



# The Sky's the Limit?

Best Practice on Assessing  
and Developing Potential

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# Executive summary

With 80% of organisational output repeatedly generated by just 20% of employees, the question of how to spot and nurture talent is a crucial consideration for organisations that want to increase both employee engagement and their bottom line. So-called 'High Potentials' are often considered an organisation's most crucial human resource, due to their leadership possibilities, productivity and ability to take on greater responsibility and work with increasingly complexity. Potential however is often a misunderstood concept, confused with performance or defined in too narrow a way.

This paper, produced by leadership consultants, CDP, is the result of a decade's research and hands-on experience with the art and science of performance, potential and behaviour change. The following key insights emerged from analysing nearly one hundred models of potential – including the internal, proprietary models of over a dozen FTSE 100 or multinational companies, around twenty models used by consultancies, head hunters and business psychologists around the world, and various academic frameworks and papers.

## 1. Potential is not the same as performance (and this is often where organisations make mistakes)

Potential is often confused with performance. Potential is not determined by what someone has already achieved; it speaks to what they have the capacity to achieve in the future. High performers – people who are excelling in their current context and role – are often mistakenly called high potentials as if the two things were synonymous. A 2015 survey of 80 companies found that 75% of companies rely on past performance to predict future performance (Church et al., 2015). Relying mainly on past performance puts companies at risk of promoting inappropriate candidates or overlooking those with genuinely high potential in favour of those who have been performing well.

## 2. Multiple factors affect potential

Traditionally, IQ is considered a key factor in one's potential. Alongside the important role cognitive ability plays, we now know that other factors are also key. These include being well-adjusted and having high emotional intelligence (able to handle stress and be resilient), being self-disciplined, organised, reliable and ambitious, being open and curious, being socialised extroverts (many senior leaders are introverts who have trained to be like extroverts), and agreeableness (being clear, assertive and able to separate work performance from personal relationships). Performance is a consideration, but so too is one's readiness for promotion; the candidate might be ready now (within one year), or it may be that they will be ready soon (1-3 years), or ready in the slightly longer-term future (3+ years).

## 3. There are multiple models of potential and multiple ways to measure it

Consultancies often adopt or develop their own model of potential, and these usually cover some but not all of the different aspects discussed in this summary. The model used at CDP, for example, is a robust, evidence-based model that identifies the fundamental 12 qualities across 4 quadrants that people need to master in order to excel: Decision Making, Execution, Emotions and Motivations, and People Skills. The model flexes according to the role and organisations we are working with in a way that is straightforward and intuitive.

A survey of 20 global organisations including AOL, JP Morgan Chase, Levi Strauss, Marriott, Microsoft and PepsiCo found that at least three measures were used across the board to measure potential – line manager ratings and recommendations, senior manager reviews, and identifying trends from the previous two to three years. Other options for assessing potential include interviewing, which need to be somewhat structured to ensure they are not completely subjective; assessment centres, which are a good predictor of performance and potential, but are often expensive; multi-source 360 ratings; behavioural assessments, which focus heavily on preceding events and resultant consequences of behaviour; and the multi-trait, multi-method approach (MTMM), which measures a range of different qualities or traits using multiple methods. The MTMM approach, because of its robustness, is recommended.

#### **4. Best practice for assessing potential**

After a decade of working with some of the world's most successful organisations, CDP Leadership Consultants has identified five points for best practice for assessing potential: the definitions within the model of potential used need to be valid and linked to observable evidence – and secondly, these definitions also need to be shared; there needs to be a clear separation between potential, performance and readiness, as well as some basic training about unconscious bias, and crucially, there needs to be practical follow-through.

#### **5. Address blind spots and derailers**

Even the most robust way of assessing potential, if it does not acknowledge and address blind spots and derailers, will miss the mark when it comes to maximising its effectiveness. Derailers are those behaviours, attitudes, habits and ways of thinking that can undermine even the most high potential individual, such as hubris on the one hand or excessive insecurity on the other. Awareness is the cornerstone to being able to stop derailers from getting in the way of fulfilling one's potential, and a robust assessment method will seek out and clearly identify any past or possible derailers to be aware of and work with.

Ultimately, deciding how your business or organisation will approach, define and measure potential are key strategic decisions which will have a tangible impact on the business. A research-backed, academically rigorous model and method of assessment, grounded in experience as well as theory, will support you and your organisation in realising the full potential within your people to generate profound and lasting business results.

# Introduction

When it comes to organisational output and impact, not all employees are created equal. In fact, studies have shown that across a wide range of tasks, in organisations and even in whole industries, a few individuals repeatedly generate a disproportionate amount of output:

The top 1% of employees generate 10% of organisational output

The top 5% account for 25% of output, and

The top 20% account for 80% of output.

*(Chamorro-Premuzik, Adler and Kaiser, 2017)*

In other words, twenty percent of people are doing eighty percent of the work in many organisations. It is hardly surprising therefore that companies invest a considerable amount of time, effort and money into identifying and developing their top talent. These people not only have the ability to boost productivity and effectiveness of a team by anything from 5-15% (ibid.), but they are also often considered to be key to the future leadership within the organisation.

Many leadership roles are recruited from high potential talent pools, but there is an issue with this: in their research on leadership transition, Martin and Schmidt (2010) found that nearly 40% of internal job moves made by people identified by their companies as “high potentials” end in failure. Something about the way many organisations identify and assess potential isn't working.

It is wise to seek to identify and develop potential in your people – but knowing exactly how to do so can be overwhelming. In this paper we are going to explore what potential is, why it matters and crucially, how to assess and develop it.

Silzer and Church (2009) developed a comprehensive recap of indicators of high potentials based on an extensive literature review of nine external high potential models from consulting firms and two corporate surveys. They identified seven characteristics that are commonly viewed as indicators of high-potential employees:

1. Cognitive skills include conceptual or strategic thinking, breadth of thinking, cognitive ability, and dealing with ambiguity.
2. Personality variables include interpersonal skills, dominance, stability, resilience, and maturity.
3. Learning ability includes adaptability, learning orientation, learning agility, and openness to feedback.
4. Leadership skills include developing others, leading and managing others, and influencing and inspiring.
5. Motivation variables include energy, engagement, drive for advancement, career drive, interests, career aspirations, results orientation, and risk taking.
6. Performance record includes leadership experiences and performance track record.
7. Knowledge and values include cultural fit and technical/functional skills and knowledge.

This paper and the DEEP model outlined in the Appendix are the result of a decade's research and hands-on experience with the art and science of performance, potential and behaviour change. This involved the analysis of nearly one hundred models of potential. These include the internal, proprietary models of over a dozen FTSE 100 or multinational companies; around twenty models used by consultancies, head hunters and business psychologists around the world, and various academic frameworks and papers. Just as importantly, it also draws on over a decade of working directly with leaders to bring about improved success.

Deciding which model of potential to adopt, and which assessment method(s) to utilise, are key strategic decisions within any business. However, even the most academically rigorous, research-backed model of potential and approach to assessment will struggle to make a lasting impact unless they are consistently adopted and embedded throughout an organisation. Choosing a model that is grounded in experience as well as theory will encourage buy in and will support you and your organisation in realising the full power of your people, allowing you to generate profound and lasting business results by unleashing their untapped potential.

# What is potential and why does it matter?

'Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing it is stupid.'

- Albert Einstein

**potential** |pə(ʊ)'tɛnʃ(ə)l|

(adjective)

having or showing the capacity to develop into something in the future.

synonyms: possible, likely, prospective, future, probable, budding, in the making

(noun)

latent qualities or abilities that may be developed and lead to future success or usefulness.

"a young broadcaster with great potential"

synonyms: possibilities, potentiality, prospects

Rising stars  
Top talent  
Acceleration pool members  
High-potential talent  
Star performers  
The top 5%  
High-potential leaders  
Future leaders  
Can turn a B team into an A team

# Definitions of potential

Until potential is defined, there is not much we can do to measure or assess it. Potential is a broad construct and there is a lot of debate about how to accurately describe it. A good starting point, though, comes from Church and Silzer, who write:

*“Individuals with high potential are individuals early in their careers who demonstrate the abilities, skills, characteristics and behaviours that are reliable predictors of later leadership success.” (2014, p.52)*

Some companies define leadership potential as an individual's ability to perform a leadership role two levels higher in the organisation (Silzer & Church, 2010). There are issues with this definition: firstly, it only states desired outcome – performing two levels higher – but does not describe any early predictors of potential; secondly, the ability to progress in your own career does not by default mean that you have the potential to lead well, which is highlighted in the definition given by Paese et al., who write that potential is evident in “how likely an individual is to learn and grow quickly as a leader” (2016).

There is some debate about whether “potential” means “potential to be a leader” or has a more general meaning, summed up by the question “potential for what?”. At CDP we believe that the underlying meaning is potential for success. In the modern workplace success is often defined as leadership of some sort, even if that is informal and more to do with collaborating and influence rather than authority; after all, most people need to “lead” in some way or another at certain times, and even when they are not leading others, they are of course leading themselves. Nonetheless an individual's PPP or Personal Potential Profile should reflect their career goal: manager, leader or expert individual contributor.

A quick mention should go to the term ‘high potential’ or HiPo. Many organisations have multiple high potential ‘talent pools’. Some of these talent pools are defined by functional area, key positions, or special target groups such as diversity talent pools based on gender or ethnicity, each of which impacts the lens through which we make sense of leadership potential. The table below provides examples of high potential categories used by 20 large organisations and found that 65% have more than one category of high potential and cluster these according to band differences. The survey also extracted the time frames in which these HiPos would be expected to be ready for band promotion. The organisations surveyed include AOL, JP Morgan Chase, Levi Strauss, Marriott, Microsoft and PepsiCo.

**Table 2. High Potential Categories**

In Surveyed Organizations	
65%*	<p><i>Have more than one category of high potential and cluster high-potential individuals based on band differences.</i></p> <p><i>Band-Level Categories</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Global leaders/senior executive potential</li> <li>Middle management or technical/functional potential</li> <li>“High Value” or “HiPro” performers (keep in role and develop for expanded responsibilities)</li> </ul> <p><i>Typical designations include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Top Potential (senior level potential)</li> <li>Turn Potential (next level potential)</li> <li>Grow Potential (same level but expand)</li> <li>Mastery Potential (same work, same level)</li> </ul>
15%	<p><i>Establish expected time frames for band promotion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Next Band</i>—Can perform at next band level in 1–2 years</li> <li><i>Same Band</i>—Able to have larger “scope, scale, and strategic importance” at the same band level in the next one to two years (horizontal movement)</li> <li><i>Same Functional level</i>—Continue to do the same work within the same functional level, only more effectively in the next one to two years</li> </ul>

\*% of the 20 participating organizations



# Potential vs. performance vs. readiness

Potential is often confused with performance. Indeed, MacRae and Furnham define potential as “the ability to perform exceptionally well (at work for a reasonable amount of time) for their own benefit and that of the organisation” (2014). High performers – people who are excelling in their current context and role – are often mistakenly called high potentials as if the two things were synonymous.

*Performance and potential are not the same: there is a vital distinction between the two.*

Let's imagine a straightforward example of a car. It has the potential to travel at 120mph, meaning that its engine and overall design have made that top speed possible. However, it may only 'perform' at 70mph, due to the conditions and context it finds itself in, such as how regularly it has been serviced, whether the oil has been changed, the age of the tyres, the type of road it is on, speed restrictions, the weather conditions and the amount of traffic around it. The current performance does not necessarily indicate the car's potential.

Or think about a sunflower seed. It has the potential to become a huge flower that brings joy to people as well as enhancing the ecosystem in which it lives, but only if nurtured in the right way and given the right conditions in which to thrive. If not, the 'performance' of the sunflower seed might drastically disappoint.

If you are trying to predict future potential for a role which will be more complex, past performance may only give a limited insight into how someone will perform in a bigger or broader role. The small car might be travelling at 70mph while the sports car could be travelling at sixty-five. In the long run, however, it's obvious that the sports car is the one with more potential.

In a survey of 80 companies, researchers found that 75% of companies rely on past performance to predict future performance (Church et al., 2015). Relying on past performance puts companies at risk of promoting inappropriate candidates or overlooking those with genuinely high potential in favour of those who have been performing well. Mis-promoting can damage or limit a company's bottom line and fulfilment of its mission and vision, so it is vital to understand the difference.

# Five best practice principles for choosing or designing a model of potential

Since it is so easy to mistake current performance for future potential, the key within organisations is therefore to understand what to look for. Over a decade of working with the world's most successful organisations to identify and develop potential has led our consultants to a simple five-part "best practice" checklist for identifying and developing potential. Whichever model you choose to work with, the five foundational elements are:

1. Your definition should be valid
2. Your definition should be accepted and shared
3. You should separate out potential, performance and readiness
4. You should beware cognitive and personal bias
5. There should be practical follow-through – the 'So what?'

Let's look at each one in turn.

## 1. Your definition must be valid

It is important that the elements that make up any model of potential have rigour and validity. They should link to observable evidence and be able to determine likely levels of future success. It is also essential that they have face validity, i.e. that they resonate on a cultural level within the organisation using them. The concepts and language used to express them should be clear, simple and easily understood by people at all levels. They will be quick to get and will make sense to people, being intuitive or even 'obvious' when articulated out loud.

## 2. Your definition must be accepted and shared

These definitions must be shared definitions of potential across the organisation at all levels. They also need to be embedded and used in talent review and developmental discussions. It is no good aligning around a definition and understanding of potential if other key players are working with a different set of criteria, or hold a different perspective and understanding in their minds. Ideally the model used will have top level buy in and will also be understandable and applicable within any level at the organisation where the model is being used. A good model of potential applies at ALL levels of an organisation, though, of course, it will manifest differently at different levels. For example, in the CDP DEEP model one quality is "innovative". A CEO needs to demonstrate this but it can also be seen, in a different way, in someone on the shop floor; or in a call centre.

## 3. You must separate out potential, performance and readiness

The assessment of potential needs to be distinct and separate from measuring performance or a judgment about a person's readiness to progress, which means that the model used must do the same. While solid past or present performance is no doubt the price of entry for consideration, we need to bear in mind that current performance does not necessarily determine future performance. Research has suggested that only about 30% of high performers should in fact be classed as high potentials (Corporate Leadership Council, 2005). Many high performers with excellent track records find that when given different challenges or roles, or in a more volatile, pressurised or uncertain context, they struggle to do well. High potentials will have to navigate significantly different challenges; therefore it is essential to separate current performance from potential. In addition, it is vital to consider the person's readiness, since it is possible to have the potential to develop a lot further, but for whatever reason, to simply not be ready.

## 4. You must beware cognitive and personal bias

The tendency for the human mind to resort to heuristics (or "rules of thumb") when judging others is strong. It is important to be aware of this, to understand which unconscious biases you may be susceptible to, and to know how to combat them. The following are ten of the most common kinds of unconscious bias and how they might play out in the process of identifying potential. A model that takes these into account is likely to be more reliable than one that does not tend to biases.

1. **Confirmation bias:** We tend to see facts that match our existing views or prejudices and not those that challenge them, however "open minded" we think ourselves to be. In organisations, this means we might subconsciously look for people who mirror the current leadership, ignoring anyone with a fresh approach.

2. **Illusion of control:** we like to believe we are more in control of things than we actually are, so assume things will go our way.
3. **Optimism bias:** we overestimate the likelihood of good things happening and underestimate the chance of bad things happening. When concluding that a high performer has high potential, we might become overly optimistic about what they're capable of achieving in the future, underestimating the possible challenges that lie ahead.
4. **Source credibility:** We tend to accept things from people who are like us, or who we like more than those who we differ from or don't like. This can lead us to easily overlook candidates with enormous potential if they are not like us, and to favour those who are similar to us.
5. **Repetition effect:** We pay disproportionate attention to things which we have heard before, or heard several times.
6. **Prospect theory:** We are biased towards outcomes which minimise losses rather than maximise gains. It can feel less risky to promote or develop a high performing candidate rather than a high potential one. We may overlook the opportunity to maximise another candidate's growth, development and results in favour of the 'safer' option.
7. **Recency:** We tend to take more account of things that happened recently and less account of things that happened a while ago. Therefore, a present project or star performer may overshadow others with more potential but who, for one reason or another, are more in the background at this point.
8. **Anchoring:** In contradiction to "recency" at other times we are overly influenced by the first thing that we discovered or experienced. Somebody's outstanding performance ages ago may be unduly influencing our perceptions now.
9. **Groupthink:** We will tend to – unknowingly – conform to the consensus (or what we perceive to be the consensus) in a group we are part of. If the group overlooks someone, we may be susceptible to taking on their viewpoint and overlooking our own.
10. **Sunk cost fallacy:** We persevere even when we realise something will not work because we've already put time and effort into them. Realising that someone may have less potential than we previously thought can be uncomfortable and the 'sunk cost' may keep us locked into trying to develop them.

Obviously potential requires an organisation to be cognisant of cultural, racial, gender and other biases and work on these – and their unconscious elements are also important.

## 5. There must be practical follow-through – the 'So what?'

Once people have been given their own potential profile, there should be easily accessible resources to help them develop. Without this, the profile becomes informational at best but will not be fundamentally useful or practical. Follow through is to potential what sunlight, water and carbon dioxide are to the sunflower seed: essential to help it become all that it can be.

At CDP for example, we offer a structured professional development process through our eLearning platform, designed specifically to turn potential into reality in each of the four core areas of our DEEP model of potential: decision making, execution, emotions and motivation, and people skills (see Appendix 1). The platform includes a series of videos, interactive exercises, developmental activities and a resources list, which we update on a quarterly basis to support the ongoing development and fulfilment of potential.

Without practical follow-through, any model of potential is informative but leaves people essentially stuck where they are. The increased self-awareness that come from a robust and relevant assessment of potential should be accompanied by the resources to help people develop and grow.

# Best practice for assessing leadership potential

The identification of potential usually starts at the top of the organisation, with senior leadership agreeing on the model, categories and definitions used, after which the process for identifying potential will be discussed and formalised.

The following is a suggested best practice process to adopt (and modify) as you assess potential in your organisation. (Adapted from Silzer, Church and Scott, 2016.)

## 1. Clearly define the business need

Understand and clearly articulate the business case for doing this, including the senior leadership and HR perspectives. Look at what the organisation currently has in place, get feedback from various stakeholders and leaders about what is working well and what could be improved.

## 2. Identify a framework of potential that is grounded in theory and research

It is important to choose a framework that makes sense to the organisation and meets the five 'best practice' criteria highlighted above (valid definitions, shared definitions, a clear separation between potential, performance and readiness, some basic training about unconscious bias and practical follow-through). A solid framework simultaneously aligns and educates your leaders.

## 5. Gain senior leadership support

Senior leaders need to be aligned around the drive to adopt a unified model of potential and method of assessing it. One way of gaining leadership support could be to implement a top-down approach by having senior leaders participate in pilot assessments or by rolling out upper-level assessment efforts first before deploying similar programmes lower in the organisation.

## 6. Ensure the programme design is aligned to the culture

This includes issues related to transparency of potential rating, availability and depth of development planning resources, and data sharing with HR and senior leaders.

### 3. Develop tools and an assessment method

Some frameworks, like the CDP DEEP model of potential, will offer a corresponding assessment method, such as a psychometric, development audit or other method. As a bare minimum, you'll need a set of competencies to describe the key attributes of future leaders – without that, you cannot identify and validate people's potential. Consider the following:

- Utilise a multi-method, multi-trait approach (MTMM). Potential is a multi-faceted construct and needs a suite of assessments to reliably measure all aspects of it.
- Assessment of potential of early career professionals should focus on a different mix of elements than an assessment of individuals later in their career.
- Multilevel architecture, so that potential can be identified and developed at multiple organisational levels. This will provide a broader picture of the internal talent pipeline and can be a significant driver of culture change.

### 4. Validate the process

Assessment of potential will be used for decision-making purposes in the organisation and as such decisions are viewed as administrative decisions that could impact one's career require a demonstration of validity and job relatedness. Conduct and document validation efforts to ensure legal defensibility.

### 7. Pay attention to participant reactions for all programme phases

Stay connected to participant responses to ensure the programme is meeting expectations and is having a positive effect on individuals and within the organisation as a whole. This will enable you to tweak and adjust as needed. Any perceptions of unfairness and bias or lack of face validity (no matter the empirical validity) will be detrimental to the programme's acceptance, effectiveness, and impact.

### 8. Lay the groundwork for future ROI studies

Senior leaders will at some point ask for a demonstration of the impact and effectiveness of the programme. It is helpful to prepare for this in the early stages of building it. Collecting early data prior to any intervention will provide the baseline data needed for a robust programme evaluation later in the process.

# Factors Affecting Potential

Whichever model of potential you choose to adopt and work with, the following factors affecting potential should be taken into account in some way.

## 1. Cognitive Ability (IQ)

A broad general definition of cognitive ability is, "A general mental ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, learn quickly and learn from experience." These abilities are clearly important to success in any corporate culture working within an ideas or knowledge economy. However, while cognitive ability is a key factor affecting one's potential, it is not the only factor

For decades, IQ tests were considered the most accurate way to measure intelligence, initially with some feasibility. For example, research has repeatedly shown that cognitive ability influences virtually all aspects of work performance and potential (for example, see Ones et al., 2010), with a significant correlation occurring between what is known as General Mental Ability and performance. The more complex the job, the more important one's level of GMA.

Research suggests that we need to consider both cognitive ability and personality in order to accurately assess potential (see Schmitt, 2015 for review).

## 2. Personality

Potential is not just about one's intellectual capacities. Clearly, the personality also plays a vital role. Certain personality traits can predict leadership potential, including the following:

1. Being well-adjusted: Senior positions are extremely demanding and stressful, therefore leaders need to be resilient to succeed. Emotionally stable people handle stress better, are more resilient and are less prone to anxiety, depression and neuroses. Being well-adjusted is also a marker of high emotional intelligence.
2. Quality of conscientiousness: Leaders need to be self-disciplined, organised, reliable and responsive. High-fliers tend to be hard working, reliable and ambitious.
3. Open and curious: Showing an interest in how things work, looking for opportunities to experiment, and being open and curious – interpersonally and towards new experiences, thoughts and challenges – are key personality traits to consider when assessing leadership potential.
4. Socialised extroverts: Social skills are increasingly considered to be vital. Many people are introverts who have trained themselves to be like extroverts. This demonstrates that these skills are learnable.
5. Agreeableness: Leaders need to be clear and assertive and able to separate work performance from personal relationships. They stand up for their own values and for their company's interests, confronting interpersonal and performance difficulties as they arise. (Adapted from CRF, 2016; MacRae & Furnham, 2014)

## 3. Performance and readiness

We addressed the performance vs. potential conundrum earlier, but it is worth revisiting since it is a key factor that does affect potential. It has been said that solid performance is the price of entry fee to the conversation about potential.

Performance looks at what someone has achieved in the past or is currently achieving. It depends on context: the situation, environment, responsibilities and stakeholder relationships that someone works within today.

### Case study: Compare Maxine, Sarah and Josh

Maxine, for example, is a top performer in her current role but she has reached the upper limits of what she is able to achieve. Her potential has been almost completely developed and she is performing highly because the challenges she faces and the roles she takes up are consistent. If she were promoted into a more senior position, Maxine would likely not thrive; faced with significantly new and different challenges, and lacking the drive or ambition, which many studies have found is a requisite aspect of potential, she would struggle. Although labelled as a HiPo (a High Potential candidate) in her current context, both she and her colleagues would likely find that in a more ambiguous, volatile or challenging situation, she would not be seen this way at all.

In contrast, however, is Sarah, who currently works two levels below Maxine. Sarah's performance is consistently solid but not as obviously exceptional as Maxine's; she's younger, newer to the organisation and less experienced. Many companies would understandably overlook Sarah in favour of promoting someone like Maxine. This is where potential and performance get confused. The reality is that Sarah actually has a lot of unexpressed potential; it is lying dormant, so to speak, largely because Sarah finds herself in a role or organisational culture that isn't suited to her key strengths and skills and has not yet been supported to develop. Her natural aptitude for leadership, however, is clear, and given new challenges, opportunities and a slightly different role, Sarah would demonstrate a lot of potential and ability to develop, whereas Maxine's environment, situation and relationships are optimal and have made the most of her skills and competencies. Given a new challenge and increased responsibility, Maxine would begin to flounder.

Then there is a third consideration: readiness. Like Sarah, Josh has a lot of undeveloped potential, particularly leadership potential. He is ambitious, visionary and naturally inspires those who work with him. However, at this moment in time, he and his line manager have agreed that he is not ready to be promoted; he is dealing with some extremely stressful personal challenges which are likely to demand a lot from him over the next twelve months. His organisation has identified him as having a lot of potential and has invited him to open the conversation up again whenever he feels ready. Because he is highly adaptable, there is not a sense of panic about fitting him into one role right now. Other people might not feel ready for different reasons, such as wanting to complete a current project or feeling that they have not done or learned all that they can within their current role. Readiness is an essential factor to consider when assessing and developing potential.

#### 4. Motivation

Whether you call it motivation, drive or ambition, the simple truth is that leaders do not get to the top unless they are highly motivated to achieve work and career goals. Writing for Harvard Business Review, authors Chamorro-Premuzik, Adler and Kaiser write that "ability and social skill may be considered talent; but potential is talent multiplied by drive" (2017).

Having a strong work ethic and an ability to remain somewhat dissatisfied with one's achievements and holding oneself accountable results in people who are more likely to:

- have a clear direction and set realistic goals
- bounce back from setbacks
- learn from mistakes.

Motivation can be assessed by standardised tests, and it can be identified behaviourally, but the key measure is not what an individual says about their ambitions but what they actually do to achieve them. Measuring motivation is hard, so many organisations review an individual's track record in order to take references to determine their drive to succeed.

#### 5. Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

Leadership is highly relational and is therefore an "emotion-laden process" (George, 2000). Skilful management of followers' feelings are a critical leadership function (Humphrey, 2008), and leaders' own emotional regulation and associated behaviours have been found to profoundly influence followers' emotional reactions and job performance (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). Given this, EQ can be considered to be a crucial aspect of the leadership process; measuring EQ could differentiate between a high performing and an average leader. Some research even suggests that EQ explains up to 90% of the difference between senior-level leaders (high performers) and their average-performing counterparts (Goleman, 2000).

#### 6. Leadership skills

The ability to advance in one's own career does not guarantee that an individual has the capability to make a crucial contribution to the organisation – particularly when it comes to inspiring, influencing and leading others. Some estimates suggest that at least half of all leaders cannot effectively engage their people. Rather than turning a B-team into the A-team, sadly, as Chamorro-Premuzic, Adler and Kaiser write in Harvard Business Review, "There is no shortage of leaders who turn A-players into a B-team" (2017). Leadership skills or abilities are therefore a key factor that affects the degree to which someone is able to fulfil their own potential and unleash it in others. One could be the most intelligent and motivated person in the world, but if one is unable to effectively lead others and does not have the capacity to learn how to do so, one's overall potential will be limited. Some measure of the qualities associated with leadership should be present in any potential model.

## 7. Other factors

Other factors that impact potential include one's learning agility – the willingness and ability to learn from experience and subsequently apply that learning to perform successfully under new first-time conditions; competencies (one of the most widely used measures of potential). These have the advantage of being easier for people to “digest” but there are numerous issues with working with this factor alone. For example, they can suggest a ‘one size fits all’ approach and are sometimes pulled out of thin air rather than being grounded in research (CRF, 2014, pg. 18).

Values and culture fit are being increasingly recognised as highly important factors – within one organisation, someone may appear not to be high potential, but given a different context, mission or culture, they may thrive. Finally, communication skills are another vitally important area, because so much of our working lives is dominated by communication nowadays.



# How to Measure Potential

After clarifying what potential is and the factors your organisation will consider comes the question of how to actually measure it. In the survey of 20 global organisations mentioned earlier, the following methods are used to measure and assess potential.

## In Surveyed Organizations

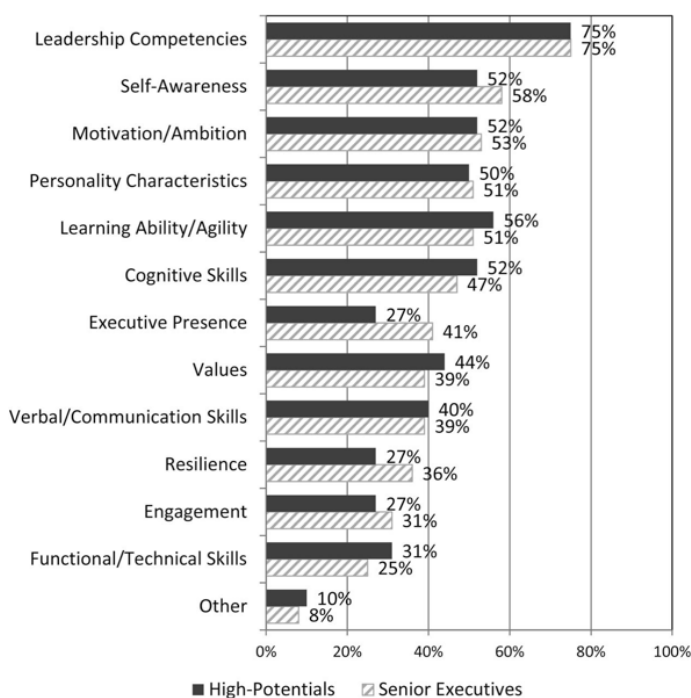
100%*	<i>Immediate Manager Ratings and Recommendations</i>
	50% view as critical to the process
	20% view as entry requirement
100%	<i>Senior Manager Review</i>
	35% use management calibration meetings
100%	<i>Last Performance Review</i>
	Usually from last two to three years to identify trends
65%	<i>360-Degree Feedback Instrument or Competency Ratings</i>
	Typically used to identify development needs
	Most are internally developed or customized tools
30%	<i>Interviews</i>
	Usually behavioral or competency based
30%	<i>Personality Instruments</i>
	Used for developmental purposes
15%	<i>Ability Tests</i>
	Used for identification or development
	Focus is on cognitive ability tests
15%	<i>Assessment Centers</i>
10%	<i>Individual Psychological Assessment</i>

\*% of the 20 organizations surveyed

Reference: Silzer and Church (2010)

All of the organisations surveyed used at least three measures: line manager ratings and recommendations, senior manager review and identifying trends from the previous two to three years. At the bottom end of the scale, just two of the organisations surveyed used individual psychological assessments, despite their thoroughness and proven usefulness.

A 2015 survey by Church, Rotolo, Ginter and Levine on assessments take place within 80 different organisations. The graph below shows the domains these companies consider most important to address when assessing potential in an individual.



Graph 1. What companies look at when assessing leadership potential, Church et al. (2015)

# Methods for assessing potential

There are various methods available for assessing and measuring potential, many of which can be blended into a multi-trait, multi-method approach, which is what we employ at CDP. Some of the most trusted methods for assessing potential are below.

## 1. Interviews

Interviews are one of the most common methods used to assess and measure potential. The one-to-one context offers a huge opportunity to do a deep assessment of an individual's skills, qualities, motivation and any other factors adopted within the chosen framework of potential. In order to be reliable, interviews need some kind of intentional structure, and to be designed specifically to test behaviours associated with high potential. In these cases, interviewing has been found to have high validity (CRF, 2015, pg. 30).

At CDP, we employ a rigorous interview process called the Executive Development Audit (the EDA), which can be used for selection, promotion or for purely developmental reasons. After the EDA is commissioned by a client, there is a half hour briefing call with the line manager, hiring manager or HR. The EDA itself takes place in person and lasts from three to four hours, and explores a range of topics, including biographical data, career achievements and the assessee's alignment with the DEEP model of potential. After this, a report is written by the interviewer and calibrated by a colleague. The report details the assessee's potential profile, strengths and areas for development, and includes a summary and concluding comments. If the EDA is for selection or promotion, the report will be sent directly to the client; if for developmental purposes, the assessee will be shown the report before it is sent back to the client. In both cases, there is a 90 minute feedback and development session with the assessee in which a Development Action Plan is co-created. We also use psychometric tests alongside the EDA process to provide a more robust, multi-method approach.

## 2. Assessment Centres and Administrative simulations

Assessment centres and administrative simulations are often extremely robust, and as such, they can be rather expensive because they use multiple exercises designed to reflect a common set of underlying performance dimensions. Despite the level of investment required to design and implement, however, they still remain one of the best predictors of performance and potential (Arthur et al., 2003; Hogan & Kaiser, 2010).

## 3. The Multi-trait, Multi-method Approach

This involves measuring a range of different qualities or traits using multiple different methods. Results are then correlated from the different methods, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence. Specifying the dimensions that are being assessed at the outset is key to making this approach work well, otherwise you risk generating numerous results that do not correlate in a helpful or informative manner.

## 4. Behavioural assessment

One of the core assumptions of behavioural assessments is that behaviour can be most effectively understood by focusing on preceding events and resulting consequences. A surprisingly diverse number of assessment methods have emerged from this, including behavioural interviewing, several strategies of behavioural observation, measurement of relevant cognitions, psycho-physiological assessment and a variety of self-report inventories.

One difference between behavioural and traditional assessment is that behavioural assessment is concerned with clearly observable aspects in the way a person interacts with his or her environment. A typical behavioural assessment might include specific measures of behaviour (overt and covert), antecedents (internal and external), conditions surrounding behaviours, and consequences (Groth-Marnat, 2006).

## 5. Multi-source 360 ratings

Most companies nowadays have some experience with 360 tools, although, as Church et al found, only 65% of the 20 large companies surveyed employed 360 reviews in their assessment of potential (Church et al., 2001). 360 rating tools use different groups (such as direct reports, peers and supervisors) to assess the same performance dimensions. However, it is not always seen as an administrative tool for use with executives.

There are some methodological, statistical and ethical concerns (see for example London, 2001). For example, if individuals

know that their scores will be used for decision-making instead of developmental purposes, they will tend to increase their scores, which raises concerns about the validity of the feedback. In addition, when making comparisons across ratings, companies usually rely on a small sample size, and the raters do not always agree on their decisions. In spite of these issues, recent reviews suggest that use of 360 feedback is increasing (Church & Waclawski, 2010). For more information see Tornow & London, 1998; Bracken, Timmreck, & Church, 2001, and Tornow & Tornow, 2001.

## 6. Other assessments

Other forms of assessment of potential include:

- Reference checks – talking to as many of the candidate's former managers and colleagues as possible to get a rounded picture of how they operate in different contexts and scenarios.
- Biographical data (Stricker & Rock, 1998)
- Career achievement inventories
- Leadership competency models (Hollenbeck, McCall, & Silzer, 2006)

# Calibrating Potential


Best practice assessment is critical for identifying an organisation's high potential talent, and best practice calibration is critical for building and maintaining the talent pipeline. The calibration process is used for three key reasons: to determine high potential status, to create succession plans, and for development decisions. The most frequent technique for doing this involves using grids to plot candidates along two dimensions: performance and potential (Aon Hewitt, 2013).

Aon Hewitt highlighted the following best practices principles for calibrating high potential (2013, p.12)

- **Multi-Faceted Ratings:** Ratings should not be two-dimensional but should address multiple factors, rating individuals on potential, which looks at their performance, character, capability, and motivation, and readiness level – whether they are ready now (within one year), ready soon (one to three years), or ready future (ready in more than three years).
- **Multiple Sources of Input:** Various managers contribute input over multiple assessments.
- **The Calibration Session:** A designated discussion is needed in order to discuss specific employees in detail. The meeting begins with a review of past performance, to give participants a gauge from which to measure an individual's progress. To guard against the risk of individual biases being present in the talent review process, managers sometimes need training on how to create open dialogue without dominating the discussion and to anchor conversations in objective metrics and observations of behaviour rather than subjective value judgements. A common underlying contract of sorts is "I won't challenge you if you don't challenge me", which can obviously result in poor sessions; to avert this, constructive conflict between participants is encouraged, overseen by a facilitator. As Aon Hewitt write, "Compensation should not be up for discussion during the calibration and assessment phase; rather, compensation decisions are best tabled until a later time." We agree that it is essential to separate the two issues.
- **Multiple Reviews:** Aon Hewitt found that the most "talent savvy" organisations conduct calibration sessions at least twice a year.
- **Action Plans:** Finally, as highlighted in our best practice guidelines on page 18, an active, individual development plan should emerge from these sessions, to which follow-up items can be added throughout the year. The ideal plan is both simple in design and powerful in purpose, allowing for clear execution.

As an example, the Development Plan we use at CDP looks like this:

**DAP - DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN**



These goals and actions should be fed into any ongoing development process. You should discuss them with your line manager and HR. We don't recommend working on more than 3 goals at a time, if you choose more than one they should be in order of importance.


I WANT TO MOVE FROM A LEADER WHO ...	TO A LEADER WHO .....	What will success look like? (In very practical terms).	What will I do? By when? What do I need others to do?	How will I measure progress?

**TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR GOALS**

**FROM:** Describe where you are now. Don't be afraid to be blunt and self-critical, or even humorous.

**TO:** Define where you want to get to. Make this stretching and inspiring but not too stretching. Discuss it with people you trust and get their input.

- Use clear, every day, evocative, descriptive language. Avoid jargon and management speak. Write it down the way you'd describe it to a good friend in the pub.
- Be clear and specific. Describe what will actually change. What will it look like? What will people see? What's the "delta"?
- Be clear in yourself why you want to achieve this goal. What difference will it make? Are you really committed to it? What might it cost you?
- Prioritise the goals that will have the most impact on your performance. Having too many will lead to a loss of focus. You can always work on the others later. (We recommend working on no more than 3 goals at any one time.)
- Your goals can be about developing strengths as well as addressing development areas.



CDP recommend our DELTA 360 Goals Survey a bespoke online tool to track your progress. For more information visit [www.cdp.consulting/delta](http://www.cdp.consulting/delta)

# Review of some major models and methods

Below are 16 consultancy models and methods for assessing and developing potential. While it can seem confusing reading so many different approaches, it can also be very useful to be aware of the different areas of emphases different consultancies highlight. You may find as you read that one or more approaches resonates. They are set out in alphabetical order.

## Aon Hewitt's approach to assess high potential (Hewitt, 2013)

This comprises five central components. Their fundamental starting point is alignment with the organisational strategy, which focuses on the organisation's mission, values and challenges. The five components are:

1. **Legal and professional guidelines:** The skills and capabilities being assessed must map to required competencies and be consistent with the organisation's culture and with legal and professional guidelines.
2. **Multiple methods:** The input methods must include the approaches with the strongest validity and should assess the most critical competencies with multiple methods.
3. **Flexible:** The process should be flexible, balancing the need for remote versus face-to-face administration, and should be appropriately customised to the organisation's competencies, language, and business context.
4. **Cost-effective:** To ensure the process is cost-effective, administration processes for candidates and administrators should be efficiently designed and minimise travel expenses that do not add value to the assessment process.
5. **Promotes ongoing development:** An exemplary assessment tool promotes ongoing development by providing information that can be used for feedback and development.

## CDP's DEEP model of potential (Draper, 2016)

At CDP, we assess 12 factors across four key areas, covering all of the key areas highlighted in this paper such as IQ, EQ, motivation, leadership skills. Each area has three key factors, which act as indicators of future potential:

- **Decision-making:** astute, innovative, strategic
- **Execution:** accountable, focussed, agile
- **Emotions and motivation:** ambitious, well-adjusted, resilient
- **People skills:** self-aware, empathic, inspiring

We also factor in the individual's past experiences, their choices and the fit between them and the role/culture/organisation. Our model is the cornerstone upon which our Executive Development Audits take place and we use associated psychometrics to identify in which areas are people weaker or stronger across the 12 Factors. For more information, see Appendix 1.

## Corporate Leadership Council model of potential (CLC, 2005)

**The CLC model looks at three core areas:**

- **Ability:** a combination of innate characteristics (mental/cognitive agility and emotional intelligence) and learned skills (technical, functional and interpersonal).
- **Engagement:** consisting of four elements: emotional commitment, rational commitment, discretionary effort and intent to stay.
- **Aspiration:** the extent to which an employee wants or desires the following: prestige and recognition in the organisation; advancement and influence; financial rewards; work-life balance and; overall job enjoyment.

## DDI's executive leadership potential model (Rogers & Smith, 2007; Wellins, Smith, & McGee, 2006)

DDI works with four cornerstones of executive potential:

- Leadership promise: defines a person who shows certain inherent abilities to lead others (p. 3). This includes:
  - o Propensity to lead
  - o Brings out best in people
  - o Authenticity
- Personal development orientation: defines a person who “never stops trying to become an even better leader” (p. 4). This includes:
  - o Receptivity to feedback
  - o Learning agility
- Mastery of complexity: touches on an individual's ability to excel in a work environment of constant, rapid change, ambiguity and competing demands (p. 5). This includes:
  - o Adaptability
  - o Conceptual thinking
  - o Navigates ambiguity
- Balance of values and results: reflects a senior leader's ability to work within a company's culture and still get the desired results (p. 6). This includes:
  - o Culture fit
  - o Passion for results

## Egon Zehnder (Monnery and Blais, 2018)

The Egon Zehnder research team has developed a model that assesses executive potential by evaluating individuals against four leadership traits, which they state predict the development of executive ability.

1. **Curiosity** – Seeking out new experiences, ideas, knowledge; seeking feedback and learning new things in order to change
2. **Insight** – Proactively gathering and making sense of a vast amount of information from a wide range of sources, and discovering new insights that, when applied, transform past views or set new directions
3. **Engagement** – Deeply engaging others, communicating a persuasive vision, and inspiring genuine emotional connection of individuals to the organisation and the leader
4. **Determination** – Managing and maintaining long-term, sustained effort and focus despite obstacles and distractions, while not ignoring evidence that the nature of the activity should change

## Hay Group (Hay, 2006, 2008)

This model looks at four key areas:

### 1. Eagerness to learn:

- Willingness to take risk to learn something new
- Curiosity

### 2. Breadth of perspective:

- Thinking beyond boundaries, take a broad view
- Conceptual ability, raw computing power or IQ

### 3. Understanding others:

- Capacity to accurately understand other's perspective and experiences
- Motivation and ability to listen

### 4. Personal maturity

- Ability to experience feedback as change to learn and grow
- Maintain emotional balance, resilience and realistic optimism

## Hewitt Associates (Hewitt, 2008)

The Hewitt model addresses the following four areas:

### 1. Performance

- Performance record
- Record of making decisions, taking action and getting things done
- Core capabilities to do current job
- Work outputs

### 2. Potential

- Promotability – ability to succeed one or two levels beyond current job
- Leadership qualities

### 3. Character

- Upward motivation
- Psychological Adaptability
- Flexible
- Open, receptive to and utilises feedback
- Highly regarded by peers and others
- Tendency and capability to challenge the status quo
- Inclined to ask questions and raise issues that are one to two levels beyond current scope

#### 4. Other factors

- Location (local market versus region or global high potential)
- Position/level
- Career stage (earlier/later)
- Diversity measures (gender, ethnicity, age)

### Hogan assessment Systems (Hogan, 2009):

The Hogan looks at the following four core areas:

#### 1. Business Domain

- Strategic reasoning
- Tactical problem solving
- Operational excellence

#### 2. Leadership Domain

- Results orientation
- Talent development

#### 3. Interpersonal Domain – relationships

- Respect for people
- Collaboration

#### 4. Interpersonal Domain - work challenges

- Strategic self awareness
- Tenacity
- Judgement

### JDI (YSC) Model of Potential (UK; Rowe, 2007)

The JDI model covers three core areas, each of which has three sub-areas:

#### 1. Judgment

- Simplifies complexity
- Identifies and handles issues
- Is analytically rigorous

#### 2. Drive

- Shows self-confidence
- Takes initiative
- Is ambitious

#### 3. Influence

- Displays self-awareness
- Reads situations well
- Makes a positive impact



## Kiddy and Partners

The Kiddy model of high potential covers five core areas:

### 1. Analytics

- Assimilates complex information
- Solves problems
- Shows strong judgement
- Breadth of knowledge/perspective

### 2. Commerciality

- Market insight
- Makes money
- Sees opportunities that others do not

### 3. Drive to achieve

- Personal interests and ambitions
- Goal orientation
- Commitment: energy and willingness to make sacrifices

### 4. Personal change orientation

- Adapts personal paradigms
- Masters new situations
- Generates productive change

### 5. Impact

- Emotional intelligence
- Leads people
- Strategic influencing

## Korn Ferry's Seven Signposts Model (2015)

Korn Ferry has identified essential signposts that indicate the likelihood of future leadership advancement and success (Sevy, Swisher, & Orr, 2014). The Korn Ferry Assessment of Leadership Potential (KFALP) measures these facets, differentiating between leaders who achieve various levels of leadership.

### The seven signposts are:

- Drivers: the individual's internal drive and motivation
- Experience: an individual's track record
- Awareness: of one's strengths and developmental areas
- Learning agility: the ability to learn from one's experience
- Capacity: Aptitude for logic and reasoning
- Leadership traits: things like taking charge, having a vision, and being innovative
- Derailment risks: and how these are managed.

## Lee Hecht Harrison Penna

LHH Penna uses a 3D model of potential, which brings together elements from 40 independent expert sources to classify both emerging and senior management talent. The model:

- Synthesises three core factors which determine the extent of an individual's potential: desire, disposition and dexterity
- Reflects an understanding of what it takes to grow in the 'new organisation' – one characterised by a VUCA environment (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous)
- Utilises different forms of measurement for each factor, such as sophisticated questionnaires and simulation exercises
- Generates results from the measurements which are then matrixed by consultants to provide a view of potential which is based on empirical evidence.

## McCall (1998):

The McCall method specialises in early identification of global executives and looks at the following characteristics:

- Seeks opportunities to learn
- Acts with integrity
- Adapts to cultural differences
- Is committed to making a difference
- Seeks broad business knowledge
- Brings out the best in people
- Is insightful, see things from new angles
- Has the courage to take risks
- Seeks and uses feedback
- Learns from mistakes
- Is open to criticism

## MDA Leadership Consulting model of high potential (Barnett, 2008)

Three core factors:

- **Personality characteristics:** Dominance, sociability, drive, versatility, and stability
- **Successful intelligence:** The capacity to analyse, evaluate, and accurately and insightfully solve problems effectively and apply what they know to adapt, to positively influence others and impact their environment
- **Attitudes and values:** Attitudes toward learning and a positive disposition toward their team and organisation.

## Personnel Decisions (Peterson & Erdahl, 2007)

This model looks at foundations, accelerators and career leadership exercises.

### Foundations include:

- Cognitive Capacity: Intelligence and cognitive complexity
- Personality and motivators: Dominance, responsibility, initiative, optimism, risk taking, energy level and adaptability.

### Accelerators include:

- Career goals and preferences: Interest and drive to pursue leadership advancement; power and control; working with quantitative and financial information; driving change, and; managing people.

The career leadership exercises differentiate leaders at different levels.

## Whitbread potential model (see CRF, 2016, pg. 26):

This model utilises five factors in assessing potential:

- **Drive:** strives to make things better; committed to unselfish goals, determined and focused
- **Insight:** joins the dots at speed, thinks beyond the immediate, brings fresh insights
- **Curiosity:** hungry for new knowledge, open minded questioning, always learning
- **Courage:** bold enough to speak out, backs themselves, surefooted
- **Impact:** socially and culturally adept, cares about people, connects at all levels.

These examples show how some large organisations have tackled the issue of assessing and developing potential and may inspire you as you do the same.

# Comparing different models of potential

The following table collates the information on the various models of potential highlighted in this paper. It matrixes the models according to the top-level information provided on each model and should therefore be used as a guide only.

	Cognitive Capabilities	Personality Traits	Self Awareness / Emotional Intelligence	Learning Ability	Leadership Competencies	Motivation/Ambition	Values
Aon Hewitt					✓		
CDP's DEEP Model	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The CLC Model of Potential	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
DDI's Executive Leadership Potential Model	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Egon Zhender Model of Potential	✓			✓		✓	
Hay Group Model of Potential	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Hewitt Associates Potential Model	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hogan Assessment Systems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Kiddy and Partners	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Korn Ferry's Seven Signposts Model	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lee Hecht Harrison Penna				✓		✓	
McCall Model of Potential	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MDA Leadership Consulting Potential Model	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pepsi LeAD Leadership Assessment & Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personnel Decisions Model of Potential	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Whitbread Potential Model	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
YSC JDI Potential Model	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

A comparison of various models of potential (CDP, 2018)

Communication Skills	Engagement	Performance	Resilience	Adaptability/Flexibility	Multi Trait, Multi-Method	Business Context
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
✓				✓		✓
✓	✓		✓			
✓				✓		
	✓	✓		✓		✓
✓		✓	✓	✓		
✓				✓		✓
		✓	✓			
✓	✓			✓		✓
	✓			✓		
	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	✓	✓		✓		
✓	✓			✓		
✓	✓			✓		

**Note 1:**

the Multi-Trait Multi-Method approach seems to be one of the best ways to measure potential.

**Note 2:**

Before adopting any model of potential, it is highly advisable to thoroughly research that model, employing the best practice principles highlighted in this paper. As discussed earlier, organisation-wide willingness to adopt the model is a key consideration, so culture fit and intuitiveness are important. The model should 'speak' to your organisation in a way that fits with the culture and people.

**Note 3:**

Some factors (according to research) are more important than others in predicting leadership. For example cognitive capabilities and self-awareness are generally seen as better indicators of potential than leadership competencies. The factors included in the matrix are the ones that most researcher agree are important for leadership potential assessment.

**Note 4:**

When it comes to best practice, an 'Ideal' model will include measurements for all of the above.

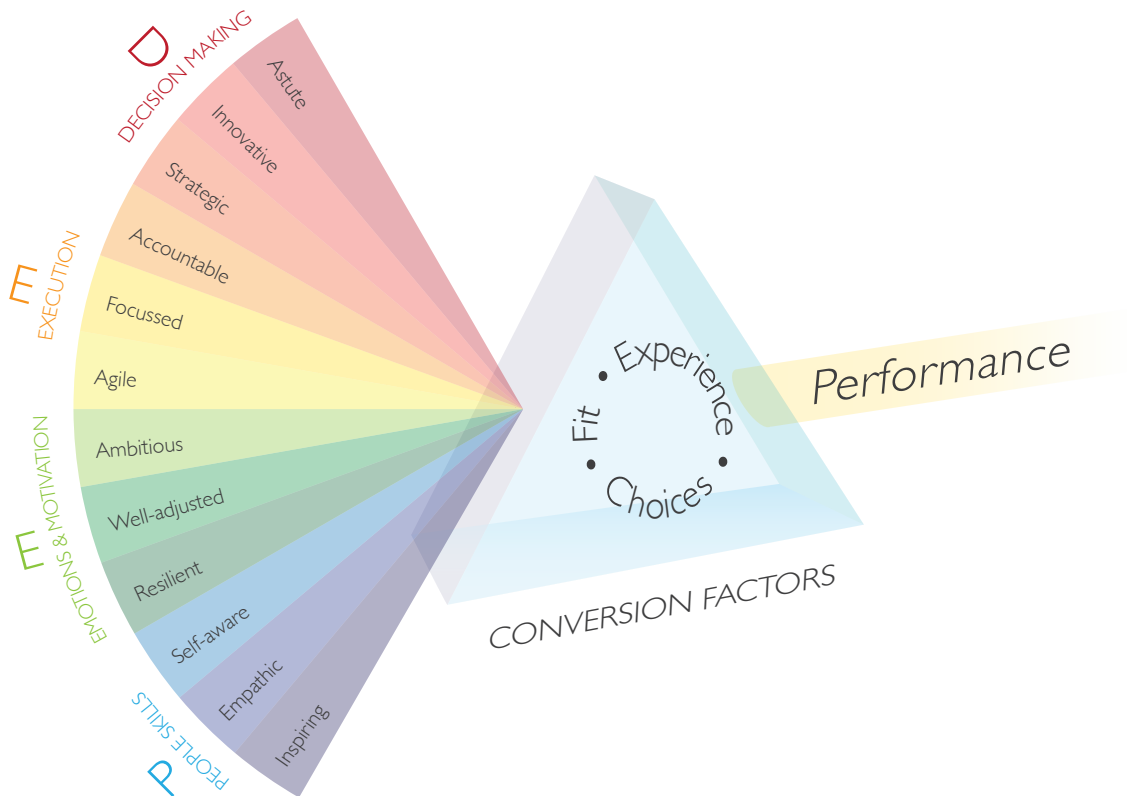
# Conclusion

In this paper, we have looked in some detail at what leadership potential is, why it matters and how it is assessed and measured as it applies to the workplace. The crucial difference between potential and performance was explained in some depth, with performance highlighting what has been achieved until now, which does not necessarily determine what someone has the potential or capability to do in the future. The influential role that readiness plays was also highlighted, and the various factors that impact potential were outlined – cognitive ability, personality, motivation, emotional intelligence and leadership skills, amongst others. Various methods for assessing potential were explored, including interviews, assessment centres and the multi-trait, multi-method approach, after which we looked at around twenty consultancy models and frameworks for assessing and measuring potential. Working with a rigorous theory and model of potential which is grounded in research – and creating the collateral to embed that in the business and which can be used by people to develop themselves - can drastically impact an organisation's bottom line. It will help your business – and the many individuals within it – to thrive, becoming and creating all that they can be. When it comes to our potential, the sky really is the limit.

## Appendix One: The CDP DEEP Model of Potential

At CDP we believe everyone has untapped layers of potential. Our consultants have a passion for helping people find and tap these layers in order to transform individual and organisational results. We have developed our own model of Potential, after many years of research and a decade of on the job experience.

The DEEP model (Decision making – Execution – Emotions and Motivation – People skills) is a 16 factor model of Potential Success.



It addresses, and builds on, the key aspects of:

**Learning Agility** (Lominger/Korn Ferry Hay)

**MAPS** model for change (Nik Kinley and Professor Shlomo Ben Hur IMD)

**KFALP:** The Korn Ferry Assessment of Leadership Potential

**JDI:** Judgment, Drive, Influence (YSC)

**Hogan** Leadership Forecast Potential Report

The DEEP model is an intuitive, practical framework that encompasses the key elements identified in the literature and practice of assessing high potential and predicting future success.

It enables organisations to clearly separate out performance from potential; quickly assess and then develop their people; and create a common language for talent discussions.

It allows businesses to create a PSP – Potential Success Profile for key roles, team and units and individuals to discover their own PPP – Personal Potential Profile.

Our proprietary DEEPQ psychometric allows for self-assessment, line management assessment and the gaining of 360 feedback.

We have also developed a comprehensive, engaging and challenging eLearning professional development platform iDEEP to develop individuals in each of the 12 areas. Each of the twelve interactive modules offers a structured learning journey which is relevant and relatable, adaptable to multiple levels of seniority and grounded in the latest theory and research.

# CDP transforms your business performance by working at the deepest level to unlock the potential of your people.

Our consultants are passionate about helping people find and unlock their untapped layers of potential. We start by rigorously auditing your talent, leaders, teams and organisation and then, by working at a deep psychological level - tackling root causes, blind spots and derailers – we bring about profound and lasting changes in performance.

## We offer:

- In-depth individual leadership audits for selection, promotion and development
- High performance executive, return to work, impact and transitions coaching
- Team effectiveness interventions (including board effectiveness)
- Organisation Development and cultural change support
- High level leadership and talent consultancy at CEO and HRD level

We would relish the chance to partner with you to ensure your business achieves its goals by enabling your people to operate at their very best. Get in touch today to discuss how, together, we can make that happen.



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