire to create an inclusive culture within three years because they believe it can create business value. And only 11 percent of companies surveyed reported that they currently have an inclusive culture. This same report indicated that investments are not commensurate with what they want to achieve. There is work to do to translate aspirations into action.

Historically, reasons for investing in diversity and inclusion have evolved. Diana Solash, Global Director of Diversity & Inclusion at Ernst

& Young (EY) and speaker at the Conference Board's 2015 Corporate Diversity & Inclusion Conference,<sup>7</sup> described the scenarios. Early on, D&I was compliance-driven, almost a check-the-box kind of priority.

Later, it was about the felt need to project a positive quality of character. There were “good guys and bad guys,” and companies wanted to prove they were among the good guys. And still later, in more austere times, after the negative business cycles following September 11 and the financial crisis of 2008, companies were demanding a better rationale for investment. All these speak to the evolving motivations of senior executives as they view changing business imperatives.

At EY, leaders made a convincing case through their engagement surveys. They were able to show that units with the highest level of engagement were more diverse and performed better than others. Those who scored lower showed more insider-outsider dynamics. In this way, EY was able to demonstrate a link between inclusion and business performance.

EMC, a global IT company based in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, also made this case. Its global diversity officer, Jackie Glenn, notes research that diversity promotes innovation: heterogeneous teams generate more creative solutions. EMC has a global footprint and relies on human capital. Glenn observes that the major obstacle to further progress is the “frozen middle”—middle managers’ understanding of why diversity and inclusion are a business imperative. But the case is clear: as she puts it, “Inclusion isn’t a social nicety.”<sup>8</sup>

Investment in diversity and inclusion by progressive global firms like EMC and EY may even have impacts on capital markets. A 2007 study based on 100 firms, drawn from *Fortune* magazine’s best companies for minorities, found a positive relationship between diversity reputation and book-to-market equity.<sup>9</sup>

To sum it up, perceptions about an organization’s reputation for promoting diverse leadership drive value. The researchers said the “study suggests that there is some value in effort and expenditures devoted to attaining best-company designation for diversity and diversity management [as it may] . . . signal . . . a firm’s earning prospects, thereby enhancing . . . perceived value among investors.”

So there is good reason for organizations to recommit to diversity and to keep working at it. We have to invest in the right places and measure progress. We have to recognize more quickly opportunities to help leaders like Daniel. With this in mind, let’s return to his story, to understand the

role that diversity played and how the Bates Model of Executive Presence offered answers.

## DANIEL'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE ExPI

Daniel described himself as more outgoing and interactive than his ExPI results indicated. In the small, local African-American community, he was a leader in his church, a proud parent, and an able provider for his family. But he was now feeling wounded. He could not help but believe that what he had come to understand about his company's commitment to diversity and inclusion had been more words than action. His personal situation was enough evidence for him.

He and the coach talked about the inhibitions that constrained his expression of Authenticity and that led to his low self-ratings in Confidence and Assertiveness. Clearly, he was feeling threatened and unsafe. There were forces that seemed to be working against him, first through the selection process and then by means of back-channel communications that challenged his integrity. There was talk that he would sabotage his boss. His response was to retreat and play his cards close to the vest.

As we reviewed the results of the ExPI, especially Authenticity and Confidence, we had what we thought were pretty plausible hypotheses for Daniel's current demeanor and resulting ExPI feedback. The succession and selection process had converged with the recent events with his boss to convince him that he was in a state of threat. This threat made him guarded and less transparent, especially with his boss but with many peers as well. This in turn had an impact on others' views of his Confidence.

In Assertiveness, we came to understand Daniel's lower ratings a little differently. You might say these qualities of his presence developed at an early age and were related to his high ratings in Restraint. Daniel admitted that he was always quite careful about managing the tone and intensity of emotion with which he had learned to express differences of opinion or experience. This is where social identity and stereotyping enter the picture.

At one point, he said, "You know it is one thing for a white man to express anger or emotionally charged disagreement, but for a black man to do so, and especially to do so with a white woman, well, it's a very different situation." Wow, imagine the power of that inhibition. Then imagine how it might be magnified in a situation in which organizational forces seemed to be turning against him. Maybe they were never really there for him in

ways he believed they were. Research tells us that Daniel is not alone in his reactions.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, Barbara could not be expected to know what was on Daniel's mind, and because he was guarded, it was difficult to close the gap in their perceptions and gain mutual understanding through conversation on their own. They had tried that, and it hadn't been successful. So Barbara's suggestion for coaching was timely and appropriate. She said she wanted to be involved and also get guidance about how to work better with Daniel. Daniel, Barbara, and the coach sat down to open dialogue that established a baseline of understanding about their shared goals and objectives.

What happened after that was a gradual but noticeable improvement in the frequency and quality of their dialogue. Conversations were less formal, and the topics were far richer. Barbara repeatedly shared how important Daniel was to the organization. She outlined her expectations clearly for their communications and updates on projects. But she was unequivocal in stating on numerous occasions that she believed in Daniel and wanted him on the team because of his talent and unique perspective. She had given him a critical enterprise assignment, and she would do all she could to support his success.

Daniel responded positively to this encouragement; it restored his trust in their relationship. It improved communication with his direct reports and peers, as well. They began to engage more in the project and appreciate Daniel's leadership. He began feeling and acting with more confidence. With the help of the coach, Daniel and Barbara had restored their relationship within a few months, and Daniel was making real progress on key initiatives.

## **THE ExPI IN ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY CHALLENGES**

As this case shows, the Bates Model of Executive Presence and ExPI assessment provide a fresh way to look at the challenges of diverse leaders. These tools also offer a far more robust framework for looking at diversity and inclusion at the organizational level. Let's consider two examples.

## **CREATING AN ALIGNED ORGANIZATION**

One of our clients, a financial services firm, had launched a three-year initiative to transform into a single, global organization. The ambitious plan was to unify governance, product development, and go-to-market strategies in

many countries and diverse regions of the world. When we started work with the executives in the company, they were aware that the one wild card in this would be differences in culture and ethnicity, but they did not yet appreciate the extent to which that could threaten the success of the initiative.

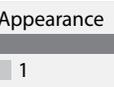
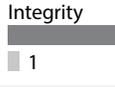
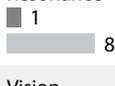
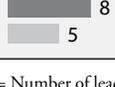
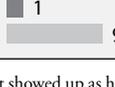
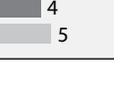
To help them analyze the situation and move this global initiative forward, we conducted a pilot assessment (in countries in North America and Latin America) to appreciate the role that leadership and cultural differences were playing in driving and restraining organizational performance.

Our assessment included an ExPI assessment for the senior global leaders in the Americas. This provided evidence of significant, relevant differences between the leadership in North America and the leadership in Latin America. We combined leaders from the United States with those from Canada to form one cohort (Figure 12.2), while the rest were leaders in the Latin American cohort (Figure 12.3). Let’s compare their results.

**HOW WERE THEY SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT?**

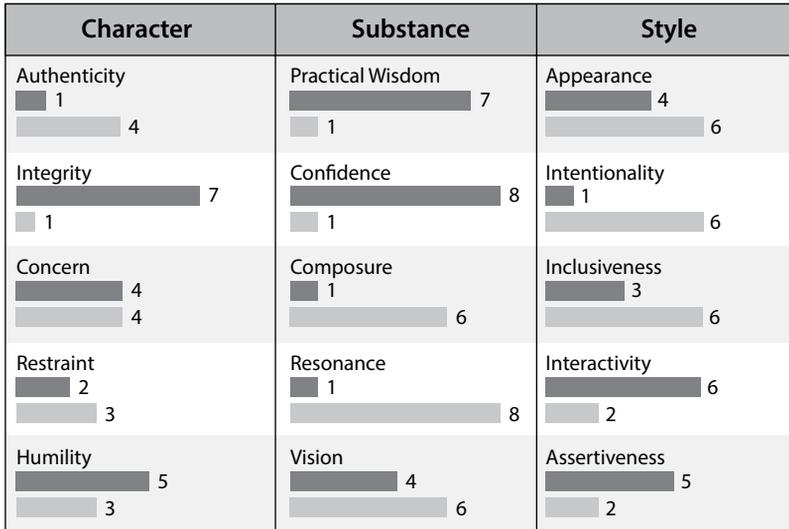
As we compared the cohorts, we found they were generally similar in the higher-rated aspects of executive presence such as Concern, Integrity, and Appearance. Confidence was a relative strength for both, though Concern was perceived to be higher among U.S. and Canadian leaders,

**FIGURE 12.2** | EXPI FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION—U.S./CANADA COHORT

Character	Substance	Style
Authenticity 	Practical Wisdom 	Appearance 
Integrity 	Confidence 	Intentionality 
Concern 	Composure 	Inclusiveness 
Restraint 	Resonance 	Interactivity 
Humility 	Vision 	Assertiveness 

■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as highest-rated  
 ■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as lowest-rated

FIGURE 12.3 | ExPI FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION—LATIN AMERICA COHORT



■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as highest-rated

■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as lowest-rated

and Confidence was a more pronounced facet of presence when it came to leaders in Latin America. While the disparities were not gaping, in a practical sense, even moderate differences had already affected the quality of their interactions. They didn't always "get" each other!

Interestingly, the way the participants showed up to their own organizations, and to one another, was different. At the meeting when they were "thrown together" and the Latin American team members had to speak English, they were quiet and demonstrated a far lower level of Confidence. Then, our team decided to have the Latin Americans present their business cases in Spanish. What a difference! Their confidence rose. All were struck by the impact that a language barrier had on perceptions of Confidence. The Latin American leaders were grateful to have had this experience and thanked us profusely.

Another finding was the differences in assessments of Humility and Interactivity between groups. Humility was higher among the North American cohort, while Interactivity was low. The opposite was true for both facets in the Latin American cohort. The Latin American leaders received lower ratings on items including "Knows he/she does not have all the answers." We thought this was another reason that the two groups were noticing style differences and viewing them as barriers to communication.

When we brought them all together in one room at a global meeting, we witnessed these qualities of interaction live. One notable difference in the groups was in the quality of Restraint. While it was a mixed bag for both cohorts, it was more frequently a low-rated facet for those in the Latin American group. Their stakeholders rated them relatively low when it came to having a calm, thoughtful style that made sensitive issues discussable as well as knowing how to de-escalate emotions and shift others from a reactive to a proactive mindset.

### IMPROVING DYNAMICS TO DRIVE RESULTS

It is not at all difficult to imagine how these differences might derail the two regions as they struggled to work out thorny issues in unifying product, sales, marketing, and governance. Progress had been extremely slow, and senior executive management was growing impatient. Uncertain how to address this, the senior leaders decided to bring all the global leaders together for a week-long meeting, to discuss the findings, jointly interpret them, and create a plan. It was a powerful experience.

We witnessed the immediate and positive impact that using data to open discussion on these issues had on group dynamics. There was frank and open dialogue, with constructive observations about the current state. In two exercises done in parallel by the Latin American and North American groups, each realized it needed to do a lot more to encourage similar qualities of interaction between the teams.

For instance, the groups saw that they needed to respond to each other (and key partners across the company) with relevant, concise insights (Practical Wisdom) and disciplined action (Intentionality). With massive change taking place, they had to commit to communicating consistently and effectively, recognizing and attending to the impacts of change on their teams.

Another theme that emerged was that of helping others translate the work the CEO was doing to refresh the company's vision in their respective roles and areas. They needed to communicate a direction that was meaningful and actionable and to prioritize their own activities to better focus their time (Intentionality) on pursuing these important conversations (Resonance and Interactivity). This would help people clarify their roles and empower them to act with greater confidence.

They also talked about how to be explicit (Intentionality) with one another from the outset when budgets and plans were made. They needed

a higher quality of interaction (Resonance and Interactivity) and needed to be more responsive to other decision makers.

### **CASCADING THE MESSAGE**

After the briefing on day one, these leaders were energized to share what they'd learned with their teams, the next-level leaders who would be joining them for the rest of that week. They felt more urgency about overcoming the now obvious differences between their geographic regions.

They were heartened that qualities of Character were perceived as high across their teams, and they could leverage the goodwill to develop a stronger, more collaborative relationship and better influence business strategy. This was a game changer for leaders in both geographies who realized the importance of speaking with an aligned “voice” representing all the Americas.

### **WHAT HAPPENED POSTPROGRAM?**

After the event, one senior leader said the “aha” was to be far more intentional in communicating with his peers. This session had opened doors to redefining patterns of interaction and interdependency between the functional areas. Instead of communicating that “things are not happening fast enough and it's all on you,” he and others now realized they had to communicate to encourage collaboration.

In addition to rethinking what was communicated, they had to address the “how.” One of the Latin American leaders set a goal to flex his approach so he could improve Resonance with both groups. He became aware that “taming” his Latin passion when presenting to colleagues in North America would enhance communication, but he would be well served to maintain his authentic Latin style with colleagues and clients in Argentina. He started practicing a more deliberate, methodical style when presenting to senior leaders in Miami and New York. Like many leaders, he worried whether altering his style would come off as inauthentic. We reminded him that we weren't talking about changing who he is; we were focusing on how he might change others' perceptions of who he is. We also told him that we didn't want him to eliminate his passion and energy; we just wanted to make sure that others would also notice that he was capable of being restrained and deliberate when the situation called for it. That included finding a way to be deliberate and methodical that still felt true to who he was. He ended up delivering a knockout presentation at year-end.

## A GLOBAL BUSINESS INTEGRATION

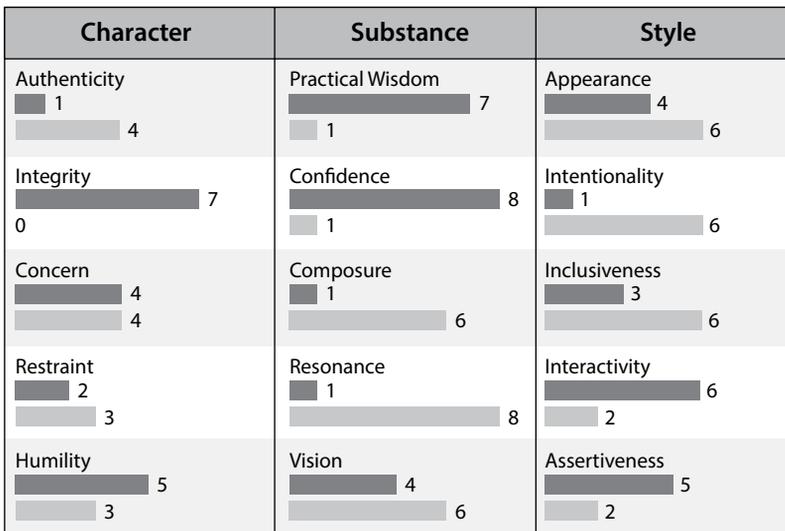
Another client, an Asian commodities company, had grown through acquisition, but corporate management remained mostly in the company's corporate headquarters in Asia. Many of the company's executives were educated in the West (United States and United Kingdom), but they faced the challenge of now integrating acquisitions in all regions of the world—the Middle East, Africa, North America, Latin America. They had to develop a shared system of governance and financial strategy while also adapting to the several jurisdictions and operating under different regulatory standards.

Top management had rigorously reviewed the executive-level leaders and identified a cohort with all the technical managerial skills to run the business and ensure balanced attention to both operational effectiveness and prudent governance. Top management had also concluded that while these executive-level leaders had demonstrated high potential for running the business based on those competencies, they came up short in other areas that would be of increased importance given their global scope of operation (see Figure 12.4).

### THE PRESCRIPTION FOR CHANGE

Management knew that many of these savvy executives, as products of their indigenous culture, might look like and feel like fish out of water in other

FIGURE 12.4 | EXPI FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION—ASIAN COMMODITIES COMPANY



■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as highest-rated

■ = Number of leaders for whom the facet showed up as lowest-rated

regions of the world. They were less comfortable making a personal connection with others that leaders in other regions of the world do more naturally. Calling attention to oneself, talking about oneself, making oneself known to others (elements of Authenticity) may seem to them like a lack of Humility, a core value for them. And speaking up assertively, especially toward their superiors, was not something they did with ease; rather, their style was less direct and more deferential.

Similarly, the manner of dress, voice tone, and other more pervasive qualities of their physical presence seemed too modest and lacking in the kind of executive energy that signals leadership presence in other regions of the world. Not only were these areas (Authenticity, Assertiveness, and Appearance) the focus of management's comments in our stakeholder interviews before the assessment process; they also emerged as some of the lower-rated areas in top management's (supervisor) ratings of the leaders.

Within their organization we found evidence of the hierarchy one might associate with a traditional command-and-control culture. There was deference to one's superiors, often some distance and formality in relations with one's peers, and a particularly tight bond with one's direct reports. Distinctive to their ethnic values and heritage, there were tendencies for these leaders to also self-rate lower in Authenticity, Appearance, and Assertiveness as compared with how Western leaders responded. And their direct reports tended to rate them even higher compared with direct-report raters in the West.

Providing leadership in the legacy culture was reliant on positional authority and formal channels of communication and decision making. But as we have found in our research and in our practice, the companies that seem to excel in growing through acquisition and operating in global markets are those that have mastered the art of less hierarchy and a more conversational style of interaction. Leaders learn to get the most from their direct reports, peers, and stakeholders through two-way communication. They leave others feeling aligned, empowered, accountable, and supported.

As indicated, top management ratings showed that the top executives wanted these leaders to be more assertive. Indeed, 3 of the 10 lowest-rated items from top management were in Assertiveness. Other items in the Style dimension, such as keeping meetings on track (Intentionality) and intervening to remove barriers to interaction (Interactivity), were also among the lower-rated items. The message was clear: "Yes, these are people of good character who know our business, *and* they need to learn to mobilize timely

execution by better leveraging their direct reports and other colleagues (old and new).”

Top management wanted these leaders to become more conscious of their Appearance: the way they dress, their voice tone and demeanor, and the way they project their energy. It was as if the top executives were saying, “You are on the global stage now, and you’ve got to look the part.” Here too is where Composure and Resonance become more important, especially as the leaders are addressing sensitive or contentious issues with new colleagues in other regions of the world where jurisdictional, economic, and cultural norms are different. They were charged with keeping one core set of governance principles while operating in far-flung parts of the world. That would require a capacity to work through differences.

### MEETING THE DEVELOPING EXECUTIVES WHERE THEY ARE

In our first meeting with the leadership cohort, we shared the summary results from our stakeholder interviews. Though Assertiveness was not particularly low overall, most leaders in the cohort were aware of lower scores in this facet from their supervisors. Management wanted to get more pushback and to hear their opinions. Getting that out into the open was a critical first step. Paradoxically, it gave them explicit “permission” to be less deferential. It also induced some anxiety in them as they considered what that might look like and how they would be able to muster the determination to break old, culturally based rules that were deeply embedded.

Another imperative that was clearly stated by management in the stakeholder interviews and in the ExPI feedback was that they needed to think and act with the enterprise aims in mind. Their culture would continue to prize operational savvy, but it must be deployed in a more active, assertive, and timely manner. Again, the leaders were neither resistant nor reluctant to grow in this direction of executive maturity; it was attractive to them. But they needed tools and strategies to act on.

In summary, then, what was the challenge for them developmentally? We hypothesized that there would be several lines of adaptive development that would be critical for these leaders, given their global roles and their need to assert governance norms while also ensuring operational excellence:

- › Recognize that it’s time to elevate their mindset and level of functioning from day-to-day operations to a more strategic plane of operating a global enterprise.

- › Clarify and “own” that more strategic role, articulate a vision that puts it in a business-relevant context, and regularly ask how their Vision is translating into action (Intentionality).
- › Step back, delegate tactical execution, and provide oversight. This makes room for others to step up and assert authority and accountability, and it positions these leaders to coach, guide, and intervene as necessary.
- › Recognize that respect and deference are two different things, and that when they are in the room with top management, they need to see evidence of a clear Vision that is translated with Intentionality and expressed dialogically and with Assertiveness.

### SOME OF THE HOW-TO

Every journey begins with a first step, and we did not want to leave this first meeting without providing them with some basis to begin experimenting with change, increasing their sense of self-efficacy, and learning from the experience. Therefore we offered them some practical tools and guidance:

1. Their version of Vision would need to be clearly linked to execution. Therefore, we helped them acquire skill in the use of a template that guided their preparation for meeting and presenting to top management. It included elements of bold and vivid aims concisely stated (Vision and Practical Wisdom) as well as data to support their rationale and a practical course of next-step actions to ensure timely execution (Intentionality).
2. What they found was that having a discipline to lean on that enabled them to create a clear, concise, evidence-based proposal made Assertiveness easier. The exchange was grounded in reasoning and constructive debate to test ideas. They were working *with* rather than only *for* top management. They were making two-way communication a reality.
3. With a clearer vision of the end in mind and a road map of the coordinated steps of action required, they were also better able to recognize the importance of their oversight role. In many cases, the proposals argued for change that would accelerate decision making while delaying some areas of their operations in order to

allow others more time to weigh in. Providing oversight and sustaining the change would be critical.

4. Any of us will be pulled by force of habit to familiar ways of playing our role, especially when we are under pressure. The individual coaching that was given to these executives created accountability to persevere and not retreat into their old comfort zone. As the leaders began to see the clarity and Intentionality of their leadership benefit those they were leading, they turned a corner.
5. Also important were some very concrete kinds of feedback on Appearance when speaking and presenting, using video. They had a chance to see some of their own top management on video as well as other successful leaders from around the world. They learned to notice what helped or hindered effectiveness and then how to apply these insights to their leadership practice.

## DIVERSITY WITHIN AND BETWEEN

You may be interested to know that among the cohort were women for whom realizing the expected role expectations of leadership would be complicated due to gender-specific expectations in the culture. With one woman in the cohort, we expanded the scope of the coaching to acknowledge gender-related constraints and what she might change to make a positive difference. Even after one conversation with the coach, she felt greater emotional freedom and a sense of empowerment.

Another leader who had risen to the executive level largely through his operational savvy and devotion to results sought some individual advice. He'd come from very humble origins and struggled with expressing himself verbally, especially in English, even though English was his company's primary business language. It was rather obviously a point of self-consciousness for him, but he was committed to making it a priority. He found that some of the practical guidance on how to organize his ideas for presentation bolstered his confidence and freed him to focus more attention on his articulation and language skills.

There were other specific cases in which very capable individuals presented with challenges and concerns that were at least in part attributable to individual differences and the shaping effects of their indigenous ethnic customs. The benefit of the ExPI as a feedback tool for them was that it

enabled them to identify where and how much these challenges mattered. Rather than privately worrying about them or, even worse, exaggerating their impact and becoming disheartened, the feedback interpretation and developmental action served to empower them and to frame these issues objectively and realistically.

We offer these anecdotal descriptions of individual cases to make another point: we must be just as ready to discover the differences within a group (Asian) of people as between groups (European versus Asian) of people. If we don't do this, we risk stereotyping. In order to cultivate habits of leadership and ways of being present that attune us and others to differences, and that cause us to catch ourselves before acting on unconscious biases, some organizations are finding that key deliberative processes such as succession planning and leadership development must be designed with these purposes in mind.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Is there a difference in meaning between the terms “diversity” and “inclusion”? And how do these definitions inform our approach to executive presence with diverse leaders? Let's take a look at a few examples of how diversity officers define them, in Table 12.1. As you'll see, diversity tends to

**TABLE 12.1** | COMPARING DEFINITIONS OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

<b>Definitions of Diversity</b>	<b>Definitions of Inclusion</b>
The unique differences and similarities that our employees, customers, suppliers, and communities bring to our global business environment	Seeking out, valuing, and using the knowledge and experiences of diverse employees for business benefit
The many ways people may differ, including gender, race, nationality, education, sexual orientation, style, functional expertise, and a wide array of other characteristics and backgrounds that make a person unique	Recognizing, understanding, and respecting all the ways we differ, and leveraging those differences for competitive advantage
Variation in the human capital profile of the organization/people from different races, religions, perspectives, etc., and therefore different cultures, values, beliefs, and reactions to the organizational environment	A competitive business advantage that we build and maintain by leveraging the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of differences in the workplace to enable individuals, teams, and the business to perform at their full potential

Source: Drawn from Quinetta M. Roberson, “Disentangling the Meanings of Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations” (2006).

focus on *demographics*, whereas inclusion focuses on *translating and leveraging differences* to maximize business results.

As Table 12.1 illustrates, many diversity officers see the concepts as distinct. At the same time, when they were asked the degree to which specific attributes apply to diverse organizations and inclusive organizations, they said there were similarities.<sup>11</sup> Diversity and inclusion overlapped when it came to teamwork, interdependence, and the building of collaborative environments.<sup>12</sup> It mattered in communicating and sharing information, as well as resolving conflict collaboratively and getting employees engaged and involved.

So what does this mean? The shifting emphasis from diversity to inclusion in D&I strategy and speech may be, in part, “a change in language rather than a material change in diversity management practices.”

### IS IT ABOUT ETHNICITY OR DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT?

These days a lot of people talk about diversity as a way of bringing lots of ideas to the table, promoting diverse thinking in organizations. And that’s a laudable goal. It speaks to how we can promote innovation and creative problem solving.

Still, diversity—the D in D&I—remains important.<sup>13</sup> It’s hard to get to diversity of thought if you don’t acknowledge demographic differences. If you skip that step, you miss a fundamental challenge that diverse leaders face. As one executive participant in a panel discussion put it, “How do I as an African-American woman get my ideas and point of view heard if my demographic differences keep me from finding a place at the table?”

### WHAT ABOUT WHITE MALES?

In talking about diversity, we are not simply referring to the inclusion and exclusion of minorities. Research indicates that white men do not see themselves as included in or benefiting from management-sponsored efforts to develop a more diverse and inclusive workplace. Rather, they are often left feeling like the “bad guy” or believing that they are being asked to simply comply with policies that require them to step aside and make room for others based on mere demographics.

Our differences in social identity and social roles are cocreated, maintained, and sustained over time. They are social-historical-cultural constructions. Men and women reciprocally reinforce gender stereotypes through their participation in traditional role taking. There are other pat-

terms of social reciprocity that keep the status quo in place on ethnic and racial stereotypes. Within organizations we must recognize and seize the opportunity to challenge these constraints.

## DEVELOPING A DIVERSITY PLAN

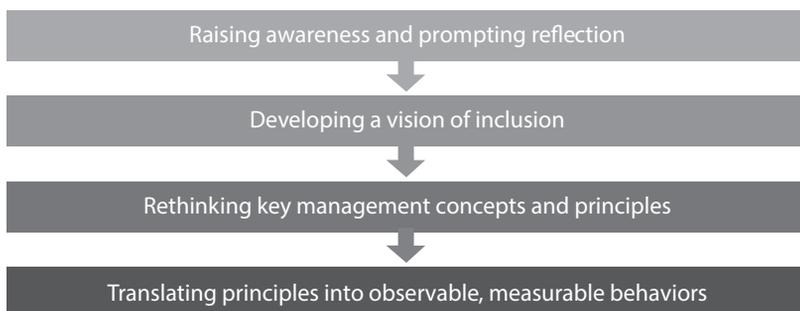
The Bates Model of Executive Presence is a construct for noticing and addressing issues of diversity and inclusion and also is a model for helping leadership teams to work together to develop a diversity strategy. Let's state right up front here that it is widely believed by D&I officers and documented in research that diversity and inclusion must be backed with sustained and visible CEO commitment.<sup>14</sup> Senior management has to have a strategic vision and a robust plan.<sup>15</sup> How do these senior leaders devise a plan and sustain the effort?

Nicola Pless and Thomas Maak describe four phases of developing an inclusive culture,<sup>16</sup> as shown in Figure 12.5. Phase one is raising awareness and prompting reflection. We and others<sup>17</sup> believe this requires a baseline assessment. The members of an executive team responsible for formulating and leading diversity and inclusion need to exude qualities of presence that help them to start and sustain the conversation about the culture they aspire to achieve.

Let's imagine a leadership team that has decided to go down this road, to address diversity and inclusion with a strategic plan.

- › First, the team members have to build awareness and reflect thoughtfully on the data. This requires them to exercise Restraint. They'll want to check a bias to act too quickly or rush to judgment.

FIGURE 12.5 | FOUR PHASES FOR DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE



If they do this, there's more room to exercise Practical Wisdom in asking questions and generating insight. They'll also need to show Composure to sustain thoughtful reflection and make sure that rational minds arrive at mutual understanding.

- › Reflection will enable them to go into the second phase that Pless and Maak suggest, developing a vision of inclusion. Vision includes discussion of the rational-logical reasons for a strategic direction, as well as the aspirational energies that will carry them there. In the process, they will need to begin thinking about how to translate the vision into action and results. This may require rethinking key management concepts and principles (phase three), which requires Integrity to do the right thing, even if it's costly, as well as Intentionality as they begin to translate their aspirations into practical action.
- › Finally, to sustain the effort and realize their aspirations (phase four) requires the active, iterative deployment of “the three I's” under the Style dimension: Intentionality, Inclusiveness, and Interactivity. Pless and Maak cite a number of inclusive “competencies” such as “active listening and trying to understand disparate views” and “encouraging open and frank communication in all interactions” that align closely with the three I's of the Bates EP Model.

### QUALITIES OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE THAT FOSTER A DIVERSE CULTURE

Leaders model behaviors that set the tone for a diverse culture. The Bates Model of Executive Presence points to qualities of leadership presence that encourage diversity. These are facets that we know enable people to recognize and respect differences, seek out different views, value all people, and empower them to perform to their full potential.

#### CONCERN

Empirical research has found that those leaders who are rated higher in consideration, which is closely related to our facet of Concern, improve team performance in heterogeneous groups.<sup>18</sup> This style of leadership involves seeing members as unique individuals and leaving them feeling noticed and recognized for their uniqueness. It was this “leader individuation” factor in their Style that explains the positive effects of consideration (Concern) on diverse team function.

## INCLUSIVENESS

Other empirical research concludes that “productive workplaces exist when employees are encouraged to express their opinion, and their input is sought before making important decisions.”<sup>19</sup> This research emphasizes the importance of an active, sustained pattern of Inclusiveness by leaders “wherein individuals are treated with fairness and encouraged to participate in decisions that impact their individual and organizational productivity.”<sup>20</sup>

## INTENTIONALITY AND INTERACTIVITY

Russo provides empirical support for the importance of the leader’s role in not only setting direction but aligning the goal orientation of team members.<sup>21</sup> Studies have shown that diversity can promote creativity, but that too much diversity without adequate effort to create goal alignment can impede performance. Related research has found that an “engaging style” of leadership may be a predictor of effective diversity management. This includes both verbal and nonverbal modes of interaction with others, all of which serve to deepen alignment and reinforce engagement.

## THE IMPERATIVE TO CHANGE

Advocacy for diversity and inclusion has gotten a second wind because of the global scope of markets in the twenty-first century. We are seeing board-level initiatives in our client organizations. These companies want to achieve a more diverse composition of leaders at the senior levels of the firm to better represent the diversity of the markets they serve. While this business rationale has been cited in the past, it seems more compelling today.

Beyond the global scope of commerce, another driver of diversity and inclusion initiatives is the need in most industries to recruit and retain top talent. Most companies believe that meeting this challenge requires tapping *all* candidates in the talent market. There are still fewer women in engineering and technology firms, especially at senior levels. As the workforce grays, there’s a lot more urgency to break down gender and cultural barriers and find and develop good leaders.

Despite the fact that some barriers to education and employment opportunities have been lowered over the past few decades, the proportion of women and people of color in the highest levels of leadership is still low; the advantage still tilts in favor of white males in U.S.-based companies.

This imposes a unique challenge for people who are affected by such social perceptions and prejudices.

Diverse leaders can be affected both by internalized self-limiting beliefs and by the prevailing attitudes and beliefs of others. So there is work to do. That has been our goal as we have worked with individuals and organizations. One encouraging sign today is the inclusive approach that some firms are using to attack the challenges. Some are recognizing that getting women into senior roles requires the attention of women *and* men. For instance, a large client of ours in the energy sector designed a women's leadership summit and was quite deliberate in ensuring that there was a balanced attendance of 70 percent women and 30 percent men. The organization also was careful to ensure that all levels from supervisory management to senior executives were represented, believing that "it takes all of us." Getting everyone involved is the right prescription for change.

As individuals, we'll have to be persistent, too. We have to keep catching ourselves so that biases don't interfere with the aims of diversity and inclusion. Barbara and Daniel had to look at their assumptions about each other. What did it mean in Daniel's mind that Barbara was a white woman and he was a black man? Likewise, what did this mean to her? How might the way Daniel interpreted the differences inhibit his expression of Authenticity and Assertiveness, making him cautious, less engaged, prone to avoid conflict, and even defensive? And how might Barbara change her approach to reduce his defenses and encourage him to trust her intentions?

## **CAN WE AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS?**

One question for organizations to wrestle to the ground is how to avoid misunderstandings in the first place. How could Daniel and Barbara's experience of dashed hope, strained relations, and a need to repair the relationship have been averted? And how could organizations anticipate issues that could create misunderstanding and derail strategic initiatives?

We've been listening to experts in diversity and inclusion, taking away thoughts that might guide people and organizations in how to think differently. The three ideas that follow, as well as some bullet points specifying how they can be realized, were inspired by numerous panel discussions and by one-on-one conversations with leaders in the field at the 2015 Conference Board Diversity & Inclusion Conference.

Embrace the idea that diversity is not about fixing people;  
it's about fixing culture.

- › **Promote transparency.** Recall that things went quiet during the search process, which caused Daniel to feel excluded. The intimations from Dave that Daniel was being groomed were not explicit, and they were not sanctioned by a transparent and well-reasoned succession process. In the absence of inclusion, information, and feedback, Daniel was left to speculate. And it's all too easy for speculation to turn negative when there is a vacuum.
- › **Earn and maintain trust.** As long as Daniel was experiencing acknowledgment, receptivity, opportunity, and advancement, he was easily able to find evidence to support a belief that his company was really committed to diversity and inclusion. Moreover, he felt comfortable offering that assurance to others, candidates for hire or promotion. But when he felt unfairly treated by being excluded and by being offered no sufficient explanation for the company's decision, his trust in management collapsed. Trust is hard to earn and easy to lose.
- › **Acknowledge the felt gap.** Most organizations have an aspirational or ideal culture that management strives for, at least in thought and often through action. But as determined as management is, there's usually a gap between the ideal and the real culture as experienced by those who work in the organization. When Daniel felt included, the gap was evident but not overwhelming. When he was excluded, the gap became immense.

To make diversity real, get into your "discomfort zone."

- › **Have difficult conversations.** Open discussion of gender differences and race and ethnicity, and how they affect perceptions of leaders, is not always easy, and it was not easy for the management of Daniel's company, whose composition was mostly white males. Acknowledging such differences conceptually is one thing, but to talk about how they are relevant to us is another matter altogether.
- › **Promote constructive conflict.** Not only was Daniel uncomfortable with conflict as a means of constructively exploring and

examining differences, but it wasn't part of the culture as a company. The company had a traditional, hierarchical culture. Fact-based discussion of differences in tactics might be okay up to a point, but it was a culture in which the prerogative of senior leadership prevailed, and others deferred to that.

- › **Acknowledge negative emotions.** The only emotions that seemed to be comfortable and appropriate to express within the male-dominated culture in which Daniel worked were those associated with achievement strivings. For those in power, expressions of frustration and anger were also allowed. Expressing feelings of concern and disappointment over being treated unfairly was risky, too provocative, regarded as “mere” emotions that should be kept private and “dealt with.”

Be courageous in putting issues of power and privilege on the table.

- › **Talk about legacy attitudes.** We did not create the legacy we inherited, but we have the power to change it. In our society, there are mindsets and attitudes that sometimes serve to advantage some (often white males) more than others (women and people of color). Any organization that is serious about diversity and inclusion will ask out loud, “Which of these legacy effects do we need to be most mindful of?” Consider how these trappings might interfere with selection, promotion, and other decisions that encourage development of a diverse talent pipeline.
- › **Encourage diverse leaders to assert influence.** Many companies have worked to empower those who are most disadvantaged by our social-political history so that they can assert their voices and express dissent in the organization. However, to form affiliation groups or so-called employee resource groups is not enough. Diverse leaders must be able to assert influence on hiring and talent development policies in a timely, business-relevant manner.

## THOUGHTS FOR DIVERSE LEADERS

It's easy to look at the challenges that still exist in changing cultures. And we do believe the qualities measured by the Bates Model of Executive Presence

can guide leaders to foster a diverse and inclusive culture. When organizations help leaders obtain timely, accurate feedback on the “right stuff” in combination with an effective coaching relationship through which difference-making insight can be gleaned and translated into developmental action, they change how leaders lead.

What about you, a diverse leader? How can you help yourself? Our first thought goes back to the beginning of the chapter, in the conversation on Authenticity.

- › As a diverse leader, you can model open, candid dialogue and promote mutual understanding. Share something about yourself and the lessons and experiences that have shaped you. Authenticity is contagious—when we open up, others open up, too, which promotes honesty and straightforward dialogue.
- › Learn how others view you as a leader. Understand how the qualities of executive presence come into play. You are unique and have your own set of strengths and opportunities to develop. Understand the 15 qualities of executive presence and how you can leverage these to make an impact.
- › Assessment and coaching are important ways to gain perspective and to adapt and grow as a leader. Misunderstandings often arise because diverse leaders don’t have an accurate picture of how they are viewed by the organization. Ask your boss, your HR business partner, and others to provide ExPI or other multirater assessment feedback. Ask for coaching and leadership development and then embrace it as the gift it is—an organization investing in you.
- › When you are provided helpful, robust feedback, engage in dialogue with people around you. We talked in the last chapter about how women can “disconfirm” beliefs or assumptions. You can do the same by sitting down with your manager and other assessment raters, one-on-one. Discussing gaps can immediately alter perceptions and also help you understand how to flex and try different approaches.
- › Forums sponsored by the organization encourage productive curiosity about differences. Become actively involved when you have the opportunity to be seen as a leader and role model.

The topic of diversity and inclusion is evolving, and we expect and hope that, someday, we'll have a new story to tell. We're curious to see how the Bates Model of Executive Presence may help to advance the cause. Following trends such as this one will be interesting. And this gives us a natural transition point to our final thoughts on how we hope the Bates EP Model will inform approaches to future business challenges.

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## Final Thoughts

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### How Executive Presence Answers Tomorrow's Business Challenges

*There's a way to do it better—find it.*

—THOMAS EDISON

So much change has taken place in the course of our lifetimes. A technology revolution has transformed how we work and play in ways we couldn't have imagined. We have the world at our fingertips and are always connected. Navigating the changing digital landscape and digital transformation is at once perplexing and exciting for business today. And that's how it is as we contemplate other changes, including the impact of rising global political tensions, unstable foreign economies, seismic demographic shifts, intensifying cyber threats, growing geostrategic competition, and increasing pressure on natural resources. We have more than enough to challenge us.

We cannot predict the future. We can only predict things will change. Change is a book without an end. The world is being redefined by global trends. We have no choice but to do our very best to lead our organizations through change.

While every generation of leaders confronts new challenges, we believe the circumstances of our twenty-first century do call for extraordinary leaders, people others trust and believe in. A compelling case has already been made by many. The World Economic Forum ranked the 10 most important global trends, based on a poll of 1,592 leaders from academia, business, government, and nonprofits. As reported by the Pew Research Center, 1 of these 10 was “a lack of values in leadership.”<sup>1</sup>

Confidence in leadership has waned. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development reports that individuals' confidence in

their national governments declined between 2007 and 2012, from 45 to 40 percent on average,<sup>2</sup> making it difficult for national authorities to mobilize support for necessary reforms. In the United States, public trust in government has fallen substantially since 1958 and is near an all-time low.

## HOW THE EP MODEL ADDRESSES CHALLENGES

### TRUST

PWC reports in its 17th Annual Global CEO Survey that the impact of global trends is changing society's expectations of business to adhere to certain standards of behavior.<sup>3</sup> "The extent to which a business behaves in line with these expectations determines how trustworthy it is perceived to be." PWC notes that this is putting trust high up on the CEO agenda. "While the trust deficit has narrowed, a lack of trust in business is still a major concern for business leaders."

CEOs and senior executives wanting to build trust with customers, shareholders, and the public can look to the qualities measured by the science-based Bates Model of Executive Presence. Consider for a moment the impact that Humility, an acknowledgment of our human limitations and recognition that we don't have all the answers, has on others' willingness to trust us. Integrity, a commitment to high standards, as well as just and honest dealings, is essential to earning others' faith in us.

These and other Character facets of executive presence not only offer a compass for good leadership; they are tied to organizational performance. PWC reports that in 2014, "more than half of CEOs believe a lack of trust poses a real threat to their growth prospects. This is up sharply from the 37% who cited concerns last year." It's impossible to imagine how organizations will thrive in the future if they do not actively cultivate in their leaders the qualities that earn others' trust.

### INNOVATION

Another top issue on the minds of CEOs is innovation to gain a competitive edge. A majority of 400 CEOs surveyed by KPMG in 2014 were concerned about the relevance of their products three years from now, as well as keeping up with their competitors, whether existing or new entrants. To this end, they are set on becoming more consumer-focused and see branding as a top organizational priority. KPMG reports that "CEOs fully grasp the need to change."<sup>4</sup>

Three-quarters of company leaders surveyed were in some stage of transforming their operating models. Spurring innovation was recognized as a top challenge by CEOs, who said there was significant room for improvement necessary to succeed at innovation and transformation. Consider how our model of Vision, defined as the ability to see future trends and ignite creative problem solving, fosters innovative, agile thinking. The quality of Practical Wisdom, with its attention to bringing insight and judgment to issues, is also critical to finding fresh yet pragmatic, practical new ways of doing things.

Innovation doesn't happen without leaders who can help us see an exciting future. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner talk about the importance of the leader's capacity to convey inspirational leadership.<sup>5</sup> In surveys of employees, they found the second-highest requirement of a leader, after honesty, is that he or she be forward-looking.

Once again we see the essential nature of Vision, as defined by the Bates Model of Executive Presence, as both strategic clarity and the ability to inspire others to action. Time spent on Vision is almost nonexistent. Kouzes and Posner cite researchers who study executives' work activities, and the authors estimate that only 3 percent of the typical business leader's time is spent envisioning and enlisting.

### **NEXT-GENERATION WORKERS**

The challenge of engaging the next generations entering the workforce has also been well documented. A 2014 Deloitte Generation Y Survey found that today's leaders face significant challenges in meeting expectations of the Gen Y workforce, which will represent 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025. Gen Y expects businesses to act responsibly and address society's challenges. This aligns with Integrity, in which leaders are perceived to be principled and to uphold standards of ethics and honesty, as well as Authenticity, perceptions of the leader's candor and honesty that allow us to take leaders at their word.

Almost one in four millennials asks for a chance to show his or her leadership skills. Fifty percent believe their organizations could do more to develop future leaders. Here, the quality of Concern, in which we demonstrate genuine interest in others, is essential, as is Resonance, our attunement to others' thoughts, interests, emotions, and motivations.

Millennials do not connect with leaders who exhibit hierarchical, formal styles of communication. Consider the importance of Interactivity, an

active style of dialogue that is informal and puts others at ease, as well as Inclusiveness, which encourages participation, invites ownership, and welcomes diverse points of view. These qualities in leaders connect others to the mission of the organization in a meaningful way and harness their best efforts.

### STRESS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

A 2014 survey of 7,000 workers by Monster.com as reported in *Forbes* found that 42 percent of employees had left a job because of a stressful environment.<sup>6</sup> A separate survey of 900 workers found an employee's relationship with the boss is the most common cause of workplace stress, followed by workload, work-life balance, and relationships with coworkers.<sup>7</sup> And this has a direct impact on productivity. The American Psychological Association reports that in a survey of 1,714 adults, 93 percent of employees who feel valued by their employer say they are motivated to do their very best for their employer.<sup>8</sup>

Leaders can either fuel stress or quell it by effectively managing their own energies and emotions, as well as their interactions with others. This includes taking care to attend to one's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Consider the importance of Appearance as measured in the model, described as showing up ready for the game and igniting energy in others. There is the quality of Composure, which articulates a leader's capacity to reduce stress by making issues discussable and avoiding unproductive conflict. Composure enables calm in the face of challenging situations, reducing anxiety and getting people productively focused.

### THE FUTURE IS NOW!

Given these and other important challenges facing business today, we think the case has been made for looking at leadership differently, through the lens of executive presence. The sooner we embrace this holistic approach, the sooner we can assure that our leaders are ready for whatever comes. The Bates EP Model addresses both the harder-driving and softer, social-emotional components of leadership that are hard to measure but that matter in addressing these future challenges.

We now understand that qualities of executive presence, specific to the role of senior leaders, enable these leaders to get things done through oth-

ers, often through layers of an organization and with those who may reside within and outside their span of control. The EP qualities are now understood—there is no longer a mysterious X factor in leadership. We no longer have to puzzle over why a leader is effective or resort to explanations like “He or she is a natural leader.”

What has always made executive presence difficult to nail down has been its breadth. The new model captures that and more. Leadership is not defined by personality. We know that what matters in leadership effectiveness are specific qualities of Character, Substance, and Style. While these have not typically been part of discussions on leadership competencies, we hope this new model encourages organizations to embrace new ideas and flex their approach to leadership development.

Our aim has been to share this breakthrough research and bring it alive with stories and case studies of those who are already using this model and addressing their most pressing business challenges. We hope to encourage more leaders and organizations to take a fresh look at what it means to be all you can be, with a modern definition of executive presence.

One of the benefits of referring to the new model is that it does not sacrifice the individuality of the leader or prescribe one formula for success. Each of us by virtue of our differences must find our own path to becoming all we can be.

By understanding perceptions of our presence and exploring qualities not often discussed in traditional development, we can accelerate our growth. You can be confident that the model is focusing on the right things and that you no longer need to rely on guesswork or programs that are one-size-fits-all. We can target, measure, and move the needle on executive presence for each and every leader.

As we come to a close, we would like to share final thoughts for each of the three constituencies for this book who have a stake in the conversation on executive presence: the leader; executive management; and also leadership development, talent management, and human resources.

## **1. LEADERS: BECOME ALL YOU CAN BE**

Over the years we've been asked countless times by leaders, “Are these really qualities that can change?” By now, we hope it's crystal clear that they can, because we are simply measuring perceptions of your presence and impact. What we're seeking to understand is how those perceptions align with

your intentions. You have strengths to leverage and perhaps some gaps to address. Understanding both will only serve to enhance your leadership brand.

Whether you've already reached senior leadership or it is your aim, we hope you're inspired to know more about yourself and to explore that further. The topics we've discussed in the book do not arise often in performance evaluation today. You may need to take matters into your own hands, by raising these questions and learning how others perceive you. Their view of these qualities is as relevant to your success as your education, experience, technical skill, and drive to succeed.

Our call to action for leaders is to be bold, take it upon yourself, and fearlessly approach your leadership development, so that you unleash the power of your unique presence. Ask for support in this work. In our experience, most successful leaders tend to be quite self-reliant, but it is not necessary or advisable to go it alone. It is better to have constructive advice, wise consultation, and helpful coaching from people you can trust. It is better to have a network of advisors as you learn and experiment and as you adapt and evolve your leadership style.

We hope the examples in this book have stimulated your thinking and motivated you to explore. Assessment, coaching, and development can help you achieve your goals. If you are offered these, receive them as the gifts they are. Your organization is expressing interest in you, wants to support you, and is investing in you.

In addition to professional guidance, ask for internal sponsorship, mentorship, and support. You never know what will be available if you don't ask. It is always best to have support before you need it. If you feel you've reached an inflection point, don't be afraid to speak up. There's no reason to suffer when you have people who care about you and want to help, for your sake and the sake of your organization.

You have unique talents and special abilities to bring to the task of leadership. Keep going, keep learning, and keep growing. Not only will you be better for it; your organization will be better for it, and others will be inspired by your example.

#### QUESTIONS THAT PRACTICING LEADERS CAN ASK

- › How can I learn how my leadership qualities are viewed by the organization?

- › What data do I need to help me be more effective in developing executive presence?
- › How might I be relying too much on a few strengths that actually could hinder effectiveness?
- › How can I take the time to reflect on my experiences and learn from them?
- › What is at stake, for me and the organization, if I am “too busy” to work at this?
- › What should I do when I am aware I’m reaching an inflection point of challenge?
- › Whom could I engage to coach, mentor, sponsor, and guide me?
- › How can I aim higher and become all that I can be?

## 2. EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

As a CEO or senior executive, we hope you are inspired to invest in your own development and also to think in new ways to look at other leaders in your organization. We trust that the research and case studies we’ve presented have clarified your thinking about the relevance of executive presence. Executive presence is not just a “nice-to-have.” As defined by the research and model, it is essential to driving organizational outcomes.

There is now a way to appraise and address these qualities in individuals and teams. Thoughtful assessment, including the Bates ExPI, can offer keener insights and better solutions. This can help with one of your most important responsibilities—to build a stronger, more diverse pipeline of leaders who will take your company into the future.

Armed with a model based in science, you can have better conversations about talent and feel more confident in evaluations of performance. You’ll be able to articulate and set expectations for leadership behavior and action as they relate to executive presence. This will inform appraisals of leaders’ capabilities, from winning trust to driving innovation, engaging employees, and promoting diversity.

Every leader knows the value of analytics in appraising situations and making better decisions. The science-based model and assessment offer data that have not been previously available, measuring capability and readiness

to inspire, align, engage, and mobilize. You rely on data to make every other type of business decision, and there is no reason now not to utilize it in leadership development.

Data such as the ExPI are timely and relevant to real-life business challenges. For example, if your aim is to sustain momentum on long-term goals, you must evaluate your team's ability to set clear direction, inspire action, encourage new ideas, and empower people to act. The ExPI combined with other assessment data can provide you with insights about a team's adaptive capacity to get things done.

We hope this is valuable as you sit down with human resources professionals to review strategies for leadership development. Armed with a model and clarifying language, you'll have better conversations about the needs and requirements of leaders in your organization. You'll have more confidence that the qualities you're measuring are right and that you will be able to measure and track performance. The data will give you a fuller, more precise picture that guides better decisions.

It's very likely that your human resources team is actively seeking your partnership and is mutually interested in providing data for this purpose. If the people on your human resources team are not yet applying metrics to leadership development, this is a good time to challenge them to do so. This becomes even more urgent as legions of baby boomer leaders retire. The task of preparing the next generation is in your hands. You need a better way to approach this important objective.

#### QUESTIONS THAT CEOS AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT CAN ASK

- › Does our organization know how to assess the influence and impact of our leaders in a way that connects specific behaviors to business imperatives?
- › What are the risks if we are not benchmarking and measuring executive presence?
- › How would I guess our leaders would stack up if we were to assess them in these areas?
- › What are the risks if we don't develop more leaders who can inspire and engage?
- › What will we forfeit if we don't invest in our future leaders today?

- › What expectations of our shareholders will go unmet without addressing these issues?
- › What are the risks if the members of my team do not rise to work together and become high performing?
- › What critical initiatives may never succeed because of a lack of visionary, inspired leadership?

### **3. HUMAN RESOURCES, TALENT MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

When we began piloting the Bates ExPI with client organizations, it was those in human resources, talent management, and leadership development who first recognized its potent value. As one SVP of human resources told us during the first pilot project, “It puts a face to executive presence” with “concrete, specific language to address important aspects of executive development.” Another leader affirmed that “nobody is measuring anything like this” and that “no instrument has really, truly addressed executive presence before now.”

One reason for the enthusiasm is that it is tied directly to business-relevant outcomes. In addition, the process we describe for interpretation of the data offers a more specific path for executive presence development. The advice is actionable, the language is clear, and the concepts resonate for leaders.

A chief human resources officer commented that leaders who completed the ExPI assessment and started coaching seemed to be “taking action and taking their development more seriously.” She said there was a “clear difference” in her mind between “the company’s standard 360 and other measurement instruments, because of the specific qualities measured and their connection to business outcomes.”

The ExPI is providing a rich set of data that companies had not been capturing or using to evaluate talent or leadership development programs. They are looking at it as a way to better evaluate the leadership pipeline, explore new solutions to diversity and inclusion, improve employee engagement, and design more effective coaching and group programs.

Human resources professionals dedicated to taking care of the people are the guardians of the organization’s most important assets. Armed with

data and situation-specific interpretation, you can develop better insight and offer greater ROI on leadership programs.

We've been to more than our share of human resources conferences where the topic was how HR can get a seat at the table with senior leaders. For many years, those in the field of human resources have been asking these questions. We believe the secret is demonstrating strategic alignment with the business. Bringing data to the discussion and offering clarifying insight are vital contributions that make you a valued partner.

There's never been a better time for HR to adopt a measurement mindset, especially when it comes to the qualities of leadership we've discussed in this book. They are not elusive; they are real and measurable. You can take a holistic approach to addressing executive presence. Senior management welcomes it, as do individual leaders who seek your help in their development and seek your advice to navigate ever-more-challenging roles.

Resources are never unlimited. However, CEOs and executives will spend when they believe they are investing in something that moves the right needle. We've heard the argument that the world may not need another assessment, and of course that makes us smile. We know organizations like yours wrestle with the question of which assessments to use. We would only suggest that every few years there is good reason to refresh our approaches. In fact, the Bates ExPI represents the first real breakthrough in leadership assessments since Daniel Goleman's work on EQ and the EQi were introduced in the mid-1990s.

In the meantime, the world is changing, and our view of great leadership has to change with it.<sup>9</sup> In 2015, Nick Petrie published an article called "Future Trends in Leadership Development" through the Center for Creative Leadership. One of the most interesting trends Petrie noted was the decline of "heroic leadership" in favor of "collective leadership." The rise of global reach has created matrixed teams, and the best leaders today are able to repeatedly assemble cross-functional, cross-regional teams to tackle one short-term initiative . . . and then move to another one with a different cast of characters. The upshot is that leaders today need to be much stronger than before when it comes to collaborating and influencing without authority. And yet many of the ways we assess and develop leaders and leadership teams have not adapted to meet this emerging need. The ExPI represents a way for us to "catch up" with this trend by measuring numerous behaviors that are more aligned with this idea of collective leadership,

which turn up in facets such as Inclusiveness, Intentionality, Interactivity, and Resonance.

Organizations large and small can be forward-thinking in the way they approach the topic of executive presence, even if it isn't possible to offer a broad array of formal programs. You can always bring a research model and insight to the basic levers such as performance reviews and talent management. In larger organizations where you can make a greater investment, there are many ways to employ the model to enhance everything you do for leaders.

#### QUESTIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES, TALENT MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS TO ASK

- › What reasons do we have to incorporate executive presence into our model?
- › What are the lost opportunities if we don't take a holistic approach to leadership?
- › Are we providing senior management with the right data and analytics on this?
- › What are the risks of designing programs without metrics and the ability to track progress?
- › How will we report on the ROI of leadership development initiatives on "softer skills"?
- › Does our own team in human resources need to develop these skills, as well?
- › What risks exist in our leadership pipeline if we don't address executive presence?
- › What are the best ways to pilot executive presence to test the fit for our organization?

#### CONTINUING YOUR JOURNEY

As you get ready to put what you've learned into action, we hope we've opened the aperture and helped you see your own leadership in a new way. We hope what you've learned has inspired you to take chances and try new

approaches. We are inspired by the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Don’t be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All of life is an experiment.”

We started our own journey to understanding executive presence in the spirit of learning and adventure. It has been and continues to be a gratifying journey. What inspired us was that we weren’t satisfied the status quo. We thought we could do better. We didn’t know where this project would take us or how valuable it would be. We simply started with the belief that it might help us fulfill our mission: “helping leaders shape the world.”

We are grateful to all the clients and others who have supported our work and partnered with us in experimenting with the new model. These partnerships have enabled us to affirm its power and document its impact. We are delighted so many have found the new Bates Model of Executive Presence valuable. We applaud the willingness of any leader or organization to take a leap and embrace a different approach. We’ve always been inspired by Steve Jobs, who said, “I want to put a ding in the universe.” We can all make a difference if we are willing to try something new.

If you want to continue on the journey toward developing your own, unique presence, we invite you to take a short, 15-minute questionnaire available at [www.AlltheLeaderBook.com](http://www.AlltheLeaderBook.com). We’ll help you evaluate your current business challenges and identify the ways in which the facets of executive presence can help you succeed. On the website, you’ll also find resources like video tips and articles where we share additional advice on developing presence and influence. In addition, you’ll discover more about the process of taking the Bates ExPI, as well as ways to find—or become—a certified ExPI coach. We welcome your inquiries and offer a number of ways to support leaders like you.

In the meantime, thank you for reading. We hope what you’ve learned has inspired you to keep reaching for the stars on the journey to becoming all you can be.

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## About the Author

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**Suzanne Bates** is a bestselling author, CEO coach, and internationally recognized expert in communicative leadership. She leads a team of seasoned executive coaches and consultants who are distinguished in the field of leadership development, known for their effective and practical approach to helping leaders make an impact.



Suzanne's roster of senior executive clients is a who's who of top global companies that turn to Bates for advice, consulting, coaching, and expertise in the field of executive presence and influence. In 2013, the firm researched, piloted, and launched the first-ever research-based model of executive presence, and operationalized it in the scientifically validated assessment tool, the Bates ExPI. The Bates Model of Executive Presence provides organizations with a rich, multidimensional framework for measuring the way individual leaders influence and make an impact to drive business results.

In 2005 Suzanne published her first book, *Speak Like a CEO: Secrets for Commanding Attention and Getting Results* (McGraw-Hill). Her other books with McGraw-Hill, *Motivate Like a CEO: Communicate Your Strategic Vision and Inspire People to Act!* and *Discover Your CEO Brand: Secrets for Embracing and Maximizing Your Unique Value as a Leader*, were business bestsellers and were endorsed by both leadership experts and Fortune 500 executives. Her popular column, "Thoughts for Tuesday," highlights personal leadership lessons and is available at [www.bates-communications.com](http://www.bates-communications.com).

For over 20 years, Suzanne was an award-winning television journalist in major markets including Boston, Philadelphia, and Tampa–St. Petersburg. Her years as an on-air personality with major market television stations WBZ-TV Boston, WCAU-TV Philadelphia, and WFLA-TV

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