

whitepaper

ARE LEADERS BLIND TO THEIR WEAKNESSES?

By Nick Tasler, Lac D. Su & Jean Greaves

The fifth most popular *Dilbert* comic strip in the cartoon's history begins with Dilbert's boss relaying senior management's explanation for the company's low profits. In response to his boss, *Dilbert* asks incredulously, "So they're saying that profits went up because of great management and down because of a weak economy?" To which Dilbert's boss replies, "These meetings will go faster if you stop putting things in context."

We may chuckle, but we have to wonder if the cartoon's popularity is due mostly to the sad truth it conveys. Are managers truly blind to their weaknesses, or are they just incapable of acknowledging their own shortcomings? If either is the case, what does that mean for anyone involved in developing leaders?

To find out, TalentSmart® researchers analyzed over 6,000 ratings from direct reports, peers, and supervisors of 523 leaders using the 360° Refined™ leadership survey. We discovered that leaders are most likely to overestimate themselves on "self-awareness"—the ability to recognize how one's own emotions impact and are influenced by other people. It may be that the hopelessly unaware managers depicted in *Dilbert* reflect today's leaders fairly accurately.

CORE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

Three skill groups considered to be mainstays of leader performance.

Strategy

Vision
Business Acumen
Courage to Lead
Planning

Action

Decision Making
Communicating
Mobilizing Others

Results

Risk Taking
Results Focus
Agility

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

Four skill groups used to take personal and organizational performance to the next level.

Emotional Intelligence

Self-Awareness
Self-Management
Social Awareness
Relationship Management

Organizational Justice

Decision Fairness
Outcome Concern
Information Sharing

Character

Integrity
Credibility
Value Differences

Development

Lifelong Learning
Developing Others

From the Outside Looking In

Contrary to what Dilbert might have us believe, however, leaders are people just like you and me. It is doubtful that the gaps in their self-awareness are due to deceitful, Machiavellian motives, or severe character deficits. In fact, the leaders in our study were relatively accurate in rating themselves on "credibility" and "integrity." In most cases, leaders did not consciously try to inflate their scores; leaders—like everyone else—are tempted to view themselves in a more favorable light than other people do. Good intentions notwithstanding, helping leaders discover exactly where they have gaps in their perception is crucial for guiding their efforts to develop professionally and perform better.

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Top 5 Gaps* In Leaders' Awareness As Rated By:

Direct Reports

1. Self-Awareness
2. Information Sharing
3. Social Awareness
4. Outcome Concern
5. Developing Others

Peers

1. Self-Awareness
2. Information Sharing
3. Outcome Concern
4. Developing Others
5. Social Awareness

Supervisors

1. Self-Awareness
2. Information Sharing
3. Social Awareness
4. Values Difference
5. Outcome Concern

*Leaders rated themselves higher than others did.

As shown in the table above, none of the largest gaps in perception between self ratings and others' ratings occurred in the Core Leadership competencies, which address such nuts-and-bolts skills as "results-focus," "business acumen," "vision," "risk-taking," etc. The bad news is that all of the top gaps involved a leader's skill at understanding how his or her behaviors and decisions impact other people. That finding is a bit disconcerting, since effective leadership is virtually impossible without effective interactions between leaders and followers.

What this means is that many of today's leaders have a decent grasp on their ability to manage a business, yet remain largely blind to their weaknesses in leading other people.

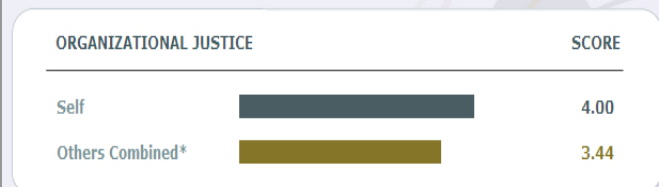
Refining Leadership Development

There's nothing more powerful than receiving feedback from the people who matter most—the members of the leader's team.

Reading this article or the latest book on leadership is not enough to raise leaders' awareness of where they drop the ball. Even a mandatory training session isn't personalized without 360° feedback. When the message becomes personalized, leaders take notice. They can't deny it when they see firsthand the gaps between their perceptions of themselves and the perceptions of the people who work the closest with them.

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YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE SCORES



360° Refined™ measures a leader's skills in the 22 *Core* and *Adaptive* leadership competencies most critical to job performance.

Results are delivered in a report that highlights strengths and areas for improvement and reveals gaps in a leader's perception.

To support follow-on learning and development, the feedback report includes e-learning featuring clips of Hollywood movies, television, and historical events, plus a complete online Goal-Tracking System™ to ensure lasting change.

How It Works

360° Refined™ is fast, clear, and complete. In just 15 minutes, participants deliver feedback through 75 scored questions and four open-ended questions.

RATER COMMENTS

You and your raters also had the opportunity to elaborate on the feedback given to you through four open-ended questions. The responses to the first question are listed below. Comments are listed as typed.

Question 1: From your observations, what is Richard Sample great at doing? That is, what does Richard Sample have a knack or natural talent for that he or she should be using/doing even more? Give an example.

My Comments:

I consider myself a good numbers guy.

Rater Comments:

He's a great boss. He's fun and funny. It lifts the mood in the office


He's a great operations guy

The Process:

1. A leader is invited to rate him/herself online, as are his/her boss(es), peers, direct-reports, and others (such as customers or board members). You control the administration and can check response rates in real time.
2. Once responses are in, you open the report with the click of a button. Responses remain anonymous to the administrator, so a leader could administer his or her own survey if needed.

Current Goals

Goal 1

Skill To Improve	Begin Date	Length of Focus	Expected Outcome	Overall Progress	Comments
Action	ASAP	One month	To get others involved in initiatives.	 NO PROGRESS	Feedback - Bruce Supervisor Add Comment
Action Steps 1. Provide others with access to the information they need to perform. 2. Gather input from others before making a decision. 3. Get support and commitment for initiatives. 4. Take the time to recognize the contributions of others.					

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3. Share the results in printed or online report format. Walk into the feedback session with the printed report and provide your client with high level results supported by detailed data and comments. The access code is provided in the report so a leader can return to his or her office and access the online results to continue with e-learning and goal setting.
4. Access to e-learning and goal-tracking is on-going so leaders can revisit their reports, forward results to others, track their progress on their action plan, and send themselves email reminders weekly, monthly, or quarterly to continue developing.

E-mail this whitepaper a friend!



360° REFINED

Invite up to 28 raters for just \$299.95!

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TalentSmart® . . . Putting Big Ideas to the Test



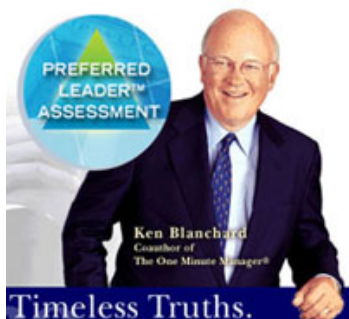
The best-selling *Emotional Intelligence Appraisal™* measures EQ in all four components from the #1 benchmark model in just 7 minutes. Easy to use and understand.



DISC is the #1 personality profile, with millions of people relying on it to discover their strengths.



Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink* opened our eyes to the power of instinct and how to train it. Now you can learn your decision-making tendencies and how to capitalize on them.



Coauthored by Ken Blanchard, the test measures the core leadership behaviors that earn the commitment and support of your people. Rigorous research with thousands of leaders supports the assessment.

Prices start at just \$39.95!

CLICK ON ANY ASSESSMENT TO LEARN MORE...