

Leadership Assessment

Student: Joanne Cheung [cheungj@allianceu.edu](mailto:cheungj@allianceu.edu)

Program: Masters of Intercultural Studies

Alliance University

March 8, 2023

## Leadership Assessment

### Summarize your Leadership Assessment

It was a bit challenging to conduct the assessment because I'm not currently in any distinctive leadership positions, where I have direct reports under me. The leadership structures in the ministries I serve in are less hierarchical and more horizontal or flat in nature, so we have one main director and every member takes on a collaborative leadership role. Nonetheless, I referred to my current and prior leading experiences, and based on my results, I lead at a Level 2 - Permission level. As a leader, my influence is largely due to the relationships and trust I've built over years of serving with others in ministry. My team members are people I genuinely enjoy being with and care about – there is no pretense and our general work environment is quite positive and encouraging. Moreover, as a highly relational person, learning about my team's dreams and hopes and supporting them in their life callings is something I deeply value.

As for areas of improvement from Levels 1 and 2, common statements where I answered *no* and need to give more attention to are: giving candid feedback about errors and problems and desiring to be a leader. Based on my peacemaking personality type, I wasn't surprised by these results, because I find confrontational conversations highly uncomfortable and know that being a leader involves asserting oneself and mediating conflict. I was actually on the cusp of attaining leadership at Level 3 - Production, easily checking off statements about high performance and hitting targets and goals at work. However, the areas that were holding me back from mastering Level 3 were not related to my competency or hard skills, but to my lack of soft skills, namely my discomfort with being "seen" as an expert, having people watch and follow my example, and problem-solving difficult situations. Even as a leader, I prefer working behind the scenes and camouflaging and tend to downplay my accomplishments.

**What are perceived strengths?**

Based on the findings from the assessment, one area of strength I could bring to the function of leadership is creating a workplace environment that is welcoming, respectful, safe, and enjoyable. I think it makes a world of a difference when your team “no longer possesses a ‘have to’ mindset...instead it turns to ‘want to’” (Maxwell 2011, 87). A natural result is getting to lead people who energize each other and are willing to freely communicate their truest thoughts, in and outside of ministry, without judgment.

Secondly, I highly value my team members and their unique contributions, instead of viewing them as projects or cogs in a wheel to help me reach my goal. My ultimate hope in leadership is to help my team step further into God’s unique purpose for their lives. In order to do this, I make myself accessible and approachable. This involves listening and investing time and effort to know their likes and dislikes and their fears and motivations so that I can serve them most effectively, develop them, and guide them toward fulfilling their purpose. This also means I don’t need to be in the spotlight and take all the credit for wins and celebrations (even if I was a lead on a project) – I find I’m often quick to take a backseat and highlight others’ strengths and contributions so that the whole team is lifted up and collectively recognized for our efforts.

While I’m a relational person, I also have achiever tendencies; I thrive in situations where I’m bringing plans to fruition and moving my team toward accomplishing our goals. My ultimate motivation is the purpose and meaning *behind* the mission, but my output is productivity.

Maxwell mentions the key barriers preventing someone from progressing from Level 2 to Level 3 are a lack of self-discipline, work ethic, organization, and productivity skills, but these are some of my greatest strengths (Maxwell 2011, 134). If “authentic leaders know the way and show the way to productivity,” then I believe I’m on the right track (Maxwell 2011, 135)!

**What are perceived weaknesses?**

One area I see perceived weakness ironically happens to be a strength – caring for my team comes naturally, but “you can care for people without leading them” (Maxwell 2011, 91). It’s easy for me to care for and love someone, but as soon as I have to confront an issue or mistake, my palms get sweaty and I shy away. Due to my people-pleasing tendencies and strong desire to maintain harmony, I find it difficult to have candid and painful conversations with team members. However, I’m learning that my fear of offending people and reticence as a leader ultimately breeds dysfunction, and avoiding awkward yet necessary and even beneficial conversations can hinder me in roles of leadership. Valuing people will go a step further if I’m able to develop their potential and help them grow and change.

When I asked several close ministry leaders to identify blind spots in my soul and leadership, a common thread ran through the feedback – my open-mindedness and desire to consider different perspectives often means my own opinions are left unsaid or placed on the backburner. That they all independently pointed out this same flaw underlines it’s a real issue. They agreed that whenever I do speak up, I add value and thoughtful insight; however, I tend to share later, than sooner, and instead choose to stay quiet. Upon deeper reflection, I realize my tendency to observe and listen instead of speaking up is rooted in my fear of conflict – which affirms my weakness noted above. Unless I feel especially strongly about a certain topic, I am content with “go with the flow” and leave the major decision-making to my boss and teammates, whom I trust. As a leader, my hesitancy to speak up for the sake of “keeping the peace” and not offending anyone, shows a lack of clear vision and resolve to follow through. If an expectation of a Level 3 leader is to bring clarity and reality to a vision, I must learn to stand my ground, instead of being so adaptable to the point that I allow situations to dictate what I do.

**What implications does this assessment have for leading in a church or ministry context?**

As someone whose leadership style is both people-oriented and goal-oriented, I'm learning that true leadership involves "helping the individual, improving the team, *and* fulfilling the vision of the organization" (Maxwell 2011, 117). When it comes to bridging the gap between people's potential and their performance in ministry, this might involve swiftly dealing with professional or spiritual issues, such as unbridled anger or unrepentant sin. It is true that a confrontation may cause someone to get hurt and defensive or even shut down, but discipline "can be similar to the work of a surgeon" where pain leads to life and health (Maxwell 2011, 113). Ultimately, the mark of a good leader is one who initiates conflict resolution and can "embrace both care and candor...and keep the balance between the two" (Maxwell 2011, 115). Thus, to move forward as an effective ministry leader, I sense God stretching my ability to offer care *with* candor – as "care should never suppress candor [and] candor should never displace caring" (Maxwell 2011, 115).

When I look at how Jesus ministered, he cared deeply for people and often taught with compassion and tenderness, and yet, he never shied away from firmly rebuking those who needed correction, such as the Pharisees or his own disciples. He modeled how to operate in perfect truth and grace. Jesus sought after true peace and wholeness – not superficial peace – and boldly exposed sin for what it was so that *true* restoration and transformation could take place. There's a deep sense of conviction in my spirit that sometimes the way through to true peace is conflict. My ultimate goal as a leader in ministry is not to win people's approval, but to wholeheartedly pursue the vision God has entrusted to me to carry out. This means there are times when I must make sacrifices and be "willing to risk what [I've] developed relationally for the sake of the bigger picture" as there can be no progress without risk (Maxwell 2011, 24).

**What needs to change in your life as a result?**

I'm still finessing my unique leadership style, but key values I've identified are integrity, a strong work ethic, commitment to team and mission, collaboration, building capacity at all levels, and seeking the Lord together for direction. If I want to progress in my leadership and move on to Level 3, some key areas to master are tackling challenging relational problems head-on and growing in my decisiveness on difficult issues. As a leader in the long run, it won't matter that I can deliver tangible results if I can't "break through obstacles, put out fires, correct mistakes, and direct people" (Maxwell 2011, 141). One way I can address this weakness is to proactively address any relational concerns on my team as they arise in the future. Furthermore, since "people naturally follow leaders stronger than themselves," I can observe and learn how credible leaders in my community problem-solve, while maintaining positive momentum and morale in their ministries (Maxwell 2011, 166). Secondly, I need to recognize the value of my own voice and input. Instead of undermining my ability, I must "understand how [my] personal giftedness contributes to the vision" and embrace my unique viewpoints whether I ruffle any feathers or not (Maxwell 2011, 151). As we learned in class, as the body of Christ, we all play a part in listening to God, waiting in His presence, and bringing something to the table.

I'm not currently going through any dramatic ministry maturing moments; but for the last two years, I've been waiting for my husband's green card to come through – a season marked by many losses and continual uncertainty to this day. Despite my impatience for answers, God is refining my ability to remain fully content in Him, and Him alone, despite my circumstances. I don't know when the breakthrough will come, but God is teaching me to persevere and be faithful wherever He has planted me. It is likely I won't see the fruit from this season for a long time yet, but even now, I know He is maturing my character and can redeem all things.

**References:**

Maxwell, John C. 2011. *The Five Levels of Leadership: Proven Steps to Maximize Your Potential*. New York, NY: Center Street.