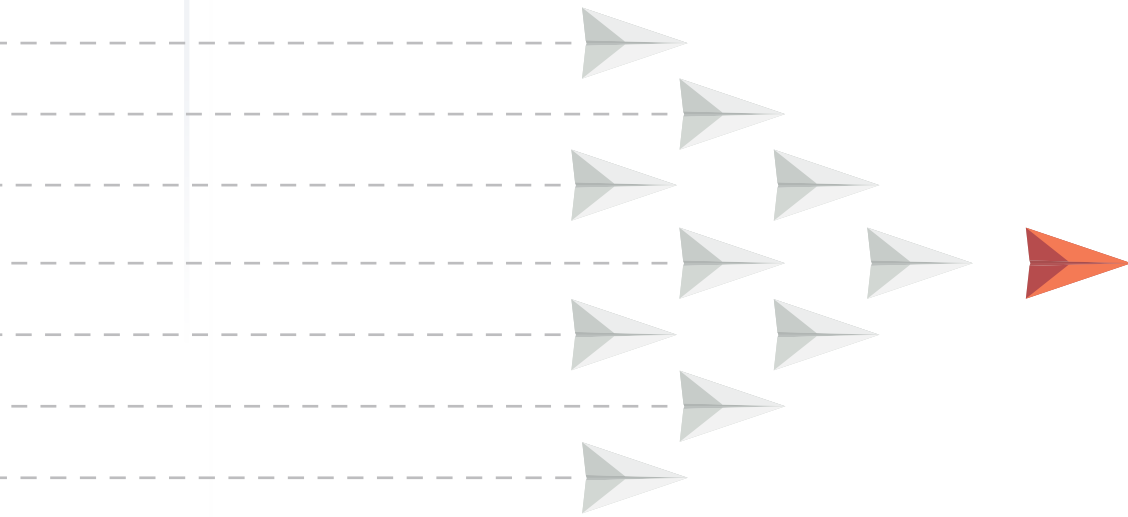


PageExecutive

The Future of

Executive Talent





Even before the phrase ‘the war for talent’ came into being in 1997, having the right talent in the right roles was a prime concern facing all executives and HR professionals. And now, identifying and supporting talented individuals is so important (and at the centre of successful enterprise management) it could be a practice area of its own.

This whitepaper will explore the construct of executive talent, and seek to help you, the reader, explore a popular concept used to assess it so you can apply it to your next executive hire.

EXECUTIVE ROLES HAVE EVOLVED



Executive skillsets are changing and changing rapidly. Why? Thanks to the onset of digitalization, which brought about huge changes in the way business is conducted, and the rise of new generations in the workplace, who are searching for meaning and purpose in their work, executive roles have evolved from what they once were.

To form a leadership team from the evolved C-suite in any organisation, propelling the organisation – and themselves – towards greater productivity and better results becomes more complex. There are complicating factors

here, such as the fact that executives come from varying backgrounds and therefore have differing modus operandi, agendas, and vision for the future.

As senior leaders, they have functional and management responsibilities that reinforce their individuality – and sometimes this competes with organisational requirements. Add performance and talent into the mix, and understanding of the complexity of building your top team to lead you forward becomes apparent.



WHY HIGH PERFORMERS ARE NOT ALWAYS PERFECT



While many organisations look at past performance records as a qualifier for high potential status, there is widespread agreement that past and current performance does not signify effective performance in broader future roles. There is a real distinction between performance and potential.

The starting point for differentiation is that potential is a dynamic state, not a static end state. People who are high potential have the capability to learn, grow, adapt, and develop – so the assumption is that high potential people are dynamic and will continue developing beyond their current state. A question arises on whether the factors contained within potential (learning ability, adaptability) are learnable – because the key factors in potential are essentially personality traits.

It is inherently complicated to make predictions about how successful someone may be in the future. There is the need to define what you are trying to predict, then assessing the person against the criteria – made complicated by issues such as personal capabilities and motivation, alongside the challenges and opportunities linked to the organisation. This is a vastly different process to a selection decision, where there is a clear understanding the specific job requirements.

Hiring managers, senior leaders, and executives need three key skills to make successful predictions on someone's potential:

- The ability to anticipate the types of future leaders (skills, experiences, abilities) needed for future organisational success
- The ability to accurately assess current people in the organisation
- The ability to judge an individual's potential for future growth and development



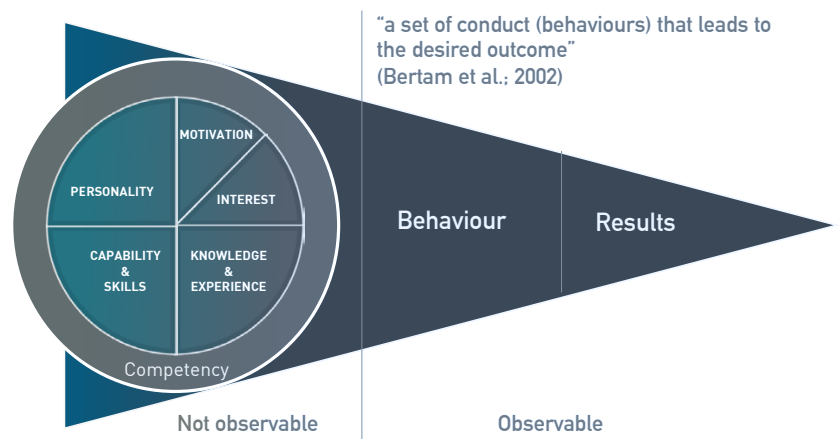
DERAILING FACTORS BEHIND PERSONALITY TRAITS



With high potential comes the possibility of darker personality traits, where a number of negative behaviours could potentially halt an individual's long-term progress. These damaging personality traits can take the form of personality dysfunction i.e. aggressiveness or insensitivity to others, or a motivational dysfunction i.e. lack of energy or willingness to work hard. These dysfunctions are highlighted as they can seriously affect the whole organisation.

- Separate personality and motivation. You also assess them separately. With the module Page Executive works with (see figure) the competencies of a person are made up by knowledge/experience (learned), capabilities/skills (learned), personality and motivation/interest
- In general, personality is not wrong or right, but different personalities traits, and their indicated levels, highlight different "advantages" and "disadvantages"
- It is important to always clarify and define the requirements of a role. Which traits/behaviours are critical to success in that role? Therefore, you can have a personality that matches a certain role.

E.g. someone with a high openness is very curious, tries out new things, and is creative. This is very helpful in a role such as researcher, or certain roles in marketing, but will not match an accountant role.



- Extraversion – they like talking to people and are outgoing, so fit very well in sales positions. However, if quiet and reserved, a better fit would be where they don't interact with people, avoiding frustrating an extroverted person e.g. data focused position.

In the end, it is all about the fit and positioning of the right people in the right jobs to help them thrive and keep them motivated.



SEARCHING FOR YOUR NEXT EXECUTIVE TEAM MEMBER



To search for and find potential, you need to know the components used in its measurement. Growth elements, such as adaptability, learning orientation, openness to feedback, drive, energy, achievement orientation, career ambition, results orientation help individuals learn new career skills but may be less important in different work environments. Their adaptability, learning orientation, and risk taking can be stifled by current work and its context – meaning a person not showing these traits might have them, but they are unused due to situational pressures and demands.

Moving this person to a new assignment may allow latent components to be unleashed, highlighting previously hidden potential. In this instance, new assignments are useful for learning new skills and knowledge, alongside demonstrating behaviours and skills previously hidden.

What then are the key components for discovering potential in an individual? In the 'The Pearls and Perils of Identifying Potential,' by Silzer and Church, they list the seven key components, reached after an exhaustive research into nine models used by assessment companies and consulting firms, and two corporate surveys.

Cognitive abilities

- Conceptual or strategic thinking, breadth of thinking
- Intellect, cognitive ability
- Dealing with complexity & ambiguity

Personality variables

- Interpersonal skills, sociability
- Dominance
- Maturity, stability, resilience

Learning variables

- Adaptability, flexibility
- Learning orientation, interest in learning
- Openness to feedback

Leadership skills

- Leadership capabilities, manage and empower people (general)
- Developing others
- Influencing, inspiring, challenging the status quo, change management

Motivation variables

- Drive, energy, engagement, tenacity
- Aspiration, drive for advancement, ambition, career drive, organisational commitment
- Results orientation, risk taking

Performance record

- Performance track record
- Leadership experiences

Other variables

- Technical/functional skills, business knowledge
- Qualifiers - mobility, diversity
- Cultural fit



Breaking down analysis of individuals in this way helps senior leaders, managers, and human resource professionals make better decisions in the identification of high potential people. Better identification of existing high potential people in an organisation, combined with improved search and selection processes, drives businesses on towards success. Following on from seven key components, Silzer and Church divide them into three wider areas that support a talent management strategy focused on potential:



Growth Dimensions:

components that help or hinder an individual's growth and development, (include adaptability, flexibility, and motivation). These traits are stable over time, but with access to learning and a supportive environment, alongside an engaging topic for the individual, they can strengthen. They are also useful as indicators regarding the acquisition of new skills.

Foundational Dimensions:

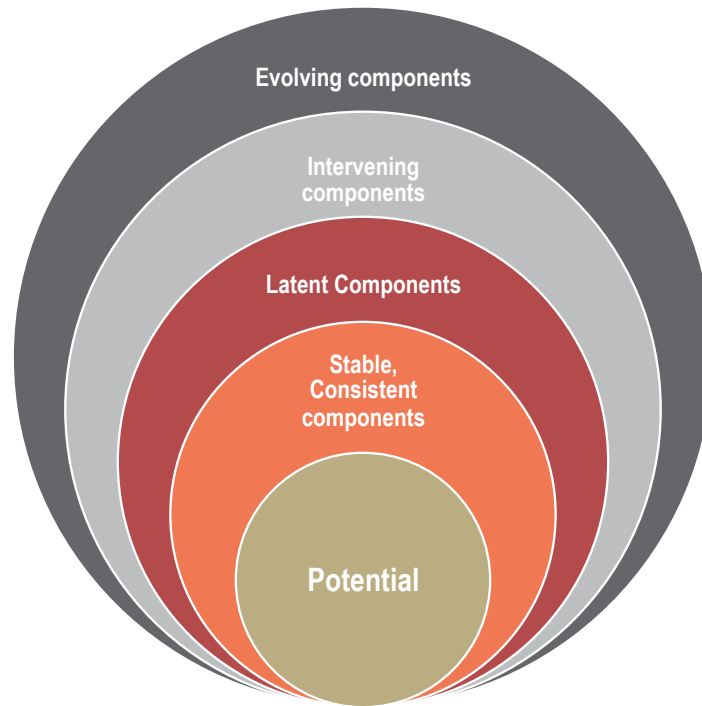
competencies people have throughout their careers, including cognitive ability, personality characteristics and interpersonal abilities. They are fairly stable and hard to alter, and only develop with considerable intervention and support from others.

Career Dimensions:

early indicators of potential in a specific career area. Specific to different careers but often include supervisory skills, potential for management, and potential for success in project management.



Silzer and Church describe the four types of high potential components relevant to understanding the model, supporting their supposition that the stable components (cognitive skills, personality traits), career skills, and knowledge can improve during the course of a career. Increased focus by organisations on learning variables with new skills outcomes can assist with evolving career skills.



Evolving components:

that an individual acquires through career experiences (mostly Career components).

Intervening components:

that influence the degree an individual can grow and develop in other areas (mostly Growth components).

Latent Components:

that need the right context and support from the management or HR to express themselves (mostly Growth components).

Stable, consistent components:

that can be measured similarly at different career stages (mostly Foundational components).



HOW PAGE EXECUTIVE ASSESSES LEADERSHIP



At Page Executive we use a similar methodology to better understand the traits leaders bring with them, ensuring at all stages that the analysis follows a strict role-based path, never deviating from linking the personality to the position. Our methodology aims to combine soft-skill analysis during the interview stage (both in person and with tools) with deep understanding of the technical skills that make-up the position.

Personality factors or more specified dimensions/traits are not visible to us. We translate them in certain behaviours that we can observe. E.g. Planning = providing accurate forecasts, projects plans, structuring your workload, etc. Networking = feeling comfortable approaching new people, etc.

These observable behaviours are assessed through different strategies:

- Competency based interviews
- Online personality assessments
- In person case studies, role plays, and presentations

In online assessments we ask a person to rate themselves on behaviours statements. From this we assess their score on certain personality scales. From scientific research, we know the strengths and areas to develop, and the advantages and disadvantages for different high/low scores on personality scales. We can then map the required profile for the job with the results/profile of the candidates.

In competency based interviews we ask candidates about previous situations and rate their behaviours on a rating scale to assess their competency score

In role plays/ case studies candidates are also assessed against competencies on a rating scales by observers

Personality traits/ behaviours are assessed through different tools/channels. The profile of the candidate reviewed against the requirements of the role/ competencies needed.



EXECUTIVE TALENT IS ON THE MOVE



Talent planning has been pushed to make earlier decisions on individuals about their potential for roles farther into the future. This is the basic challenge in identifying high potential talent. What we look for in individuals earlier in their career indicates they have what it takes to be successful in future roles that are often unspecified, and in some cases, may not yet exist, in addition to being an effective component to a leadership team. It pushes us to focus on a different set of individual variables and an ambiguous criterion.

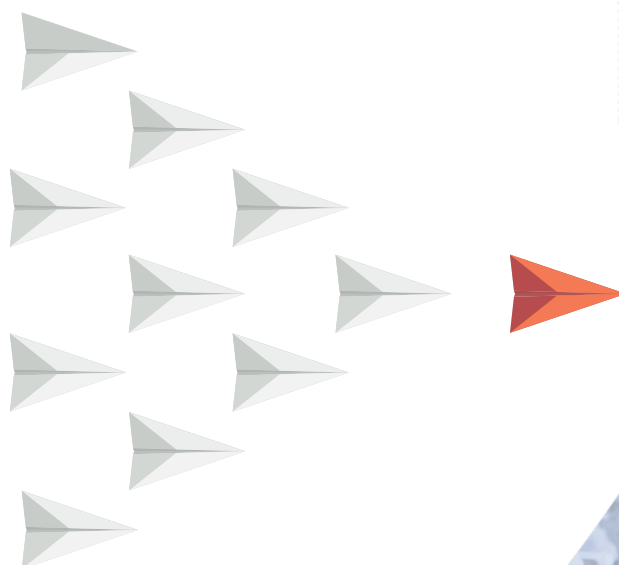
Many organisations spend time and resources on identifying and developing the talent that is needed to achieve business strategies. Talent is gaining in status, almost equal to financial resources, as a critical foundation for business success. Organisations now have formal talent strategies that help them successfully compete for the best talent.

These models should include foundational, growth, and career dimensions. Organisations should keep in mind that many signs of potential might be latent because of the context and situation. Employees who are in a position that is a poor fit for them should be moved to a different position with more interesting tasks and challenges and management support, before a conclusion is made about their potential.

Finally, leaders may consider assessing signs of derailment in their employees as part of their strategy for identifying potential. But with that said, the central question remains: **potential for what?**



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