



Leading Now

Relationship Intelligence
& Four Trends in Leadership





The world is changing. **What are you doing about it?**

As old models of command-and-control executive leadership become increasingly irrelevant, so do outdated approaches to leadership development. Previously, success was defined by an executive's ability to assess situations quickly, make decisions, take action, and deliver on goals. Now it's based on how well they empower others to do so. This shift in the function of leadership is a direct reflection of the changing nature of jobs and careers. According to a study by Deloitte: "careers are no longer narrowly defined by jobs and skills but through experiences and learning agility." Leaders must empower their talent to bring their experiences to bear and offer them the autonomy to learn as they go. More than ever before, business performance boils down to people performance.



For team leaders, needs have similarly changed. To solve complex problems, mid-level leaders must quickly assemble and reassemble teams that are often cross-functional, hybrid, and composed of people with diverse perspectives, experience, and talents. Team leaders must become skilled at fully engaging each individual on the project at hand while managing the conflicts that inevitably arise in their fast-paced environments.

With this new function of leadership, four trends increasingly separate top talent and top earners from the rest.

Organizations need leaders who can:

-  Master multiple leadership communication styles
-  Reduce conflict on teams while fostering inclusion
-  Illuminate and eliminate unconscious bias
-  Build trusted networks across their organization and beyond it

Meeting these needs doesn't require separate leadership competency development training. All can be improved in leaders who learn to apply Relationship Intelligence throughout their work day.



Relationship Intelligence and Four Leadership Trends

Common to all of these new trends is the need for leaders to develop two types of awareness: first, how they are intrinsically wired to approach situations, and second, an awareness of how their team members might approach the same situation differently. Relationship Intelligence cultivates both types of awareness and then takes the crucial next step: It develops in leaders the ability to adjust their own style to meet those differences from a place of understanding.

Relationship Intelligence is powered by the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) 2.0. And since the SDI 2.0 is inter-personalized and comes with an action platform, leaders also gain real-time access to similar insight (or intelligence) about their team members. Leaders who apply relationship intelligence and use it to create a common language with their teams become more agile and accommodating with one another and achieve better outcomes. They learn to avert the possibility of healthy opposition transforming into conflict, which is essential to keeping goals on track.



Motivated by **People-Performance-Process**

Do This

✓ Be flexible, sociable, playful, and collaborative.



Motivated by **Process**

Conversations (In Conflict)

✗ Don't mistake quiet for disinterest.



The Core Strengths Platform and suite of integrations reinforce Relationship Intelligence in the flow of work. Just-in-time insights give leaders instant access to the hard data they need to quickly and accurately tailor their approach in meetings, messages, and conversations, allowing their communication to achieve its intended impact more consistently. When adopted team-wide, Relationship Intelligence enables leaders and their teams to discuss people and personalities objectively, which can go a long way in preventing conflict and creating a culture of open communication and mutual respect.

By putting Relationship Intelligence to work day-to-day, people can convey what's important to them in ways others with very different motives can more easily understand. In this way, leaders and their team members learn to choose when and how to use specific strengths to more authentically connect with others (give them what they want/need) while also moving toward their own goals (to satisfy their motives). Not surprisingly, Relationship Intelligence supports the practical development required for each new leadership trend. Let's dig into each one.

The screenshot displays two user profiles from the Core Strengths Platform. Each profile includes a 'Change' button, a profile picture, name, title, and a 'Demo' label. Below the profile information, there are sections for 'Motives' and 'Conflict' with associated color-coded labels and text. A 'Communication Tips' section includes a progress indicator (e.g., 'Going Well' vs 'Conflict') and a dropdown menu for selecting tip categories. A 'Quick Tips' section provides actionable advice, and an 'Example Subject Lines' section offers communication templates. A large, colorful diagram on the right side of the interface represents the 'Motives' framework, with segments labeled 'PEOPLE', 'PERFORMANCE', and 'PROCESS'. The bottom of the interface shows a 'Motivates Me' section with a partial description of a user's motives.

Evelyn
Customer Support
Motives: HUB
Conflict: [BR]-G
People-Performance-Process Analyze [Accommodate-Assert]

Jason
IT Director
Motives: GREEN
Conflict: G-[BR]
Process Analyze [Accommodate-Assert]

Communication Tips
How are things in this relationship?
Going Well | Conflict

What kind of communication tips do you need?
Messages

Quick Tips

- Be flexible and open-minded; seek multiple perspectives

Example Subject Lines

- We need your input on...
- Could we brainstorm about...
- The team needs...

Motives

PEOPLE | PERFORMANCE | PROCESS

Motivates Me
GREEN
is motivated by meaningful order and g things through. They have a strong to pursue independent interests, to be al, and to be fair.



The world is changing.

Leaders with RQ are poised to help their teams communicate, stay connected, and conquer any uncertainty together.

TREND #1



Master Multiple Leadership Communication Styles

At Core Strengths, developing multiple communication styles is wholly aligned with our belief that people can accommodate differences in personality and motivation and that doing so increases the effectiveness of both the leader and the team. Our SaaS integrations and training help tailor your communication approach with each individual to achieve better, faster outcomes with others. Quite oppositely, many other personality assessments recommend that leaders rely almost exclusively on top strengths within easy reach.





But relying on only a handful of strengths naturally limits a leader's range of communication style. It also precludes them from developing the agility they need to move among different types of people and teams, both within and outside the organizations they lead. This strengths-based agility is gaining in importance. According to Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends report, "Today, successful businesses must incorporate external trends, perspectives, and voices by maintaining positive relationships, not just with customers and employees, but also with local communities, regulators, and a variety of other stakeholders."¹

Our approach inherently develops multiple communication styles because we look at strengths through the lens of people's motives and encourage using the full range of them like tools in a relational toolbox. We deliver insights for when and how leaders may switch to a different strength, when needed, to satisfy their own motives and meet the needs of the people they communicate with. Moreover, "switching" is linked to clear reasons why a leader might choose that strength, so they can access that style while still feeling authentic. This more deeply developed strengths-based agility moves leaders out of their comfort zone, when necessary, without moving them too far from the core strength that got them where they are in the first place. And we all know that going out of your comfort zone is often where the magic happens.

Successful businesses must incorporate external trends, perspectives, and voices by maintaining positive relationships

¹ https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/HCTrends2018/2018-HCTrends_Rise-of-the-social-enterprise.pdf



Echoing this sentiment, an executive-level leader who completed Core Strengths training later in his career was struck by what a different young leader he would have been with his newfound RQ. “I wouldn’t have spent so many years being such an uncompromising idiot, thinking that was the only way to get people to perform.”



TREND #2

Reduce Conflict, Foster Inclusion

Innovation often happens due to many divergent views being heard, so leaders must model how to welcome and discuss opposing views for their teams. This isn’t always easy — especially when the stakes are high and the pace is fast — but this aspect of leadership is critical for engaging the different experiences and perspectives that invite innovation and higher performance. Yes, conflict (and people’s overwhelming natural desire to avoid it) creates a massive cost in lost time and productivity, but that doesn’t even factor in the loss of potential for those same teams seeking diversity of opinion, style, input, and excelling at inclusion.



A study led by Cloverpop, the enterprise platform for communicating, tracking, and improving decisions, analyzed approximately 600 business decisions made by 200 business teams over two years.



They found that inclusive teams make better business decisions up to 87% of the time; teams that follow an inclusive process make decisions 2x faster in half the number of meetings.



Moreover, the decisions made and executed by diverse teams delivered 60% better results.²

The failure to engage different perspectives may lead not only to mediocrity but also to interpersonal conflict (or the avoidance of it), if people on a team feel their values are unrepresented and their voices unheard. Relationship Intelligence gives your developing leaders a strong understanding of their motives and behavior as well as team members (described above) as a foundation. Still, it goes even deeper into what happens to those motives and behavior when healthy opposition starts to feel personal, our values are violated, and two or more people find themselves in conflict.

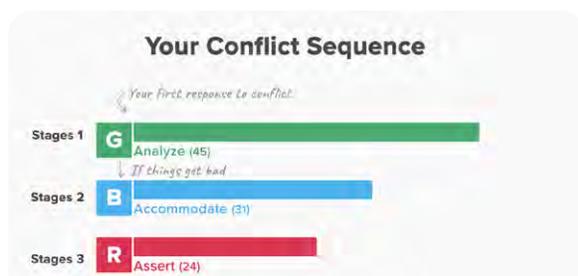
² <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/minorities-who-whiten-job-resumes-get-more-interviews>



As part of every assessment, each person receives their own “**conflict sequence**” that tracks to stages of an escalating conflict. Some people first rise to the challenge and assert themselves. Others become peacemakers, while still others withdraw to think things through. None of these reactions, however, readily supports open discussion or an exploration of the issue at hand.

It is a powerful game-changer when leaders and teams have the Relationship Intelligence to understand each other in tense situations and correctly “see” each other’s shifting behavior for what it is: simply a response to conflict. Using the common language taught in our training, leaders and their teams can more objectively discuss the “heat in the room” and steer the conversation back to a productive track. This clarity is invaluable because conflict (even perceived conflict) produces an internal experience in people that surfaces externally in various ways: some visible and some completely inscrutable.

This can lead to faulty assumptions about others’ behavior, which often fuels discord and halts progress. But when leaders allow their teams to recognize where they and others are in their sequence, conflict can become something managed well — instead of something desperately avoided at a high cost to the organization.





TREND #3



Illuminate and Eliminate Unconscious Bias

The world has come a long way in confronting conscious bias in the workplace. This focus on long-standing practices that disproportionately affect one group has had the added benefit of bringing into focus various kinds of unconscious bias that also erode the culture and productivity of our organizations and institutions. Unconscious biases range from the fairly innocuous (Google engineers designed a YouTube video uploading app that only worked properly for right-handed people³) to situations that create outright discrimination (a two-year study showed that African-Americans who “whitened” their resumes received more callbacks for interviews⁴). These biases are problematic at all levels, but their impact is greatest when practiced by leaders.

³ <https://googleblog.blogspot.com/2014/09/you-dont-know-what-you-dont-know-how.html>

⁴ <http://www-2.rotman.utoronto.ca/facbios/file/Whitening%20MS%20R2%20Accepted.pdf>



Specialized training is available to address unconscious bias in leadership. Speakers like Karen Pressner⁵ have extolled the “flip it to test it” approach: when reflecting on certain behavior with a colleague, you can flip the gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation and ask yourself if you would have acted the same way, said the same things, or made the same decision. These kinds of remedies are useful **reflection tools**. And they might even work in advance of a meeting or afterward to make amends for inadvertently discriminatory behavior. But finding this level of illumination adequate is missing the point of bias. We don’t want to treat people like we might treat another type; we want to treat people with respect for the very specific humans they are. There’s a difference in all of us beneath the surface, a cognitive diversity, and this consciousness is the driving force of Core Strengths. **Discussions of cognitive diversity** on your team should not preclude discussions of other kinds of diversity when so many groups have been, and continue to be, underrepresented in the workplace. But at Core Strengths, we find that people can talk about cognitive diversity objectively because there’s no history of discriminating against people because they’re motivated by concern for process, performance, or people. When leaders focus on the motives and style of communication that drive their team members as individuals, unconscious bias is revealed and replaced with attention to what will make the outcome of their communication or collaboration with a particular person the best possible.

⁵ https://youtu.be/Bq_xYSOZrgU



Motivated by **People-Performance-Pro**

Do This

- ✓ Be flexible, sociable, playful, and collab



Motivated by **People**

Do This

- ✓ Take the time to ask how they feel about things

Avoid This

- ✗ Don't push for quick decisions or guesses.



Another problem leaders have with unconscious bias is that it reverts and remains stubbornly unconscious even after it's illuminated.



Even after training on diversity, equity, and inclusion, disciplined reviews of an unconscious bias often fall by the wayside, as so much good training does. A differentiator for Core Strengths training is its innovation for stickiness. Our Core Strengths platform is a digital relationship coach that weaves tailored insights into your meeting and messaging apps. It provides a direct portal into the Relationship Intelligence of yourself and others to instantly refresh what was learned in our training (and it's effective even without training). At any moment, in real-time, users can receive specific guidance on improving meetings, messages, and conversations based on their hard-wired motivations and conflict sequence data. Motive-based relationships and Relationship Intelligence skills will positively affect your DEI initiatives because you can always find common ground with the person's essence and celebrate them for their differences.

TREND #4



Build Trusted Networks Across the Organization and Beyond It

The team is the essential business unit, and networks of teams (what Deloitte in its Human Capital Trends report⁶ calls the “symphonic operating model” as opposed to the functional “siloes” one) are what drive the ever-increasing collaboration and internal integration our organizations require to succeed.

⁶ https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/HCTrends2018/2018-HCTrends_Rise-of-the-social-enterprise.pdf

What powers that network is a tremendous amount of ongoing relationship-building based on trust and respect, whether within the C-suite, between executives and team leaders, or among team leaders and their talent. Because it's a network, a symphony, if you will, it only runs well when people **trust one another enough to communicate fully and rely on one another to be accountable and driven.**

When teams operate with each member truly working from a place of respect for others, with opposition perceived as healthy — not job-threatening — then greater problem-solving innovation and stronger business performance is possible. Core Strengths' solutions don't end with strengths or conflict sequences. It also includes a study of overdone strengths, which is the behavior that results when we humans double down on what we perceive as our strengths at ill-fitting times, particularly when other behavior would be much more appropriate. Whether overdone in frequency, intensity, or duration, overdone strengths inhibit trust-building by creating an unstable environment where team members no longer feel safe, valued, appreciated, and understood.





Let's look at a disguised example from our training. Makela is a strong leader, and her SDI results showed self-confidence as one of her top three strengths. She validated this during her debrief. Her self-confidence in her vision and hiring instincts make her team members feel secure and excited to collaborate. Makela's self-confidence is clearly a bonding agent that is part of why her team consistently outperforms. But when the team is meeting with an outside vendor to execute an important project, Makela begins to overdo her self-confidence. When this external team rightly points out work her team will need to do, instead of listening, Makela starts "winging it," pretending this is work they have already done. Important discussions and points other team members try

to raise get

overlooked as

Makela keeps

the spotlight

on herself. Her overdone self-confidence turns into arrogance, and her team no longer feels secure or cohesive. Some are embarrassed by their leader's behavior. The energy in the room, which was positive and bright at the beginning, has been drained.

**Self-regulation and awareness
goes a long way to deepening
the trust among team members**

If Makela had been aware that she has a tendency to overdo her self-confidence when faced with an emerging set of new circumstances, she may have handled herself and the meeting differently and maintained the high functionality of her team. This is just one aspect of the value of understanding overdone strengths: It makes individuals the master of their strengths — not the other way around. And this level of self-regulation and awareness goes a long way to deepening the trust among team members as they inevitably join forces with other internal and external teams to get business done.



Successful Leaders Leverage All Four

Core Strengths believes that leaders can be well-rounded without giving up the power of the top strengths that make them who they are as leaders. We also believe they can employ all four of these tactics without separate training for each one: The new operating model within organizations and the more transparent world we all live in demands it. This passage from the Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends report summarizes the situation well: “Today, successful businesses must incorporate external trends, perspectives, and voices by maintaining positive relationships, not just with customers and employees, but also with local communities, regulators, and a variety of other stakeholders. Building these relationships challenges business leaders to listen closely to constituents, act transparently with information, break down silos to enhance collaboration, and build trust, credibility, and consistency through their actions.”⁷ The stakes are high for companies and the people they employ. The future demands interdependency, cooperation, collective action, and innovation to lead, and that demands competent leaders adept at empowering others and modeling the conscious behaviors that fuel performance.

Get in touch

Evelyn
Motives: HUB
Conflict: [BR]-G
Top 3 Strengths: Inclusive, Flexible, Risk-Taking
COMPARE

Jason
Motives: GREEN
Conflict: G-
Top 3 Strengths: Methodical, Tolerant, C
COMPARE

⁷ https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/HCTrends2018/2018-HCTrends_Rise-of-the-social-enterprise.pdf