

**Decoding the Team Conundrum:
The Eight Roles Executives Play**

by
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Decoding the Team Conundrum: The Eight Roles Executives Play

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Abstract

In this article a number of leadership “archetypes,” ways of leading in a complex organizational environment are explored. These archetypes represent prototypes for understanding leadership behavior. Ideally an executive team—representing a number of leadership archetypes—should be able to cover all the leadership needs that are required to make an organization effective.

Eight commonly found leadership archetypes are identified. Each of these leadership archetypes will prove more or less effective depending on the organizational situation. The archetypes listed are strategist, change-catalyst, transactor, builder, innovator, processor, coach and communicator. A description is given of each archetype including what it means working with, and managing each of these types. These in-depth descriptions form the foundation of a Leadership Archetype Questionnaire (LAQ).

Key words: Leadership archetype; leadership behavior; character; team; executive role constellation; leadership archetype questionnaire.

There was once a general who faced a formidable battle. He had three regiments, led by three colonels, each with a very different character structure. The first colonel was entrepreneurial and self-confident. The second was conscientious and highly efficient, if lacking in imagination. The third was abrasive and confrontational but always seemed to achieve the impossible. The night before the battle, the general visited his three colonels in turn. First, he told the entrepreneurial colonel briefly that he needed him to take the lead in planning the morning's attack. Then he sat his second colonel down and gave him a detailed battle plan. To the third, he confided that the battle was already lost, that they had no chance. The colonel disagreed violently—the general was wrong, and the colonel's regiment would wipe the enemy off the field. At dawn the next day, the three regiments attacked, each regiment was victorious and the battle was won.

There is no one “Great Man” in this anecdote. Instead, we find four highly effective leaders. Our general was an astute judge of character. He understood how each of his men would think and act and he knew what buttons to press to get them to do so. He knew that their personality make-up would determine how they led their troops and faced the enemy. He knew how to leverage each member of his team to maximum advantage.

Laying to rest the ghost of the Great Man

Although the ghost of the Great Man—the stereotypical all powerful, undisputed leader who controls an organization and determines its success or failure—still haunts leadership studies, most now recognize that successful organizations are the product of distributive, collective, and complementary leadership. A group of carefully-selected individuals can be structured in such a way to turn into a highly effective team that delivers much more than the sum of its parts. The first step is to identify each individual's personality make-up and leadership style, and then match their strengths and competences to particular roles and challenges. This sort of creative team configuration can energize and enhance the workplace. On the other hand, a mismatch can bring misery to all concerned, and cause considerable damage.

Mary Johanssen was an HR manager in an international cosmetics company when she was spotted by Harry Oller, VP Europe for the company. “She gave a superb presentation about how they'd dealt with new hire integration in a South African subsidiary. I said to

my colleague, ‘We have to get her to sort out Poland.’ We were having major problems with a new acquisition there.” It was a big leap in terms of promotion but Mary was given the job of introducing and implementing a new cascading excellence program within the Polish subsidiary. “It was a disaster,” Oller remembers. “A load of money spent on consultancy and implementation studies; rudimentary, half-hearted efforts at running an inappropriate program; and a workforce that had no clearer idea at the end of 12 months what they were doing or why.” What had dazzled Oller were Johanssen’s analytical and communication skills. She was at sea, however, in a more operational role.

Testing, testing

So if an understanding of individual character is essential to identifying leadership strengths, what tools do we have to help us? Because deciding “She’s good,” as Harry Oller learned to his company’s cost, is not enough. The question is “good in what?” There are a number of so-called diagnostic tests around, of debatable value. Learning that someone is abrasive and could be a character in the film *Sunset Boulevard* might make you feel better about your perception of her as an individual, but will be of limited help in deciding how best to use her in your organization. It is not enough to slap a label on someone. Until we understand a person’s inner theatre—the dramas and major scripts that play within all of us from birth—we will not understand the person’s behavior. But how do we dig deeper than this and how deep, feasibly, can we go?

Outside a psychotherapeutic context, the answer is probably, “Not far.” But we can observe behavior and action patterns, and compare these with individual self-perceptions. Most of us are motivated by a natural curiosity about how we come across to others and whether their perceptions of us are consistent with our own. We want feedback about our effectiveness; we want to know how we can change, if change is needed, either for the better or simply to adapt to changing circumstances. Feedback can have a behavioral impact and will have action implications. The process is rather like peeling an onion: as the outer, superficial layers come away, our core life experiences are steadily revealed.

There are, of course, a number of conscientious leadership questionnaires that are worlds away from the enneagrams and compatibility tests that litter the life-coaching circuit. Most try to identify certain recurring behavior patterns considered more or less effective in a leadership context. So we have tests to discover whether executives are people- or

task-oriented; autocratic or democratic; transactional or transformational; and variations on all of these. This sort of questionnaire may be overly simplistic but it can help point someone in the right direction on a career or organizational path.

Deeper insights can come from a more clinical approach. Henry Mintzberg was a pioneer in this area. He identified ten essential executive roles: figurehead, liaison, leader, monitor, disseminator, spokesman, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator. Mintzberg suggested that effective executives need to play a variety of these roles at different times and to different degrees, depending on the level and function of management. Meredith Belbin looked similarly at the construction of teams, concluding that balanced teams, made up of people with complementary behaviors, were more effective than randomly assembled teams.

A whole consulting industry has grown out of studies like these, using a plethora of tests based on various configurations. At times, unfortunately, the literature describing the merits of these tests is reminiscent of the sales pitch of a used-car dealer: a lot of promises but in the end it's the same old same old. And as you would if you were closing the deal on your second-hand car, you want the answers to different questions: Just how solid is it? Has it been test-driven? Is it valid, reliable, honest and authentic? Or does it just look superficially appealing?

Identifying leadership archetypes

At the danger of sounding like a used-car salesman myself, I want to introduce a new approach, and a new tool, for assessing leadership behavior: the Leadership Archetype Questionnaire. In doing so, I look at leadership somewhat differently from others. My work is based on observational studies of *real* leaders at the strategic apex of their organizations. My aim is to help executives see and understand the continuity between their behaviors in the workplace—the outer layer of the onion—and the inner core of their deep-seated character traits. Leaders' attitudes and interactions with people are the result of a complex confluence of their inner theater (including relationships with authority figures early in life), significant life experiences, examples set by other executives, and formal leadership training. Sometimes, the antecedents of specific leadership behavior are quite clear; at other times the connections are more tenuous.

My studies have shown that there are a number of recurring patterns of behavior that influence an individual's effectiveness within an organization. Over time, I formulated these patterns into a number of leadership archetypes, templates for interpreting observations and behavior. The eight leadership archetypes I identified are: *strategist*, *change-catalyst*, *transactor*, *builder*, *innovator*, *processor*, *coach*, and *communicator*.

A leadership archetype characterizes the way in which leaders deal with people and situations in an organizational context. The Leadership Archetype Questionnaire (LAQ), was devised to help executives identify their predominant leadership archetypes, understand their behavior more clearly and identify organizational situations in which a particular leadership style could be most effective. It should also be noted—given the importance of behavioral adaptability—that effective leaders will score high on a number of these archetypes. They will be able to switch focus depending on the circumstances. A lack of fit, however, between a set of leadership archetypes and the context in which executives operate is a main cause of organizational dysfunctionality and executive failure. The LAQ helps executives analyze themselves and those they work with, identify specific leadership styles, and then think about what it's like to work with people demonstrating certain dominant behaviors. What are the best roles they can play in the team—how to align individual strengths with team roles? What's the best way to manage them? What's the best procedure if you work for them? How do you get the best out of them? Who else will they work well with? What combinations of styles should you avoid? By applying this sort of analysis you can avoid toxic combinations and construct A-teams. Additionally, you can map the feedback from various constituents (how the other team members view them) and see where perceptions differ and where they overlap. We'll look at that later. First of all, what are the archetypes?

Development of the Leadership Archetype Questionnaire (LAQ)

Over the last 20 years, I have studied the behavior of executives from all over the world in a specially-designed leadership workshop at INSEAD that has four iterations over the period of a year. This workshop is intended to go deep below the superficialities that characterize much leadership education. It creates a safe transitional space—using the life case study as major vehicle—where individuals are encouraged to unpeel the various

layers of their personality. In the workshop, executives' behavior and character issues are put under a microscope. In addition, they are given personality tests and a number of other multi-party feedback survey instruments. Regularly, they are put in smaller groups to explore difficult organizational and personal issues.

These workshops show that executives tend towards a specific behavior pattern that can be highly effective at one stage in their career but quite dysfunctional at another. The group work often reveals behavioral inflexibility as people struggle to cope with new organizational situations. I have also observed that complementarity is vital to a team: all is well if an individual's weaknesses are counterbalanced by others' strengths. The opposite is also very true. These findings have been confirmed repeatedly during organizational interventions with groups of executives undertaking a high performance team building exercise.

From the cumulative observations of these workshops, and discussions with colleagues in the organizational behavior and strategy fields, I formulated eight distinct leadership archetypes and constructed the Leadership Archetype Questionnaire (LAQ), a diagnostic multi-party feedback instrument for individuals and organizational stakeholders to use to identify leadership style. The LAQ consists of 48 questions, carefully constructed to elicit indicators of an individual's personal style and to supply 360-degree feedback.

It needs to be noted that it is impossible to include all existing character types and their behavioral consequences in a study of this sort. The fact that my typical study sample is not a cross-section of the work population excludes that possibility. People in positions of leadership are a self-selected group. The identification of these eight leadership archetypes is a direct consequence of their prominence in a leadership context. For example, there were very few people in the workshops with self-defeating, dependent, depressive or detached personalities, ways of behaving that makes the attainment of a leadership position quite difficult.

The archetypes

The strategist: leadership as a game of chess

Strategists are good at dealing with developments in the organization's environment. They provide vision, strategic direction and outside-the-box thinking to create new organizational forms and generate future growth.

- Excellent at abstract, imaginative thinking
- Long-term orientation
- Ability to see the big picture and plan accordingly
- Great conceptualizers/presenting all the options
- Talented at simplifying highly complex situations
- Capacity to think globally
- Ability to think laterally: groundbreakers
- Great interest in undertaking new things/solving unorthodox, difficult problems
- Champion unconventional thinking
- Agile in response to change
- Excellent at aligning vision with strategy

Works best in turbulent times, when changes in the environment require new directions.

In times of crisis a strategist can provide the vision, confidence, and strength to motivate a disorientated and demoralized workforce. President Franklin D. Roosevelt did it for a nation when, in the grip of the Depression, he told Americans, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." The confidence he inspired won him an unprecedented four consecutive terms, as the US moved from the crisis of the Depression to the conflict of World War II.

In the workplace, a strategist may know the right direction to take thus making for many admiring people but may not be so good at convincing them to follow. Although strategists usually have a very high IQ, they may be lacking in emotional intelligence (EQ). Despite their talent for aligning vision with strategy, they are not always good at taking the next step—aligning strategy *with* values and behavior—as this would entail the sort of awkward human interventions they are reluctant to deal with. To compensate for this deficiency, strategists often join forces with *coaches*.

In one European retailing chain, where the managing director was involved in time-consuming and complex negotiations to fight off a takeover bid, he began to rely on his affable, rather older head of sales—whose preferred end-of-day position was a comfortable seat at the bar in the company’s leisure suite—to keep people up to date with what was happening. This informal arrangement, which grew out of one specific situation, worked so well that the head of sales was also brought in to facilitate communications and people issues during a limited downsizing operation the following year.

The change-catalyst: leadership as a turnaround activity

Change-catalysts love messy situations. They are masters at re-engineering and creating new organizational “blueprints.”

- Skilled at recognizing opportunities for organizational transformation
- Great capacity for identifying and selling the need for change
- Prepared to take on risky, independent assignments
- Good at turning abstract concepts into practical action
- Always looking for new, challenging assignments
- Possessing a great sense of urgency
- Ability to make difficult decisions: tough mindedness
- Very talented at implementation
- Setting high standards and monitoring performance
- Ability to align vision, strategy *and* behavior
- Aptitude in selecting executive talent to get a task done

Works best in situations of culture integration after a merger or acquisition, or when spearheading a re-engineering or turnaround project.

Rudy Giuliani was used to tough assignments. As mayor of New York, he cut crime by two-thirds, and made the city a model for crime management all round the world. However, his aggressiveness and turbulent private life polarized opinions about him. Then, on 11 September 2001, Giuliani was one of thousands who fled for their lives during the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and people saw another side to him. On the day of the attacks, with President George W. Bush kept off the ground in Air

Force 1 for his own safety, Giuliani became “America’s mayor,” broadcasting calm and informative bulletins, comfort and reassurance. He convened police and fire chiefs and kept them with him throughout the day, coordinating the rescue services; he brought together leading local and national government figures for strategy meetings; and he went on to the streets to see and be seen. In the following days he insisted that the city stayed open for business as usual and he attended the funerals of more than 200 emergency service workers who died in the attacks. “Tomorrow,” he said, “New York is going to be here. And we’re going to rebuild, and we’re going to be stronger than we were before.”

If change-catalysts thrive on crises and difficult decision-making, the flip side is that they get easily bored with the status quo. They might revert to rocking the boat in order to liven things up, or lose patience and leave the organization.

Simon Levinson, in his early fifties, has the energy of someone half his age and has made a career of turning round failing overseas markets for a number of multi-media companies. The longest he has remained in one company is five years. His partner recognizes key signals: “The three-year point is classic. First the restlessness starts—he can’t carry on doing this job for the next n years—then he starts discovering things to feel resentful about, lack of support, slow responses. Then the calls start to come from the headhunters and there are weeks of anticipation and uncertainty before I find out whether I’ve got to start learning another language, or whether I’m going to be faced with an extended period of depression and sulking.”

Simon’s energy could be channeled if he worked with a team that included a coach, processor, and/or communicator archetype. The different perspectives offered by these individuals could help him to take a longer-term focus, and guide him in projects that would keep his interest after the initial turnaround effort.

The transactor: leadership as deal-making

Transactors are great deal makers. Skilled at identifying and tackling new opportunities, they thrive on negotiations.

- A preference for novelty, adventure and exploration

- Thriving on new challenges
- Less interested in day-to-day management
- Great salesmen/negotiators
- Embracing change
- Enthusiasm/dynamism
- Proactive mode
- Short-term focus
- Great adaptive capacity
- Creative networking to attain goals
- Great risk tolerance
- Powerful drive to accumulate wealth
- Good reader of people

Works best when negotiating acquisitions or other deals.

Tom Maral's negotiation skills—acquiring or making licensing deals (particularly in the pharmaceutical industry)—led to a meteoric rise and made him a very young partner in the investment bank where he worked. He and his deputy made a particularly effective team. His deputy was detail oriented, good at dealing with people, and knew how to select and keep the right people to make a deal work.

By the time he was in his early thirties, Tom had become restless at the bank and was looking for another challenge. It didn't take him very long to find a group of investors happy to support his idea to set up a private equity firm, specializing in the pharmaceutical industry. But Tom was a disaster as his own boss. Although he closed a number of very promising deals, everything fell apart. Day-to-day managerial responsibilities bored him, and he constantly put off decisions and meetings. This led to poor relations with a number of scientist-entrepreneurs, whose cooperation was essential to making the business model a success. After a few years of struggle, the investors had had enough and severed their association with him. Tom found himself looking for a new job.

Transactors' dynamism and judgment skills are often counterbalanced by impatience with structures and procedures. Although they are excellent at wealth generation, left to act too

much on their own, they can create havoc within an organization. They need strategists, processors, and coaches to redress the balance.

The builder: leadership as an entrepreneurial activity

Builders dream of creating something and have the talent and determination to make their dream come true.

- Great need to be independent/to be in control
- Enormous amount of energy, drive, dynamism and enterprise
- Single mindedness/very focused/very decisive
- Enormous perseverance: great capacity to deal with setbacks
- Ability to live with a great deal of insecurity/ambiguous situations
- Capacity to thrive under pressure
- Long-term focus
- High achievement orientation
- High but calculated risk taking propensity
- Good at creative adaptation/creativity
- Strong motivation to create something
- Great talent for getting buy-in from others/to obtain resources
- A moderate dose of social skills
- Difficulties in dealing with authority

Works best setting up “skunk works” or other ventures inside or outside the organization.

Sir Alan Sugar, the founder of Amstrad and one-time owner of premiership football club Tottenham Hotspur, left school at 16. By that time, he was earning more by working in the evenings after school and running a market stall at weekends than his father earned in a week. He founded Amstrad when he was 21, the same year he married, and made his fortune selling basic, low-cost computers and electronics. At 40 he was the 15th richest person in Britain. When his personal wealth was cut by two-thirds following the London stock market crash in 1987 he remained philosophical (“It’s basically shares, and I have always totally ignored it. It’s flattering, but you haven’t got it and so it’s irrelevant.”) and continued to work with undiminished energy. Now a television star in the UK with *The Apprentice* (based on the US show with Donald Trump), he retains an interest in Amstrad and Spurs, and has a lucrative property portfolio. Self-confessedly aggressive, rude, and

explosively short-tempered, he nevertheless inspires great loyalty in his people. His gentler side as a dedicated family man and generous supporter of charities is less well-publicized.

Builders tend to be strongly controlling and have little regard for others' authority. They live with the illusion (and this may have been true once) that nobody can do things as well as they do. Given their great need for control and ambivalence toward authority—have great difficulties with delegation. They live with the illusion (and this may have been true once) that nobody can do things as well as they do. Although their leadership can be inspirational, within an organization, poor communication and a culture of fear can make this person lose touch with reality, and contribute to dysfunctional decision-making. Difficult as it may be for them, they need help of more organizationally oriented types—the processors—to bring their organizations to the next phase.

The innovator: leadership as creative idea generation

Innovators are focused on the new. They possess a great capacity to solve extremely difficult problems.

- Great drive to pursue their ideas
- Creative and imaginative
- Always on the lookout for future possibilities: new projects, new activities, new procedures.
- Never satisfied in developing their ideas/difficulties with closure
- Tolerance for and enjoyment of complex problem solving
- Stretch goals at whatever needs to be accomplished
- Enormous perseverance/focused
- Long term orientation in the pursuit of their ideas
- Not political/quite naïve about organizational politics
- Ineffective communicators
- Financial gains secondary
- At times eccentric

Works best as idea generators within an organization.

Innovators are constantly generating new ways of doing things, whether they are

inventors or inventive implementers, devising new ways to position products or services. A prominent, somewhat controversial example is Madonna, who is constantly reinventing her image and style and segues seemingly effortlessly between acting, singing, writing, and celebrity wife-and-motherhood, depending upon which of her talents is in the ascendant or particularly in demand.

UK inventor James Dyson spent nearly 10 years developing the bagless, dual cyclone vacuum cleaner that has made him a household name. He nearly bankrupted himself with the hefty cost of annual patent renewals before he saw a penny in sales. Now worldwide sales have exceeded £3 billion, and dyson has joined Hoover as a transitive English verb. The sole shareholder of his company, Dyson has a personal fortune of £700 million. Dyson's inventiveness is matched by shrewd marketing and planning. In 2005 he rode out adverse publicity when he moved his manufacturing out of the UK to Malaysia, to save costs and allow expansion. Research and development remained in Britain and within a year Dyson was employing more people in the UK than before he moved the manufacturing off shore.

The downside of innovators is a tendency to introversion and insularity. The subtleties of organizational political life may escape them but if teamed with people who complement their talent with more highly developed social skills, they can be a powerful leadership force.

The processor: leadership as an exercise in efficiency

Processors like an organization to be a smoothly running, well-oiled machine. They are very effective at setting up the structures and systems needed to support an organization's objectives.

- Systemic outlook
- Extremely effective at turning abstract concepts into practical action
- Good at implementing process-based actions
- Effective at providing structure/processes/boundaries
- Dislike for unstructured situations
- Adherence to rules and procedures
- Possessing a great commitment to the organization

- Good corporate citizens/loyal and cooperative
- Great self-discipline, very reliable, efficient and conscientious
- Remaining cool-headed in situations of stress
- Positive attitude toward authority
- Excellent at time management

Works best when creating order out of disorder.

Processors are adaptable and collaborative, and complement most other leadership styles. They are important in any executive role constellation, and they are not the kind of people who will get an organization into trouble. Deeply loyal, they are not afraid of difficult decisions, even if there is a personal cost involved.

When Gerald Ford became US President in 1974, his major task was to restore confidence in the presidency, which his predecessor, Richard Nixon, had brought into disrepute. Maintaining that “the difficult decisions always come to this desk,” within a month of taking office he issued a formal pardon to Nixon, sparing the former President the humiliation of a highly public trial. Ford then faced out national uproar and a congressional enquiry into allegations that the pardon had been part of a pre-arranged deal before Nixon’s resignation. Ford judged that the pardon was “the right thing to do,” in order to re-establish the authority of the White House, and, as Ford’s successor Jimmy Carter put it, “heal our land.” Watergate cast a long shadow over Ford’s achievements, however, and cost him re-election in 1976, although his work to reunite the country was later recognized by the Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded to him by Bill Clinton.

Sometimes a respect for order, systems and rules can shade into stubbornness and inflexibility, so that a processor can be slow to respond to new opportunities or even hinder them. But generally processors are good team players, and know how to make things work.

Kiera Rhodes was director of international development at a leading educational institute when she was asked to undertake an urgent downsizing study: the institute had to pare down a workforce that was already stretched. Kiera knew that the answer was to eliminate an entire area of operation, either within the faculty offerings or an administrative

function. One candidate was the chemistry department. Following a nationwide trend, chemistry was attracting fewer student applicants. However, the department's field of research was cutting-edge and internationally recognized. The institute could not afford to lose that acclaim and intellectual capital to a competing body. Another candidate immediately became apparent: the department of international development. Although a small department, its overheads and expenses were disproportionate to its size and returns remained stable—but low. Kiera's final recommendation was to make herself, and her department, redundant.

The coach: leadership as people development

Coaches create high-performance teams and high-performance cultures.

- Empathic/high EQ
- Good listeners
- Inspire trust
- Affinity with people/cooperative
- Excellent at handling difficult interpersonal and group situations
- Talent for creating high performance cultures and teams
- Great developers of people/giving constructive feedback
- Excellent at giving career guidance
- Great motivators
- Good communicators
- Have a positive outlook
- Good delegators
- Preference for participatory management

Works best when instituting culture change projects. Particularly effective in networking, knowledge-based organizations.

Adrien Fribourg, had worked for some time as an interim manager, taking short-term appointments troubleshooting in a succession of high-tech companies, when his agent called with a proposition. A small software developer, with one outstanding product, had just rid itself of its founder-CEO but was floundering. They wanted someone for the long-term, who would give the company a new style of leadership, something different from the very directive, hierarchical style favored by the departing person. Adrien hesitated.

His life worked out very nicely as it was. With his children independent and out of the house, and homes in France and Italy, short-term, intensive missions suited him well—and they were lucrative. However, there was something very appealing about the company profile. The single product excelled in the market and for the time being at least its position looked unassailable; there was clearly no shortage of creative thinking in the organization, although it was largely frustrated; and the people were all high caliber. Unfortunately they were also disaffected and the company had high exit rates.

Adrien took the job. During his first two weeks, he rarely saw the inside of his office as he systematically met every individual working in the company, the suppliers, and major clients. For three days he traveled with members of the sales team. Towards the end of his first month he called all the employees together. First of all, he summarized the situation as he saw it and announced that, over the next two months, he would be formulating a plan to bring in new financing and kick-starting some project innovation that had been lying dormant. Then he said that during that period his door would be open to anyone to come and present ideas: and after that, his door—and everyone else's—would be gone. The internal partitions that divided the company premises (the top two floors of a converted warehouse) into small, somber offices would be removed.

Adrien had identified likely leaders for development teams and immediately put them to work on some of the slumbering projects. He assembled a special unit to look at second and third generation developments from the alpha product, bringing in client representatives as advisors. The sales team recruited new members and were given specialized training. Adrien's office was also in the new open-plan workspace and he was careful to maintain a presence there, overcoming some initial wariness from employees. Eventually, he was obliged to relocate to an interior "pod," to establish a degree of privacy and confidentiality—but it had no door, and his accessibility became a keynote of the new company culture. In the first two years, he saw very little of his Italian and French homes. By the end of that time, the new generation of software was rolling out, several of the dormant projects were being activated, and the company's improved performance had attracted two new investors.

Coaches are highly effective at getting the best out of people, and get a great deal of personal satisfaction from developing and mentoring others. Consistently with this, they

may find it hard to be tough when needed, and shy away from dealing with underperformance and difficult personal issues. They probably do *not* represent the leadership archetype best suited to dealing with crises.

The communicator: leadership as stage management

Communicators are great influencers, and have a considerable impact on their surroundings.

- Excellent at communicating broad themes/big picture
- Talented in using simple language/ metaphors
- Not detail oriented
- Great presence/ knowing how to attract the attention of others
- Impressive theatrical skills/creation of make-believe
- Capacity to reframe difficult situations positively
- Talent for influencing others
- Good networking skills/ building alliances
- Excellent at managing various stakeholders
- Very effective in getting people to see their point of view.
- Very effective in using “experts”
- Not proud to ask for outside help/use advisors and consulting firms

Works best when influencing various organizational constituencies to overcome crisis situations.

Communicators have impressive theatrical skills and great presence. Optimistic and universally pleasant to those around them, their influence can be positive, even dazzling. However, their preference for looking at the big picture, rather than dealing with detail, can put pressure on others and attract accusations of superficiality.

Ronald Reagan, so media friendly that he was known as the “Great Communicator,” was an outstanding speaker long before he became President. Funny, disarming, and gifted at drawing people out and towards himself, he was able to touch and inspire people individually at all levels. As President, he called on writers who crafted his speeches to suit his ability to deliver ideas and emotions simply and sincerely. Happy to delegate to advisors and his cabinet, Reagan took more time off from the White House than any of

his predecessors. As President George W. Bush recalled in his funeral eulogy: “He believed in taking a break now and then, because, as he said, there's nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse.” Peggy Noonan, one of Reagan’s advisors and speechwriters, admired him greatly and wrote a famous tribute. Nevertheless, she noted: “[His] great flaw ... was his famous detachment, which was painful for his children and disorienting for his staff. No one around him quite understood it, the deep and emotional engagement in public events and public affairs, and the slight and seemingly formal interest in the lives of those around him. ... He would do in the nicest possible way what had to be done. He was as nice as he could be about it, but he knew where he was going, and if you were in the way you were gone.”

With their self-serving tendency to look for supporters and providers who can make them look good, organizational communicators are ideal clients for consulting firms. They need to be reminded that effective leadership is defined by results, not attributes. They need executives such as strategists and processors to make their dreams become reality.

Mapping archetypes

So, what do we do with this new set of leadership archetypes? How do we build on this opportunity for self-knowledge and better perception of others? How can this knowledge be used to help leaders adapt their behavior to function well in a new role?

A key point is that archetypes result from an individual’s response to the environment. Appropriate behavior in one situation will be unsuitable in another; obvious strengths in one role will handicap performance in others. Understanding personality make-up, competencies, and roles is a powerful tool in the hand of an organizational designer—as our clever general demonstrated. Understanding people’s preferred style will be useful when building management teams, where members can help each other, leveraging their strengths and allowing colleagues to compensate for their weaknesses.

However, identifying leadership behavior patterns is not easy. It can be a complex process. What’s more, it triggers a sort of hypochondria. Just as junior doctors discover they have the symptoms of every new disease they study, we all start to recognize aspects of ourselves in the description of each archetype—and that’s perfectly fine, because the

truth is that most of us can be slotted into more than one archetype, and archetype identifications will change as our life changes. Assessing where and what we are is not a static, one-off, operation.

A substantial part of the LAQ analysis gives guidance on working for leaders who fit the eight leadership archetypes and managing others who align with them. This is summarized briefly in Table 1.

Table 1

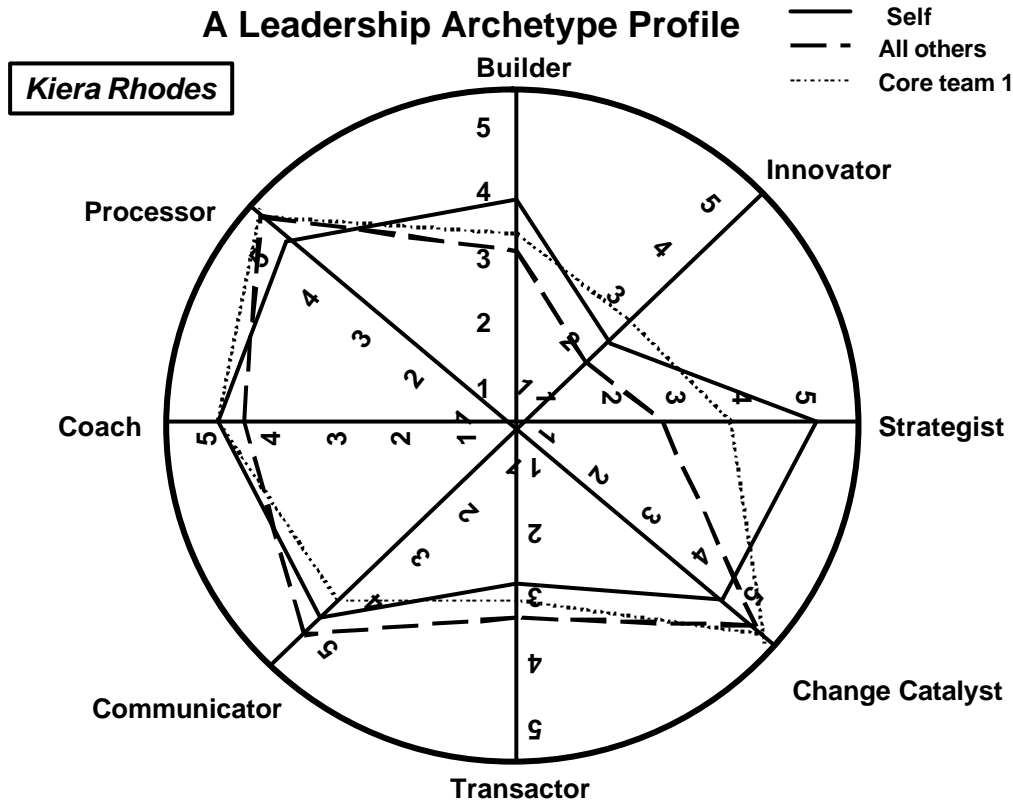
Leadership archetypes	Working with them	How to manage them
Strategist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not reject bizarre suggestions out of hand • Help them align strategy with implementation • Assume responsibility for implementation • Help them translate abstract ideas into communicable plans • Do not expect compliments or interest in your work • Ask their advice • Provide data to support or query their vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage their creativity • Listen to them • Protect them from internal bureaucracy • Be patient: do not expect instant results
Change-catalyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them slow down • Be prepared for insensitivity and thoughtlessness • Act as a buffer • Be prepared for action • Be ready to indicate when they are moving in the wrong direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use them as trouble-shooters • Limit the risk of change for change's sake • Do not stifle their enthusiasm • Set boundaries • Develop their reflective side • Help them increase their EQ
Transactor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared for action • Expect direction • Be prepared to take on a complementary role • Be direct • Maintain their interest • Act as a sounding board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep them fulfilled • Help them to look at the long term • Stress the need for administrative diligence • Address volatile behavior

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect surprises • Do not overreact to volatile behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage transparency • Maintain attractive reward procedures
Builder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a voice of reason • Demonstrate examples of professional management • Emphasize the value of delegation • Help set priorities • Be ready to play devil's advocate • Do not expect compliments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to them • Recognize their need for independence • Emphasize the value of delegation • Avoid over-solicitous information seeking • Watch out for over-optimism • Compliment them on their ideas
Innovator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a self-starter • Do not expect feedback • Be a sparring partner • Keep them in touch with financial realities • Help them to achieve closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage them to explore unorthodox ideas • Protect them from internal bureaucracy • Do not put them in management positions • Steer them towards valuable projects • Channel their enthusiasm
Processor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point out their negative influence on others • Be a buffer between them and creative people • Encourage them to take action and be more adventurous • Accept the need to observe established rules and procedure • Understand that conformity will be rewarded more than innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them see the larger picture • Forestall any tendency to over-systemize • Help them speed up decision-making • Calm any distress over departures from procedure
Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be ready to play organizational executioner • Encourage them to recognize and deal with underperformance and difficult decisions • Inject a regular dose of reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate their ability to get the best out of people • Encourage them to recognize and deal with underperformance and difficult decisions • Help them to feel comfortable about exerting authority

Communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume responsibility for implementation • Trust their instincts • Make sure their exposure to questioning is kept short • Prevent excessive use of external advisors • Pre-empt their tendency to go for quick-fix solutions • Make sure your own achievements are recognized by others • Inject a regular dose of reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use them in communications roles in crisis situations • Be directive • Make sure they understand what you expect from them • Create a support system for implementation • Prevent excessive use of external advisors • Watch out for abuse of the system
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Ideally, the LAQ will be completed by the individual, and also members one or two of the core team(s) to which the person belongs (for example, colleagues from the same department, and fellow members of an executive team). A third category includes all interested others inside or outside the organization (for example, clients or people from other departments or subsidiaries). The self-score, core team score(s), and others' scores are then averaged and mapped on a spider web grid, where congruencies and discrepancies are immediately visible. To see how this works in practice, let's look at the mapping for Kiera Rhodes, who decided self-immolation was the only viable solution to her organization's crisis (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1



Looking at her profile, the first observation is that her self-perception and the perception of others are quite close with the exception of the Strategist role. Her high Processor, Change Catalyst and Coach scores noted by her department members and the other observers could explain why she was viewed as the person best suited to handling the downsizing project. In addition, the high scores on the Communicator axis points out her effectiveness in getting the needed messages across. The divergence on the Strategist axis can be a consequence of the fact that this particular LAQ exercise was completed before she made herself and her whole department redundant. Although she was quite innovative in engaging in self-immolation, she is viewed as everything but the Innovator type.

Once an individual test-taker has had the opportunity to reflect on their results as shown on the spider web graph, the next part of the process is to consider the following questions. Ideally, these topics should be discussed with the person's executive team, but even if the thinking is done individually, it is still an invaluable exercise.

1. What executive role constellation is needed in your organization, given the environment it is operating in? What leadership behavior is needed for maximum effectiveness? What kind of behavior should be played down or changed?
2. What do you perceive as your most prominent style? If you have received multi-party feedback, what do others see as your most prominent style? How do you explain the divergences?
3. How does your leadership style fit the context in which your organization is operating? Could your style cause problems, and if so, what would they be?
4. What is the leadership style of your key subordinates? How do their styles fit with yours? Should you try to modify aspects of your style? What behavior should you avoid? What can your subordinates do to help you?
5. What is your superior's style? How does his or her style fit with yours? Should this person try to modify aspects of his or her style? What kind of behavior should he or she avoid? Is there any advice you can give your superior?
6. Given the importance of executive role constellations in teams, what changes need to be made?

What are we like?

What this discussion of leadership archetypes has demonstrated is that the ideal leader has the option of a repertoire of styles. Obviously, the higher the person rates on the various leadership archetypes, the better. Having the luxury of having more than one style to choose from will increase an executive's options in dealing with changing situations. Rare will be that leader, however, who rates high on all of the eight archetypes. But the identification of leadership archetypes may be the first step in expanding one's behavioral repertoire. In doing so, however, the person needs to be realistic. Certain roles will not come naturally. They just don't fit the scripts in the individual's inner theatre. The person might not have the personality make-up for certain kinds of behavior. Furthermore, there will be problems if people are put into roles they are not suited for, particularly at senior

levels in the organization. It is much better for an executive to maximize her or her strengths, and ask others with complementary archetypes to work with him or her, rather than trying to do, or be, the impossible.

By recognizing the importance of specific leadership configurations, we will gain valuable insight into other people and how they operate. We will recognize the gaps that have to be filled in teams. And, most importantly, by looking at leadership as a set of complementarities, team effectiveness will improve. Furthermore, executive teams that pay attention to individual differences in leadership styles will appreciate interdependencies and recognize how each member of the team can make the best contribution. It will help create a culture of mutual support and trust, will reduce team stress and conflict, and make for more creative problem solving. In addition, increased trust will decrease the kind of silo formation that is all too common in large organizations, and encourage effective knowledge management. Thus building effective teams will contribute to the existence of boundaryless organizations. Most importantly, however, when executives take time to develop understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses, they will have laid the foundation of a high performance organization.