

The Executive's Strategic Leadership Workbook

Introduction: Leadership as a Phenomenon, Not a Formula

Welcome to a different kind of leadership guide. This workbook is designed not to give you a prescriptive formula, but to guide you in developing a practical, effective leadership strategy that is authentic to you and resonant with your organization. Its purpose is to move beyond abstract theories and equip you with a concrete process for enhancing your self-awareness and managerial effectiveness.

The core premise of this workbook is grounded in extensive research. It posits that leadership is not a fixed set of personality traits or a particular style. Instead, leadership is a dynamic phenomenon—the result that occurs when a qualified executive gives the **optimal response to the demands of their organization**. This responsive process is guided by the interplay of three core themes: your **Competence**, your **Commitment**, and your **Self-Concept** as a leader.

Throughout this workbook, you will engage in a structured process to explore these themes in depth. You will assess your personal leadership capabilities against a research-backed framework, uncover the internal drivers that shape your leadership identity, and ultimately build an actionable plan for targeted growth.

Consider this workbook a practical tool for self-discovery and strategic planning. By dedicating time to the reflections and exercises within, you will build a more profound understanding of yourself as a leader and craft a deliberate strategy to amplify your impact.

Module 1: Defining Your Leadership Core

Before you can lead others effectively, you must understand what drives you. This module is the foundational first step in crafting an authentic and sustainable leadership strategy. By clarifying your internal drivers and self-perception, you establish the "why" behind your leadership—the personal mission that will guide your actions, shape your decisions, and inspire your teams. This is the bedrock upon which all other competencies are built.

Section 1.1: Uncovering Your Leadership Self-Concept

Research shows that an executive's awareness of themselves as a leader—their leadership self-concept—stems from one of two sources. Understanding your own origin story is key to leading with authenticity.

- **Internal Locus:** Your leadership identity formed *prior* to a formal managerial role. It is driven by personal ideals, a strong sense of mission, or deeply held values that guide your actions.
- **External Locus:** Your leadership identity emerged *as a result* of your managerial role. It is shaped by the responsibilities of your position and the demands and context of the organization.

The table below contrasts the characteristics of each locus:

Internal Locus of Self-Concept	External Locus of Self-Concept
Driven by a personal mission or "change agent" identity.	Guided by the requirements and expectations of the managerial role.
Leadership is an expression of personal values and ideals.	Leadership is a response to organizational and team needs.
Often confirmed by standing for something, even against the status quo.	Often focused on enabling team success and "greasing the wheels."
Sees the managerial role as a vehicle to fulfill a personal vision.	Sees leadership as a duty and responsibility conferred by the organization.

Potential Blindspots

Understanding your dominant locus is critical for self-awareness, as each carries potential blindspots that can undermine your effectiveness if left unmanaged.

- **Dominant Internal Locus:** A narrow focus on your personal mission can lead you to disregard organizational chains of command or alienate peer-level executives whose support you need. Your strong opinions, while valuable, may intimidate subordinates, preventing them from sharing dissenting views crucial for robust decision-making.

- **Dominant External Locus:** A heavy focus on your team and "managing down" can cause you to neglect the equally critical tasks of managing laterally (with peers) and managing up (with supervisors). Without this broader stakeholder engagement, you risk losing continued support and resources for your team.

Use the following questions to reflect on the origins and drivers of your leadership identity. Be thoughtful and specific in your responses.

- **Reflection Question 1:** When did I first become aware of myself as a leader? Was it before I had a formal managerial title (Internal Locus) or as a result of my role and responsibilities (External Locus)?

- **Reflection Question 2:** Describe a time your leadership was confirmed by clashing with the status quo. What personal value were you expressing? (Internal Locus)

- **Reflection Question 3:** Describe how your managerial role itself "makes you a leader." What specific demands of the role shape your leadership behaviors? (External Locus)

• **Reflection Question 4:** What is my personal "mission" or "ideal" as a leader? How does my current role serve as a vehicle for this mission?

Section 1.2: Clarifying Your Vision and Mission

Based on your reflections, synthesize your core drivers into two distinct statements. These will serve as your compass, guiding your strategic action plan in the modules ahead.

My Leadership Vision Statement

Write a single, compelling sentence that describes the future you want to create through your leadership. What is the ultimate impact you aim to have on your team, organization, or industry?

[Write your Leadership Vision Statement here.]

My Leadership Mission Statement

Write 2-3 sentences explaining your core purpose as a leader. How will you achieve your vision? What principles and values will guide your daily actions and decisions?

[Write your Leadership Mission Statement here.]

With a clearer understanding of your leadership self-concept, you have established the "why." Now, let's move to a practical assessment of your capabilities—the "how" you bring your vision and mission to life.

Module 2: Assessing Your Leadership Competencies (Personal SWOT Analysis)

Effective leadership development requires a clear diagnosis of where you excel and where you have opportunities to grow. This module introduces a powerful diagnostic tool—the SWOT analysis—grounded in the seven core competencies of managerial leadership identified by extensive research. By systematically evaluating your capabilities, you can pinpoint exactly where to focus your developmental efforts for the greatest possible impact.

Section 2.1: The Seven Core Competencies of Managerial Leadership

Research with executives has identified seven distinct abilities that are critical for leadership effectiveness. These are not personality traits, but actionable skills that can be developed over time.

- **Qualification for Role:** Being capable of performing the tasks assigned to your role, including both explicit and implicit requirements.
- **Autonomy-Cohesion:** Imparting autonomy to subordinates while creating cohesive, unified teams.

- **Fostering Trust:** Creating mutual trust between yourself and your subordinates through openness, integrity, and confidence.
- **Steadiness amid Uncertainty:** Acting effectively and decisively when faced with incomplete facts, tension, and complexity.
- **Balanced Execution:** Managing both the immediate demands and the long-term strategic needs of the organization.
- **Communication:** Expressing yourself clearly and tailoring your message to the audience and intended result.
- **Growth/Cultivation:** Developing current and future capabilities in yourself and in your subordinates.

Section 2.2: Your Personal Leadership SWOT Analysis

Complete the following SWOT analysis by evaluating your proficiency across the seven competencies. This exercise will form the basis of your action plan in Module 4.

Strengths (Internal)	Weaknesses (Internal)
Which of the 7 competencies are your greatest assets? Where have you received positive feedback? Provide specific examples.	Which of the 7 competencies represent your biggest growth areas? Where do you feel least confident? Provide specific examples.
> <i>[Write your response here. Be specific and provide concrete examples.]</i>	> <i>[Write your response here. Be specific and provide concrete examples.]</i>
Opportunities (External)	Threats (External)
Looking at your organization and stakeholders, where can you leverage your strengths to make a greater impact? What upcoming projects or challenges align with your competencies?	What organizational challenges or stakeholder dynamics could expose your weaknesses? What external pressures test your less-developed competencies?
> <i>[Write your response here. Be specific and provide concrete examples.]</i>	> <i>[Write your response here. Be specific and provide concrete examples.]</i>

This analysis clarifies *what* your core capabilities are. The next module will provide the context for applying them, exploring the three critical arenas where leadership is demonstrated daily.

Module 3: The Three Commitments of Executive Leadership

Competencies are only valuable when they are applied. This module breaks down the abstract idea of "leading" into three concrete arenas of action, or **Commitments**. These are the sustained efforts where your competencies are demonstrated and your impact is felt. Mastering the commitments to **Presence**, **Stewardship**, and **Development** is essential for translating your capabilities into tangible results.

Section 3.1: The Commitment to Presence

Presence is the commitment to consistently invest your time with stakeholders. It means being visible, available, and genuinely engaged, whether you are physically in the room or connecting with a remote team. It is the foundation for building trust, motivating teams, and gathering crucial information.

Stakeholder Mapping

Map your key stakeholders and create a deliberate strategy to enhance your presence with each group.

Stakeholder Group	Their Needs/Expectations	My Actions to Improve Presence
<i>e.g., My direct reports</i>	<i>Clear direction, regular feedback, feeling heard</i>	<i>Schedule weekly one-on-ones; hold monthly team "office hours"</i>
<i>e.g., My supervisor</i>	<i>Proactive updates on key projects, no surprises</i>	<i>Send a concise weekly summary email; schedule a bi-weekly check-in</i>
<i>e.g., Peer executives</i>	<i>Collaboration, visibility into my team's work</i>	<i>Initiate one cross-functional project this quarter; attend their team meetings periodically</i>
> <i>[Your entry here.]</i>	> <i>[Your entry here.]</i>	> <i>[Your entry here.]</i>

Reflection Questions

- How much time should I invest in being visible to internal stakeholders versus being with my team?
- How do I create leadership presence when working with remote or multinational teams?
- Analyze the "total package" of your communication (words, tone, body language, timing). How might your reputation outside the company differ from inside, as illustrated in the Lane & Quinn case study?

Section 3.2: The Commitment to Stewardship

Stewardship is the commitment to honor the authority of your managerial role. It involves responsibly assigning tasks, setting clear direction, providing the necessary resources for success, and preserving the integrity and ethical standards of the organization.

Priority & Decision Matrix

List your top 10 current tasks or decisions and place them in the matrix below. As you populate the quadrants, consider how you will provide clarity on **autonomy** and **accountability** to your team.

- For tasks in the **Do First** and **Schedule** quadrants, consider: How do I ensure my team has the autonomy to act on my decision? How can I create a clear decision-making framework?
- For tasks in the **Delegate** and **Eliminate** quadrants, consider: How do I empower someone else to do this? How do I make their accountability crystal clear? What can be stopped to free up team capacity?

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	Do First	Schedule
	> <i>[List items here.]</i>	> <i>[List items here.]</i>
Not Important	Delegate	Eliminate
	> <i>[List items here.]</i>	> <i>[List items here.]</i>

Reflection Questions

- Do my subordinates have a clear understanding of their roles and accountabilities? How do I know this for certain?
- The source highlights the critical role of the "manager once-removed"—the manager's manager. In the case of Chris, whose manager Lee provided permission and served as a buffer, Lee's actions enabled Chris's success. How do your actions directly impact your own managers' effectiveness and their ability to empower their teams?
- What infrastructure (policies, procedures, tools) do my subordinates need to do their jobs well, and what is my role in providing it?

Section 3.3: The Commitment to Development

Development is the commitment to consistently build current and future capabilities—both in yourself and in your subordinates. This is a strategic imperative that ensures high performance today and builds a competitive advantage for tomorrow.

Team Development Planner

For three members of your team, identify a key growth area and the most appropriate method for developing it.

Team Member	Key Growth Area (Current/Future Capability)	Development Modality (e.g., Coaching, Stretch Goal, Mentoring)
e.g., Sam	<i>Developing presentation skills for senior leadership (Future)</i>	<i>Assign a stretch goal: Co-present with me at the next quarterly review</i>
e.g., Kim	<i>Improving project management discipline (Current)</i>	<i>Provide direct coaching using our project management software</i>
e.g., Drew	<i>Gaining cross-functional business acumen (Future)</i>	<i>Arrange for mentoring with a peer in the marketing department</i>
> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]

Reflection Questions

- Do I tend to coach by providing answers or by guiding my team to find their own solutions?
- What is one "stretch goal" I can assign to a high-potential employee that pushes them out of their comfort zone?
- What is my own biggest leadership development gap, and how will I address it in the next quarter?

Having explored your self-concept, competencies, and commitments, you are now ready to translate these insights into a concrete plan for leadership growth.

Module 4: Building Your Strategic Action Plan

This is where insight transforms into intentional action. An effective leadership strategy is not a static document; it is a living plan that guides your focus and efforts. This module will guide you in translating your reflections from the previous modules into specific, measurable, and time-bound goals, ensuring that your development is deliberate and impactful.

Section 4.1: Setting SMART Leadership Goals

The SMART framework is a proven tool for creating clear and trackable goals. Review the **Weaknesses** and **Threats** you identified in your SWOT analysis. Your first SMART goal must directly address

your most critical weakness or a significant threat. Your second goal should focus on leveraging a key **Strength** to capitalize on an **Opportunity**. Your third goal can address any other high-priority development area.

Use the template below to formulate your three leadership goals.

• **Goal 1:**

- **Specific:** What exactly do I want to achieve? (Connect to a competency or commitment).
- **Measurable:** How will I track progress and know when I've succeeded?
- **Achievable:** Is this goal realistic given my resources and constraints?
- **Relevant:** How does this goal directly advance your Leadership Vision? Which principle from your Mission Statement does it put into practice?
- **Time-bound:** What is my target completion date?

• **Goal 2:**

- **Specific:**
- **Measurable:**
- **Achievable:**
- **Relevant:**
- **Time-bound:**

• **Goal 3:**

- **Specific:**
- **Measurable:**
- **Achievable:**
- **Relevant:**
- **Time-bound:**

Section 4.2: Your 90-Day Action Plan

Break down your highest-priority SMART goal into concrete steps for the next 90 days. A powerful goal is only achieved through consistent, focused action.

Key Action Step	Resources Needed	Potential Obstacles	Completion Date (by Week #)
<i>e.g., Improve team cohesion (Goal 1)</i>	<i>Budget for team-building event</i>	<i>Scheduling conflicts</i>	Week 4
<i>e.g., Delegate one major task</i>	<i>One-on-one time with direct report</i>	<i>My own reluctance to let go</i>	Week 6
> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]
> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]

Section 4.3: Quarterly Planning and Progress Tracking

Map out your primary focus for the next four quarters to maintain momentum on your leadership development journey.

Quarter	Primary Focus (SMART Goal #)	Key Milestones	Progress Check-in Dates
Q1	<i>e.g., Goal 1: Improve team cohesion</i>	<i>Complete 90-day action plan</i>	<i>End of Weeks 4, 8, 12</i>
Q2	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]
Q3	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]
Q4	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]	> [Your entry here.]

Tracking Progress

Use this simple log for weekly or bi-weekly check-ins on your 90-day plan. Consistent reflection is the key to sustained growth.

Date	Actions Completed	Progress Notes/Challenges	Next Steps
<i>e.g., 10/15</i>	<i>Held 1:1 with Sam to discuss delegation</i>	<i>Sam is excited but nervous. Need to provide clear support.</i>	<i>Draft delegation plan with clear success metrics.</i>

> <i>[Your entry here.]</i>	> <i>[Your entry here.]</i>	> <i>[Your entry here.]</i>	> <i>[Your entry here.]</i>
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A plan is only effective if it is regularly reviewed and adapted. This commitment to ongoing reflection is the final, crucial component of strategic leadership.

Conclusion: The Ongoing Practice of Leadership

You have now journeyed from the core of your leadership identity to a concrete plan for action. This workbook has guided you through a process of defining your self-concept, assessing your core competencies, contextualizing them within the three commitments, and building a strategic plan for your growth.

The central idea to carry forward is that leadership is not a destination you arrive at, but a continuous process of application, learning, and reflection. The most effective leaders treat their development as an ongoing practice, not a one-time event. They remain curious, seek feedback, and adapt their strategies in response to new challenges and opportunities.

Leadership is a phenomenon of interdependent variables, and it becomes a palpable experience when the right person exhibits the right behaviors in response to the demands of a situation. Challenge yourself to see this workbook not just as a tool for self-improvement, but as a blueprint for architecting the conditions—in yourself, your teams, and your systems—for leadership to emerge. We encourage you to revisit this workbook quarterly to reassess your competencies, refine your commitments, and set new, ambitious goals for your ongoing development as a managerial leader.