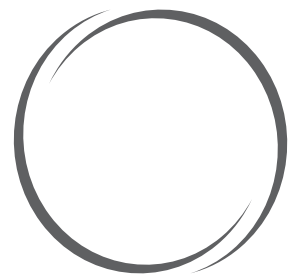


The peak of  
Shada mountain  
in Saudi Arabia.

**5** REASONS WHY  
**HR EXECUTIVES**  
MUST KNOW ABOUT  
**ADULT DEVELOPMENT**



The Leadership Circle®

# WHAT IS ADULT DEVELOPMENT?

Are leaders born naturally or do they have to make an effort to grow into effective leaders? This is an essential question about leadership – and, ultimately, about who we are as human beings. It is also a question that science is increasingly capable of answering in a granular manner.

Some people are born to be super-intelligent, to stand tall, or to have a deep voice. These are attributes that can be useful for a leader, but having them does not guarantee a person will be an effective leader.

Scientific findings show that there are different levels at which adults make sense of themselves and their surroundings. Prior conventional wisdom held that the mind of an adult does not develop much further after the age of about 20 years old.

However, several independent studies have shown that adults can continue to grow and reach higher developmental stages throughout their life. Although empirical research shows that less than half of all adults actually reach a higher level.

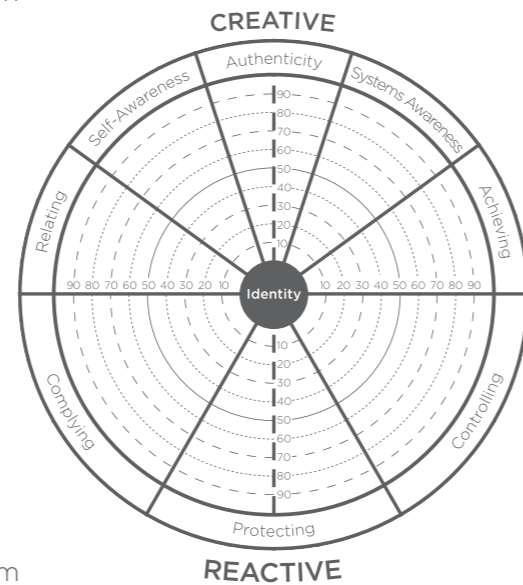
Why is this important? For one reason, because leaders at higher developmental stages are more effective leaders.

At The Leadership Circle, we use a simplified distinction between Reactive and Creative orientations, with the latter indicating a higher level of adult development than the former:

- **A Creative mind applies to leaders who define themselves based on their inner motivation, who embrace the possible, and who can consciously choose to act counter to their instincts, when that serves a purpose. Leaders with a Creative mind tend to “play to win” in the pursuit of a greater course.**
- **A Reactive mind implies that external expectations steer the leader, who then tends to focus on solving problems and acts instinctively under pressure – either aggressively or passively. Leaders with a Reactive mind tend to “play not to lose”, fearing that they will not live up to expected standards.**

While people in their twenties might experience glimpses of their future Creative mind, in practice, few operate primarily from there, at least not until their thirties. Meanwhile, it is possible to help a mostly Reactive person to imitate the thought patterns and behaviours of a Creative mind.

Adult Development brings a new dimension to leadership development. Attention on leadership competencies, such as communication and problem solving, has come to stay. However, adult development can help explain how and why some leaders excel in leadership, while others struggle despite extensive training. It is increasingly common to refer to competency-based development as “horizontal” (adding more skills beside existing skills) and adult development as “vertical” (reaching a higher level of sense-making).



# WHY IS ADULT DEVELOPMENT VITAL FOR HR EXECUTIVES?

**1**  
**ADULT DEVELOPMENT EXPLAINS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EFFECTIVE AND LESS EFFECTIVE LEADERS.**

**There is a growing body of evidence on the close relationship between adult development and leadership effectiveness; for instance:**

- Professor Bob Kegan from Harvard University did a meta-study of leadership research, concluding that leaders need a higher level of adult development to avoid the “in over our heads” phenomenon, whereby a leader tries to live up to a responsibility that is more complex than their current level of sense-making.
- Professor Bill Torbert from Boston College conducted longitudinal studies of ten CEOs and their organizations and found that only five out of the ten CEOs succeeded in their efforts to to make radical organizational transformations. Further, all the five successful CEOs were at higher levels of adult development than the five unsuccessful CEOs.
- The Leadership Circle has carried out assessments of more than 200,000 leaders worldwide. These assessments show a strong positive correlation between Creative competencies and Leadership Effectiveness, while Reactive tendencies are negatively correlated with Leadership Effectiveness. Comprehensive research confirms that organizations led by leaders mastering their Creative competencies performs better than those organizations led by leaders where their Reactive tendencies dominates.

**THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE ASSISTS IN BRINGING THE LEADERS' FULL POTENTIAL INTO PLAY.**

2

**RESEARCH HAS DECODED LEADERS' PATTERNS OF THINKING AT HIGHER AND LOWER LEVELS OF SENSE-MAKING.**

The Leadership Circle's Universal Model integrates 18 of the most significant leadership competencies, with 11 tendencies related to personal character structures. The model is, among other tools, used to assess individual leaders, teams and organizational leadership cultures. To date, more than 200,000 Leadership Circle Profile assessments have been conducted and these confirm the interplay between Creative competencies and Reactive tendencies. This provides unique insights into where leaders have the biggest potential to grow and to increase their effectiveness.

**GREAT LEADERS MAKE AN EFFORT TO GROW CONTINUOUSLY.**

Most leaders experience that their environment becomes increasingly unpredictable and complex. Growth, globalization, and digitalization are key drivers of this phenomenon. It's a direct conclusion from the research of Professor Bob Kegan at Harvard University, who stated that leaders must cultivate their level of adult development to thrive in such conditions. The same is apparent from The Leadership Circle's work with admired organizations all around the world.

3

**GROWING COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY IN MOST SECTORS INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT.**

**POWERFUL METHODS ARE AVAILABLE TODAY TO HELP LEADERS, TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS GROW BASED ON ADULT DEVELOPMENT.**

The Leadership Circle has developed special methods based on adult development for how to assess leaders, help them to define developmental goals and design and deliver coaching and other interventions to accelerate their growth. The approach pays close attention to leadership effectiveness. **3M, American Express, Careem, Cisco, Citi, FedEx, Google, Harvard University, Pixar, and Roche** are among the organizations benefitting from developing their leaders with The Leadership Circle.

**TOO MANY LEADERS PLAY NOT TO LOSE; THE MOST EFFECTIVE LEADERS PLAY TO WIN.**

5

**THE POPULATION OF EXPERIENCED LEADERSHIP COACHES, WHO BUILD ON ADULT DEVELOPMENT, IS CONTINUING TO EXPAND.**

The Leadership Circle was established in the United States at the start of the millennium, and, today, it has regional offices on six continents and supports multiple languages, including Arabic. The Leadership Circle runs three certifications accredited by the International Coach Federation:

- **Leadership Circle Profile certification (three days).**
- **Collective Leadership Assessment certification (one optional extra day).**
- **The Leadership System certification (three additional days).**

Admission to the certifications is subject to extensive prior coaching experience.

# HIGHLIGHT ON REASON 2

## RESEARCH HAS DECODED LEADERS' PATTERNS OF THINKING AT HIGHER AND LOWER LEVELS OF SENSE-MAKING

The Leadership Circle's methods help leaders utilize their potential to grow. The approach is both developmental and contextual. Leaders become more effective when they develop their Creative competencies and also become better at managing their Reactive tendencies (as opposed to being managed by these). Meanwhile, the more complex and unpredictable their work context is, the more difficult it is for them to be fully aware and manage their Reactive tendencies.

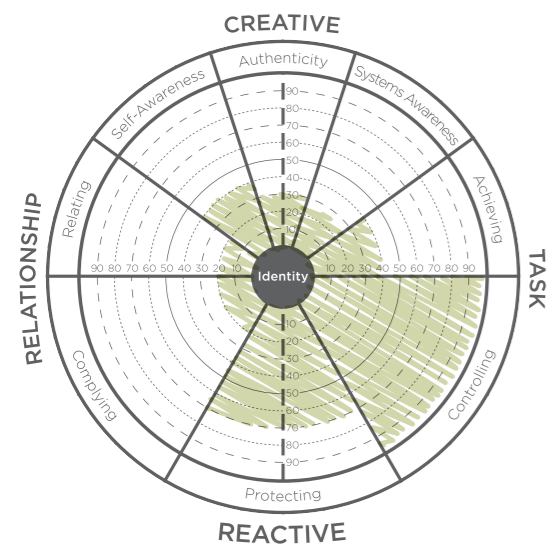
Growing as a leader is a journey. A pragmatic way to start is to understand where the leaders are on that path and to help them from there. Assessments give leaders an understanding of their strengths and the areas with the biggest potential for increasing their leadership effectiveness. This provides a foundation for ongoing one-on-one-coaching and group coaching as well as for organization-wide development programs.

The three following examples illustrate some possible insights from an individual Leadership Circle Profile 360-degree assessment. For the sake of simplicity, the below graphs only show the evaluator scores in eight dimensions (the full report will also show those of the self-evaluation and break down the scores in additional 29 sub-dimensions).

**BASED ON MORE THAN 200,000 LEADERSHIP CIRCLE PROFILE ASSESSMENTS, THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE CAN DEMONSTRATE A CLEAR LINK BETWEEN EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND THE ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF THE RESPECTIVE LEADERS' ORGANIZATIONS.**

### CASE EXAMPLE 1:

#### Reactive leader with a strong Controlling tendency

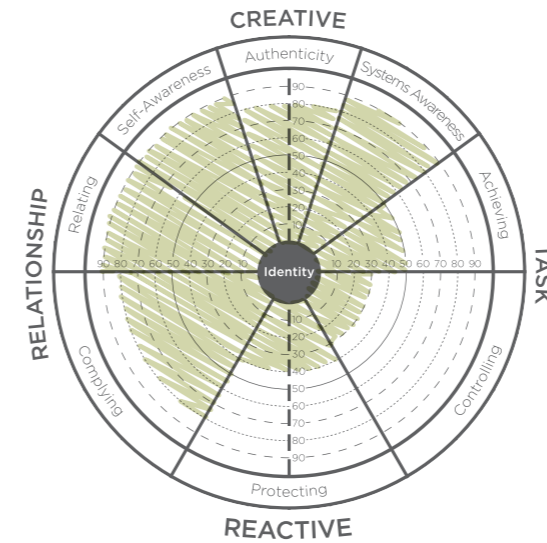


(Only showing inner circle dimensions)

- The leader is relatively Reactive, and Controlling is his dominant Reactive tendency.
- The strong Controlling tendency of this leader is likely holding him back from being more effective.
- The leader is dominant, which impacts his relationship to others.
- The leader's biggest developmental potential is to become more aware of his Controlling tendency (Reactive Task-orientation), enabling conscious choices about how to manage it.
- The leader's more conscious dealing with his Controlling tendencies will allow him to excel with the Relating competency (Creative Relationship-orientation, which is the exact opposite).

### CASE EXAMPLE 2:

#### Creative-leaning leader with a strong Complying tendency

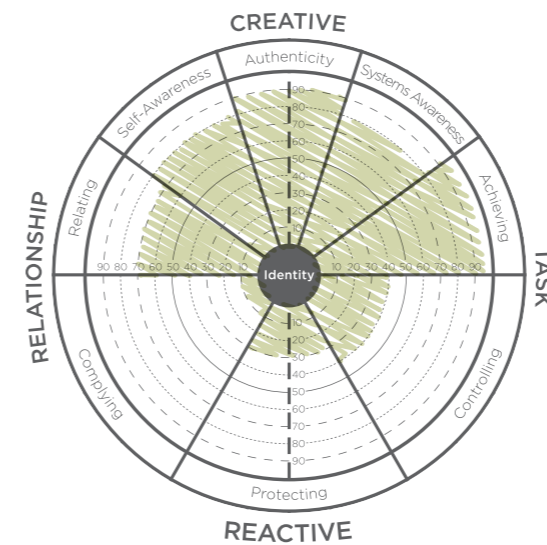


(Only showing inner circle dimensions)

- The leader is slightly more Creative than Reactive, and Complying is her dominant reactive tendency.
- The pattern correlates with leadership effectiveness slightly above the median.
- The leader has many desirable strengths but agrees too easily.
- The leader's biggest developmental potential is to become more aware of her Complying tendency (Reactive Relationship-orientation) in order to choose consciously about when it manages her or the other way around.
- The leader's more conscious dealing with her Complying tendency allows her to excel more easily with the Achieving competency (Creative Task-orientation, which is the exact opposite).

### CASE EXAMPLE 3:

#### Creative leader with a suppressed Complying tendency



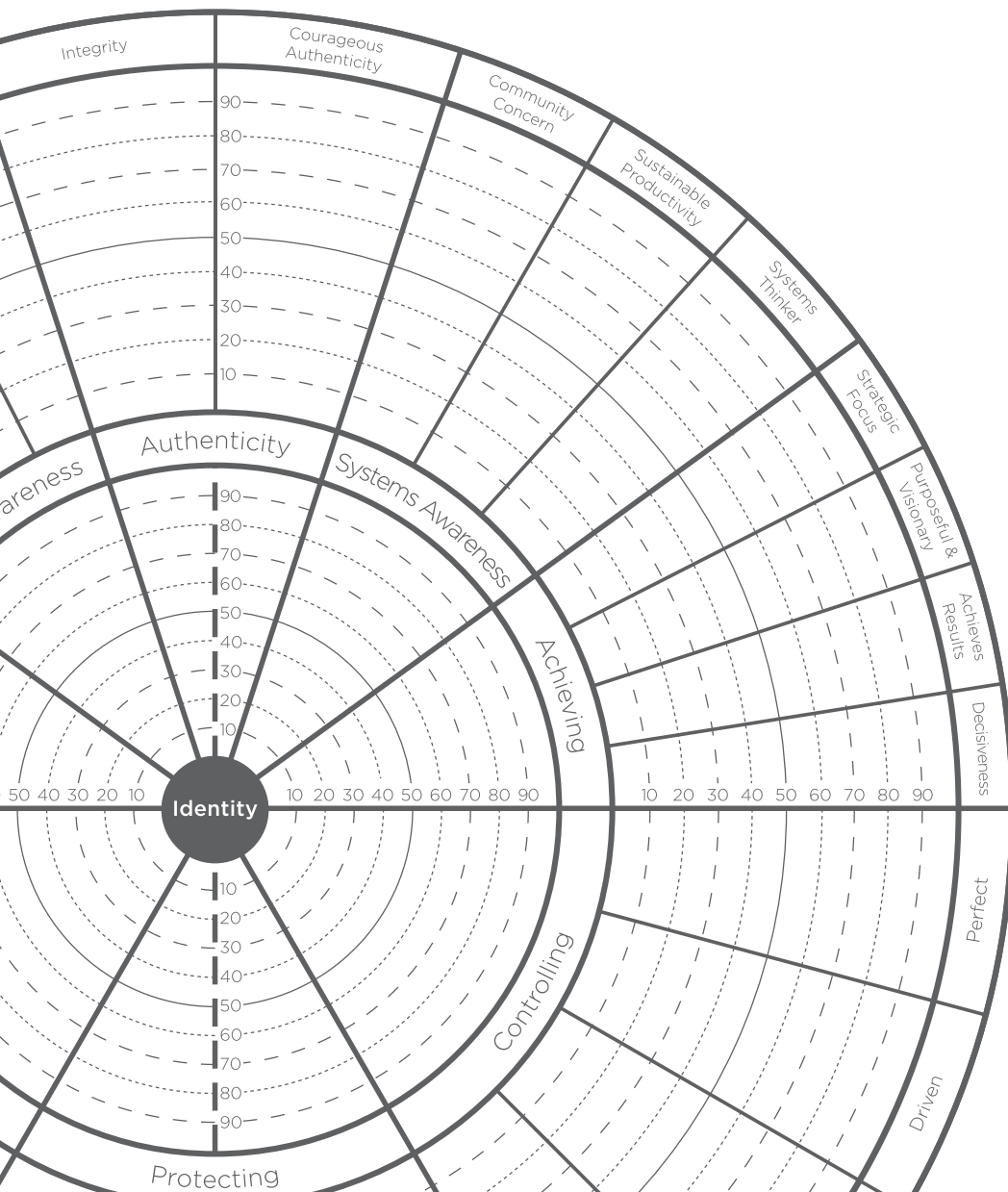
(Only showing inner circle dimensions)

- The leader is highly Creative with moderately low Reactive tendencies, except for a very low score in Complying.
- The pattern correlates with a high level of leadership effectiveness.
- The leader is, however, almost lacking the Complying tendency, which ultimately is a basic human strength and helps leaders, as long as it is not too strong. The leader might suppress this human side limiting his or her repertoire.

**EXPECT EXTRAORDINARY OUTCOMES.**

# WE EXIST TO EVOLVE THE CONSCIOUS PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP

CREATIVE



## CONTACT US

We welcome a conversation about how The Leadership Circle can help you with leadership development or coaching within your organization.

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