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Why traditional leadership assessments fall short—And how tech can fix it

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Leaders can foster workplace cultures that empower individuals, drive innovation, and sustain business success by utilizing the right tools and embracing continuous growth, said Corinne Canter.

Unlike popular opinion, leadership is more than just guiding a team to meet business goals. It plays a crucial role in shaping organisational culture, fostering innovation, and ensuring long-term success. But how can leaders measure their own effectiveness and the culture they are fostering? And more importantly, how can they ensure that leadership development efforts lead to real, sustained change?

Corinne Canter, Head of Consulting at Human Synergistics Australia, has spent years helping organisations understand and transform their leadership and culture. Drawing from her extensive experience in consulting, coaching, and leadership development, Canter highlights how tools like the Life Styles Inventory (LSI) can provide valuable insights into leadership behaviours and how technology can support leaders in making informed decisions.

The Role of Self-Awareness in Leadership Effectiveness

One of the biggest challenges for leaders is gaining an objective view of how they are perceived by their teams, peers, and stakeholders. Canter describes the Life Styles Inventory (LSI) as a "visual mirror" that helps leaders assess how their thinking patterns influence their actions and, ultimately, their leadership impact.

"Without self-awareness, leaders can unintentionally create cultures that hinder collaboration, initiative, and performance," she explains. "The LSI provides a snapshot of what's working while also offering choices about what could be adjusted to improve effectiveness across all areas of life."

Self-awareness, however, is just the starting point. The real value comes when leaders translate these insights into action, using the feedback to develop behaviours that foster positive workplace cultures.

Going Beyond Traditional Leadership Assessments

Leadership assessments have been around for decades, but Canter argues that many traditional tools fail to capture the deeper behavioural patterns that influence leadership effectiveness.

"Traditional assessments often focus on surface-level skills, competencies, or personal preferences," she says. "While useful, these can sometimes discourage leaders from adapting and evolving because they believe, 'this is just who I am'."

LSI differentiates itself by focusing on mindset and behaviour rather than static traits. According to Canter, this enables leaders to see how their behavioural choices impact their effectiveness and whether they are helping them achieve their goals. It also provides insights into unconscious tendencies that can either support or undermine a leader's impact on their team and workplace culture.

With over five decades of research, the LSI provides a structured approach to leadership assessment. It maps twelve styles of thinking and behaviour using a visual model called the Circumplex. This allows organisations to align **leadership development** with team and organisational culture diagnostics seamlessly.

"The more models, frameworks, and terminologies an organisation uses, the more friction and confusion it creates," Canter notes. "By using one integrated framework, organisations can streamline their leadership development efforts and drive more effective change."

Integrating Leadership Assessments into Organisational Development

A leadership assessment is only as good as the actions that follow. Canter highlights that organisations that successfully integrate the LSI into their leadership development programs have a few key elements in common:

1. Alignment with Organisational Values and Leadership Frameworks

- Organisations with a clearly defined leadership framework can map their goals to the Constructive styles in the Circumplex, ensuring alignment between individual development and business objectives.

2. Ongoing Coaching and Mentoring

- Providing leaders with post-debrief coaching sessions has been shown to sustain behavioural change. By targeting specific skills that emerge from leadership assessments, organisations can offer focused development opportunities.

3. Incorporation into Team Development

- Using LSI as part of a team development program allows teams to harness their diverse strengths while working towards shared goals. This not only improves individual leadership effectiveness but also enhances collaboration across the organisation.

Overcoming Challenges in Leadership Development

Implementing leadership assessments and development programs is not without its challenges. Canter identifies some common obstacles that organisations face and provides insights on how to overcome them:

- Accountability for Personal Growth
 - "People must take ownership of their own **feedback and development**. If everyone is waiting for others to change first, nothing will happen."
- Misconceptions About Constructive Leadership
 - "Many mistake being 'Constructive' for being 'nice'. Constructive leadership is about setting high standards, trusting teams to make decisions, and having honest conversations about performance. It's not about avoiding difficult discussions but handling them in a way that is both respectful and effective."

- Consistency in Leadership Development Efforts
 - "Leadership growth is a continuous journey. You can't attend one workshop or listen to one podcast and expect lasting results. It requires ongoing effort, much like maintaining fitness through regular workouts."

The Future of Leadership Development in a Tech-Driven World

As leadership and workplace dynamics evolve in response to technological advancements and societal shifts, the need for adaptable leadership strategies has never been greater. Canter believes that while human behaviour remains fundamentally the same, the environments in which leaders operate are rapidly changing.

"Constructive styles of thinking and behaviour have always been effective, and they will continue to be effective in the future," she states. "However, the speed of change means that leaders must be more intentional about their impact. They need to develop agility in decision-making, emotional intelligence in team interactions, and resilience in the face of uncertainty."

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in supporting leadership development. AI-powered tools, real-time feedback platforms, and advanced analytics are making it easier for leaders to track their progress, identify areas for improvement, and receive personalised coaching recommendations.

"Your style of thinking and behaviour will determine whether you and your organisation thrive or merely survive in the face of rapid change," Canter concludes. "By leveraging the right tools and maintaining a commitment to continuous growth, leaders can create workplace cultures that empower individuals, drive innovation, and sustain business success."

Leadership and organisational culture are deeply interconnected. Measuring leadership effectiveness is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity. Tools like the LSI may offer a structured, research-backed way to gain insights into leadership behaviours and their impact on workplace culture. However, the true value of these assessments lies in their application.

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