THE STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE
TEAM DIAGNOSTIC

A Self-Assessment for CEOs and Executive Directors

Six patterns that kill strategy before it starts.
See which ones are running your team.

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New Science. Ancient Wisdom. Better Business.

Why This Matters

You have smart, capable people around your leadership table. You have a strategy. You may even have a plan everyone agreed to. So why does execution keep stalling in ways nobody can quite explain?

Most strategic plans that fall short get diagnosed as execution failures. It's a tidy explanation — and it gives the planning process a full pass. But execution doesn't fail in a vacuum. It fails because of what happened, or didn't happen, in the room where the decisions were made. That's where this diagnostic begins.

Research from HBR and Workpath found that executives report feeling 82% aligned on strategy — but actual measured alignment sits at just 23%. That fourfold gap is where strategic performance suffers first. Not in the plan. In the room where the plan is supposed to come alive.

And the cost isn't abstract. McKinsey's research shows that organizations with aligned, effective top teams are nearly twice as likely to achieve above-median financial performance and grow 2.5 times faster than peers. The inverse is equally true: when your team isn't functioning as a team, every strategic initiative pays the price.

This diagnostic is designed to surface what's actually happening inside your leadership team. It examines six patterns I encounter most often in my work with CEOs and executive directors — patterns that persist in plain sight, with talented people at the table, for years. Not because anyone is failing. Because the causes run deeper than most leaders suspect, and they come from places most consultants never look.

> The score is not the end goal. It's perspective. What you can see, you can address. What you can't, runs the show without your permission.

What This Assessment Is and Is Not

This is not a personality test. It isn't a coaching tool or a team-building exercise. This diagnostic is specifically designed to surface the disconnects between the strategy have defined and your leadership team's ability to execute on it. It looks at agile thinking, systems cohesion, and strategic performance — the dynamics that determine whether a well-crafted strategy actually works in the real world. It's also a beginning, not a verdict. You may find something here you've sensed but never had language for. You'll get clear next steps to consider.

What you won't get is an easy fix. People are complex. Leadership teams — with their experience, history, competing priorities, and individual ways of operating — are more complex still. Unpredictable in uncertainty. Genuinely powerful when they're working. This diagnostic is designed to expand your perception, challenge assumptions that may have outlived their usefulness, and open the door to better performance.

How to Use It

For each of the six patterns, you'll find a description of the dynamic, a set of diagnostic statements, and reflection questions. The diagnostic statements tell you where the pattern lives in your team. The reflection questions start to tell you why.

Rate each diagnostic statement on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means you strongly agree. Don't overthink it — your first instinct is usually the most honest one.

- **A note on reading scores:** Each pattern is scored from 6 to 30. A higher score means the healthy behavior is present. A lower score means the problematic pattern is active.

- **A note on honesty:** This assessment is only as useful as you are truthful. The most common mistake leaders make in self-assessment is answering based on what they intend or aspire to rather than what actually exists today. Rate the current state. Aspiration is important, but it's not the same as reality, and confusing the two is how blind spots form.

- **A note on judgement:** Nothing in this assessment is intended to judge you or your team. If a statement doesn't sit well, treat that as useful information. Discomfort is often a signal that something worth examining is close. It's not an indictment of anyone's intent — the fact that you're here says something meaningful.

Consider doing this with your team. This diagnostic is designed for individual reflection, but its power multiplies when leadership teams complete it independently and then compare notes. The places where perceptions diverge are almost always the places where the most important work needs to happen.

Before You Start

Before you dive into the six patterns, take a moment to ground yourself. Write down what brought you here. What's your gut telling you about how your leadership team is functioning? What are you trying to solve?

Don't overthink it. Your instinct is usually the most honest signal you have.

PATTERN ONE

Performative Consensus

Your team agrees in the room — then scatters.

Meetings end with apparent consensus. Heads nod. Action items get assigned. And then execution fractures — not dramatically, but quietly. Priorities drift. Interpretations diverge. Operational pressures intercede. Six months later you're asking why progress stalled, and no one can point to the moment it went sideways.

The cause isn't inattention. It's a cognitive phenomenon called the False Consensus Effect — the tendency to overestimate how much others share your interpretation. When a CEO shares a strategic direction and the room doesn't push back, the CEO walks out believing alignment was achieved. But silence isn't agreement. Depending on the individuals at the table, that silence signals unreadiness due to processing time needed, lack of data, lack of capacity, or simply that they cannot connect the dots.

Most teams operate as though understanding is synonymous with agreement, and agreement is synonymous with commitment. Those are three different things. Without the discipline to surface and test each one, what you get is performative consensus. It looks like alignment. It functions like fragmentation.

Diagnostic Statements

	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Agree
When our leadership team makes a strategic decision, each person explicitly states their position — not just their assent.	○	○	○	○	○
We take adequate time to fully discuss and assess implications before final decisions are made.	○	○	○	○	○
If I asked each member of our leadership team to independently list our top three strategic priorities in order, I'm confident the lists would match.	○	○	○	○	○
Our team has a clear process for distinguishing between understanding a direction, agreeing with it, and committing to execute it.	○	○	○	○	○
When execution diverges from what was discussed, the team notices quickly and addresses it directly.	○	○	○	○	○
We regularly test alignment rather than assume it. Disagreement surfaces in the room, not in the hallway afterward.	○	○	○	○	○

Reading Your Performative Consensus Score

25–30: Alignment is tested, not assumed. Your team has the discipline to surface disagreement before it fragments execution. Protect this — it's rare.

18–24: Consensus feels real in the room, but you may be discovering misalignment during execution rather than preventing it. The gap between what's agreed and what's understood is worth examining.

12–17: Agreement is being inferred from silence. Priorities likely mean different things to different people, and the team doesn't have a reliable mechanism for catching that before it costs you.

6–11: Strategic alignment is largely performative. The team may leave meetings believing they're on the same page when they're not even reading the same book. This is where strategy fractures first.

Reflect

When was the last time your leadership team independently documented their understanding of strategic priorities — and compared notes? What would happen if you tried that exercise tomorrow?

Think about a recent initiative that stalled or drifted. Can you trace the breakdown to a moment where alignment was assumed rather than confirmed?

How does your team handle the moment when someone says "I thought we agreed to something different"? Is that moment safe, or does it carry a cost?

Jot down your thoughts below.

Avoidance Culture

Nobody says the hard thing.

Your senior leaders are editing themselves before they ever speak. Most of the time, it isn't about fear — it's simpler than that. Teams are new, or stretched thin, or competing for the same limited resources. Someone is still finding their footing in a role. Someone else is trying to read the room before they stake out a position.

McKinsey's 2025 research across top teams globally puts a number to what most senior leaders already sense: psychological safety and conflict management rank among the five weakest team health drivers — scoring well below the midpoint on effectiveness across every team studied. These aren't outliers. They're the norm. What makes this particularly pointed is that psychological safety also ranks among the strongest predictors of team performance. The dimension teams consistently underinvest in is one of the ones most likely to determine whether they actually deliver. The reason it stays underdeveloped isn't complicated — leaders learn, often early, that surfacing uncomfortable truths carries personal risk. The data from a generation of research keeps confirming it: executives withhold vital information, suppress critical opinions, accept questionable strategies rather than raise a flag. Not because they lack the capability to do otherwise. Because they've read the room and decided it isn't worth it.

There's a second layer underneath the silence, and it rarely gets named. Even when your leaders are willing to engage, they aren't working with the same risk calculus. Each person around your table perceives and navigates risk differently — not because any of them are wrong, but because experience, domain familiarity, background, and a dozen other factors shape how individuals read a situation.

One leader looks at a bold strategic move and sees a reasonable bet given the upside. Another reads the same move and reaches instinctively for the brake. Both reads can be legitimate. The challenge is that those differences rarely surface unless the conversations that reveal them are intentional. When they stay hidden, the team operates in a kind of collective ambiguity — everyone believing they've aligned on something, while carrying genuinely different thresholds for what they're actually willing to commit to based on risk. That gap only becomes visible when execution hits friction.

Diagnostic Statements

	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Agree
Senior leaders on our team regularly raise concerns or objections about strategic direction — even when it challenges the prevailing view.	○	○	○	○	○
When someone shares a dissenting opinion in a leadership meeting, it's treated as valuable input rather than resistance or disloyalty.	○	○	○	○	○
Our team has explicitly discussed its tolerance for candor — how much uncomfortable truth the system can handle.	○	○	○	○	○
I can name a recent instance where a leader changed their position because the team's dialogue genuinely shifted their thinking.	○	○	○	○	○
Information flows upward as freely as it flows downward. Bad news reaches the leadership table without being filtered or softened.	○	○	○	○	○
Our team has explicitly surfaced the differences in how each leader assesses and tolerates risk — and those differences are factored into how we make strategic commitments.	○	○	○	○	○

Reading Your Avoidance Culture Score

25–30: Your team has built a culture where candor is safe and expected. This is the foundation of sound strategic decision-making. It doesn't mean conflict is comfortable — it means it's productive.

18–24: Honesty exists but may be uneven — some topics are open, others stay underground. Watch for the conversations that consistently don't happen. Those are the ones costing you most.

12–17: Self-editing is the norm. Leaders are calculating personal risk before raising concerns, and the system is rewarding that silence. Strategic decisions are being made with incomplete information.

6–11: Avoidance has become the operating culture. The hard conversations aren't happening, and the team may not even recognize what's being lost. This is a strategic vulnerability hiding in plain sight.

Reflect

Is there a topic your leadership team consistently avoids — something everyone knows matters but nobody brings up? What is it, and why does it stay underground?

Think about the last time a significant strategic concern was raised. How was it received? What happened to the person who raised it?

How would your team's direct reports describe the culture of honesty at the top? Would their answer match yours?

Jot down your thoughts below.

The Familiar Fix

You keep solving the wrong problem.

You launch initiatives with confidence. Restructure the team. Bring in a new leader with a track record. Twelve months later, the same dynamic still exists. The real disconnect was never structural. The solution was never going to be found by rearranging the chart.

What drives this pattern is the Einstellung Effect — the tendency to default to a familiar solution even when a more effective one exists. It's most visible in leaders who were hired precisely because they built something similar at a previous organization. They know what worked there. The instinct to apply it here is natural. It's also where the misdiagnosis begins — because the question that needs to come first rarely does: "What's unique about this organization that I need to understand before I reach for an answer I've already used?"

The gap shows up in how strategy gets discussed at the leadership table. Every organization is a complex, interconnected system — its own history, culture, relational dynamics, operational constraints. When a leader proposes an approach without surfacing those specific conditions, the solution is already disconnected from the challenge. What succeeded in a different context, with different people, under different conditions, may not transfer here. What you're looking for is whether your team, as a whole, is building its answers from the inside out.

Organizations are not machines you can re-engineer by rearranging the parts. They are living, complex adaptive systems — and in living systems, the quality of the connections between the parts matters more than the arrangement of the parts themselves. When the relationships between senior leaders are marked by shallow trust, untested assumptions, and unresolved friction, no amount of structural redesign will produce different results.

This is where systems intelligence becomes the differentiator — and it's a team capacity, not an individual one. A leader with strong systems intelligence reads the specific conditions of this organization before reaching for solutions: the culture that shapes what will actually stick, the relational dynamics that will either carry or kill an initiative, the history that explains why certain fixes have already been tried. But that intelligence can't rest in any one person. When a new leader joins the table, the incumbent team carries a responsibility that rarely gets named: to bring the organizational context forward actively, to hold the institutional knowledge the new leader can't yet have, and to ensure that what's particular about this organization shapes how the team evaluates what gets proposed. Without that, even the most capable incoming leader is navigating in the dark — and the team is letting it happen.

Diagnostic Statements

	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Agree
When a strategic initiative underperforms, our team examines its own dynamics and decision-making process — not just the plan or the market.	○	○	○	○	○
Our team recognizes the difference between a structural issue and a relational one, and responds accordingly.	○	○	○	○	○
When the same challenge resurfaces after a reorganization or leadership change, we ask what's driving the recurrence rather than attempting another structural fix.	○	○	○	○	○
We invest in understanding how our leadership team operates under pressure with the same rigor we apply to market analysis or financial planning.	○	○	○	○	○
Our team's approach to strategic challenges starts with the question "What dynamics are producing this outcome?" before jumping to solutions.	○	○	○	○	○
When a new leader joins our team, the incumbent members take active responsibility for transferring organizational context — the culture, the history, the relational dynamics — not just the strategy and the role.	○	○	○	○	○

Reading Your Structural Misdiagnosis Score

25−30: Your team looks at relational dynamics as a primary diagnostic lens. This systems-aware approach prevents the costly cycle of structural fixes that don't address root causes.

18−24: There's awareness that team dynamics matter, but the default response to underperformance may still be structural. Examine whether your team reaches for relational diagnostics only after structural fixes have failed.

12−17: The instinct to fix structure is strong. Reorganizations, role changes, and new hires are likely the primary response to strategic challenges, while team functioning goes unexamined.

6−11: Your organization is likely cycling through structural interventions without addressing the underlying team dynamics. This is one of the most expensive patterns to leave unresolved — because every fix feels decisive while changing nothing fundamental.

Reflect

Think about the last major reorganization or leadership replacement. Did the underlying dynamic change, or did it find new ways to express itself?

If you set aside every structural explanation for your team's challenges — org design, talent gaps, market conditions — and looked only at how the people at the table relate to each other under pressure, what would you see?

What would it take for your leadership team to accept that the issue might not be the strategy or the structure — but the way the team itself operates?

Jot down your thoughts below.

The Team Reset

Every leadership change resets the clock.

A key leader leaves. A new one arrives. Someone gets promoted into the C-suite. And on the surface, the strategy remains intact. But underneath it, something resets — the relational foundation the team was quietly standing on has shifted, and what looked like solid ground turns out to have been held in place by familiarity, not structure.

Transition reset operates on two levels, and most organizations only name the first one. The interpersonal dimension is visible: the tentative trust-building, the careful maneuvering, the months it takes for a new leader to find their footing on a team that already has its own patterns and history. Someone new is watching closely, reading the room, calibrating how to establish credibility before they stake out positions. They want to add value — and that desire itself creates pressure to bring forward ideas, solve things quickly, demonstrate why they were brought in. Meanwhile, the people already at the table are doing their own assessment, deciding how much weight to give this new voice before it's earned it.

The operational dimension is less discussed, but equally disruptive. When a leader inherits a function, they inherit more than a team and a budget. They inherit the organization's perception of that function's value — how much it matters, how well it's delivered historically, what it's owed in terms of resources, political capital, and strategic priority.

That perception was built over time by someone else. The new leader steps into it whether they want to or not. If the function was undervalued, they're fighting that gravity from day one. If it was overvalued and they know it, they have to correct without destabilizing. Either way, they're navigating the organization's history while also trying to contribute to its future.

The reason transition keeps resetting the clock is that most teams have no shared understanding to anchor to — no codified awareness of how the team operates, how each member thinks under pressure, or what held the last configuration together. When that knowledge lives only in unspoken dynamics, it leaves with every departure.

Gartner found that 56% of C-suite executives are likely to leave their current role within two years — and the most tenured executives are often the first to go. It's a reality every leadership team faces, and it's not just an inconvenience. DHR Global found that when a C-suite executive exits, 55% of employees question whether the organization's mission is worth believing in. What erodes isn't just the team. It's the organizational confidence to execute.

Diagnostic Statements

	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Agree
Our team has a shared language for how each member thinks, communicates, and operates under pressure — documented and accessible, not just intuitively understood.	○	○	○	○	○
When a new leader joins the executive team, the onboarding process includes how this particular team functions together — not just the role and the strategy.	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership transitions are treated as team events requiring collective adjustment, not individual events the team is expected to absorb.	○	○	○	○	○
Our team's relational foundation — trust patterns, communication norms, decision-making dynamics — would survive if two senior leaders turned over in the same year.	○	○	○	○	○
We have intentional processes for preserving institutional knowledge and relational capital when a leader departs.	○	○	○	○	○
We have built relational and operational infrastructure — shared norms, documented context, explicit handoff processes — that preserves the team's strategic capacity through leadership changes.	○	○	○	○	○

Reading Your Team Reset Score

25–30: Your team has built relational infrastructure that survives individual transitions. This is a significant strategic asset — and it's extraordinarily uncommon.

18–24: Some infrastructure exists, but transitions still create meaningful disruption. The team likely recovers, but the cost in lost momentum and strategic drift may be higher than you realize.

12–17: Leadership transitions reset the team's relational clock significantly. Trust, communication patterns, and strategic context must be rebuilt from scratch each time — creating recurring windows of vulnerability.

6–11: The team's cohesion depends almost entirely on the informal dynamics between current members. Any significant leadership change will produce months of strategic drift while the team recalibrates. This is a structural fragility, not a people problem.

Reflect

Think about the last time a senior leader joined or left your team. How long did it take to recalibrate? Did the team fully recover, or did it quietly settle into a different — and possibly lesser — version of itself?

If a new executive joined your team tomorrow, what would they receive beyond an org chart, a strategy deck, and a set of KPIs? Is there anything that tells them how this team actually works together?

How much institutional knowledge, relational capital, and strategic context would your team lose if your two most tenured leaders left within six months of each other?

Jot down your thoughts below.

Cascading Dysfunction

The team's dysfunction is now the organization's culture.

Whatever is unresolved at the leadership table doesn't stay at the leadership table. It replicates in every division, every department, every team meeting below you. The patterns you tolerate at the top become the patterns everyone else lives with.

There's an ancient principle that captures this with striking precision: as above, so below. As within, so without. What shows up at one level of a system shows up at every level. This maps directly to what complexity science confirms about organizational behavior: in complex adaptive systems, patterns are fractal — they repeat at every scale. If your executive team operates in silos, your departments will too. If trust is fragile at the top, it will be thin everywhere else.

Gartner's research puts a number to this: just over half of top team members say they have a clear sense of how priorities fit together. That drops to fewer than one-third among direct reports, and plummets to 16% for frontline supervisors. Clarity doesn't just degrade. It disintegrates. And the less clarity there is at the top, the less there is everywhere else.

Diagnostic Statements

	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Agree
The operational challenges in our middle management and frontline teams do not mirror the dynamics of our leadership team.	○	○	○	○	○
Our leadership team holds itself to the same standards of collaboration, transparency, and accountability it expects from the rest of the organization — and we can point to specific evidence of it.	○	○	○	○	○
Strategic clarity holds as it moves through the organization. Frontline supervisors could articulate our priorities with reasonable accuracy.	○	○	○	○	○
When we see dysfunction in the broader organization — silos, conflict avoidance, unclear priorities — we examine whether the pattern originates at the leadership level before looking elsewhere.	○	○	○	○	○
When we identify a cultural gap in the broader organization, our first question is whether the same gap exists at the leadership table.	○	○	○	○	○
Employees at all levels would describe the culture the same way our leadership team does.	○	○	○	○	○

Reading Your Cascading Dysfunction Score

25–30: Your leadership team is modeling the culture it expects. This is where strategic performance becomes self-reinforcing — the patterns at the top produce the patterns everywhere else, and both are healthy.

18–24: The leadership team's best qualities are likely reflected in the organization, but so are its blind spots. Look for the places where organizational challenges mirror unresolved team dynamics.

12–17: Leadership team patterns are replicating through the organization in ways that undermine strategic execution. The culture you're experiencing isn't something happening to you — it's something flowing from you.

6–11: The organization's culture is a reflection of unresolved leadership team dysfunction. This has moved beyond a team development need into a strategic performance crisis — because you cannot fix the culture without first addressing the team that's creating it.

Reflect

Look at the biggest operational challenges surfacing in your organization right now. Do any of them mirror dynamics that exist — even subtly — within your leadership team?

If your leadership team avoids conflict, where else in the organization do you see conflict avoidance? What is it costing?

How would your mid-level managers describe the culture at the top? Would their description match your leadership team's self-assessment?

Jot down your thoughts below.

The Coherence Gap

Strategy is only as strong as the leaders who carry it.

At this level, nobody is showing up just for the paycheck. Every leader on a senior team carries their own trajectory — the contribution they want to make, the way they're growing, the version of leadership they're becoming. When that individual direction runs in genuine coherence with where the organization is going, something becomes visible at the table: a quality of engagement that goes beyond functional competence. Leaders lean in not just because it's their job, but because what's at stake for the organization is also at stake for them personally. When the coherence is absent — even subtly — the quality of contribution shifts. They're still capable. Still present. But a dimension of their energy is pointing somewhere else.

This becomes most visible — and most costly — in the CEO. Over time, many organizations allow their sense of mission to become inseparable from the person at the top. The CEO carries the vision not only because it's their role, but because it has become personally theirs. The purpose lives in their language, their relationships, their particular way of framing what the organization is for. When they leave, the mission doesn't just lose its champion. It loses its primary holder.

The same dynamic shows up more quietly in the leaders who surround the CEO. When a senior leader's own sense of trajectory — where they're growing, what they're building, what they want their contribution to mean — has drifted out of coherence with the organization's direction, the signal rarely arrives as a dramatic announcement. It shows up in the quality of their strategic engagement. The ideas they stop bringing. The problems they stop pushing on. The energy that used to be readily available, and now has to be summoned. Leaders and organizations are often good at sustaining the appearance of full engagement long after the underlying coherence has eroded. By the time it's visible to everyone, it's been a factor for much longer than anyone wants to admit.

When the diagnostic surfaces a coherence gap, the instinct can be to treat it as a performance signal. It isn't — not yet. Most senior leaders didn't lose their sense of purpose; they lost the thread connecting it to the work in front of them. Get curious before drawing conclusions. What drives them? Where do they want to be growing? Those answers more often point toward something the organization hasn't yet named or made room for than toward the door. Sometimes a conversation like that surfaces a perspective or capability worth bringing into the organization's strategic thinking — sitting right there at the table, unrecognized. Coherence isn't only something leaders find with the organization. It's something organizations can build toward their people. And yes — sometimes the honest conversation reveals that someone has genuinely grown in a direction that takes them out of the organization. That's a legitimate outcome. The goal is to make sure it's the real reason, not a convenient one.

Diagnostic Statements

	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Agree
Each leader on our senior team can articulate, in their own words, why the organization's mission matters to them personally — not just professionally.	○	○	○	○	○
If our CEO left tomorrow, the clarity of our organizational purpose and direction would remain intact across the leadership team.	○	○	○	○	○
Individual leaders on our team are growing in ways that are genuinely connected to where the organization is headed — not just managing the same responsibilities they have held for years.	○	○	○	○	○
The senior leaders on our team bring ideas and energy that reflect genuine personal investment in the organization's future, not just accountability for their function.	○	○	○	○	○
We have explicit, intentional conversations about how individual leaders' trajectories connect to the organization's direction — not just performance reviews, but real dialogue about where each person is headed and why it matters here.	○	○	○	○	○
The engagement level of every senior leader on this team — the quality of their presence and their contribution — reflects someone who sees their own future in this organization's future.	○	○	○	○	○

Reading Your Coherence Gap Score

25–30: Coherence is present and visible. Your leadership team brings genuine personal investment to the organization's direction, not just functional accountability. That quality of engagement is a strategic asset — and it's worth protecting deliberately.

18–24: Coherence is partial. Some leaders are genuinely invested; others are running on professional competence rather than personal alignment. That gap may not be visible yet, but it is affecting the quality of strategic contribution in ways that are difficult to pinpoint.

12–17: The distance between individual trajectory and organizational direction is likely showing up as reduced engagement — ideas that don't surface, execution that meets the standard but doesn't exceed it. The leaders themselves may not have named what's happening.

6–11: The coherence gap is significant. Leaders are present but not fully there. This creates fragility — not just in retention, but in the strategic depth the team can access. The organization may be more dependent on a single leader's vision than it realizes.

Reflect

Where do you see the clearest coherence between an individual leader's trajectory and the organization's direction? Where is the gap most visible?

If the CEO left tomorrow, how much of the organization's clarity of purpose would leave with them?

Which leaders on your team seem to be operating at full energy? Which have a dimension of themselves pointed somewhere else? What do you think is underneath that difference?

Jot down your thoughts below.

Your Results: Reading the Patterns

Transfer your section scores below. The individual scores matter, but the pattern across all six tells the real story.

Pattern	Your Score	Range
1. Performative Consensus	/30	6 – 30
2. Avoidance Culture	/30	6 – 30
3. Structural Misdiagnosis	/30	6 – 30
4. Team Reset	/30	6 – 30
5. Cascading Dysfunction	/30	6 – 30
6. The Coherence Gap	/30	6 – 30

Reading Your Overall Results

Mostly 25–30: Your team has built genuine strategic capacity. The healthy behaviors are present and functional. The risk at this level is complacency — these dynamics require active maintenance, not just recognition.

Mostly 18–24: Your team is functional but not fully performing. The gaps are real even if they aren't visible yet. This is the most common profile — and the most deceptive, because "not broken" gets mistaken for "working well." Targeted investment in your lowest-scoring patterns will have disproportionate impact.

Multiple scores 6–17: You are not looking at isolated problems. You are looking at a system. These patterns compound each other — false consensus enables avoidance, avoidance enables misdiagnosis, and dysfunction at the top cascades through the organization. The priority is not to fix everything at once. It's to identify the pattern that is driving the others and start there.

One outlier low score: Pay attention to the pattern that is significantly lower than the rest. A single weak link in a high-functioning team creates a specific, predictable vulnerability — and it often goes unaddressed precisely because everything else looks strong. The scenario guidance below will help you interpret what that outlier means in context.

What the Patterns Reveal

Individual pattern scores tell you where specific dynamics are at work. But the relationship between scores is where the strategic intelligence lives. These six patterns don't operate independently. They're interconnected — and the connections matter as much as the individual findings.

Multiple low scores (6–17 across three or more patterns). This is the most important finding. False consensus feeds avoidance. Avoidance feeds misdiagnosis. Misdiagnosis leads to

structural fixes that don't address the real issue. Every leadership transition makes all of it worse because there's no relational foundation to hold the team steady through change. And the compounding dysfunction cascades, becoming the organization's operating culture. If you're seeing low scores across multiple patterns, you're looking at a system, not a list of separate problems.

Low Patterns 1 and 2, higher elsewhere. Consensus and candor are the foundation. If these are weak, the other scores may be artificially inflated — because the team isn't surfacing the information needed to assess the rest honestly. Start here.

Low Pattern 4 with stable team. If your team hasn't experienced recent turnover but still scores low on transition fragility, you're sitting on a time bomb. The infrastructure gaps are invisible because they haven't been tested. They will be.

Low Pattern 5 with higher team-level scores. If your leadership team rates itself well on consensus, candor, and relational dynamics but the broader organization shows cascading dysfunction, there's a perception gap. The team may be experiencing its own dynamics differently than the rest of the organization does. This is worth investigating with external data.

Low Pattern 6 with strong scores elsewhere. This is the most quietly dangerous finding in the diagnostic. A team can be functionally aligned, candid, and relationally stable — and still be operating well below its strategic potential if leaders have lost the thread between their own growth and the organization's direction. Strong process scores can mask a coherence gap for a long time. The signal is usually visible in the quality of strategic thinking: ideas that are competent but not bold, execution that meets the standard but doesn't raise it. If Pattern Six is your lowest score, start there before celebrating the others.

Consistently mid-range scores (18–24 across most patterns). This is the most deceptive pattern. Nothing looks broken. But nothing is truly strong, either. Teams in this range tend to feel stuck — competent but not thriving. The risk is complacency. The opportunity is that focused investment in any one pattern can shift the entire system.

> The team isn't adjacent to the strategy. The team is the strategy's operating system. If the operating system is compromised, nothing you run on it will perform as designed.

The Strategy Connection

Purpose, Growth & Evolution in Equilibrium (PGEE)

These four dimensions of what I call *quantum-intelligent strategy* are designed to be held and managed by a team, not an individual. Every pattern in this diagnostic directly impacts your team's capacity to execute across those dimensions. Check one or two at the most to work on based on the diagnostic score and your own reflections.

☐ **Pattern One.** *Performative Consensus directly undermines Purpose.*

When alignment is assumed rather than tested, purpose fractures into as many interpretations as there are people in the room. Each leader executes a slightly different version of the strategy, and no one names it until strategy execution has fallen short.

☐ **Pattern Two.** *Avoidance Culture blocks Evolution.*

Anticipating what's coming and adapting before it arrives requires the kind of candid, uncomfortable dialogue that avoidance makes impossible. If nobody says the hard thing at the top, the organization loses its ability to see what's coming, and its capacity to evolve degrades quietly, long before the gap becomes visible.

☐ **Pattern Three.** *The Familiar Fix stalls Growth.*

When the team keeps reaching for structural solutions instead of examining its own dynamics, the adaptive capacity that drives real growth never develops. The organization gets activity without learning — and mistakes motion for progress.

☐ **Pattern Four:** *The Team Reset threatens all four PGEE dimensions simultaneously.*

Every leadership transition erodes the shared context that holds Purpose coherent, interrupts the Growth cycles the team has established, disrupts the collective Evolution that requires continuity of learning, and destabilizes the Equilibrium that depends on stable relational dynamics. A team unaware of this dynamic isn't just vulnerable to disruption, it's rebuilding its capacity to execute strategy every time.

☐ **Pattern Five:** *Cascading Dysfunction collapses Equilibrium.*

Equilibrium requires the courage to hold honest conversations about tradeoffs — to deprioritize, to say no, to challenge a peer's strategic bet. When dysfunction at the top goes unaddressed, it replicates through every level of the organization, making that kind of honest dialogue increasingly impossible everywhere it needs to happen.

☐ **Pattern Six:** *The Coherence Gap undermines strategic performance.*

Purpose can only be carried by leaders who personally believe in it. Growth requires people who are growing. Evolution demands leaders who are themselves evolving. And Equilibrium — the deliberate balancing of competing priorities — is only possible when leaders are genuinely invested in the organization's future, not just managing their function within it. When coherence is present, all four PGEE dimensions are amplified. When it's absent, even a well-designed strategy operates at a fraction of its potential.

What's Next

You now have something most leadership teams never develop: an honest picture of the relational patterns driving — or undermining — your strategic performance. That awareness alone changes how you lead. Here's what you can do with it.

1. **Name the pattern.** That's not a small thing. Most of these dynamics persist precisely because no one calls them what they are. Acknowledging that your team's alignment is assumed rather than tested, that avoidance has become habitual, that you keep reaching for structural fixes when the challenge is relational — that's not weakness. That's the first act of leadership.

2. **Share this with your team.** Not as a judgment — as a conversation starter. Have each person complete the assessment independently and compare scores. The patterns that this diagnostic tool reveals are rarely a surprise to the people living inside the organization. They've felt it. They just haven't had language for it.

3. **Pick one pattern.** You don't fix everything at once. Identify the pattern that's most active and ask: what would it take to move this score meaningfully in the next six months? That's your highest-leverage investment in strategic performance.

4. **Build the infrastructure.** Not another offsite. Not a personality quiz that lives in a drawer. Real, evidence-based tools that give your team a shared language for how each person thinks, communicates, and operates — especially under pressure. And a sustained commitment to using that awareness as a strategic asset, not a one-time event.

> Strategy doesn't fail in one dramatic moment. It fails in the accumulation of dynamics that nobody named.

If this assessment confirmed what you've been sensing — or revealed something you hadn't seen — and you want to go deeper, that's exactly what QI Performance Navigation is built for. Not coaching as therapy. Not coaching as a remedial exercise. Coaching as strategic infrastructure — an ongoing investment in the relational capacity that makes strategy executable. It sits inside the strategy, not alongside it.

Reach out at erin@erinsedor.com or visit ErinSedor.com. Let's talk about what's possible.

Erin Sedor is a CEO Strategy Coach and executive advisor with 30+ years helping organizations design strategy that actually works — and build the leadership capacity to carry it. She is the creator of Essential Strategy and the Quantum Intelligence framework for conscious, adaptive leadership.