



The Strategic Impact of Character and Virtues

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WESTERN UNIVERSITY · CANADA

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Institute for Leadership



“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one.”

Henry David Thoreau

“Every man, as to character, is the creature of the age in which he lives. Very few are able to raise themselves above the ideas of their times.”

Voltaire

Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.

Abraham Lincoln

People do not seem to realize that
their opinion of the world is also a
confession of character.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character

Martin Luther King Jr.

Modern day organizations are the instrument of societal change...

For better or worse

The most pressing and important problems (and opportunities) we face will require character based judgment that exceeds our current capacity.

Imagine if as educators and practitioners we could elevate character alongside competence to foster the quality of well-being and sustained excellence we seek.

“The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world’s problem.”

Mahatma Gandhi

*“We must become the
change we want to see.”*

Mahatma Gandhi

Hopes & Aspirations

- Share insights I wish I had known 40 years ago when I embarked on my academic career.
- Workshop - Learn, Experience, Engage
- Perhaps inspire you in some small way
 - your personal well-being and those in your orbit
 - Your teaching, research, practice

9th - 11th JANUARY 2025

If the character-and-virtue agenda in philosophy, psychology, and education is to maintain its contemporary relevance, it needs to be brought to bear on ongoing and future global challenges. Global challenges of our time include: the mental health epidemic; the sudden rise of GenAI and related new technologies that open a Pandora's box of moral issues; increasing environmental threats; and perceived political dysfunction leading to increased polarisation. All these challenges, and others, threaten the moral ecology underlying healthy character development.

Key Insights

Character leadership is central to addressing the grand challenges of our time.

We are underestimating the strength of character required to navigate the grand challenges.

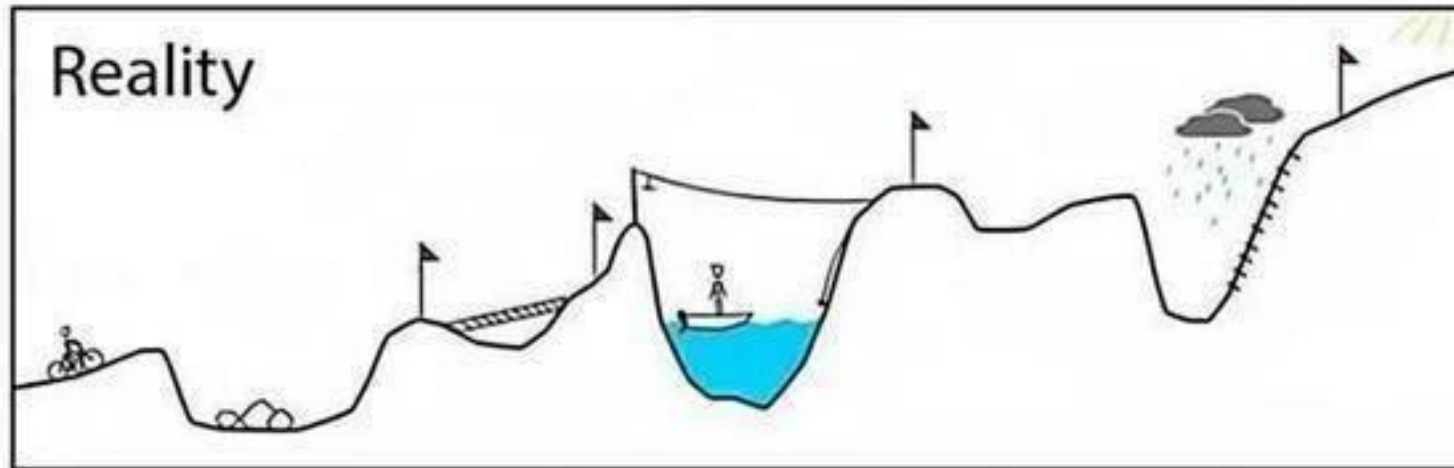
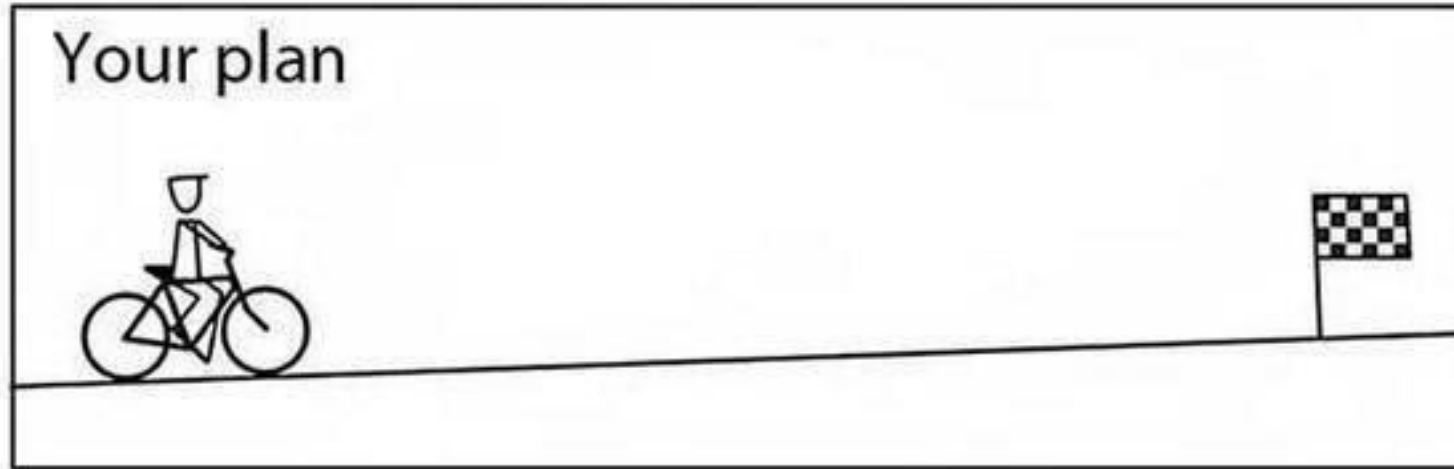
Organizations are instrumental (for better and worse). Understanding the architecture of character in organizations is critical.

We need to move beyond the “temporary bump” of awareness to enable strategic impact.

Paradigm shifts needed...



How much courage will it take?



<https://i.redd.it/hftf2bv0gt8y.jpg> - Courtesy of Veronique

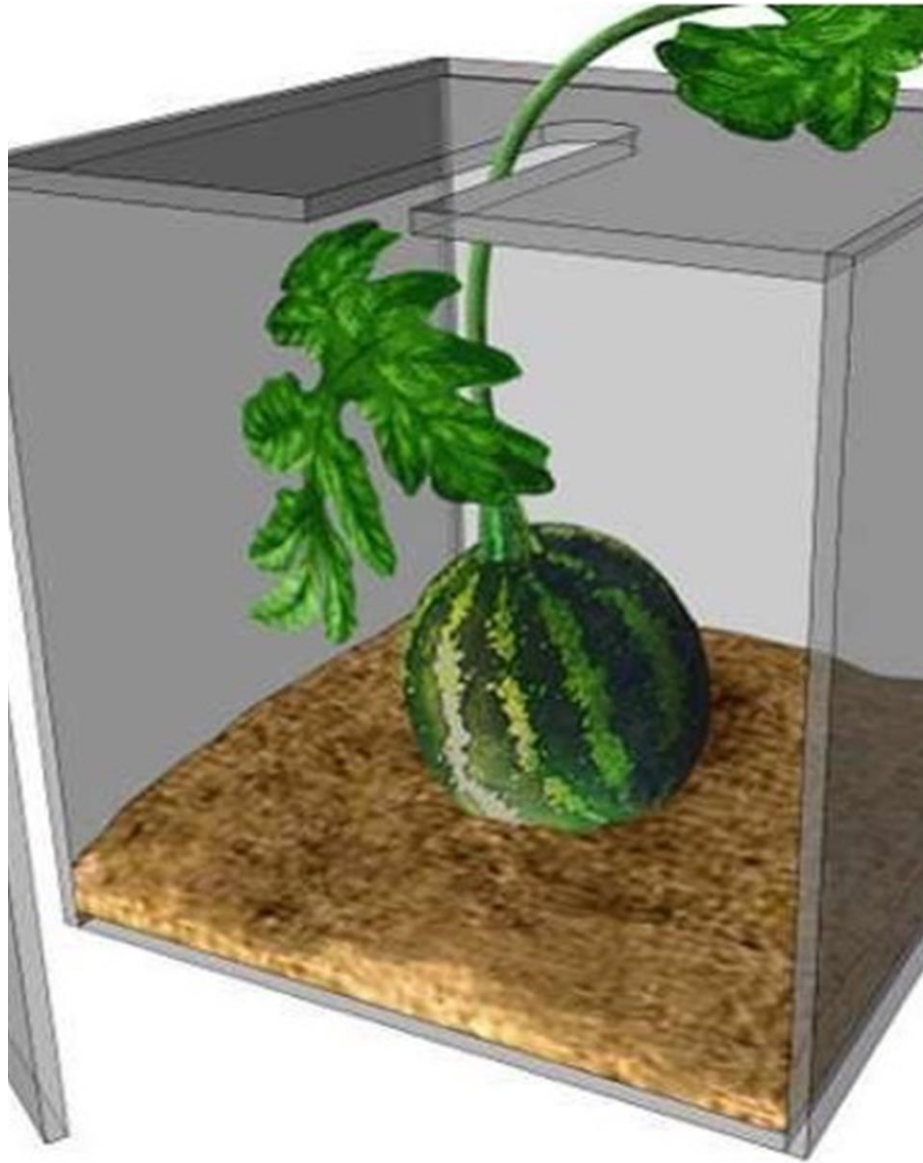
Culture & Character

‘If you put good apples into a bad situation, you’ll get bad apples.’

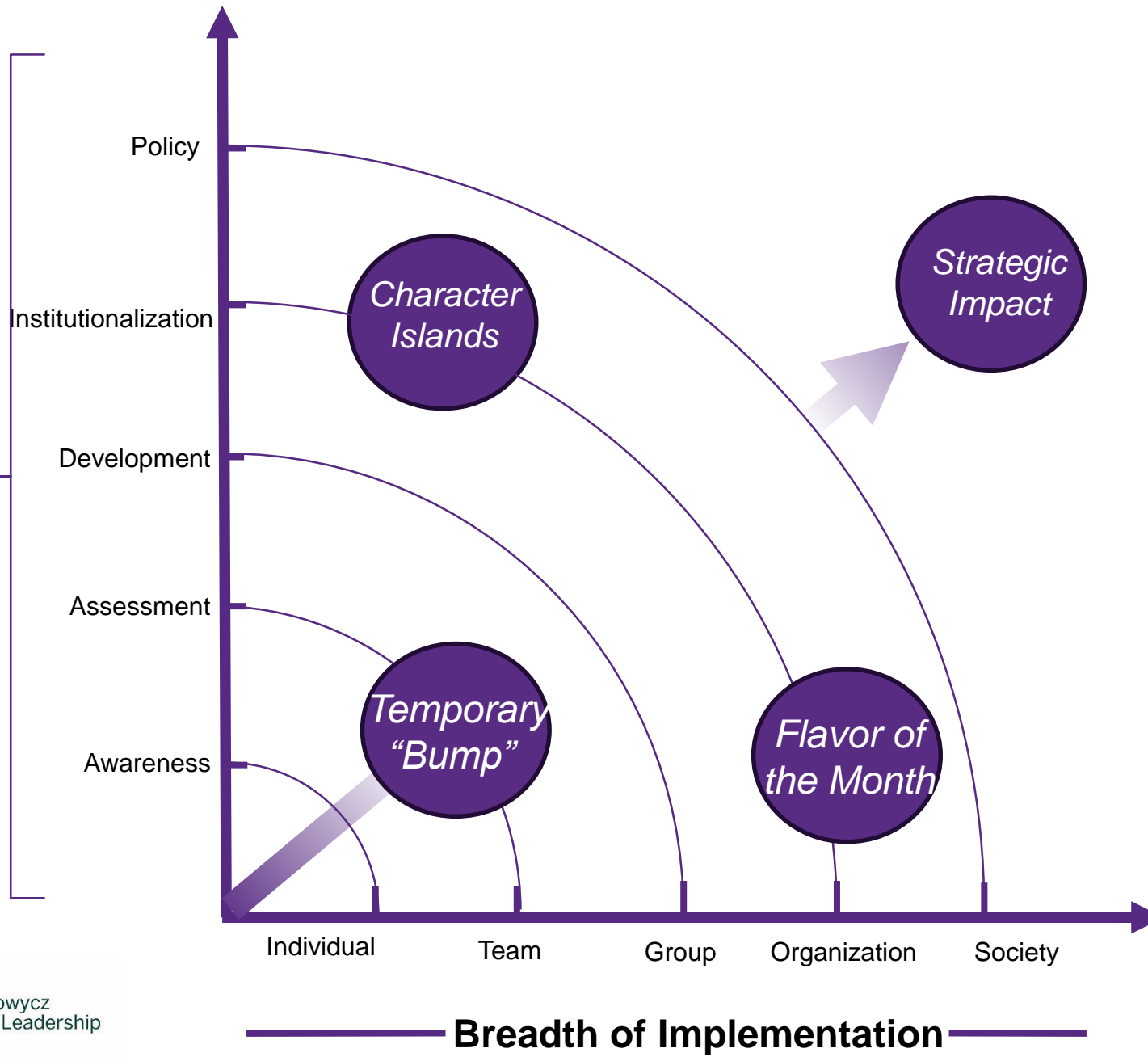
- Philip Zimbardo

We share responsibility to be **good barrel makers.**





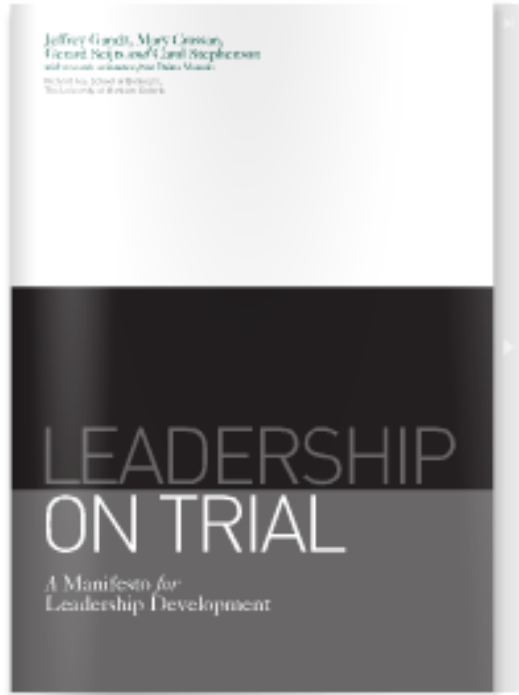
Depth of Implementation



The Journey.....



Why Character? - Lessons from 2008



- 350 Leaders
- Focus Groups
- Canada, US, Europe, Asia
- Key Insight – Character implicated but no agreement on what it is or how it can be developed

Elevate Character Alongside Competence!

<http://www.ivey.uwo.ca/research/leadership>

The Perfect Hire for Community Management

by Burke Nielsen | Feb 8, 2017 | 6 comments

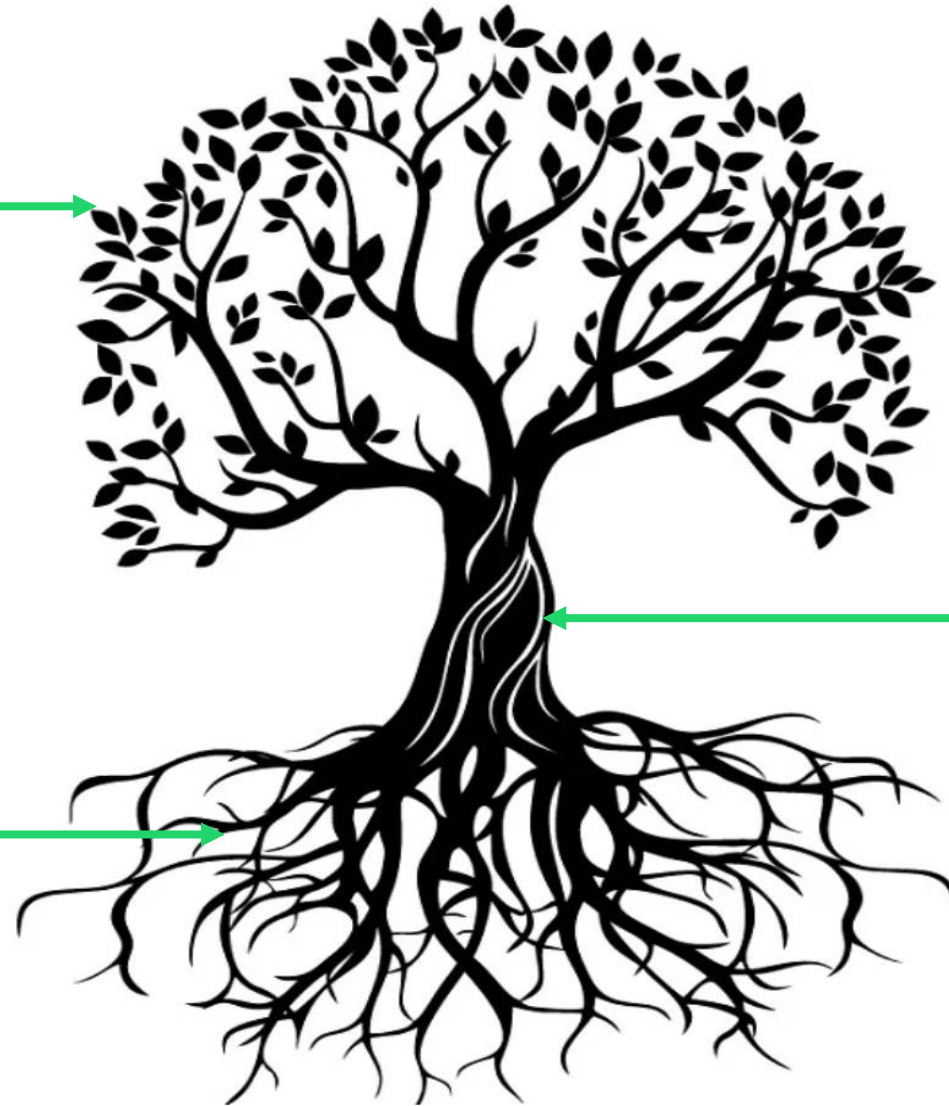


Character, Competencies and Values

Competencies

What I/we do, How I/we do it

E.g. Communication
Problem-solving
Time management
Mentoring



Values

Why I/we do it

E.g. Collaboration
Integrity
Excellence
Customer Service

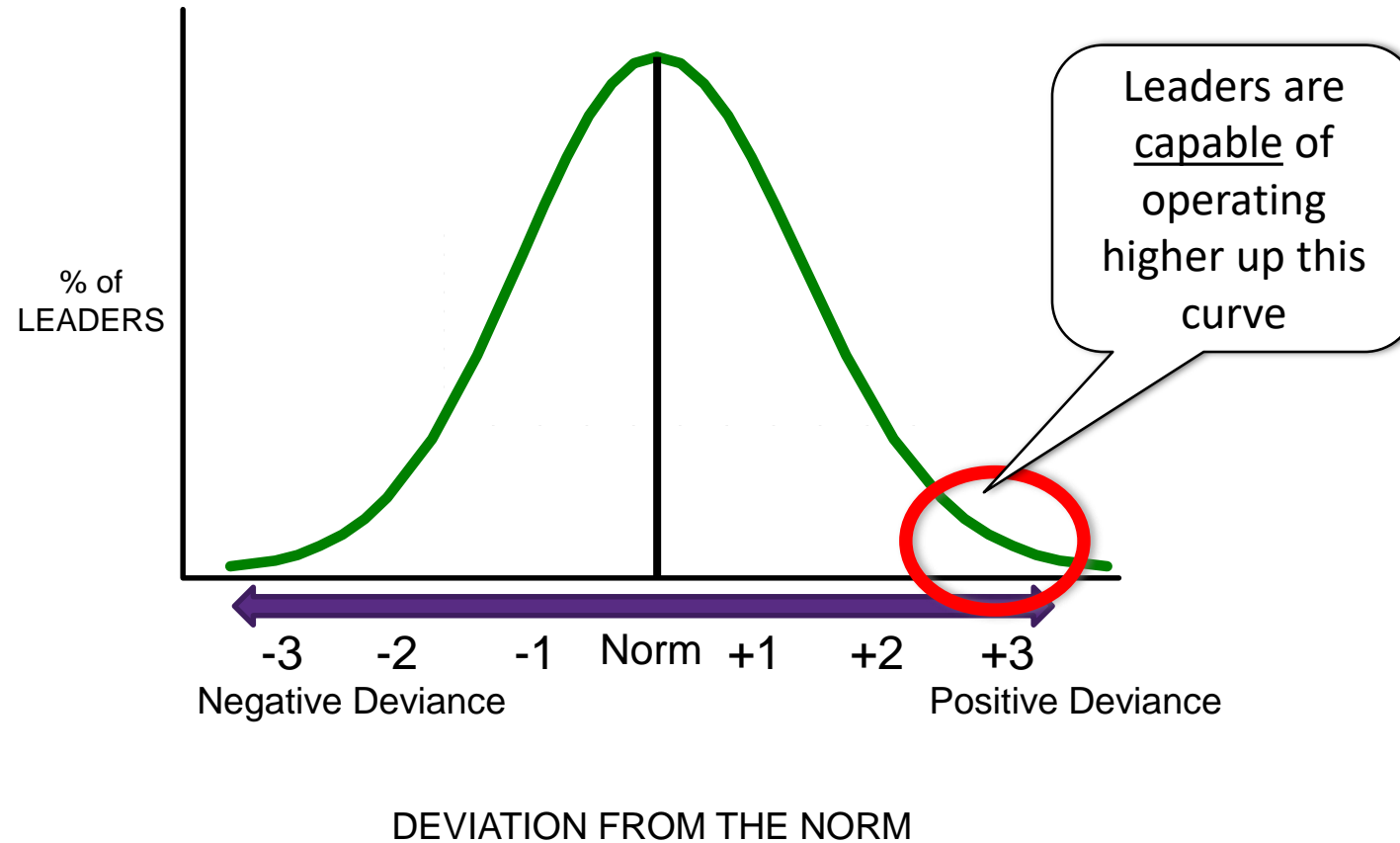
Character

Who I am / Who we are

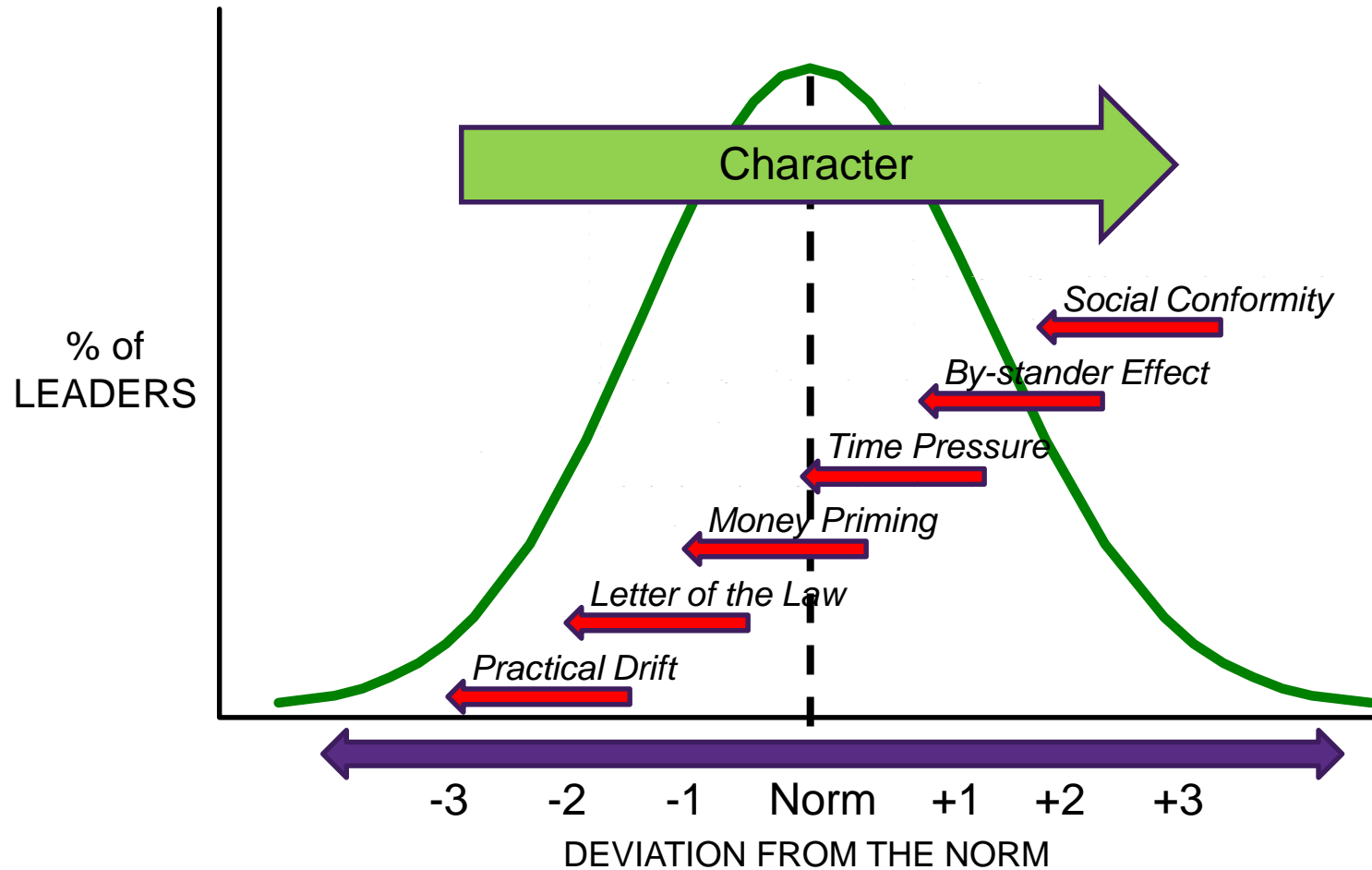
Defining Leader Character

- Being a **leader** is less about the position and more about the **disposition to lead**. Having the disposition to lead is what allows professionals to rise above the fray and **bring the best of themselves to their daily activities**.
- **Character** "An interconnected set of habituated patterns of thought, emotion, motivation or volition, and action (Bright et al., 2014) that satisfy very specific criteria, identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004), as being virtuous." (Crossan et al., 2021, p. 287).

Character: Sustained Excellence & Human Flourishing



Character Reasserts Judgment



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

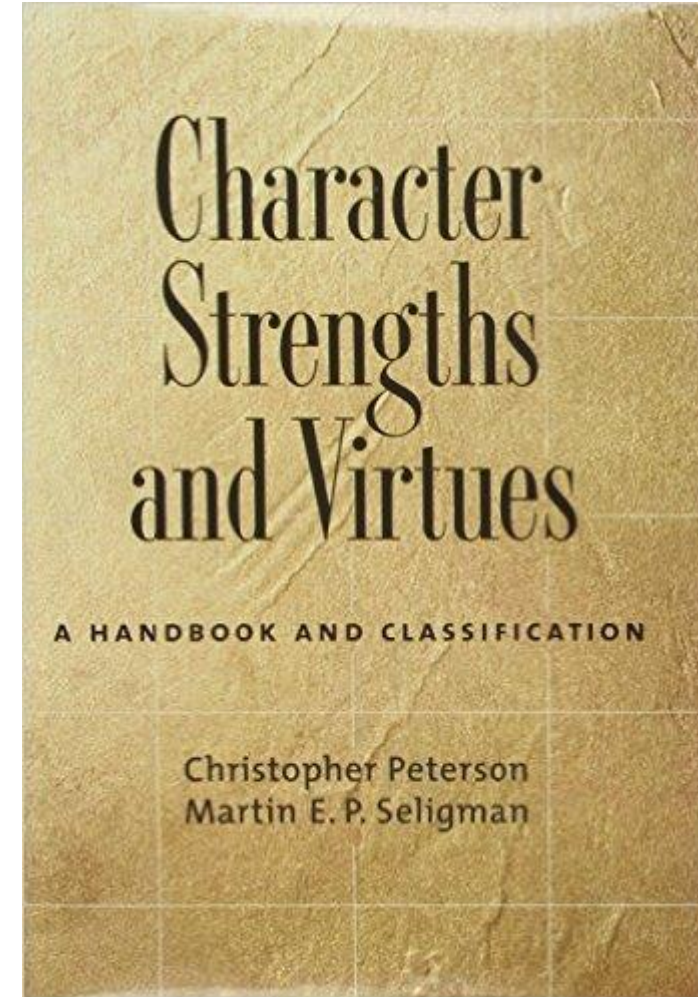


Virtue Ethics
and Practical
Wisdom

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Platon-Confucius-Aristote.jpg>



Seven
Grandfather
Teachings



Character
strengths that
apply across
cultures,
religions and
time

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[@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)

Research to Practice

In Search of Values and Decision Making
Journal of Business Ethics, 2013, Vol. 111, No. 1, pp. 1-14

Mary Crossan, Gerard Seijts

Journal of Business Ethics
ISSN 0167-4544
Volume 111
Number 1
July 2013
DOI: 10.1007/s10551-012-1198-1

Developing Leadership

Wester

Wester

Leadership

By paying more attention to the values and character of leaders, we can improve the effectiveness of leadership.

When it comes to assessing CEOs, or board members, the boards to consider are character. This article suggests the key dimensions these criteria to assess should consider in the

Competencies, Commitment

Corporate directors look for three things in the CEO: assess and occasionally commitment and character.

Competencies matter. The capable of doing; in order for intellect as well as of and strategic competencies reflects the extent to which hard work of leadership role, and how prepares necessary to succeed. It determines how leadership contents in which they how they use the content the decisions they make implemented and evaluated.

Leaders

Ch

Organizational Dynamics (2015) 44, 65–74

Character impact on

Gerard Seijts*

Ivey Business School, Western University

INTRODUCTION

In a recent comment on the Ivey Business School, Domenic Bartol consulting practice, we focus too much on who we hire. Similarly, in a speech to the Bank of England, and in the broader financial markets need to rediscover their clients and their needs of C-suite leaders have discussed this topic, and executive leaders, would disagree. While leaders read they also report that they use it in recruiting, selecting, and firing them! Based on research on the perceived character to three dimensions of ambiguity about what it is, its dimensions are in leadership, how character done to develop character. Second, leaders

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ARTICLE IN PRESS

JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

Journal of Management
doi: 10.1111/joms.12000

Character's Essence

Financial Institutions
William Furlong, Professor

The General Data Protection Regulation

Non-EU Companies
Ozan Karaduman

The Rise of the A Corporate Governance

Jerry K C Koh and V

In Pari Delicto Approaches Taken

Lincoln Caylor and M

Embedding practices

Gerard Seijts,

Good leadership is a combination of the commitment to these three, character attention – both in recruitment and practice – thought to be foundational. Fred Kiel and his colleagues on four aspects of character: generosity and compassion (ROA) of 9.35% over a 10-year period. Low ratings had a ROA of 1.5%. Character is a combination of values that enable organizationally-appropriate behavior. Sentative of good leadership traits such as resilience, dispositional variables, individual's values, such as research on character begun to be incorporated into research. This development crises and scandals in example, we conduct the role of leadership financial crisis. Quest theme in our covers public, private and nonprofit, the United Kingdom, the United States, and an organization's revealed that senior-level public and private critical to good governance remains underdeveloped. Hence, two questions and HR professionals

[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616\(2014\)00000-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(2014)00000-0)

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Developing Leadership CHARACTER

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Mary Crossan, Gerard Seijts, and Bill Furlong

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Developing Leadership Character in Business Programs

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DAINA MAZUTIS

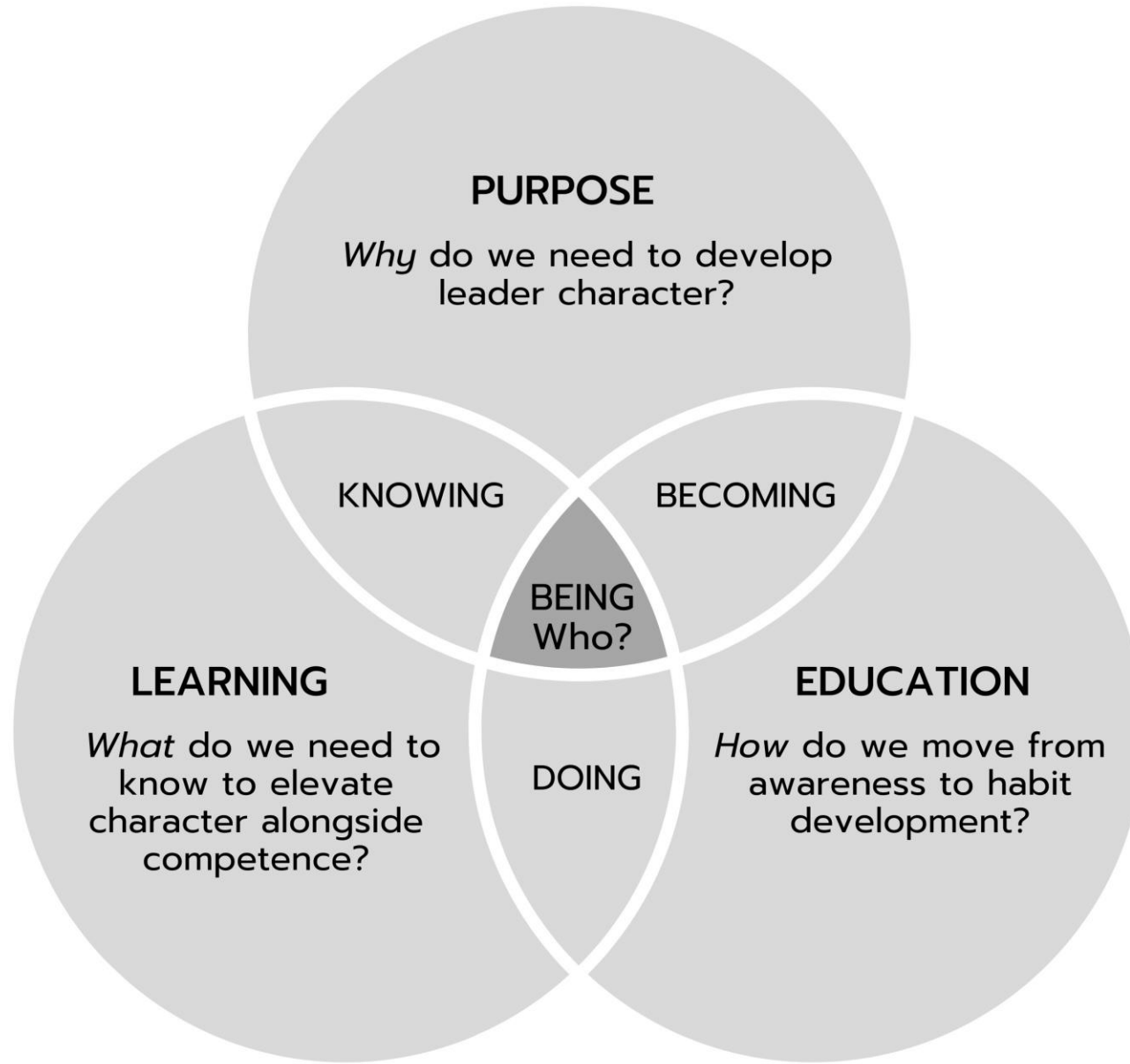
IMD, Lausanne, Switzerland

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Our objective is to encourage and enable leadership character development in business education. Building on a model of character strengths and their link to virtues, values, and ethical decision making, we describe an approach to develop leadership character at the individual, group, and organizational levels. We contrast this approach to existing practices that have focused on teaching functional content over character and address how business educators can enable leadership character development through their own behaviors, relationships, and structures. Most important, we provide concrete suggestions on how to integrate a focus on character development into existing business programs, both in terms of individual courses as well as the overall curriculum. We highlight that the development of leadership character must extend beyond student engagement in a course since “it takes a village” to develop character.



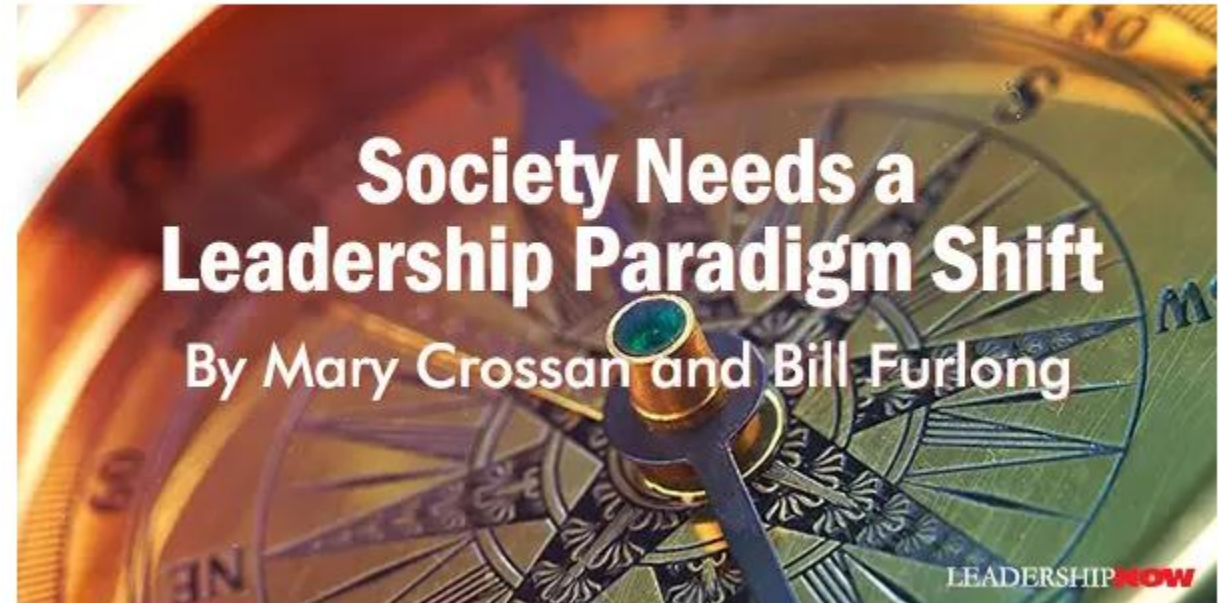
Paradigm Shift – Elevating Character Alongside Competence

12.04.23

Society Needs a Leadership Paradigm Shift

Benefits of leaders moving from weak to strong character:

- 14% increase in leader effectiveness
- 10% increase in leader resilience
- 8% increase in leader well-being
- 6% increase in promotion potential
- 18% increase in employee voice
- 16% improvement in psychological safety
- 8% increase in organizational commitment
- 8% increase in work engagement
- 4% increase in subjective well-being
- 10% increase in job-related well-being
- 10% improvement in job satisfaction



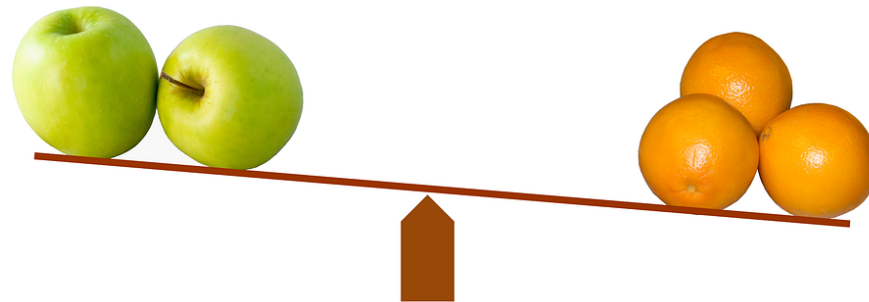
Paradigm Shift #1: “Casual” to “Leader” Character

Casual Character

- Morals and ethics
- Personality based
- Subjective
- Can't be assessed
- Can't be developed
- Competency most important
- “Nice” to have
- Restraining

Leader Character

- Performance, Judgment, Well-Being
- Habits of Being
- Objective
- Can be assessed
- Can be developed
- Character amplifies competency
- “Need” to have
- Liberating



Paradigm Shift #2: From Good to Strong

“Good Enough”

- "My intentions are good"
- "I am a good person"
- "I don't need development...but I see the need for this in others"
- "The devil made me do it - It's not me, it's the organization."
- "I focus on my strengths"



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-walking-on-beach-during-sunset-4612303/>

Underestimating Needed Strength

- Good intentions necessary but not sufficient – accountable for our observable behaviors
- More than being "good" - Does it hold up?
- Knowing how to exercise character daily.
- Work in the organization while working on it.
- Strengths operate like vices without support



<https://getwindsurffit.com/windsurfing-boards/>

Paradigm Shift #3: The Aerodynamics of Leadership

- Flight became possible once we grasped the invisible science of aerodynamics
- Likewise, the “X-factor” of great leadership is visible once we understand the science of Character
- “...realiz[e] the enormous benefits that accrue from recognizing how strength of character, alongside competence allows leadership to take flight.”

– “Character – The Aerodynamics of Leadership” (Crossan & Furlong, CEO World Magazine)



Make Leader Character Your Competitive Edge

October 19, 2022 | Mary Crossan, Bill Furlong, and Robert D. Austin | **LEADERSHIP**

The authors' research into leader character demonstrates its effect on judgment and finds that fostering a culture where character is valued equally alongside competence can result in better decisions and outcomes. Furthermore, they find that, as with competence, character can be developed through education and practice.

<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/make-leader-character-your-competitive-edge/>



Return on Character

“Organizations with leaders of high character – those whose employees rated them highly on integrity, responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion – had nearly **five times the return on assets** of those with low character.”

- “Return on Character”, Fred Kiel, 2015



The Practice



Canada Border Services Agency



Royal Canadian Mounted Police



Canadian Armed Forces



Canada Revenue Agency

Agence du revenu du Canada



HEALTHPRO

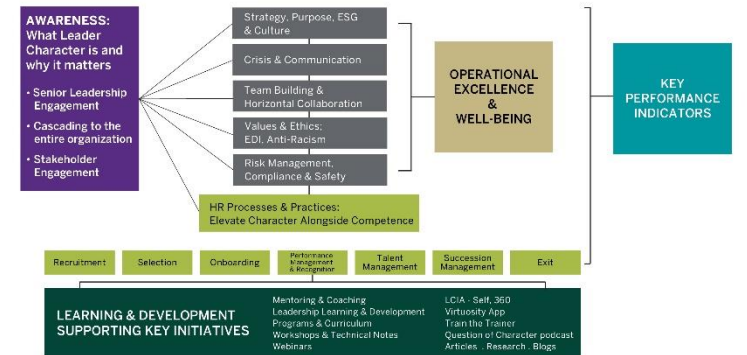
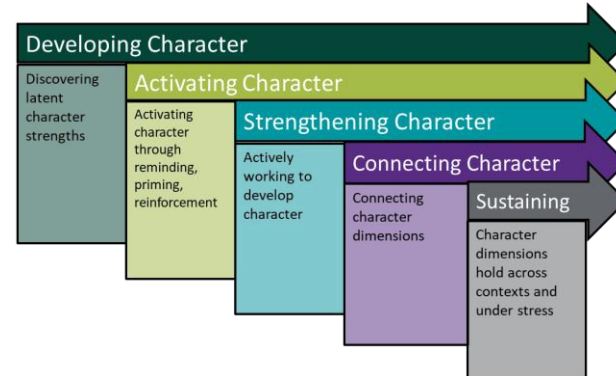
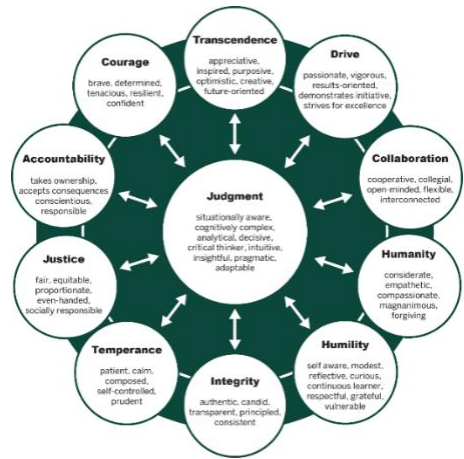


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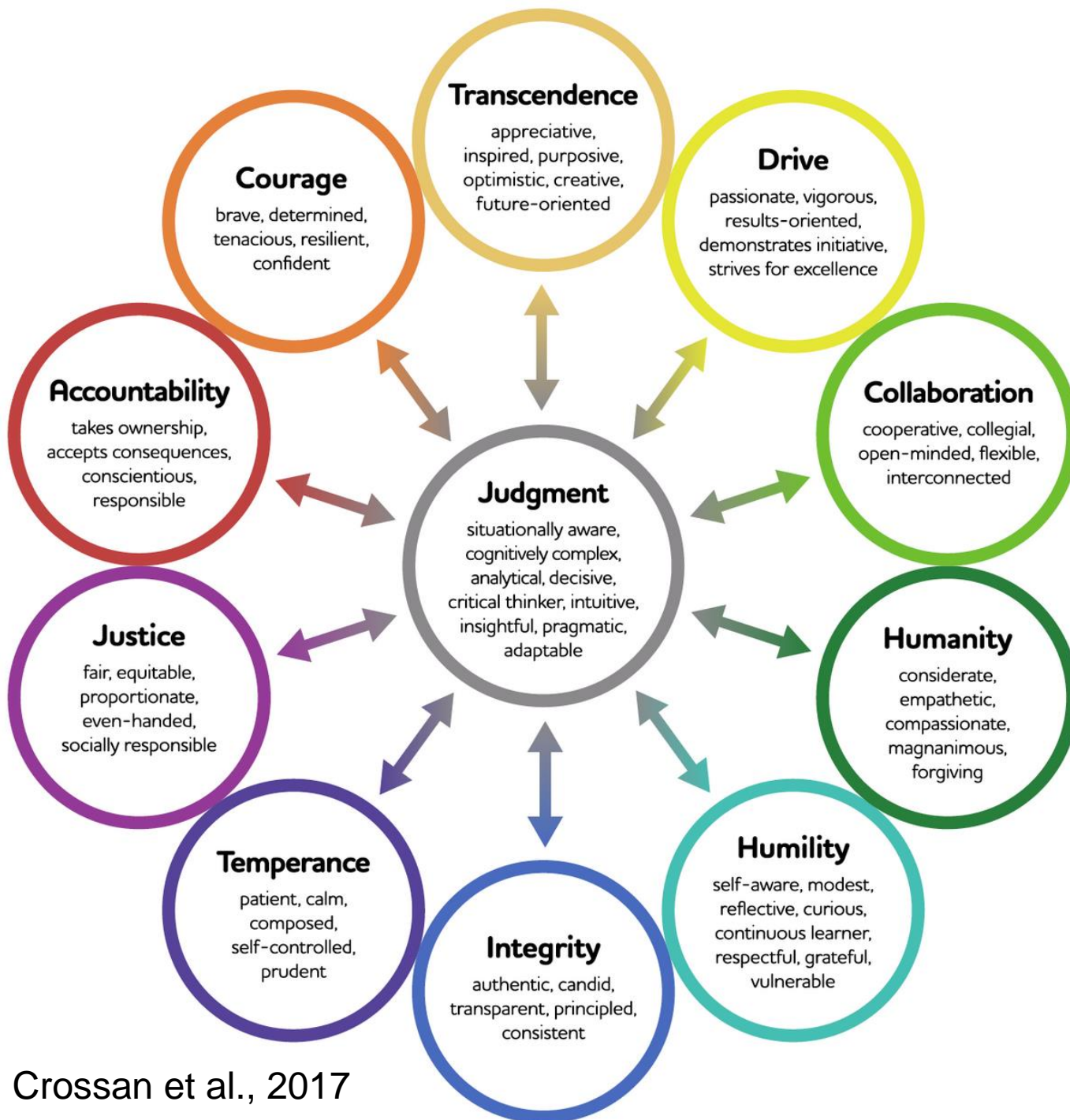
www.ivey.ca/leadership/
[@iveyleadership](https://twitter.com/iveyleadership)

Anatomy → Development/Exercise → Application



Leader Character Framework

1. Interconnected
2. Any virtue can be a vice (- or +)
3. Judgment plays a central role
4. All are equally important
5. Never want to weaken strengths
6. Universal across context, culture, time



www.ivey.ca/leadership/
@iveyleadership

Mandela's First Day





What do you think is your strongest dimension?

What do you think is your weakest dimension?



Virtues and Vices

Humanity

considerate,
empathetic,
compassionate,
magnanimous,
forgiving

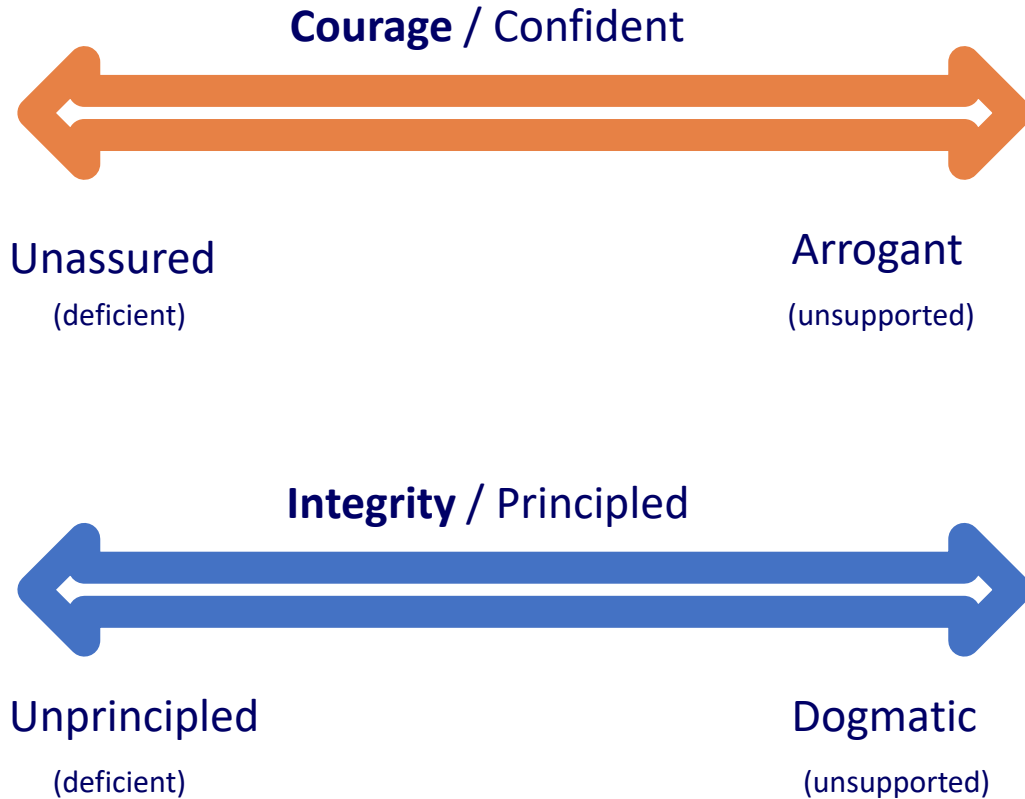
Integrity

authentic, candid,
transparent, principled,
consistent

Temperance

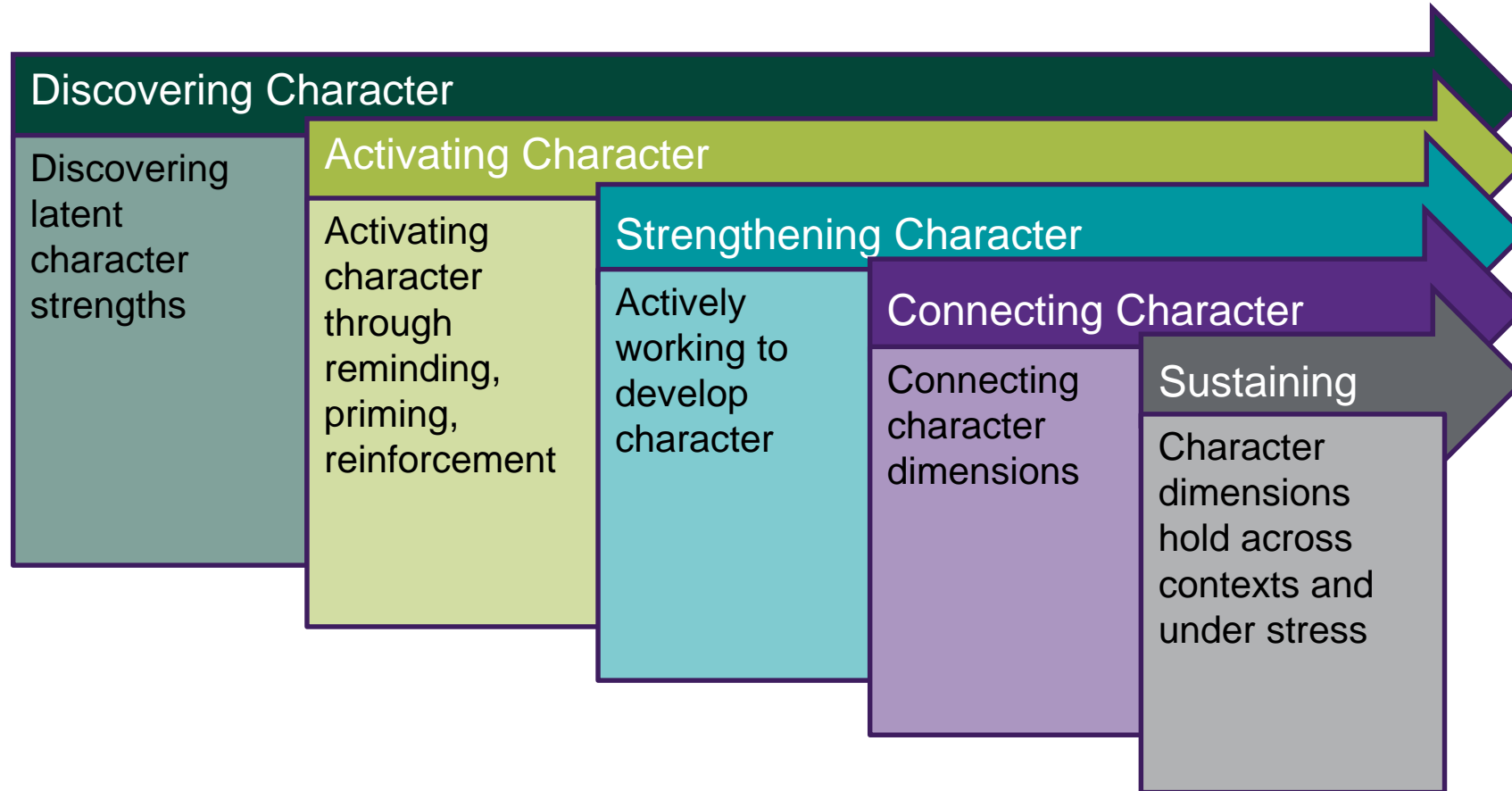
patient, calm,
composed,
self-controlled,
prudent

Virtues & Vices



Dimension	Deficient Vice	Virtue	Excess Vice
Accountability	Unaccepting Negligent Irresponsible Deflects	Accepts Consequences Conscientious Responsible Takes Ownership	Burdened Obsessive Controlling Can't delegate
Courage	Cowardice Unassured Hesitant Fragile Yielding	Brave Confident Determined Resilient Tenacious	Reckless Arrogant Bull-headed Overly-compensating Stubborn
Transcendence	Unthankful Unimaginative Short-sighted Uninspired Pessimistic Directionless	Appreciative Creative Future-Oriented Inspired Optimistic Purposeful	Awe-struck Untethered Missing the present Over-stimulated Delusional Fixated
Drive	Waits for direction Apathetic Aimless Mediocrity Lethargic	Demonstrates Initiative Passionate Results-Oriented Strives for Excellence Vigorous	Dictatorial Fanatical Tunnel-vision Strives for perfection Forceful
Collaboration	Confrontational Self-centered Inflexible Disconnected Narrow-minded	Collegial Cooperative Flexible Interconnected Open-Minded	People-pleaser Conflict-avoider Compliant Boundaryless Abstract
Humanity	Uncaring Oblivious to others Unrelatable Vindictive Aloof	Compassionate Considerate Empathetic Forgiving Magnanimous	Overly concerned Overly-accommodating Overwhelmed by feelings Exploitable Over-bearing
Humility	Fixed mindset Disinterested Ungrateful Braggard Unreflective Disrespectful Unaware Protective	Continuous Learner Curious Grateful Modest Reflective Respectful Self-aware Vulnerable	Lacking focus Transfixed Feeling insignificant Self-effacing Ruminating Fawning Self-conscious Over-exposed
Integrity	Fake Untruthful Inconsistent Unprincipled Manipulative	Authentic Genuine Consistent Principled Transparent	Uncompromising Belligerent Rigid Dogmatic Indiscriminate
Temperance	Anxious Agitated Impatient Inattentive Rash	Calm Composed Patient Prudent Self-Controlled	Indifferent Detached Overly accepting Overly cautious Overly-regulating
Justice	Inequitable Biased Unfair Disproportionate Narrow concerns	Equitable Even-Handed Fair Proportionate Socially Responsible	No exceptions No differences "One size fits all" Micromanage proportion Paralyzed by complexity
Judgment	Stagnant Lacking logic Simplistic Lazy thinking Indecisive Lacking instinct Ignorant Unrealistic Oblivious	Adaptable Analytical Cognitively Complex Critical Thinker Decisive Intuitive Insightful Pragmatic Situationaly Aware	Overly malleable Over-analyzing Complicating Overly critical Impulsive Lacking reason Cunning Overly practical Over valuing situations

Developing Character



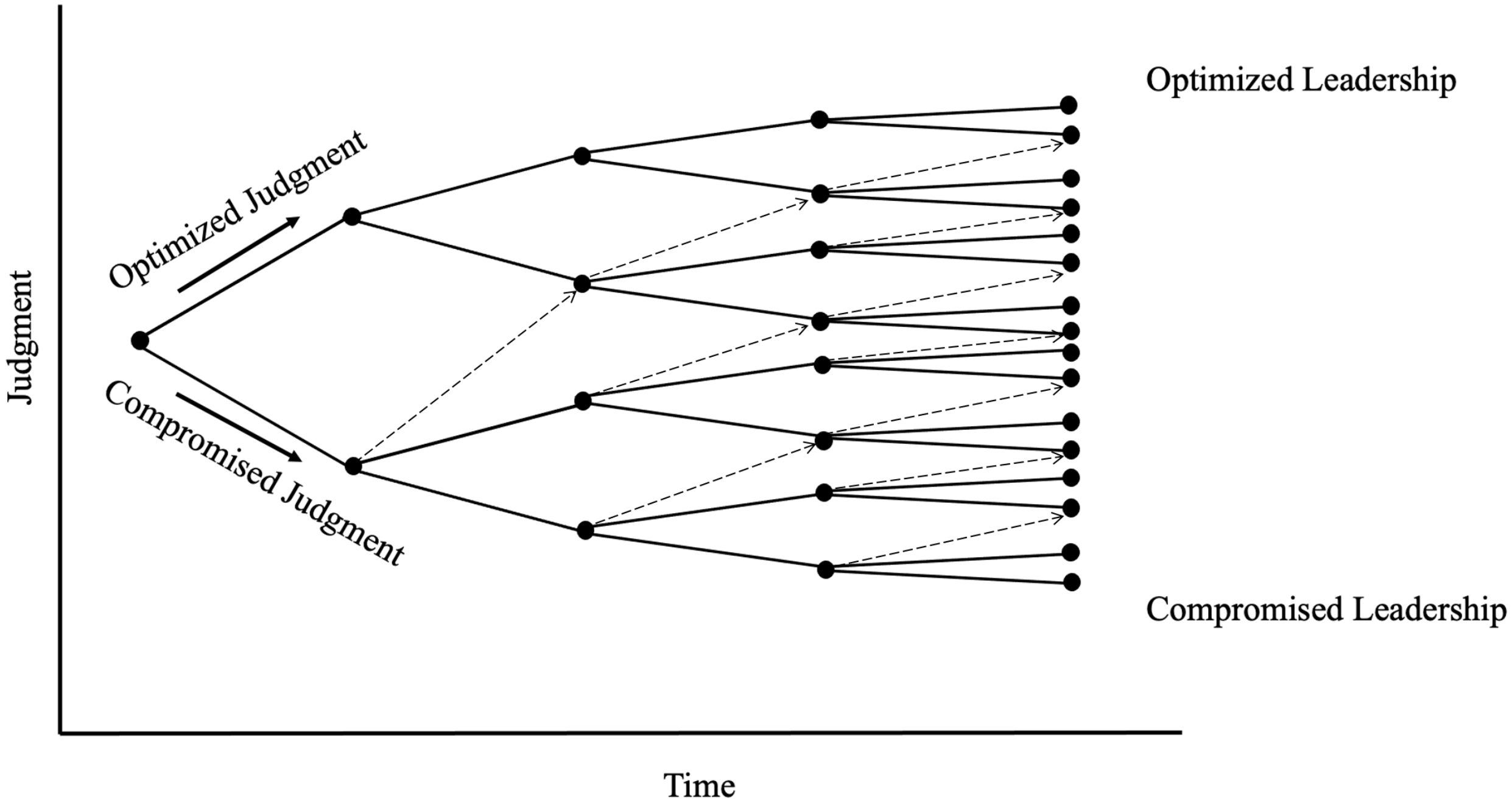
Character is a Habit...for better or worse

- “Who are you becoming while you are busy doing?”
Are you becoming more courageous or less courageous?
Someone with more humility or less humility? Etc.
- “Who have you become while you are busy doing?”
- “Who do you want to become while you are busy doing?”

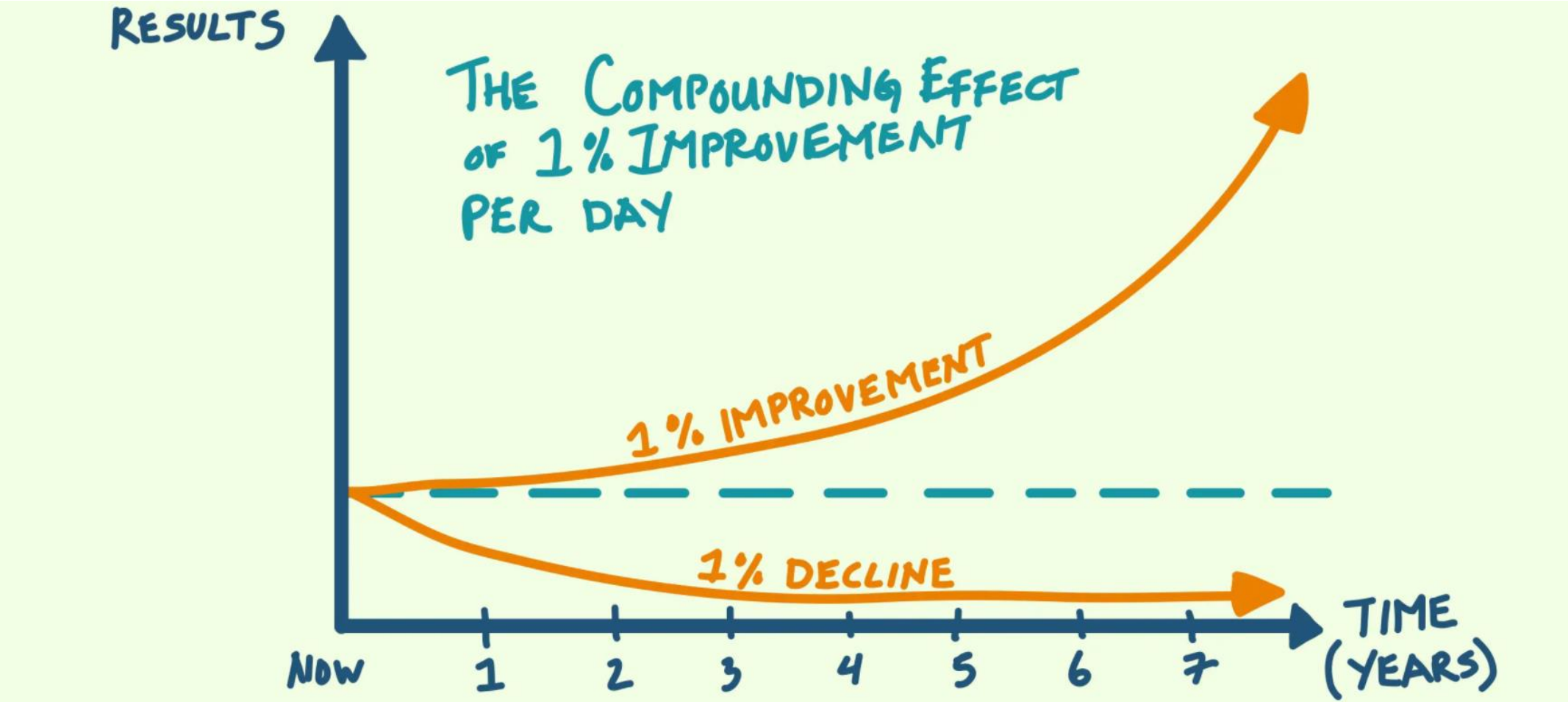
As with physical exercise, without the conscious attention to the exercise of character, it will atrophy.

**“Every action you take is a
vote for the type of person
you wish to become.”**


- James Clear



Atomic Habits – 1% Improvement



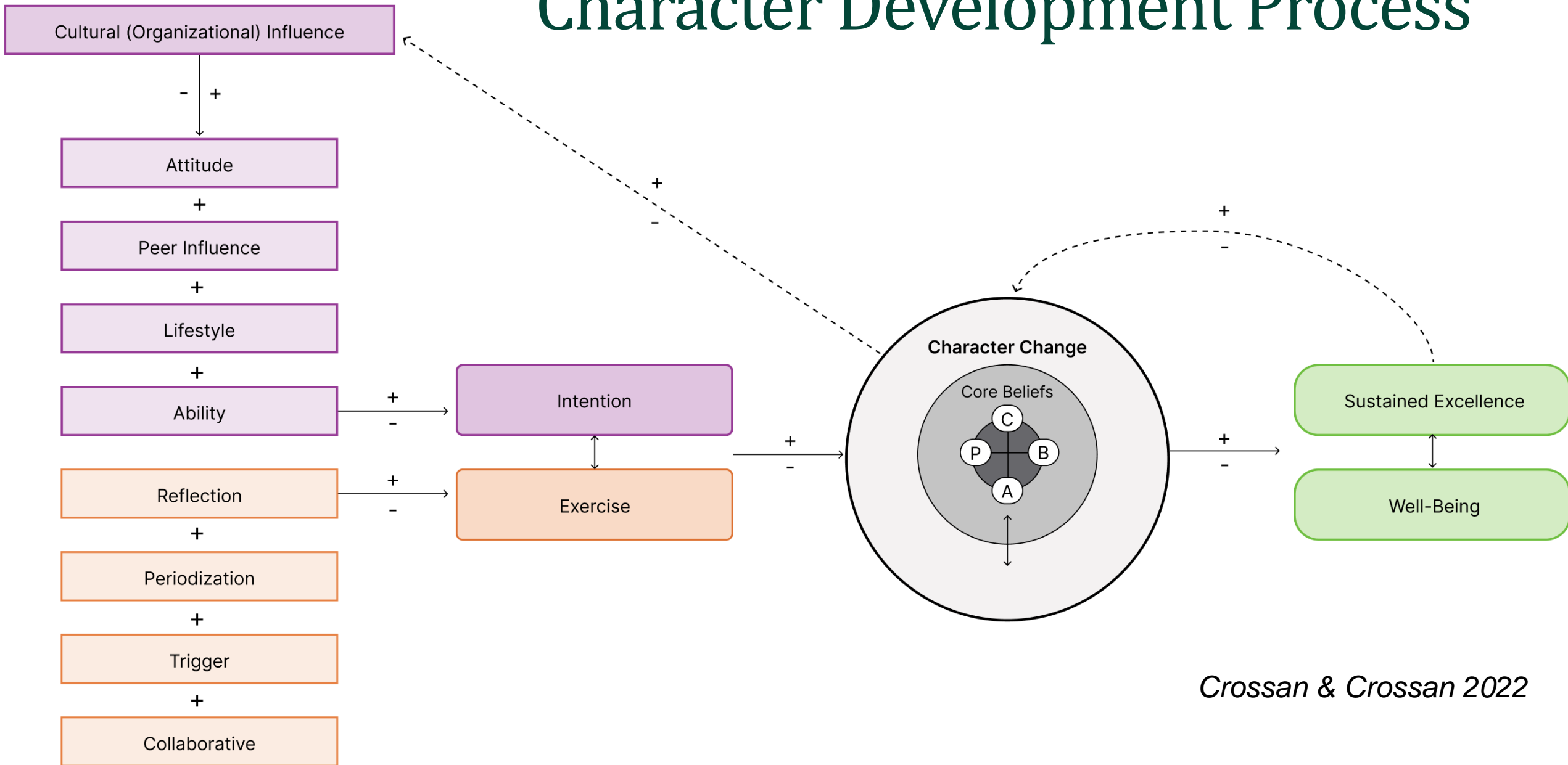
<https://regpaq.com/atomic-habits-review-notes-lessons>



“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

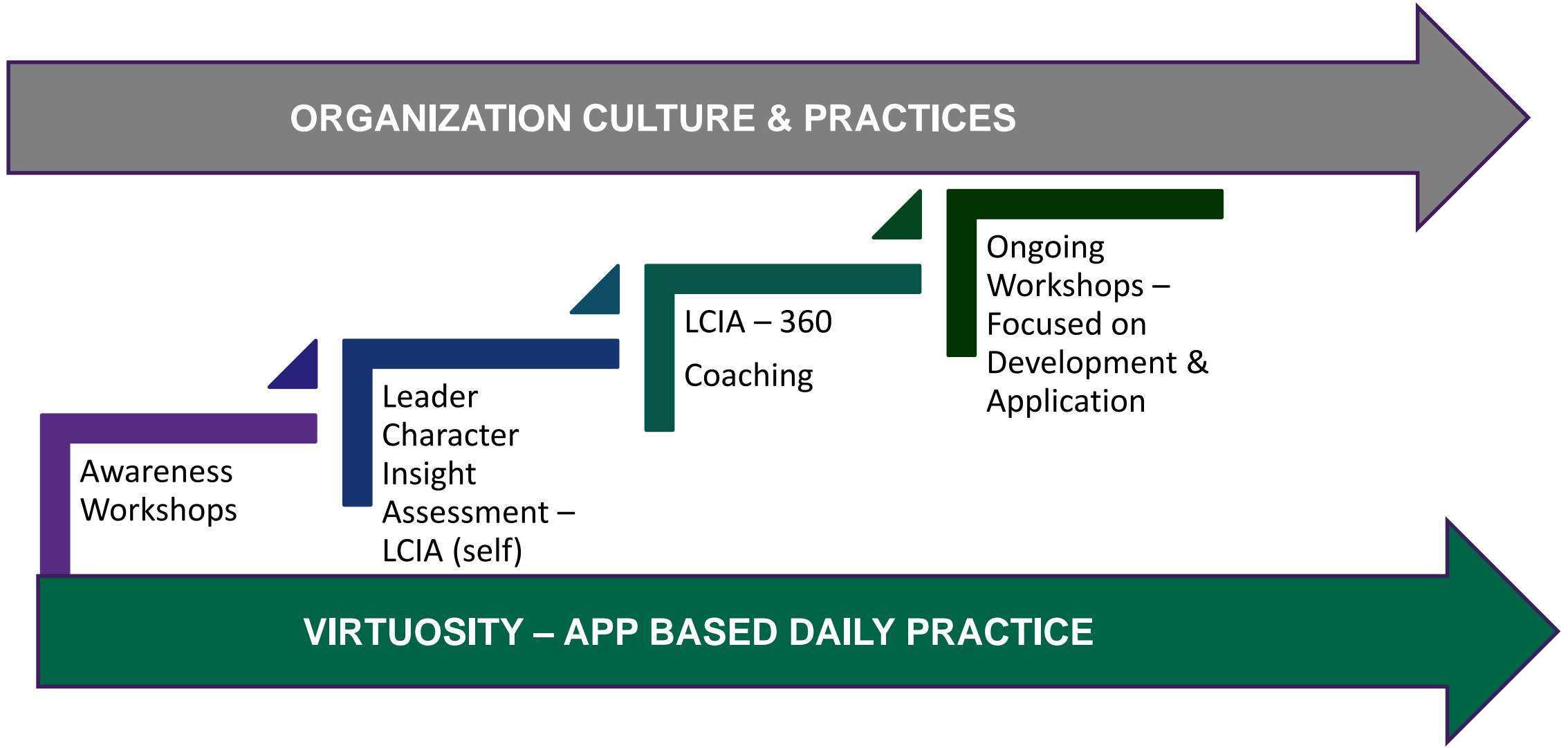
Viktor Frankl – Man’s Search for Meaning

Character Development Process



Crossan & Crossan 2022

Developing Character – Program Progression

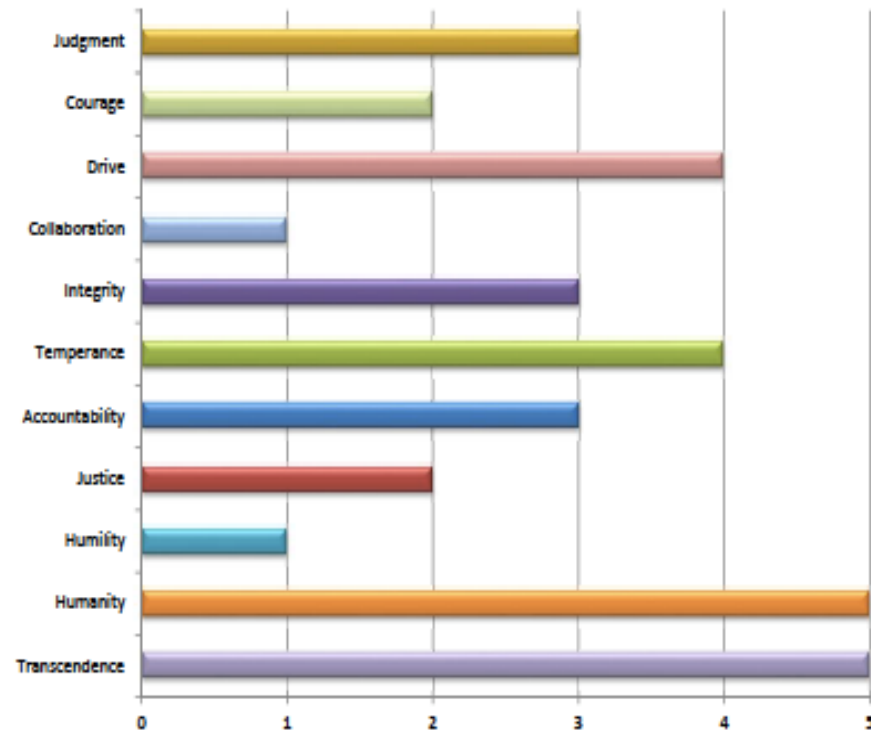


Leader Character Insight Assessment – Self & 360

LCIA Results Overview

Dimension Scores

In responding to the LCIA items you were asked to identify how likely you would be to engage in various behaviours that reflect the character dimensions and elements described in this report. You responded using the following scale: 1=Extremely Unlikely, 2=Unlikely, 3=Unsure, 4=Likely, 5=Extremely Likely. The graph below shows your score on each character dimension.



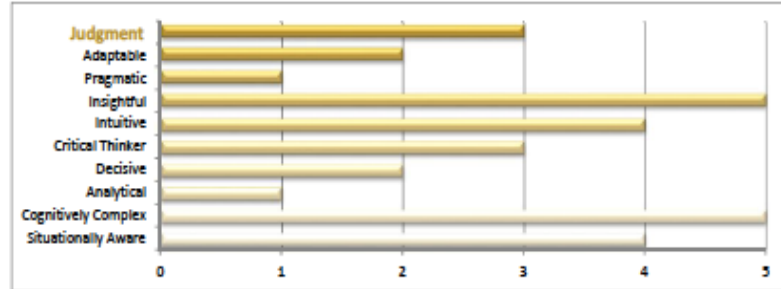
JUDGMENT

Makes sound decisions in a timely manner based on relevant information and critical analysis of facts. Appreciates the broader context when reaching decisions. Shows flexibility when confronted with new information or situations. Has an implicit sense of the best way to proceed. Can see into the heart of challenging issues. Can reason effectively in uncertain or ambiguous situations.

ELEMENTS

- Situationally Aware:** Demonstrates an appreciation for unique circumstances that may dictate unique approaches.
- Cognitively Complex:** Analyzes, makes clear sense, and draws sound conclusions in uncertain, complex and ambiguous circumstances.
- Analytical:** Skillfully analyzes and employs logical reasoning.
- Decisive:** Promptly makes astute, level-headed decisions. Shows clear-sighted discernment of what is required.
- Critical Thinker:** Applies sound analysis and logical reasoning to evaluate ideas, decisions, and outcomes.
- Intuitive:** Understands things without an apparent need for conscious reasoning.
- Insightful:** Grasps the essence of situations. Sees into the heart of challenging issues.
- Pragmatic:** Understands, develops, and implements workable solutions under varied circumstances.
- Adaptable:** Modifies plans, decisions and actions to adjust to new conditions.

The chart below displays your ratings for Judgment and its key elements.



7 Strategies

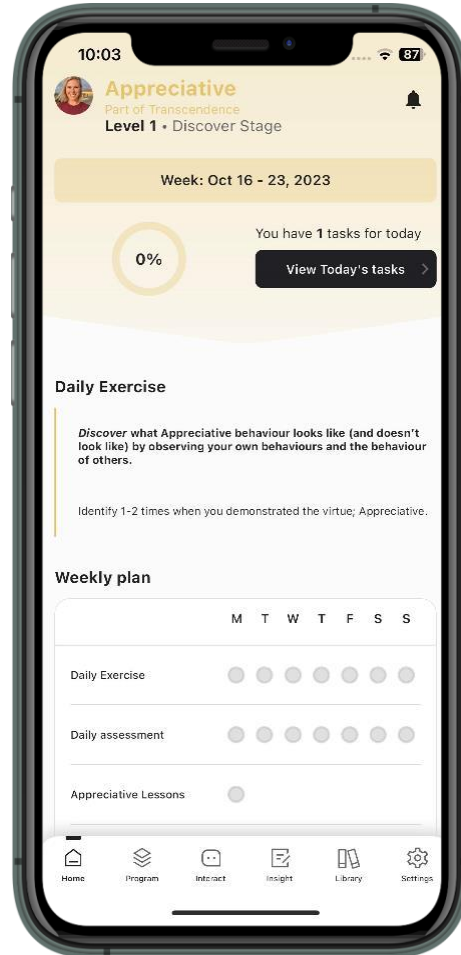


Virtuosity Systems

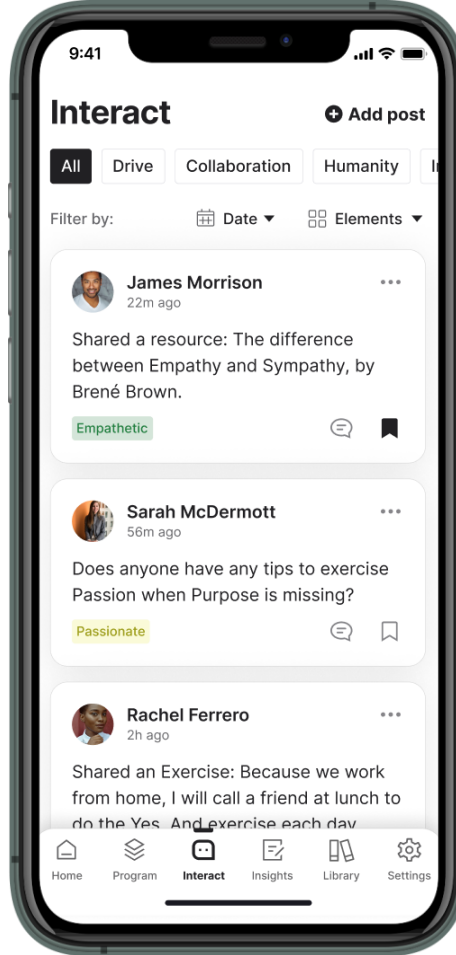
Lessons



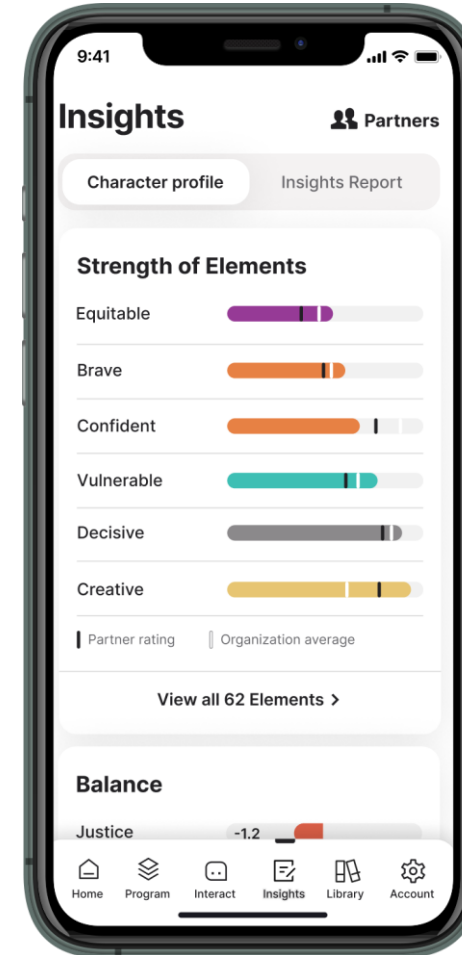
Exercises



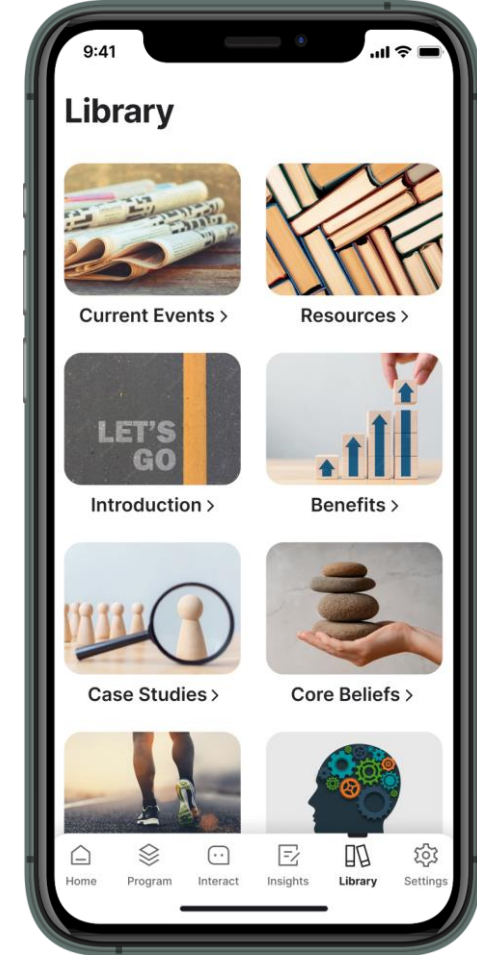
Interactions



Reflection



Exploration



Thoughts to Destiny

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR *THOUGHTS* ,THEY BECOME *WORDS*.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR *WORDS*, THEY BECOME *ACTIONS*.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR *ACTIONS*, THEY BECOME *HABITS*.

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR *HABITS*, THEY BECOME *CHARACTER*.

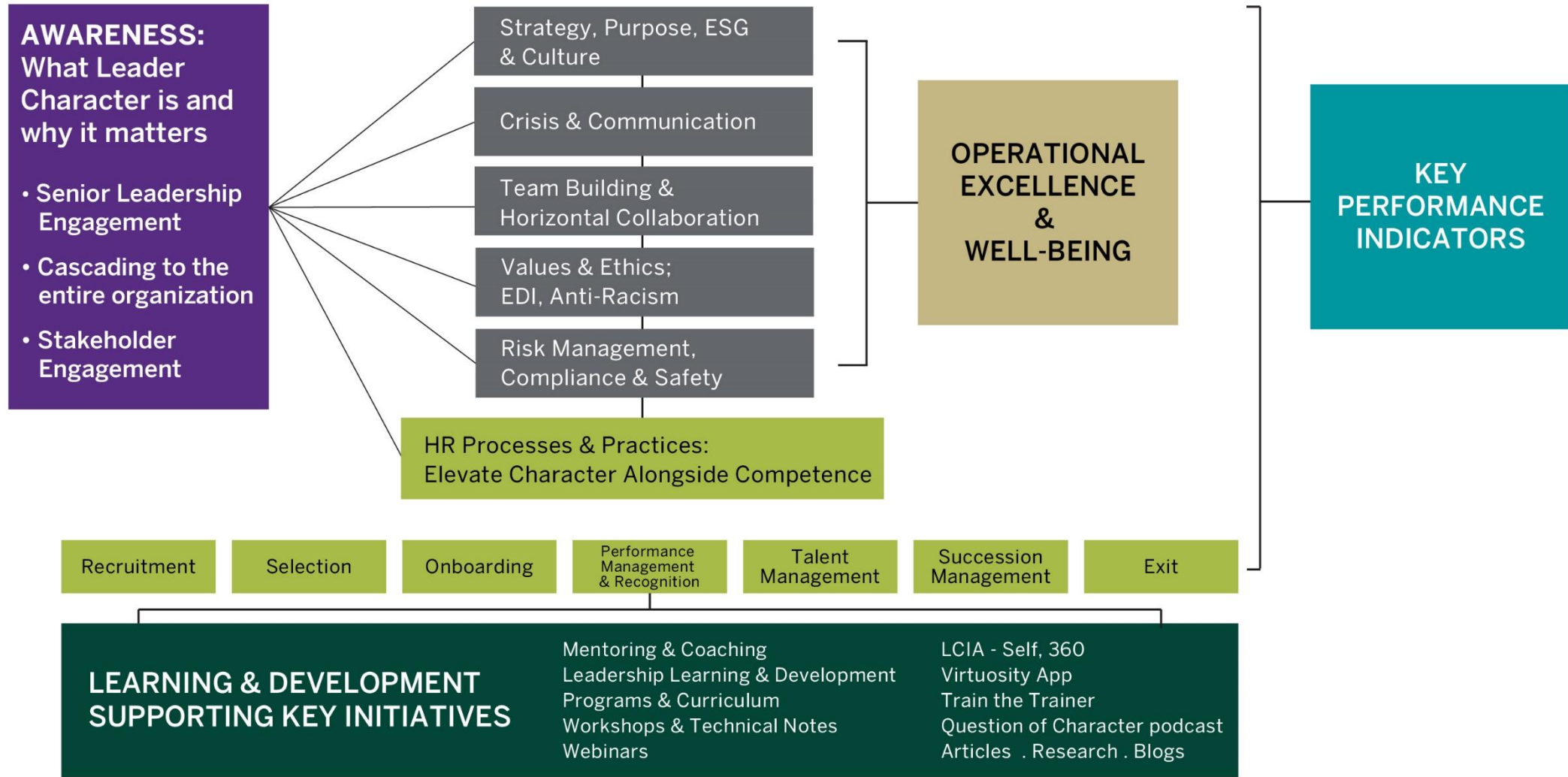
BE MINDFUL OF YOUR *CHARACTER*, IT BECOMES YOUR *DESTINY*.

Adapted Quote

Application – Embedding Character



Leader Character Strategic Roadmap



Character Infused Culture

Dimension	Under-weighted	Strong character	Over-weighted
Accountability	Failure to deliver results & take responsibility; blaming culture; low ownership of issues	Ownership of problems; commitment to decisions; act in organizational interest	Difficulty delegating; obsessive and controlling; little room for learning failures
Courage	People don't speak up; fear prevails; giving up; little innovation	Determination and perseverance are prevalent; high resilience; "truth to power"	Reckless, stubborn, and arrogant risk-taking
Transcendence	Narrow goals & objectives; failure to acknowledge and appreciate; not inspired	Commitment to excellence; clarity & focus; inspiration motivates innovation	Always thinking things will get better but no tangible sense of how to get there
Drive	Lethargy & low productivity; lac of initiative; apathy	Sustained momentum around focused priorities; high productivity	Tunnel vision; perfectionists inhibiting productivity
Collaboration	"Every man for themselves" mentality; lack of information sharing; silos	Effective teamwork enhancing productivity; diversity and inclusion driving success	Conflict avoiders; people pleasing; too many people clouding decision-making
Humanity	Lack of empathy, compassion, and consideration	Deep understanding of what is important; people feel they are seen and heard	people feel overwhelmed and suffer compassion fatigue
Humility	Arrogance and overconfidence; complacency; lack of learning and development	Willingness to identify & discuss mistakes; supportive of learning and development	Overwhelmed; ruminating about mistakes; pushover; lacking focused learning
Integrity	People operate from a position of self-interests and mistrust; lack of transparency	Trust, transparency, and effective communication; aligned principles and values	Uncompromising, rigid, and dogmatic interactions; exclusionary practices
Temperance	Impatience and agitation prevalent; stressed and anxious; emotional outbursts	Effective risk management; thoughtful consideration; calm even under duress	Risk averse inaction; lacking urgency; indifferent about outcomes
Justice	Inequities; favouritism and nepotism	Fairness fostering trust; clear understanding and action around systemic inequalities	Rigid rule-based procedures that do not take into account individual differences
Judgment	Indecision; lack of insight, rigour, and understanding; resistance to change	Insightful and adaptable; situationally aware and current; solid decision-making	Analysis paralysis; over-complicating decision-making; no clear sense of priorities

Character Culture Check (Crossan & Crossan, 2023)

What Can I Do Next?

1. Begin with yourself

- Understand, assess and develop your character. Reflect on the leader character framework – particularly your strengths relative to weaknesses (resources - LCIA self and 360 assessment)
- Check out the “*Question of Character*” podcasts, www.questionofcharacter.com
 - Especially Episodes 1, 2, and 7
- The “Developing Leadership Character” and “The Character Compass” books provide comprehensive accounts of our work.
- Virtuositycharacter Instagram (free resource)
- **Virtuosity**TM leader character development app

2. Exercise your leadership – share with others

- Share the slides and articles – engage in conversations at work and at home
- Become a champion of character change

What Can We Do Next?

1. Embed character in your organizational practices

- The Strategic Roadmap provides guidance (also listen to QOC Episode 6 re: CRA)
- Collaboration between Strategic Leaders, Operations and HR
- Focus on key strategic & operational issues

2. Ongoing – you are not alone:

- Stay connected – reach out.
- We need “all hands on deck” to “be the change we want to see in the world”.



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Insights Partners

Character profile Insights Report

Strength of Dimensions

- Collaboration
- Humility
- Humanity
- Temperance
- Integrity
- Justice
- Accountability
- Courage
- Judgment
- Drive
- Transcendence

Partner rating Organization average

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LEADERSHIP CHARACTER INSIGHT ASSESSMENT

Mary Crossan, Ph.D., Gerard Seijts, Ph.D., & Jeffrey Gandz, Ph.D. © 2013



Age: 18+

Time: 20 MINUTES

Test User Qualifications:

Formats: WEB

Languages: En Fr

Sample Report: [SAMPLE REPORT](#)

Cherokee Teaching

One evening a Cherokee Elder told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said,

‘My son, the battle is between two ‘wolves’ inside us all. One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.’

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: ‘Which wolf wins?’

The Elder simply replied, ‘The one you feed.’

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