Assessing Leadership Talent

A Scientific Approach to Identify High-Potential Leaders

GALLUP CONSULTING
To learn more about the Executive Assessment and Gallup's approach to leadership selection, development, and succession planning, please visit consulting.gallup.com or contact Sarah Van Allen at 1.202.715.3152 or sarah_van_allen@gallup.com.
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How your organization selects and develops its executive leaders can affect your business’s future growth and provide a distinct competitive advantage. However, without the right tools to properly conduct executive selection, development, and succession planning, organizations tend to make decisions that are inconsistent and highly subjective. This can lead to the formation of an executive leadership team that is imbalanced in the range and depth of talent needed to effectively run your organization.

In contrast, Gallup offers a systematic, strengths-based approach to executive selection, development, and succession planning guided by our Executive Assessment, which evaluates leadership talent:

- objectively
- in a structured format
- by a highly trained consultant
- based on characteristics of high performing leaders
- with results reported in a quantifiable manner

The Gallup Executive Assessment combines a predictive, structured, and validated interview with experience and performance factors to create an objective overall picture of a leader’s talents.

Executive Interview

At the heart of the Gallup Executive Assessment is the Gallup Executive Interview. The Executive Interview is completed over the telephone in a structured, recorded interview format. A highly trained Gallup Consultant conducts each interview, which typically lasts from 90 to 120 minutes. During the interview, the consultant asks candidates to respond to a series of open-ended questions about their personal opinions and experiences. Through the patterns in those responses, a quantified description of the individual’s leadership style is revealed. Because the goal is to understand how the individual naturally thinks, feels, and behaves, there are no trick questions or hidden agendas. The telephone format is used specifically to avoid the biases inherent in face-to-face interviews. The interview should be administered to individuals who have had experience leading and managing others. Candidates report finding the process enjoyable and intellectually stimulating.

Gallup researchers assess the responses based on congruence to the responses of proven, successful leaders. After completing the interview, individuals can schedule a consulting feedback session to assist them in understanding their strengths and opportunities as leaders. For the executives requesting the assessment, a variety of reports are available for use in selection, development, and succession planning.
Applications of the Executive Assessment

The executive assessment lends valuable insight for the purposes of selection, development, and succession planning.

Selection. The assessment is an objective, research-based tool to help select leaders with the greatest potential to create success and growth for the organization’s future. By measuring talent in each of the five dimensions of leadership, the Executive Assessment enables an organization to understand a candidate’s level of talent in each of these leadership dimensions, as well as the candidate’s overall leadership potential. Results can be compared with Gallup’s database, a client’s database, or the results of other candidates. Levels of talent within dimensions can be matched to roles to examine the talents of individuals and their potential fit in that position.

Development. The Executive Assessment can be used as a developmental tool to highlight the leadership talents of each member of an executive team. The process is designed to assist in identifying further developmental steps that will enhance each participant’s capability as a leader. The results and conclusions/recommendations of the assessment can be integrated into personal development plans, and, with the addition of manager feedback options, a manager can be equipped to develop the areas of greatest potential in an individual. Furthermore, the interview profile can be used on an individual basis to coach a person on developing his or her leadership strengths and building complementary partnerships to leverage the talents of other team members.

This systematic method of assessment also allows executives to identify their collective areas of strength and opportunity as a team. Helping organizations understand current leaders and position their talents for the greatest effect can make teams and organizations more efficient and productive.

Succession Planning. One of the most revealing uses of the Executive Assessment is in succession planning. The assessment enables organizations to identify potential leaders inside or outside the company who can best contribute to its future success and growth. By measuring the leadership talent of each member of the current executive team and the talent concentrations of the team as a whole, an organization can look to increase the overall talent level of the team and, when hiring, add talents that are currently underrepresented. The Executive Assessment can help an organization answer an important and difficult question: “Are our high potential leaders stronger or weaker than our current leaders?”

The Executive Interview Dimensions

Gallup’s research identified the items that best predict leader performance. These items form five constructs — the critical dimensions that differentiate highly successful leaders. These dimensions are Direction, Drive, Influence, Relationship, and Execution. Each dimension is further differentiated into themes reflecting specific behavioral patterns that help predict and explain an individual’s approach to the planning and execution of daily work. The five dimensions are defined below.

Direction — Setting the course is a critical function of leadership. Envisioning the future, communicating that vision, creating strategy, and determining goals and priorities allow others to make progress based on the leader’s big-picture guidance.

Drive — High expectations toward outcomes enable leaders to increase performance and growth. The best leaders are personally and organizationally driven, setting standards and challenging others to attain more.

Influence — Leaders must clear obstacles from the path and inspire followers to action. By
compelling others through persuasion, emotion, or charisma, the leader generates confidence and support. People look to leaders for guidance and decisiveness.

**Relationship** — Effective leaders find multiple ways to affect the performance, development, and growth of others. They invest in their people, care about them, and genuinely want them to succeed. Fundamentally, they know that any organizational success rests on the successes of each person within that organization.

**Execution** — Outstanding leaders guide the planning and orchestration of critical tasks. From timelines, to people assignments, to rearranging strategic plans, leaders must ensure that work is completed effectively, accurately, and efficiently.

**Leadership Research**

Gallup has researched leadership talent for more than 40 years. As a part of this research, Gallup has identified common leadership talents by systematically analyzing high performing leaders from a wide range of industries and cultures. The Gallup Executive Assessment was developed based on an extensive study of successful leaders in business, government, education, and nonprofit organizations. Data from more than 47,000 leaders in more than 200 organizations formed the basis of Gallup’s analysis. The assessment measures the inherent talents of current and potential leaders, modeled after those who demonstrated the highest achievements in profitability, revenue growth, employee engagement, supervisor evaluations, previous promotions, and organizational growth. Gallup is continually conducting research on leadership and refining its understanding of successful leaders.

The Executive Assessment pulls together this research in a process designed to help leaders identify and leverage their unique leadership talents. Gallup’s research shows that executives who are clear about their leadership talents and who work to enhance their leadership strengths have a significant effect on wider business results. Similarly, individuals form the basis of personal leadership effectiveness by understanding aspects of leadership that are less natural for them and learning how to best manage these aspects.

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