

The Executive Leadership Self-Assessment: A Framework for Growth

Leadership in the biopharmaceutical industry is not a fixed set of personality traits inherent to a select few. Instead, it is a dynamic phenomenon that emerges from the complex interplay between a leader's abilities, their sustained efforts, and the specific demands of their environment. In a sector defined by long development horizons, high R&D costs, and intense regulatory scrutiny, leadership cannot be reduced to a simple list of attributes. Rather, effective leadership is the result of a qualified individual giving the optimal response to the unique challenges of their organization. The most critical task for any executive, therefore, is to cultivate a deep and honest self-awareness. This guide provides a research-backed framework for that self-assessment—one grounded in the experiences of seasoned biopharmaceutical executives—enabling you to identify specific opportunities for targeted development and chart a course for more effective managerial leadership.

1.0 Understanding the Leadership Framework

A structured, evidence-based model is an invaluable tool for conducting a meaningful self-assessment. It moves beyond subjective impressions and provides a comprehensive lens through which to view your leadership practice. The framework presented here is grounded in a qualitative study of executive leadership experiences, which identified three core thematic categories that produce effective leadership behaviors. These interdependent themes are **Competence**, **Commitment**, and **Self-Concept as a Leader**. Competence is *the ability of the executive to respond to a situation, a request, or an expectation from their managerial role*. Commitment is *the executive's sustained effort to meet their competencies*. Finally, Self-Concept as a Leader is *the executive's awareness of themselves as a managerial leader or as exhibiting 'leadership behaviors or characteristics.'* The following assessment is structured around these core themes to provide a holistic, insightful, and actionable view of your leadership effectiveness.

1.1 The Three Pillars of Leadership

The research identified three primary themes, each with corresponding subcategories, that form a comprehensive model of managerial leadership.

• **Theme 1: Competence:** *The ability of the executive to respond to a situation, a request, or an expectation from their managerial role.*

- Qualification for role
- Autonomy-cohesion
- Fostering trust
- Steadiness amid uncertainty

- Balanced execution
- Communication
- Growth/cultivation

• **Theme 2: Commitment:** *The executive's sustained effort to meet their competencies.*

- Presence
- Stewardship
- Development

• **Theme 3: Self-Concept as a Leader:** *The executive's awareness of themselves as a managerial leader or as exhibiting 'leadership behaviors or characteristics.'*

- Internal locus
- External locus

2.0 Leadership Competency Assessment

This section contains the core self-assessment instrument. To gain the most value from this exercise, approach these questions with candor and take time to reflect on recent, specific examples from your professional experience. Use the following simple, qualitative rating scale to evaluate your practice in each area.

- **S (Strength):** This is a consistent and evident strength in my leadership practice.
- **D (Development Opportunity):** This is an area where I could improve or be more consistent.
- **N/A (Not Applicable):** This dimension is not relevant to my current role.

Competency Assessment Questions

Competency Area	Assessment Question	Rating (S/D/N/A)	Evidence/Notes
Qualification for Role	Do I possess the baseline industry experience and knowledge required for my role, or do I sometimes rely on 'soft skills' to compensate for gaps in competence?		

Qualification for Role	Am I effective at balancing my attention between key corporate stakeholders and the needs of my direct reports?		
Autonomy-Cohesion	Do I empower my subordinates with the autonomy they need to fulfill their accountabilities, or do I tend to micromanage their tasks?		
Autonomy-Cohesion	Do my actions foster a cohesive team environment where individuals respect each other's roles as integral to the team's results?		
Fostering Trust	Do my actions demonstrate congruence between what I "preach" and what I "practice," thereby building trust?		
Fostering Trust	Am I an inclusive leader who proactively invites team members to openly discuss issues, share ideas, and voice concerns?		
Steadiness Amid Uncertainty	How effectively do I make decisions when faced with imperfect facts, incomplete information, or high-pressure situations?		
Steadiness Amid Uncertainty	Do I serve as a "calming presence" for my team, displaying a consistent temperament and emotional resilience during times of organizational turmoil or tension?		
Balanced Execution	How adept am I at managing both the immediate operational demands and the long-term strategic needs of my organization?		
Balanced Execution	Do I create the necessary infrastructure (policies, procedures) to guide daily tasks, or does a focus on "visionary thinking" cause me to ignore these foundational elements?		
Communication	Do I customize my communication style and level of detail to be appropriate for the specific audience (e.g., direct reports, peers, senior executives, external stakeholders)?		

Communication	How effectively do I use communication to inspire action and align my team with a shared vision and clear objectives?		
Growth/Cultivation	Do I actively coach my team members through problems to help them become better thinkers, or do I tend to provide answers directly?		
Growth/Cultivation	Do I have a high degree of self-awareness about my own learning gaps and actively pursue my own leadership development?		
Presence (Commitment)	Am I consistently visible and available to my team, or do I use tools like email as an "evasion tool" for face-to-face conversations?		
Stewardship (Commitment)	Do my direct reports have a clear understanding of their roles, their specific accountabilities, and the authority they possess?		
Development (Commitment)	Do I consistently follow through on creating and supporting development plans for my subordinates?		
Self-Concept (Awareness)	Am I guided more by a strong personal mission (Internal Locus) or by the expectations of my managerial role (External Locus)? <i>A consultant might note: There is no 'right' answer here. The goal is self-awareness. An internal locus can drive mission-led change but may clash with organizational needs. An external locus ensures alignment but may feel less authentic. Understanding your primary driver is key to managing its potential blindspots.</i>		

3.0 Interpreting Your Results & Deep-Dive Reflection

The primary value of this assessment lies not in achieving a particular score, but in the patterns that emerge from your honest reflection. Review your ratings, paying close attention to the items marked "D" for Development Opportunity. Do you notice any recurring themes? For example, are most of your development opportunities

clustered within a single competency like 'Communication'? Or do they relate more broadly to a commitment like 'Stewardship'? Identifying these patterns will help you focus your development efforts where they will have the greatest impact. The following prompts are designed to facilitate a deeper reflection on these identified areas.

3.1 Reflection Prompts by Competency

Qualification for Role

- What communication venues (e.g., corporate meetings, team events) are expected from my role, and how do I create and maintain a leadership presence in these situations?
- What are the key short- and long-term objectives directly attributed to my role, and how do these tie into the overall corporate objectives?

Autonomy-Cohesion

- How do I create a leadership presence when working with multinational teams or with team members from different cultural backgrounds?
- Do my subordinates have a clear understanding of their colleagues' roles and accountabilities, and how they relate to the team's overall goals?

Fostering Trust

- How often does my subordinate come to me to raise concerns, ask a question, or share an idea? What does this frequency indicate about our level of trust?
- What factors contribute to my "personally earned authority" beyond the formal authority vested in my title?

Steadiness Amid Uncertainty

- How do I maintain my leadership presence in an emotionally charged situation or when directly confronted?
- Do I have a decision-making process that allows me to balance the need for timely execution with the need to gather sufficient information?

Balanced Execution

- How do I weigh being present for the right reasons versus delegating effectively so that I am not micromanaging?
- What infrastructural gaps may currently exist at my company for which my role may be directly or indirectly accountable?

Communication

- What verbal and non-verbal communication cues am I typically exhibiting in the presence of subordinates, peers, and supervisors?
- What is my process for enforcing adherence to company policies and procedures, and how is this communicated?

Growth/Cultivation

- What competency gaps have I identified in my own ability to create leadership presence (e.g., oral communication, listening skills, handling difficult conversations)?
- Am I aware of the "presence mix" of individuals I work with—the degree of engagement or type of presence needed by certain team members?

The Commitment to Presence

- How many ideas do I receive from my team on a weekly basis? What have I done with them?
- What does it look like when I am truly engaged in a conversation versus when I am not? How often do I interrupt?

The Commitment to Stewardship

- Based on my subordinates' behaviors, what message am I communicating about the importance of following the company's ethical and legal guidelines?
- What do my subordinates need to do their jobs well—what equipment, training, technology, or knowledge gaps exist?

The Commitment to Development

- Do I have a consistent method of initiating dialogue with subordinates about their development?
- Does my management style work for ambitious employees but prove less effective for those who want to grow within their current role?

4.0 Creating Your Personal Development Action Plan

Insight without action is incomplete. The final and most crucial step in this process is to translate your reflections into a concrete, personal development plan. This simple but powerful framework will help you structure your intentions, identify necessary resources, and hold yourself accountable for growth. Use the insights you gained from the assessment and reflection prompts to populate the template below.

Focus Area	Specific & Measurable Goal	Key Actions	Resources & Support Needed	Target Date

Example of a Completed Focus Area

• **Focus Area:** Fostering Trust

• **Specific & Measurable Goal:** Improve the frequency and quality of open dialogue with my direct reports, measured by a 50% increase in unsolicited ideas shared in 1:1s over the next quarter.

• **Key Actions:**

- Explicitly dedicate the first 10 minutes of every 1:1 meeting to open-ended questions about challenges and opportunities, without a set agenda.

- When an idea is shared, practice active listening and use a coaching framework (e.g., "Tell me more about that," "What would be the first step?") instead of immediately providing a solution.

- Publicly acknowledge and give credit for a team member's idea in the next team meeting.

• **Resources & Support Needed:** Schedule a candid conversation with my manager to discuss this goal and ask for their support and accountability. Engage an executive coach for two sessions focused on active listening and coaching techniques.

• **Target Date:** End of Next Quarter

To help you brainstorm, consider the following examples of actions and resources, which are based on proven developmental modalities.

• **Example Key Actions:**

- Initiate a peer-to-peer mentoring relationship with a colleague strong in a specific area.

- Identify and take on a "stretch goal" project that requires working outside my comfort zone.

- Implement a consistent coaching framework (warm-up → core → solutions → summary) in my one-on-one meetings.

• **Example Resources & Support:**

- Engage an executive coach to identify and work on leadership blindspots.

- Enroll in a formal leadership development program or professional workshop.

- Request a 360-degree multi-source feedback assessment to gain broader perspective.
- Schedule a candid conversation with my manager to discuss my development goals and ask for support.

5.0 Conclusion: The Ongoing Commitment to Managerial Leadership

Effective leadership is not a destination one arrives at, but a continuous process of development, adaptation, and self-reflection. The most effective leadership is "requisite"—it arises when the right person exhibits the right behaviors in response to the demands of a situation within a particular environment. This requires more than a static list of traits; it demands a deep capacity for self-awareness and a commitment to ongoing growth.

Treat this self-assessment not as a one-time event, but as a recurring practice. Periodically returning to this framework will help you foster the self-awareness required to navigate the complexities of your role and adapt to the evolving needs of your team and organization. Committing to this journey of personal and team development is one of the most challenging, yet ultimately most rewarding, aspects of being a managerial leader.