Personal Leadership Brand

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**Personal Assessments/Insights**

***Personal Background***

**How have your family traditions and customs influenced your leadership and shaped your life?**

My household would have been considered puritanical if we were religious. We did go to church, but the scripture was not what guided us on what was right and wrong – no, the omniscient/omnipotent figure who commanded our devotion and set our moral compass was my Father. I don’t want to use the word, “dictator,” but I don’t really have a better one. There was no discourse on what we should do or even how – “jump” was commanded, and it was assumed that we already knew “how high.” The feedback was constant… and rarely positive. This is a rather bleak picture I am painting, but it was not that we did not have a loving household – we did. My father is a very loving man, but one who has more energy and less patience than any other person I have ever known. Simply, it was a stressful environment where I did not see leadership as an example.

I run through the qualities that make for a good leader. Communication – it was an open household for communication, but not one for any sort communication that could be considered dissent. Trust – I can’t say that there was a lot of trust - we never knew what to expect based on his mood. It was either all love or a whole lot of anger mixed with a bit of anxiety. Self-care – both of my parents are workaholics who have sacrificed their health and sanity on a regular basis in the pursuit of career. Confidence – pops has that in abundance, but he never helped in fostering that in his kids. Inspiring/motivating – like most fathers, his inspiring speeches to motivate his workforce (my sisters and I) to work every day after school and on weekends to refurbish rental houses was “because I said so.” After he started his own law firm, I saw that his leadership was not strong their either. His employees were not particularly motivated and often would undermine him, given the opportunity. This all sounds harsh, but it does give some context to the values I have tried to develop.

**How have your values and morals developed?**

My father did teach me other puritanical values such as hard work and being humble. These have both helped and hurt me as a leader. I also understand how to present myself and speak in a way that generally gives me a degree of credibility. For as much as he dictated, he is also a great listener and has a huge amount of empathy (both are conditional on the context). He has drive and values accomplishment which he transferred to his kids. For better or worse, he taught us how to be self-reliant and how to initiate action rather than wait for it to be handed to us.

I worked much in the same way as he did for the decade I have been a professional. I work (too) hard, have little tolerance for people who do things in a way that I don’t agree with, have learned to not rely on anyone, and have dictated when in a position where leadership is needed. I have added my own values over the years – a strong emphasis on learning, an attention to detail, and an element of perfectionism that drives most people insane (including myself).

Beyond my family dynamics, the type of work I have performed reinforced bad leadership habits. My last company was cut-throat. You could not trust the leadership, your coworkers, or your reports as the primary motivator and focus of the company was to rule by fear. Second to one engineer, I outlasted every other person in the company. I did so by documenting everything I did (CYA methodology), outworking my colleagues who tried to get me fired (this happened more than once), memorizing technical operating procedures (so I could perform everything “by the book”) and by getting a position in the company where I did not report to anyone (for technical reasons, this even included the CEO). This makes you effective as an employee, but terrible as a team member or a leader. This was compounded by the fact that the organization was terribly hierarchical and it seemed that merit was not a consideration for the stratification. In my own personal “leadership” there I had control over an entire geographic region and issued directives that could not be questioned. I don’t mean that I wielded that much power due to who I was. Due to federal stipulations around energy management, it was actually a legal issue if someone did not follow my orders. This, of course, is not actual leadership in any sense of the true meaning.

**Who and what has influenced or shaped your values and philosophy of leadership, both positively and negatively?**

I talked a lot about the negatives already, so I will talk a bit about where I feel I am gaining ground in leadership.My first real taste of leadership came from running a startup in Thailand. I truly wanted to be the boss that I had never had. I wanted to be kind, empowering, trustworthy, inspiring, and to get things done through influence rather than power. I succeeded in some areas, but fell flat in getting alignment and executing. My workforce was largely expats – most of whom had fled the pressures of working in the U.S. to live a stress-free life in Bangkok. Those who were local saw me as an outsider – one who was trying to capitalize on their country. I found a lot of frustration in trying to lead this team as it was nearly impossible to motivate them as I extrapolated what would motivate me. I can say that I experienced a lot there, but I could not really pinpoint what I learned about leadership.

Enter CCA - I am now at a point where I am getting a formal education in leadership and the opportunity to practice it. These are firsts for me. I see excellent leadership traits from many of my classmates and by several professors. I gravitate to both, wanting to be led, and wanting to learn how they evoke such a feeling. My work in groups here has taught me a lot. It has often been a painful experience, but I learn best from pain.

**Your Leadership Style**

**What does it mean to be a leader in your occupation?**

In my previous occupation a leader was the person in charge of a group – that was the only defining characteristic. The leaders there were not highly respected as they did not seek alignment and relied on the org. chart to define what leadership means. To quote my former CEO “I am paying them, isn’t that enough?”

I am currently working in Design Strategy both as a student and professionally. In both realms, leadership is needed, but the is no power to exercise or direct incentive to offer, aside from generating a good product and doing what needs to get done. In both cases, the structure is completely flat, so leadership comes from alignment of interests to serve a common goal, and the informal appointing of a person who is best suited to help define the objective and to steer the ship. This form of leadership requires drive, an ability to rally, the skill of listening to the group/integrating opinions, elements of logistics, and gaining an extreme amount of trust.

**How do you want to use your leadership skills and responsibilities in your current position?**

Being a “Leader” will always have some appeal based on my vanity. That said, I am not drawn to having a leadership role that is not earned. I want to gain a leadership position from the feeling by the team that I am well-suited to help them achieve the shared goal.

More specifically, it is my desire to:

* Co-create the goal/plan with my team
* To set high ambitions and insight based on my experience
* Generate energy
* Make the team feel valued, respected, and capable

**What do you see as your long-range leadership goals?**

There are elements of leadership in management (as there are elements of management in leadership), but it is my goal to not manage. I would like to “lead from behind” for an excellent team on new and ambitious projects. I never want to be the MOST skilled leader in an organization, however as I want to continually learn from others. If I find that I am the most capable person in the room, I no longer want to be in that room, as I will have nothing to directly gain.

Longer range that these desires, it is my goal to develop other leaders. In this I would be able to perpetuate effective leadership and would be able to learn a great deal by teaching.

**Personal Assessments/Insights**

**How has Strength Finders/SCARF assessments informed your leadership style?**

**Strengths Finder**

**Top 5 Themes**

1. Learner

2. Input

3. Restorative

4. Individualization

5. Achiever

**How do my identified strengths relate to my results?**

My strengths are very indicative of how I engage with the world and with my teammates. It is obvious that I love to learn (learner / input). The rewards that I seek in my employment and in my personal relationships are that of edification. I will forgo compensation for more opportunities to learn and often jump fields once I have found that I know enough about the domain. I love to fix things and create (restorative / achiever). I often enter VUCA situations as they yield the greatest opportunities to make a measurable impact with tangible results. Lastly, I find I am at my best by focusing on the individual. I engage at a deep level at the earliest opportunity. My interests in academician (psychology) as well as my interests in marketing and design reflect my desire to understand someone on an intimate level.

**Is there a connection between them and my conflict style?**

I tend to engage conflict head-on. This is likely the restorative component of my strengths. I think that every conflict can be resolved by

1. Addressing the issue directly (restorative). I engage as I like to fix things. This does, however, have the negative effect of not letting things “breathe.” Additionally, not all dynamics can be fixed – I am bothered when someone is angry at me as I feel that, if given the chance, I can make it better. This can be a waste of time and energy for me, and for the other person.
2. Hearing a person out and communicating with them on a deep level (individualization). Generally this is very helpful in resolving a conflict. It can, however, result in a one-sided interaction where my feelings and thoughts are not heard. I am generally aware of when this occurs and pull back when I feel it is present. The other issue that occurs is that by the time everything is heard, there is no energy left to create solutions. This leads to inaction.
3. Using logic to address the issue rather than emotion, and an interest in tactics to resolve conflicts (input/learner). Again, this generally is beneficial to the conflict in that thoughts, expectations, and proposed resolutions are based on facts. At times, this has the negative effect of others regarding me as uncaring and clinical. I have had numerous interactions when a cool demeanor can insight additional anger in who I am speaking with (typically a romantic partner). I do my best to avoid this perception as many people use stonewalling in conflict and it does little in helping to resolve the issue.

**Am I relying on my strengths too much?**

Absolutely. I feel that if I work hard or think hard enough about something, I can fix it (achiever/input/learner). Even if this was true, I would spend an infinite amount of time on these things rather than just letting some things slide.

I also believe that I have to research absolutely everything before making a decision (Input/learner). This is incredibly time-intensive and does not yield a better return.

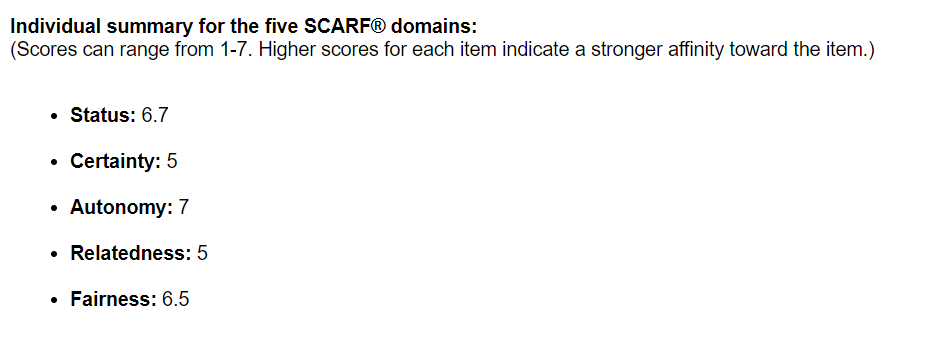
I am very target oriented and I can end up ignoring interpersonal dynamics to achieve my goals. This can be very short-sighted (achiever).

I also expect good things from most people, I simply have to find it (individualization). This is time-consuming and draining and does not always yield much of a result.

**What other strengths might I need to develop?**

The ability to work with others and to facilitate group dynamics. Any of the strengths in relationship building and influencing would be helpful.

**SCARF**



**What did I learn about myself with what is important to me?**

**STATUS**

I have never thought of myself as being very oriented towards status. I like interesting things, but I am not flashy in what I buy or do. I am not interested in money except as a tool to get the experiences I want from life. At a deeper level, it is my impression that status is felt by comparing yourself to others – a competitive sort of benchmarking. Though the comparison can be valuable to understand where you sit, I have no desire to lord my status over another. I was raised in a family that did well (for the area), but it was seared into the fiber of who I am that we were no better (and often times a bit worse) than everyone else. My sisters and I worked nearly every day since we were old enough to hold a hammer, and that only through this hard work, could we establish value for ourselves. Every adult was to be respected, and every person had inherent worth that was equal to your own. As such, doing better than someone does not do much for me – instead, I compete with myself on a daily basis. I know that every day I should be doing better than what I was doing the day before. Sounds great, right? Sounds like the protestant dream embodied….

But this trait leads to several issues:

* I am extremely critical of my own work. Nothing is to the standard I would like it to be.
* I do not take time to appreciate something that I have done well, or where I am.
* I am told frequently that I am too hard on myself
* In teams I give 1/100th of the negativity I give to myself – but even this watered-down negativity is too much.

What I do value is my continued need to advance in my work – not so much in title or salary (these can be proxies for success) but in the things I can improve and the learnings I can receive. I have to admit that I do want to be respected – it is very important to who I am. The respect I seek, however, would ideally come from the things that I am not afforded by life, by nature, or by good luck.

The respect I seek (in ascending order) would be

1. For intelligence
2. For being a hard worker
3. For being a compassionate and kind person
4. For being a good friend, brother, son, husband, and father
5. For being a good human

Pros: I work hard and I deliver good product.

Cons: I drive people crazy with my demands, and I end up exhausting myself

Takeaway: It is important to keep in mind that I need constant challenge and for my hard work to be recognized

**AUTONOMY**

Rating high on autonomy is no surprise to me. I have always been fairly independent, and I find value in things (right or wrong) that others do not. In addition to this, I know that I like being able to do the things that I would like to do in the ways that I would like to do them. I do not feel that I know best, or even better than anyone else – it is simply my way of learning and my way of feeling like I have accomplished something. I have a strong drive to make things work, but if the product is compromised by input that I do not feel is valuable, I tend to shy away from investing myself into said project.

I rely on my ability to get things done on my own, but it has limitations. I have found that I will not involve myself in some projects deeply as they do not excite me – in addition to this I am not someone who takes orders from others. I am very happy to be given direction, but I have left many jobs where the directives were the only form of management.

Pros: I can get things done and I can create.

Cons: Autonomy limits yourself and does not provide a good basis for working in a hierarchal structure

Takeaway: I need to be able to manage myself, and to get the rewards I seek from my work.

**CERTAINTY**

I knew (with certainty) that this would come up - I do not feel this measure is sensitive enough to break down the underlying drivers here. I am extremely comfortable with entering into ambiguous situations in most every domain. As long as potential damage can be undone I can enter with no plan whatsoever. The reason I scored high on this measure is that I am a planner – I am someone who enjoys fixings problems and coming up with novel solutions. I am also comfortable with improvising. An issue that is sub-optimal here is that I am one or the other. A planner, or an improviser. There is nothing in between. When I have planned something and the plan no longer works, I have to take time to re-orient to improvising. I do not always succeed at this.

Additionally, my detailed plans often get misread. Many teammates see me as too detail-oriented to see the big picture. I would argue that I spend so much time on the details because others refuse to do so. I would also argue that I am not given the chance to talk big-picture because I get pushed into detail roles.

This has HUGE implications on how I am perceived as a leader:

1. Optics – leaders divorce themselves from the day-to-day. Their job is to steer the ship. A leader should, however, understand the details of what underlies the course taken.
2. Energy – an effective leader delegates details. The energy and time should be used for amalgamating.
3. Relatability – people don’t like nerds, and nerds don’t become leaders (often).
4. Facts, figures, and details often get in the way of the human dynamic. Leaders focus on the individual.

Pros: I am someone who fixes things. I set goals and make a path to get there. I can continue this to help drive a team

Cons: Interpersonal dynamics – people don’t like the data-driven overly-confident goon who ignores human dynamic.

Takeaway: The section is correct in stating that it drives me crazy to leave things to the end. I value the suggestion that I need to make things apparent about my expectations, and I will need to leverage relatedness more.

**RELATEDNESS**

Understanding people on an individual level is my life’s work. I admit, I really don’t get some (many) people. The things they do, and what drives them in this tumultuously painful and absurd existence – and that’s ok. I feel I am a pretty normal guy and it seems like a lot of people don’t get me. Fair enough. I would however, like to bridge that gap – not for me so much, but I feel that my contribution to the world (my small one, and the one at large) would be to provide a better understanding of disparate groups… ok, more than an understanding – a true empathy.

I through appreciation around like it is about to go out of style. I am sincere when I do so as I value what people do and I truly believe that every person is special in a significant way.

The assessment is 100% correct that I get hurt when others do not reach out to me in the ways that I reach out to them. I am learning how to deal with this. The assessment is also correct that it is not the best for me to work alone. I am quite good at this, but it is detrimental to my growth, my happiness, and to my relationships with others.

Pros: I should continue to push to understand and empathize with others – to make them feel valued and heard. In doing so, it is almost impossible to have feelings of animosity towards one-another. Additionally, excellent insights can be derived from this depth. Lastly, this depth creates bonds – bonds that I need to succeed in this life

Cons: I am not good at superficial dynamics. I do not like to work with a person if I don’t understand what drives them. This can be off-putting and we simply do not have time to be deep on every interaction.

Takeaway: Work to be more approachable and relatable at a general level, but continue to pursue depth

****Fairness****

In the second grade, my class was required to write something positive about each other. To this day, I recall that another student (who I respected) said I was the fairest person he knew. To this day I still do not know what his assessment was based upon, but it has stuck with me for 26 years.

I will fight for you to be treated fairly, even if your cause differs (or even opposes my own) - big advocate of the ACLU her Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere. Ok – off of the old’ soapbox now.

I do enjoy being able to admit defeat, but I become incensed when someone tries to cheat at the game – mostly because I know that when it comes to aggressive interactions or duping I am someone who is skilled (we can thank the Attorney father for that). But, as mentioned earlier, I do not want to go down that path. I sincerely want to be a good person. Ideally, I want to live in a world of abundance, one where people do not have to take advantage of one-another to

Pros: I try to give everyone a fair shake and try to respect them.

Cons: The same shake is not always shook back in my direction. Additionally, I am not great at “letting things slide.” I can be very combative when I think someone is being unjust. The solution is to look into what I am winning.

Takeaway: Don’t get upset by unfairness in life. Be firm, but kind in asserting what I want and need. Getting angry due to unfairness only adds negativity to the dynamic.

**How has the Reflected Best Self helped inform who you are as a leader?**

**RBS**

**What surprised me the most about the feedback?**

What surprised me most was that many people think of me as such a kind and loving person. I do not get this assessment from the people I work with or from people in this program. From friends and family I am seen as warm, fun, kind, affectionate, caring, and compassionate. From those who work with me and those in this program, I am seen as serious, strict, and lacking empathy. The feedback given back to me in this program by my classmates has been pretty rough. Candidly, I don’t see myself as very well-liked here. I work extremely hard in this program and that does not seem to be well-received due to how serous I am. In part, this is fair but at the same time I do question the motivation behind some of the feedback. I genuinely care for many people I work with, but I compartmentalize that for the appropriate time. The overall learning here is that I am very black and white in my thoughts and my interactions.

I did not expect to be regarded as patient, generous, artistic, or particularly courageous.

I feel like I have fallen from many of the positive attributes that were mentioned in recent years. Life had been particularly though for the better part of a decade. My response to a tough situation is to fight harder (basically I turned into a real mean SOB).

**What did I learn about myself from my contacts?**

I learned that I surround myself with people who appreciate range and more than just a splash of eccentricity. Those who understand me best are the ones who know that I value the range of the human experience.

Three quotes stand out:

* “You are all the good things, but you embrace all the bad things too”
* “You humor and the topics you discuss are the most sophisticated form of human expression right after music”
* “You are able to shift the energy of a space in unexpected and profound ways”

**What competencies/skills do you use as a leader most frequently?**

**Personal Leadership Development Plan**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Narrative Description: (answering the questions in Part 3)   * 1. What do you consider to be your primary 1-2 strengths as a leader?  1. Passion/drive/hard work – I try to lead through example. I am not afraid to be “in the trenches” and would not ask someone to do something that I am unwilling to do myself. 2. Understanding of the Individual / empathy – Though I am still trying to gain experience here, my focus on the individual can be very effective at leading. I care to understand what people on my team want, need, and aspire to be. I am interested in seeing their individual strengths and growing those. This is a benefit to the individual, the team, and the project.    1. What are your data points for this assessment, and how have you validated them? 3. The best datapoint is my biggest weakness in the domain. I tend to exhaust people with my ambitions. With the right team, they value the work and it can help to motivate good work. 4. I tend to form deep relationships with individuals and am often able to bring outsiders in and make them feel valued. Recognizing the talents of these individuals and encouraging them often results in the most dedicated team-member.    1. What feedback loops do you have in place to assure that you are not over- doing them? 5. This is the TOUGH one. I have failed at this numerous times this year and throughout my career. My feedback only comes from when I start having physical issues by pushing too far (seriously). From the leadership perspective, I only see it when people “ghost” me or the project. 6. I am sensitive to when someone does not want direct/deep engagement. I can see when they pull away and follow suit – pulling back to respect their boundaries. I am also very time-conscious (too much) so I track how much time is being dedicated to personal relationships.    1. How will you go about finding venues where they are valued, and where the “fit” is such that you can use them more often than not? 7. In domains where there is strong motivation and alignment to the goal from talented hardworking individuals. A step forward, however, would be in places where I set the alignment and motivation. 8. Venues where I have enough time to engage in a deep manner and where the culture is to be open and discuss deeply. | | | |
| Answer each of the questions below (Part 4) | Growth Area | Growth Area | Development Area |
| Provide a brief description of the Growth/Development area (3) | **Influence / Inspire / Enable –**  Focusing on the individual needs, wants, and goals. Working to align a team based on a common goal and get them excited about the work. | **Trust / Presentation –**  Demonstrate less self-orientation and maintaining values across all work. Show confidence in all areas but particularly in presentation and not showing stress. | **Self-Care –** Implementing structure into my life that ensures I take care of myself so that I can be an effective leader. |
| What specific behaviors or  practices might address this priority?  (What do you need to  start/stop/continue?) | **Stop –**  Don’t rush into getting the work done. Don’t “black hat” until it’s the right time.  **Continue –**  Listening and empathizing. This takes time but it is worth it in the long run.  **Start –**  Take time to make everyone feel heard, and more importantly, implement their ideas.  Use small talk. Ask questions to learn from them.  SLOW DOWN. | **Stop –**  Be careful about how I present what I want.  Don’t be a nerd (e.g. no one is impressed by facts – they are impressed by direction)  Don’t be intimidated by others. Even if they are more successful or a boss, realize that I am competent, and stressing will do no good.  Don’t intimidate others.  Showing stress  **Continue –**  Be overt about my goals.  Work towards the goals of others (even to my detriment).  Practice more public speaking, pitching, interviewing, and interacting.  **Start –**  Practice leading groups and recap how meetings went afterwards.  Affiliating with good leaders that I can learn from.  Exercising pull in meetings and leadership. Make others come to you | **Stop –**  Thinking that working will cure everything.  Sacrificing physical health for a boss or a team  Sacrificing happiness and mental health.  Stressing/worrying  **Continue –**  Making incremental changes. I have a lot of work to do in this category, but I can only accomplish this one step at a time.  Valuing things that good humans value and place this over work (family, health, volunteering).  **Start –**  Drawing boundaries. This is part of pull leadership.  Pissing people off with my work and drive.  Building safeties and stops into my schedule.  Living more for now.  Looking at the MORE distal goals. People are worth more than projects.  STRESSING – it won’t accomplish much. |
| What are the potential obstacles to keeping your commitment? | Time constraints  Being overwhelmed  Engaging in analytical thinking  Not working with people who I respect. | Time constraints – stress kills this.  Getting wrapped up in the details.  Being intimidated by others. | TIME  Fear of failure  Help from others  Demands from others  Overscheduling  Stressing out |
| What resources do you need to be successful?  (Specific people, training, coaching, funding, etc.) | Time (one on one in particular)  A work environment that encourages communication.  People I respect and am interested in.  Practice (could be training) | PRACTICE  Time to reflect.  Training – exec offerings, shadowing, good examples of leadership, coaching. | TIME  Help from others  Classes |
| How will you assess  progress/success? | Recapping how much work is being done based on my requests and seeing if someone goes “above and beyond.”  Feedback from teams (360 reviews).  Tracking that I have checked in with each person at every meeting.  Gauging if I am doing more talking or more listening.  Tracking if I black hat.  Formal recap at every meeting to note how I have done (1-7 scale). | Review of self after each major meeting or engagement.  Comfort levels with people.  Gauge how much I speak in a meeting.  Gauge if I have left empty space. | Track time I have set aside daily.  Check in on self for stress level (journal).  Physical health  Quantify times  Celebrate “no”  Check in with partner to keep me honest.  Add it to assessment list for the week in venture. |
| What is your  immediate next step,  & when will you  begin? | Develop scale to recap meetings. On the above metrics.  I will begin in my initiation of Venture project (1 mos.) | Place it into a review for venture.  Journal.  Sign up for leadership classes at summer job (adobe)  I began outlining the assessments today. | Calendar out downtime for YOGA (now).  Buy a journal and outline what to put in place (now)  Schedule a time to journal.  Calendar weekly check in (now)  Set a quitting time Now). |