LEADERSHIP CIRCLE PROFILE:
BREAKTHROUGH LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT TECHNOLOGY

Bob Anderson

Founder, Chairman & Chief Development Officer

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CIRCLE.

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to describe the Leadership Circle Profile as a significant advancement in leadership assessment and development technology.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

This paper will describe how the Leadership Circle Profile integrates many of the best psychological, leadership, and spiritual development frameworks and theory into an integrated competency-based leadership assessment.

FINDINGS

In addition to describing the Leadership Circle Profile, the article will summarize key statistical information that suggests the underlying validity of the instrument. It will also show how the major dimensions measured by the Profile are correlated to Leadership Effectiveness and a Business Performance Index. A full description of the validity data and research methodology is beyond the scope of this paper.

ORIGINALITY/VALUE

Organization Development consultants and executive coaches will discover a new leadership assessment technology that goes beyond what is available in other tools, in that, it is a more complete model of leadership development; immediately brings the key internal and behavioral issues to the surface; and invites the client to work more deeply and transformationally within themselves.

KEY WORDS

360 degree leadership assessment instrument, development

PAPER TYPE

Technical.

INTRODUCTION

The Leadership Circle Profile (LCP) represents a significant advancement in the state-of-the-art of leadership assessment and development. It is the first competency-based 360 assessment tool to measure behavior at various stages of adult development; to link patterns of action with habits of thought; to organize information into a developmental system based on some of the best theoretical frameworks in the leadership, psychological and spiritual literatures; and to display information in a way that immediately draws attention to the most critical information in the feedback.

DESIGN CRITERIA

The Leadership Circle Profile (LCP) makes major advances on the best 360 instruments. The LCP is designed to measure a battery of key leadership competencies. Most high quality 360 instruments have a solid research base and measure competencies shown to relate well to leadership effectiveness and to outcomes important to business. The LCP was designed to do this as well as any tool on the market. In the recent book, The Extraordinary Leader, Zenger and Folkman state that the research on leadership competencies can be boiled down to 16 key competencies that significantly enhance leadership effectiveness. The LCP measures a strikingly similar set of key competencies and establishes itself among the best 360 instruments available. It is the other design criteria, however, that set it apart.

The Leadership Circle Profile is designed to integrate many of the best theoretical frameworks from the Leadership, Adult Development, Psychological and Spiritual bodies of knowledge. Few, if any, 360 tools have a theoretical framework to complement their research base. The LCP has a rich and integrated theory base. This allows practitioners to use multiple frameworks that help the client connect the data to deeper insight.

The Leadership Circle Profile is designed to measure behavior and assumptions simultaneously. In this way, it connects patterns of leadership behavior with habits of thoughts. It does not measure assumptions directly, but measures behaviors that are associated with assumptions—well researched by cognitive psychologists (Burns, Ellis)—and that are giving rise to high and low 360 results. In this way, the LCP helps the client get beneath the behavior to the automatic thought processes that underlie behavior. It facilitates far deeper insight, and as a result, more possibility for transformation.

The Leadership Circle Profile is also designed to point to stages of adult development. Kohlberg, Kegan, Gilligan, Cook-Grueter, Hall, Beck, Wilber and others have shown that adults can evolve into more complex "operating systems" through which they think and act. With greater complexity comes greater capacity. The LCP is designed to measure thinking and behavior that is likely to arise at various stages of development. In so doing, the LCP becomes a platform for transformation.

The Leadership Circle Profile integrates all of the above in such a way that the consultant/coach and client can immediately see the significant patterns in the data. Data is visually displayed so that the client is naturally drawn toward the most important issues. Most 360 tools display data as sequential list of competencies. The LCP organizes information in a high impact way so that the client immediately begins to inquire into the interrelationships between behaviors.

THE CIRCLE: A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

Everything stated above is represented in the Circle Graphic. Much of this article will describe the dimensions arrayed in the Circular Profile (Figure 1) and how the layout of the circle meets all of the design criteria mentioned above.

The Graphic is composed of an inner circle and an outer circle. The outer circle contains all of the dimensions measured by the LCP. (A discussion of each is beyond the scope of this paper. For more information, the reader can go to www.theleadershipcircle.com.) The inner circle summarizes the 29 dimensions of the outer circle into eight inner-circle summary dimensions. Each wedge of the inner circle summarizes the dimensions in that wedge of the outer circle. The inner circle provides immediate insight into the predominant patterns in the data. The outer circle provides specific detail as to what is making up that pattern.

All data is compared to a norm base (of over 3000 self-assessments and 30,000 feedback-assessments) and presented as percentile scores. This allows for immediate comparison to normative populations, but more importantly, it distills information usually lost when only raw data is presented. Self-assessments are presented as a dark line and the average percentile score from feedback-providers is presented at the outer edge of the shaded area.
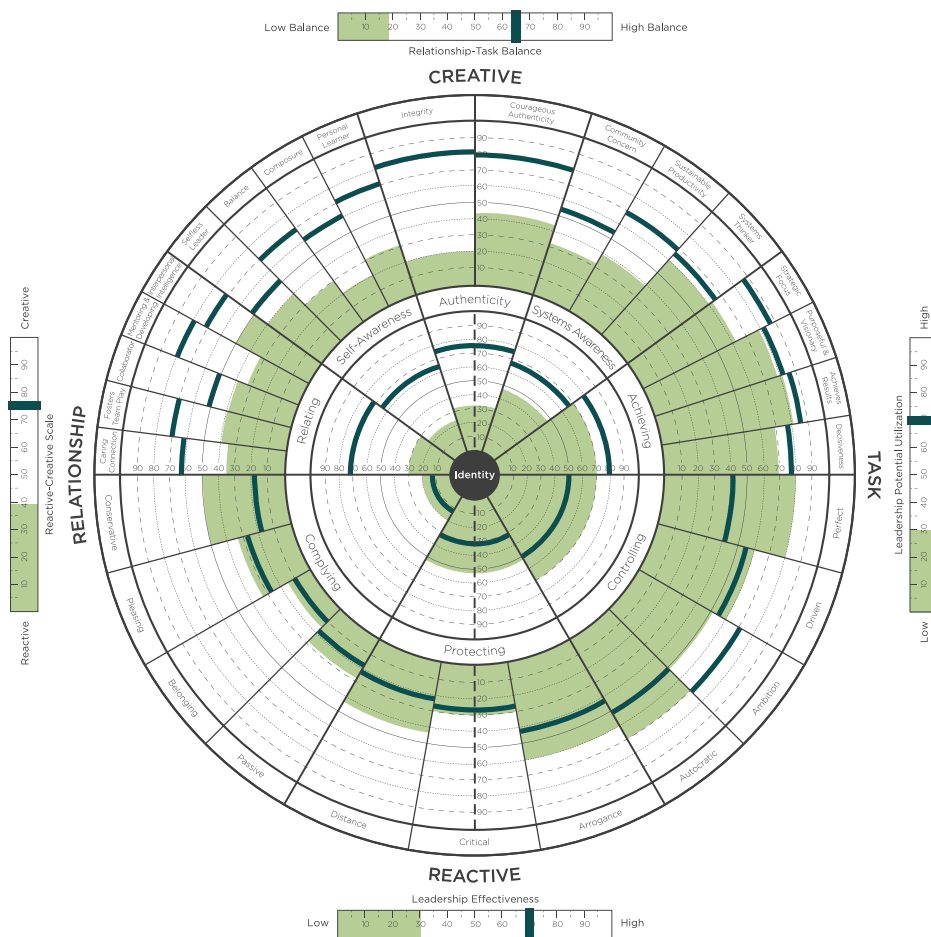

Figure 1: The Leadership Circle Profile Graphic

The top half of the circle is labeled Creative and the bottom half, Reactive. The top half of the circle contains an array of 18 Creative Competencies. These are competencies that have been shown, through the leadership research, to be highly correlated to effectiveness and business outcomes.

The split in the top half and the bottom half of the Circle points to a number of developmental frameworks. The labels Creative and Reactive refer to Robert Fritz's (The Path of Least Resistance) description of the Creative and Reactive Orientations. In the Creative Orientation, people are primarily focused on what they want and bringing into being results that matter. In the Reactive Orientation, they are focused on problem resolution—reacting against the problem to relieve the stress, anxiety and inner conflict that the problem is causing. Fritz argues that these two orientations produce very different patterns of results over time. The Creative Orientation more predictably creates intended results, while the Reactive Orientation tends toward maintaining the current situation.

Larry Wilson described these two orientations as, Play-To-Win versus Play-Not-To-Lose. Playing to win is defined not as competitive, but as, "Going as far as you can using all that you've got." He describes the bottom half as Play-Not-To-Lose. In the Play-Not-To-Lose orientation, the focus is on minimizing risk, self-protection and self-promotion. While very common, it is not a prescription for effectiveness.

The largest framework that the top-half and bottom-half points to is the research on stages of adult development. We know that children, as they grow, move through different "operating systems." A child at age five lives in the magical kingdom where Santa can go around the world in one night, come down every chimney, eat everyone's cookies, get presents to every house on the planet. This works in a five year olds' operating system. By age nine, the child is reading the Guinness Book of World Records. Things now have measure and form. They do not shape shift. The child lives in a very different reality and relates to the world very differently. Developmental Psychologists call this stage Concrete Operations. Adults can, likewise, move into and through similar shifts in their operating systems—if they grow. There is a substantial amount of research describing these different adult operating systems (Robert Kegan, Ken Wilber, Carol Gilligan, Brian Hall, Lawrence Kohlberg, Don Beck, Susan Cook-Greuter, Bill Torbert, and the mystical traditions of all religions). All the research suggests that with each evolution in the operating system comes greater capability to handle increasing complexity with greater effectiveness.

The Leadership Circle Profile has been most heavily influenced by the work of Robert Kegan at Harvard. Kegan has developed a five-stage model. Stages three and four correspond respectively to the Reactive and Creative Orientations described above. Kegan's research, confirmed by others, suggests that only about five percent of adults evolve beyond the Creative Orientation. About 20 percent of adults fully configure at the Creative level of development. Seventy percent of adults are operating at the Reactive or in the transition from Reactive (level 3) to Creative (Level 4).

In the Reactive stage, the self-structure or self-concept is organized such that identity is rooted in the surround. Identity, self-esteem, self worth, and security are made up from the outside-in— by how one is seen by others; by the internalized messages that one has been given from some external authority in the surrounding environment. These messages inform one about who one is, and how one needs to behave in order to be effective, good, or right. These internalized messages are held as unquestioned or unexamined assumptions that run behavior. Because they connect ways of behaving with self-worth and security, and because they are not conscious, the manager has little choice but to behave in habitual ways. Behavior is therefore reactive—it is run in reaction to outside events by unconscious inner assumptions.

When this operating system shifts to the Creative orientation, the assumptions that equate worth or security with behavioral strategies, become objects of conscious reflection. Behavior is not reactive, but choice-full. This is because the Self is much more internally organized—what psychologists call Internal Locus of Control. At this stage of development, new questions emerge. The person begins to differentiate from the culturally accepted messages and begins to seriously ask, "What is my vision? What are my values? Who am I anyway and what do I most want to do with the time I have left in my life?" The person is now acting in the world from his/her own internal compass; his/her own internal standards, and set of values that have been discerned out of all of the surrounding messages. The person is, therefore, living and leading much more autonomously or independently in the world.

In his book, In Over Our Heads, Robert Kegan evaluates many of the major literatures that adults are reading—parenting, couples, work, etc. He makes an interesting conclusion. Kegan shows how all this literature is prescribing very different kinds of behaviors and actions in the world, but then goes on to show how each makes the same demand on consciousness. In other words, all the literatures that adults are reading to help them be more effective are written to a level-four operating system. These bodies of literature are making a level-four (Creative) demand on consciousness. This includes the leadership literature and competency research. Key Competencies are primarily level-four behaviors. In other words, they are most readily accessed when the Self is fully configured at level four. The way we have been describing leadership, and the competencies required to embody it, are most readily available in the Creative Orientation.

In summary, the top half of the circle is composed of Creative Competencies that are fully accessible only when operating out of a Creative, level four, independent operating system.

The bottom half of the circle describes earlier versions of these Creative Competencies. The bottom- half measures developing strengths—strengths that are emerging through, and still held within, a Reactive operating system. Therefore, the bottom half of the Circle is not measuring weaknesses; in fact, there are many strengths associated with the bottom half—strengths that have not yet fully matured into their Creative counterpart. The earlier version of high Achieving competencies are Controlling behaviors. The earlier version of Relating competencies are Complying behaviors, and the earlier version of Self/System Awareness and Authenticity is Protecting.

Given that the bottom-half strengths are being run through a Reactive operating system, each dimension measured does have built in limitations. Limitations result because the basic assumption underlying each dimension is some form of worth, security, and identity equated to that specific behavioral strategy. As soon as we say we have to behave in specific ways in order to be okay, behavior becomes compulsive (Reactive). This reactivity reduces behavioral flexibility and it reduces access to full range of behavior described in the top half of the Circle.

THE NATURAL DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The Circle suggests the direction of development, which is depicted through the layout of the circle. The right half of the Circle is labeled Task; the left, Relationship. All dimensions on the right half tend to be more focused on getting things done, getting results, making decisions, redesigning systems, change management, etc. Everything on the left half has to do with relationships between

individuals, teams, and with oneself. This converts the circle into a grid; upper-left is Creative engagement with people; lower-left is Reactive engagement with people; upper right is Creative engagement with achieving results and evolving systems; and lower right is Reactive orientation toward task.

This grid informs the direction of development for leaders. Task orientation at the Reactive level of development is Controlling. As it evolves from Reactive to Creative, it becomes Achieving (the Creative task orientation just above Controlling on the circle). Complying is a relationship orientation that evolves into Creative Relating (just above it). The same developmental evolution is true for Protecting as it evolves into Self/System Awareness and Authenticity.

This is important is because it is much more natural for a Complying person to focus on developing the strength of Complying. Complying then matures into Relating—which is more natural than asking that person to change their nature and become an Achiever. Our data suggest that when Complying evolves into Relating, Achievement develops quite nicely. The same is true for Controlling. When Controlling evolves into Achieving, Relating develops as well. When Protecting evolves into Authentic Awareness, Achieving and Relating come along with it.

This turns the Leadership Circle into a very powerful development system. It works with a manager's strength even when it is being reactively over-used. It does not ask the manager to become different, but to develop their strengths into higher levels of maturity and mastery. It does not ignore weaknesses (which is currently in vogue), but works with them to foster deeper insight.
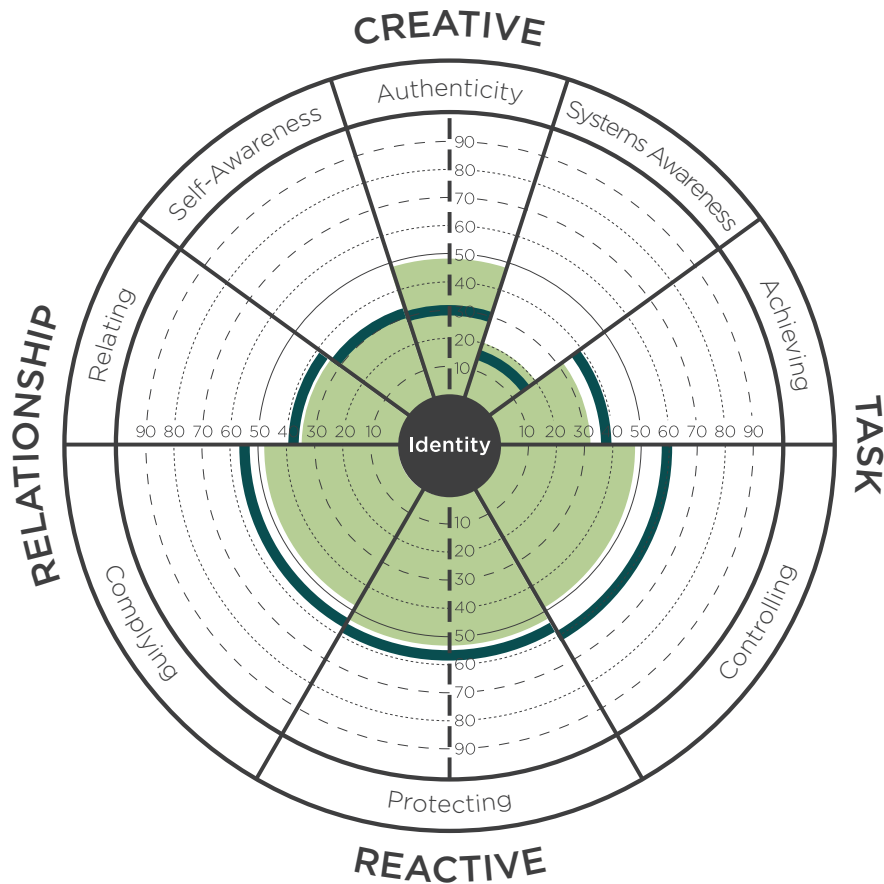

Figure 2: The Inner Circle Dimensions

BEHAVIORAL POLARITIES

The grid underlying the Circle also forms the basis for key polarities that have been well researched in the leadership literature. Dimensions that are opposite each other on the Circle are opposite theoretically, behaviorally, and statistically. For example, Relating is opposite Controlling (Figure 2). Relating is made up of five subscales (found in the outer circle—Figure 1) that, taken together measure the capability of a manager to form strong connections with people and relate to them in ways that foster individual growth, team development, and collaboration. Relating is a measure of interpersonal competence and the degree to which a manager cultivates a high-performance environment. Opposite relating is Controlling. Controlling is made up of a number of dimensions, some more controlling than others, but taken together, Controlling measures the extent to which a manager pursues results in service of personal ambition and at the expense of people development, teamwork and collaboration. Controlling and Relating are opposite behavioral strategies. The Correlation Table below (Figure 3) indicates that they are statistically opposite. They are inversely correlated (-.64) and quite strongly so. Relating, on the other hand is highly effective. Its correlation to Leadership E ectiveness is .85. The correlation between Relating and Business Performance is .50. Contrary to many of our management myths, Relating is an extremely strong form of management. Controlling works against Relating and is therefore inversely correlated to Leadership Effectiveness at -.41.

PERFORMANCE CORRELATIONS*	Business Performance Index	Leadership Effectiveness Scale	Relating	Self-Awareness	Authenticity	Systems Awareness	Achieving	Controlling	Protecting	Complying
Business Performance Index	1	0.61	0.50	0.48	0.50	0.57	0.61	-0.21	-0.31	-0.40
Leadership Effectiveness	0.61	1	0.85	0.76	0.78	0.84	0.91	-0.41	-0.56	-0.63
Relating	0.50	0.85	1	0.87	0.72	0.80	0.76	-0.64	-0.75	-0.44
Self-Awareness	0.48	0.76	0.87	1	0.66	0.73	0.66	-0.74	-0.74	-0.36
Authenticity	0.50	0.78	0.72	0.66	1	0.78	0.86	-0.23	-0.38	-0.72
Systems Awareness	0.57	0.84	0.80	0.73	0.78	1	0.88	-0.40	-0.51	-0.61
Achieving	0.61	0.91	0.76	0.66	0.86	0.88	1	-0.24	-0.41	-0.75
Controlling	-0.21	-0.41	-0.64	-0.74	-0.23	-0.40	-0.24	1	0.83	0.09
Protecting	-0.31	-0.56	-0.75	-0.74	-0.38	-0.51	-0.41	0.83	1	0.23
Complying	-0.40	-0.63	-0.44	-0.36	-0.72	-0.61	-0.75	0.09	0.23	1
Number of Observations	486	1,863	2,746	2,746	2,746	2,249	2,746	2,746	2,746	2,746

* 0.4 or more is noteworthy | 0.6 or more is strong

Scale Alpha: 0.94

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS SCALE QUESTIONS

I am satisfied with the quality of leadership that this leader provides.
This leader is the kind of leader that others should aspire to become.
This leader is an example of an ideal leader.
This leader's leadership helps this organization to thrive.
Overall, this leader provides very effective leadership.

Figure 3: Correlation Table

Note: Pearson Correlations are based on aggregated scores from the entire norm base of feedback- providers. Because the sample size is so large, all correlations are significant beyond .001. Leadership Effectiveness is a research scale that measures the perception of overall leadership e ectiveness. Business Performance is a scale that asks feedback-providers to evaluate, not the manager, but the business performance of the organization that the manager leads compared to industry standards. A full description of these measures is beyond the scope of this article.

Dimensions that are laid out oppositely also have opposite internal assumptions that run associated behavior. The Leadership Circle Profile is the only competency-based tool to measure these competing assumptions and associated behavior. Managers will often get feedback that their Relating skills need improving, but they seldom gain the insight that it is their high control assumptions (the need to be so flawless; the need to be so much better than others; the need to be so in control) that are running the show. These assumptions, and the behaviors associated with them, work against Relating skills. To simply create an action plan around improving one's relating skills is woefully insufficient. This is why 360 tools have not been as effective as hoped in producing behavioral change. A much more high-leverage approach is to help the manager get some self-awareness around the assumptions, and the automatic responses that they are making to situations that lead them to over-control: push excessively, over-drive, or be hyper-critical. If they can begin to interrupt these responses, they can begin to get more flexibility in their behavior. Furthermore, it may be much more effective to help a high-control manager evolve that capability to the Creating level, where it becomes Achieving. Our data suggests when Controlling matures into Achieving it becomes power with people, not power over people. It becomes relational enough to be high performing.

Another polarity within the circle is between Achieving and Complying. Achieving is the creative use of power; its power is focused on purpose, vision, and end results. In service of results, Achieving is both strategic and decisive. Obviously, it is no surprise that Achieving is highly correlated to Effectiveness at .91.

Complying on the other hand, is the reactive letting-go of power. Managers scoring high on Complying give up power in the organization as a strategy to win approval, stay safe, go along to get along, and be a loyal team player. The strengths of complying are relational. They are oriented toward loyalty, harmony, teamwork, and caring about how others feel. The downside of Complying is that self-worth is tied-up with being liked, being acceptable, being conservative, fitting in, etc. High Complying managers lower their profile in the organization as a strategy to stay safe. Complying is opposite Achieving. The high Achieving manager takes up power and authentically pursues purposeful results. These are opposite behaviors and inversely correlated at -.75. Because Achieving is so highly correlated to Effectiveness, Complying is inversely correlated to Effectiveness at -.63 and to Business Performance at -.40.

If a manager is getting low scores on dimensions within Achieving (such as Focusing on Results, or on Decisiveness), the first place to look for what might be causing this is Complying. Does this manager have Reactive, auto-pilot behavior that has him/her playing it safe when he/she might need to be making a fairly risky decision? And if so, what are the underlying assumptions running that basic strategy? The outer circle dimensions (Figure 1) within Complying will provide insight into the specific assumptions and behaviors that are interrupting Achieving. If the manager can get some basic self-awareness around how he/she defaults to a "play it safe" strategy, and translate that awareness into more empowered Relating, then Decisiveness, Focus on Results, and Achieving will grow very nicely.

The third major polarity in the profile is the polarity between Authentic Awareness and Protecting. Authentic Awareness in the top half of the circle is comprised of Self-Awareness, Systems Awareness, and Authenticity. Opposite Authentic Awareness is Protecting. To understand this polarity, it is helpful to get a deeper understanding of how the bottom half of the circle is organized.

In the 1950's Karen Horney wrote a book called Our Inner Conflicts—a summation of her learning and research about how individuals organize a sense of identity (Character Structure). She said that people organize their identity using one of three different strategies—a Moving-Toward strategy, a Moving-Against strategy, or a Moving-Away strategy. The bottom half of the circle incorporates Karen Horney's work. The Moving-Toward others is expressed in Complying, the Moving-Against in Controlling, and Moving-Away in Protecting.

The skills, capabilities, and competencies of Protecting all have to do with rational brilliance. That is its gift. When that gift is used to establish a sense of identity, however, it will be overused. The manager then runs the risk of becoming arrogant, emotionally distant, aloof, overly rational, and at the extreme, highly critical of others.

The strengths of Protecting are oriented toward learning, awareness, and knowledge. Therefore, it is directly opposite Self-Awareness, Systems-Awareness, and Authenticity. The Self-Awareness dimension includes much of the work by Goleman where he shows that emotional and relational intelligences are highly dependent upon Self-Awareness. The Systems-Awareness dimension measures what Peter Senge describes in his book e Fi h Discipline—systems thinking and systems awareness. Authenticity measures what Peter Block wrote about in his best selling book, The Empowered Manager, in which he describes the courage and authenticity required to create the organization one envisions. While Protecting is oriented toward these Creative competencies, its overly rational, distant, arrogant and critical tendencies has serious negative consequences and therefore is inversely correlated to Self-Awareness (-.74), Systems-Awareness (-.51), and Authenticity (-.38), not to mention Relating (-.75) and Achieving (-.41).

VISUAL INTEGRATION

The LCP is also unique in that it reports and displays results in percentile scores compared to an ever-growing norm base of managers. This allows for much more accurate interpretation of the meaning of the data than does presenting raw scores. For example: A manager may receive a score of 4.0 for Relating and, if there were a 360 that measured controlling, a 3.0 for Controlling (on a 5 point scale). is manager is likely to conclude, "Well, I received a 4 on Relating and a 3 on Controlling. That looks pretty good to me. Relating is a full point higher than controlling so I must be doing okay." These are the conclusions that most managers walk away from when they get 360 results typically reported on a 5.0 scale. Once this data is converted to percentile scores however, the manager will discover that his/her 4.0 score on Relating is about the 45th percentile, and his/her 3.0 score for controlling is about the 75th percentile. Now the manager is looking at data that tells a very di erent story—a more accurate story.

Added to this, the LCP then draws a relationship between those two dimensions in opposite quadrants, so the natural conclusion from the data is that my high Controlling scores are interrupting my ability to develop people and create teams. That's a very different starting place for a developmental conversation with the manager. Our experience suggests that he/she immediately begins to explore that relationship and to ask questions that are simply not asked using other 360 tools.

Furthermore, because the LCP links behavior to habits of thought, it provides the coach/consultant a window of opportunity to shift the conversation to the level of thinking or assumptions that

are underlying the moments when a manager moves to control, when he/she could allow the group to make its own decisions. Underneath that momentary behavior is often some form of inner conversation that has the manager linking this moment with future success and self-worth. Therefore, he/she is feeling at risk personally. When Controlling managers feel at risk, their automatic default behavior is to control, even at the expense of the long-term development of trust, teamwork, and relationships in the organization. The LCP surfaces the habits of thought that result in habits of behavior and, thereby, creates opportunities for breakthroughs.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

In summary, the Leadership Circle Profile is the first 360 degree assessment instrument to measure a full array of Key Creative leadership competencies, while simultaneously measuring competing Reactive tendencies. It is the first 360 of its type that measures management behavior at different developmental levels, and shows the relationship between these levels. It is the first competency-based 360 that also measures the cognitive assumptions that drive behavior. It does all this with strong correlation to real world results within a theoretical framework that supports the natural direction of development. The LCP is the first competency 360 that displays results in a way that shows the integration of all of this information. This makes the LCP a platform for transformation. Immediately, it takes consulting-client conversations deeper than is accessible using other tools. It allows for action plans that are both behavioral and self-awareness oriented. In short, the Leadership Circle Profile facilitates more rapid progress into breakthrough insights, new behavior, and greater levels of effectiveness.

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As founder and CEO of The Leadership Circle, Bob has created and conducted intensive leadership development workshops, pioneered innovative assessments, and mentored practitioners worldwide in how to manage complex leadership transformations. Spanning nearly 30 years, Bob Anderson's story is one of an innovator and visionary in leadership development. As early as high school and college, Bob staffed intensive personal and leadership development retreats. In business school, his love for statistics and economics helped to culture a unique talent. He became skillful at taking complex ideas and integrating them into models and methods for leadership development that are powerful, tangible, and accessible. While working as a manager in manufacturing, Bob completed a Master's degree in Organizational Development. Early in his career, he was fortunate to have had Peter Block as his mentor. He has also worked closely with some of the industry's most respected names including Peter Senge, Robert Fritz, and Ken Wilber. He and David Whyte co-taught leadership workshops created by Bob.

Today, under his leadership, The Leadership Circle's clients rank among the nation's top companies. Bob explains, "We now recognize that leadership is a process of transformation whereby a leader is encouraged to make a profound shift—to gain a deeper under-standing of themselves, the world, and their relationship to others. This deeper, longer term work is what our Leadership Profile brings to the table, what The Leadership Circle stands for, and this is the kind of work we invite organizations to experience."