

A LEADLEAP WHITE PAPER

DRIVE

Why some people grow and others stall
— and how to tell which one you are.



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Capability sets your ceiling. **DRIVE** determines whether you ever reach it.

Most organizations treat talent development as a spending problem: invest more in training, get more capable people. Yet ninety days after almost any program, behavior has barely moved. The money was real; the change was not.

The reason is not effort and not budget. Growth depends on two things at once — how a person thinks and how a person executes — and nearly every development tool addresses only one of them. Personality assessments describe what type someone is. Skills training adds technique. Motivational work adds energy. None explain why two equally talented people, handed the same opportunity, diverge so sharply over three years.

DRIVE names both halves and measures them together. It rests on two pillars — a **Cognitive Catalyst** that governs whether a person is ready to grow, and an **Execution Engine** that governs whether they actually do. From their interaction emerge three recognizable profiles: the **Dreamer**, who thinks but does not ship; the **Doer**, who ships but does not reflect; and the **Driver**, who does both and compounds.

This paper has two parts. **Part I — Strategy** — explains why the problem is structural, why existing tools miss it, what the five facets of DRIVE are, and how to identify which profile you hold today. **Part II — Tactics** — covers what to actually do about it, facet by facet.

2

pillars — belief that permits growth, execution that converts it

5

facets — measurable, developable, in a prescribed order

3

archetypes — Dreamer, Doer, Driver — each with its own path

PART I OF II

Strategy

Why the problem is structural, why existing tools miss it, what the five facets of DRIVE are — and how to identify which profile you hold today.

Sections 01 – 07

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01 The Problem: Why Talent Investment Underdelivers

Walk into any mid-sized company's annual review of its learning budget and you will find a paradox stated politely. Spend is up. Attendance is high. Satisfaction scores are flattering. And almost nothing has changed in how people actually work.

This is not a failure of execution by the L&D function. It is a failure of model. The dominant assumption behind corporate development is that performance is a function of capability — give people more knowledge, more skill, more tools, and output rises. Capability matters, but it describes a ceiling, not a trajectory. It tells you how high a person could go. It says nothing about whether they will.

Consider the pattern every manager has seen. Two people join in the same cohort with comparable raw ability. One spends the next three years visibly compounding — taking on harder problems, recovering faster from setbacks, getting measurably better. The other plateaus early, busy but not advancing, or bright but perpetually stalled before the finish line. Same starting capability. Radically different outcomes.

If capability explained growth, this divergence could not happen. Something else is doing the work — something upstream of skill, that decides whether skill ever gets built. The central question, then, is not "how do we make people more capable?" It is the sharper one most programs never ask: **why do two equally capable people, given the same opportunity, grow at completely different rates?**

02 Why Existing Tools Fall Short

The market is not short of frameworks. It is short of frameworks that connect mindset to execution. Each dominant tool illuminates one fragment of the picture and goes dark on the rest.

Personality typologies — MBTI, DISC, and their relatives — are useful for understanding how people prefer to communicate and collaborate. But they describe type, not capacity for growth. Knowing someone is introverted or detail-oriented tells you how they tend to operate; it tells you nothing about whether they will get better at operating. Type is largely stable. Growth is the variable we actually care about, and typologies hold it constant.

Cognitive measures — IQ and aptitude tests — predict the ceiling well and the trajectory poorly. High aptitude is necessary for some work and sufficient for almost none. The history of underachieving talent is written entirely in people who had the horsepower and never engaged it.

Single-trait theories each capture one true thing and over-extend it. Grit explains persistence but is silent on whether a person's beliefs even permit them to learn from the failures they persist through. Growth-mindset work explains why belief about ability matters but stops short of execution — believing you can improve does not, by itself, set a goal, regulate effort toward it, or sustain interest across years.

The gap is the same every time: no widely used model links how a person thinks about their own growth to whether they execute on it. Mindset tools live on one side of the wall. Execution tools live on the other. The person being developed lives on both sides at once, and falls through the crack between them. DRIVE is built to close that gap.

03 Introducing DRIVE

DRIVE organizes growth into two pillars and five facets. The first pillar, the **Cognitive Catalyst**, governs whether a person is ready to grow — the belief layer of what someone holds true about their own ability and about failure. These beliefs do not produce growth directly; they gate it. The second pillar, the **Execution Engine**, governs whether a person converts that readiness into movement — direction, regulation, and endurance.

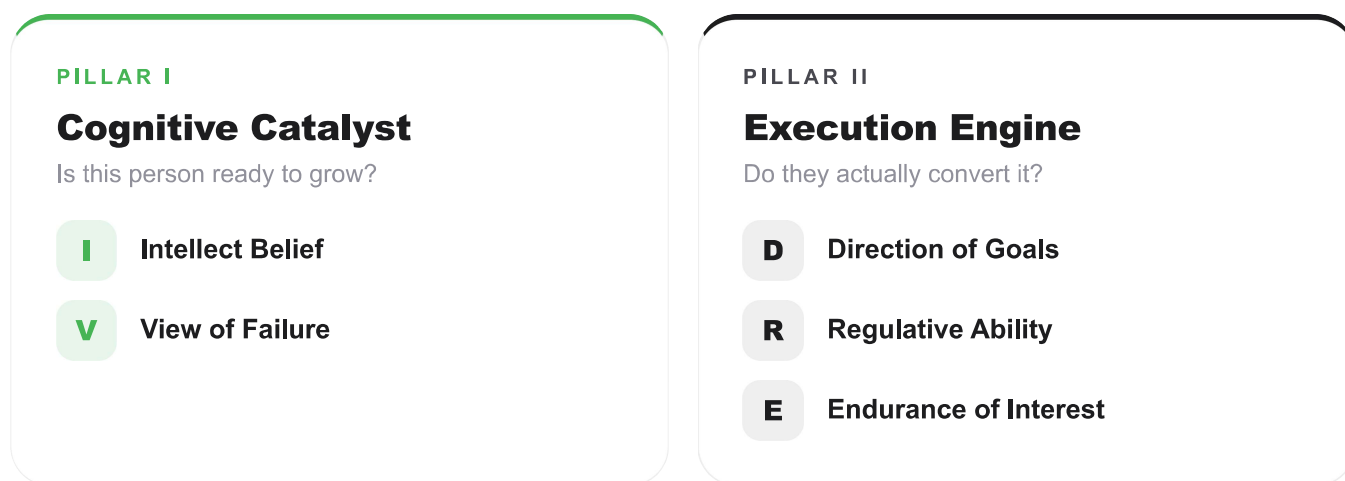


Figure 1 — The DRIVE framework: two pillars, five facets.

The order is deliberate. The Cognitive Catalyst comes first because belief gates effort: a person who believes their ability is fixed will not spend the effort the Execution Engine requires, no matter how much technique you give them. But the reverse is equally fatal: belief without execution is potential energy that never discharges. Both pillars are necessary. Neither is sufficient.

HOW DRIVE RELATES TO THE RESEARCH IT BUILDS ON

DRIVE does not claim to replace the work it stands on — it integrates and operationalizes it for one specific setting: the corporate hierarchy. Three deliberate design choices distinguish it from the source theories. It isolates Intellect Belief to professional capability specifically — the price a person will pay for visible failure inside an organization, where the stakes are reputational and political rather than academic. It decouples effort from interest, which the grit literature blends: the mechanics of daily effort live under Regulative Ability, while Endurance of Interest is defined narrowly as resistance to organizational novelty-decay — the shiny-object pivots that destroy compounding. And it binds belief and execution into a single diagnostic, because in practice the two pillars fail together and must be developed together. DRIVE's contribution is not a new psychology; it is a structure that makes an established one usable by a manager on a Monday.

04 Pillar I — The Cognitive Catalyst

DOES BELIEF PERMIT GROWTH, OR QUIETLY FORBID IT?

I Intellect Belief

The foundational work here is Carol Dweck's distinction between a fixed and a growth mindset: the belief that ability is essentially set, versus the belief that it can be developed through effort. A person who believes ability is fixed reads every difficult task as a test of how much they have — and avoids difficulty, because difficulty risks exposing a limit. A person who believes ability is built reads the same task as the mechanism by which they grow — and seeks it. Intellect Belief sets the price a person will pay for challenge; set that price too high and the whole Execution Engine starves.

V View of Failure

Closely linked, and measured separately, is how a person construes failure. Drawing on Burnette and colleagues' work on the beliefs that govern self-regulation, DRIVE distinguishes failure as debilitating — evidence one is not good enough, a signal to withdraw — from failure as enhancing — information that sharpens the next attempt. These views produce opposite behaviors at the moment that matters most: right after a setback. Over a career, the compounding difference between pulling back and leaning in at every setback is enormous. View of Failure determines which way a person breaks under pressure — and pressure is where growth is decided.

05 Pillar II — The Execution Engine

READINESS IS INERT UNTIL IT IS CONVERTED.

D Direction of Goals

Effort without direction is motion, not progress. This facet captures whether a person sets clear, meaningful goals that give effort a vector. Undirected energy feels productive and produces little — the busyness that fills calendars and moves nothing. Direction is the difference between working hard and working toward.

R Regulative Ability

The self-regulation facet: the capacity to manage attention, effort, and impulse in service of the goal once it is set. It is the unglamorous machinery of doing the thing when the initial motivation has worn off. Goals declare where to go; regulation is what actually walks the distance — especially across the long middle stretch where no one is watching and the novelty is gone.

E Endurance of Interest

The final facet draws on Angela Duckworth's work on grit — specifically the consistency of interest component, the ability to stay committed to one direction rather than abandoning it for the next attractive thing. Endurance is what allows compounding to occur at all. The long game is lost most often not to a single dramatic failure but to quiet, repeated reallocation of attention — starting over, again, just before the returns arrive.

06 The Three Archetypes

The two pillars do not operate independently in real people — they combine. Because each pillar can be strong or weak, their combination produces a small number of recognizable profiles. Most people will recognize themselves — or someone they manage — within the first sentence of each.

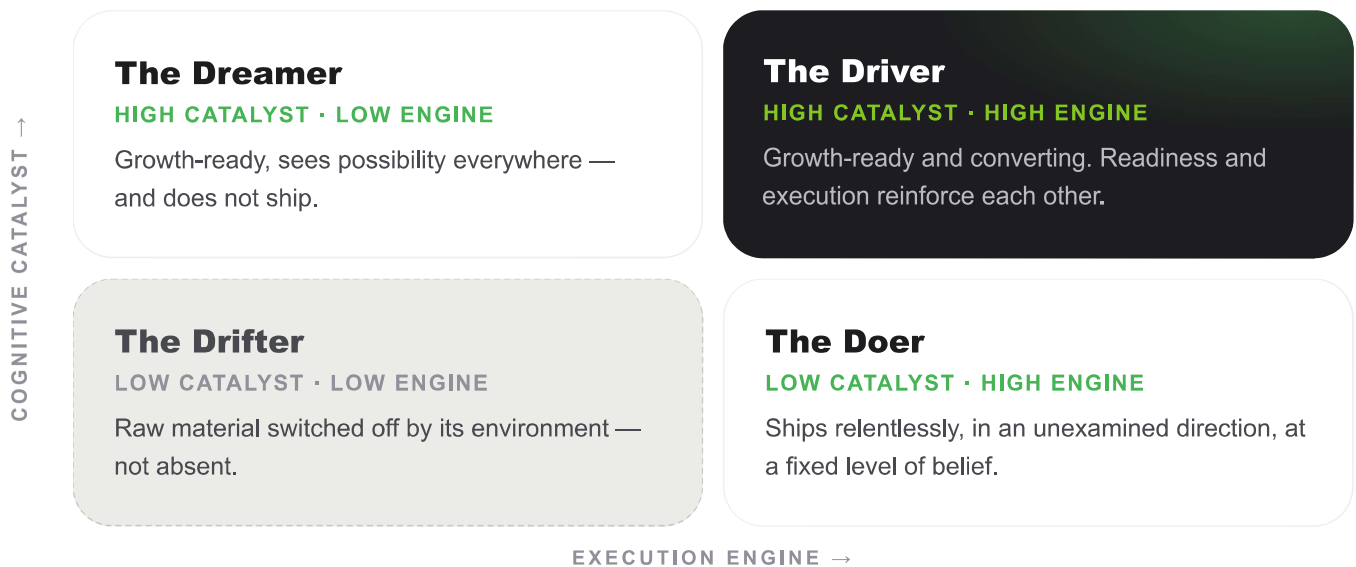


Figure 2 — The DRIVE archetypes: Dreamer, Doer, Driver, and the Drifter origin state.

The Dreamer (high catalyst, low engine) is genuinely growth-ready — believes in their capacity, takes failure in stride, sees possibility everywhere. And does not ship. Ideas accumulate; plans get refined; the starting line keeps moving. The Dreamer mistakes the clarity of their thinking for progress on the ground, and can spend years feeling like they are about to break through. The readiness is real; the conversion never happens.

The Doer (high engine, low catalyst) is the profile organizations tend to over-reward, which is exactly why it is dangerous. The Doer ships — sets goals, regulates hard, endures, produces visible output — and does it in an unexamined direction, at a fixed level of belief, while quietly refusing the one thing growth requires: sitting in discomfort long enough to learn. When a task threatens to expose a limit, the Doer does not slow down to absorb the lesson; they accelerate past it into the next deliverable, where competence is assured. The result is motion without development — busy, productive, valued, and five years on a more efficient version of exactly who they were. If you read the Dreamer and winced, and read the Doer and nodded along comfortably — read the Doer again. The comfort is the symptom.

The Driver (high on both) is the profile the model points toward: growth-ready and converting. Drivers are not more talented than Dreamers or Doers — that is the crucial point. They are the same raw material, organized so readiness and execution reinforce each other instead of sitting on opposite sides of the wall. The Driver is what a Dreamer becomes when they build an engine, and what a Doer becomes when they develop a catalyst. It is a destination, not a birthright.

And the fourth corner — **the Drifter** (low on both) — is the one to read carefully, because it is the most misdiagnosed. It is tempting to see a Drifter as simply lacking talent. That is usually wrong. Far more often the Drifter is someone whose catalyst was crushed by an environment that punished early failure,

and whose engine was never given any scaffolding to run on — capability suppressed from both sides at once. The Drifter is not the absence of raw material; it is raw material that has been switched off. That distinction decides whether you write the person off or re-engineer the conditions around them — which points at an idea the model has so far left implicit: DRIVE never operates in a vacuum.

07 The DRIVE Index: Knowing Which One You Are

A model is only useful if you can locate yourself inside it. The DRIVE Index is a short self-assessment — fifteen statements, three per facet — that produces a five-axis profile of your standing on each facet and an overall reading across four bands: Strong, Developing, Mixed / Transitional, and Limited DRIVE.

The Index is not a label to file away; it is a diagnosis whose entire purpose is to direct action. A profile strong on the Cognitive Catalyst and weak on the Execution Engine is a Dreamer's, and points to a different set of moves than a Doer's. Knowing the shape of your own profile is what makes the second half of this paper usable rather than generic.

Take the DRIVE Index — free

Find your five-facet profile in under five minutes.

[Take Free Assessment →](#)

That diagnosis is where Strategy ends and Tactics begin. Part II takes each facet in turn and answers the only question that finally matters: knowing your profile, what do you actually do about it?

Tactics

Part I diagnosed the problem and gave you a profile. This part is about what to do with it. One instruction governs everything that follows: **do not work on all five facets at once**. Find your weaker pillar, fix the facets inside it in order, then balance.

08 Shifting the Cognitive Catalyst

Your DRIVE Index tells you which pillar is your constraint — your weaker one — and that is where the entire return is. A Dreamer who pours more energy into thinking, or a Doer who ships even harder, is optimizing the half they have already mastered and starving the half that is actually holding them back.

The catalyst facets are beliefs, and beliefs do not change by being argued with. They change by being disconfirmed — by accumulating evidence the old belief cannot explain. Every tactic here manufactures that evidence.

I Intellect Belief

Choose tasks at the edge, and log the curve. Pick work that is genuinely difficult — likely to go badly at first — and keep a simple record of performance over repeated attempts. The point is watching your own improvement curve, the one piece of evidence a fixed belief cannot absorb. **Change the tense, not the mood:** replace "I can't do this" with "I can't do this yet." This is not positive thinking; it is a factual correction. **For managers:** praise process, not outcome — "you found a smart way through that" builds the belief that ability is constructed; "you're so talented" teaches the person to protect the label by avoiding risk.

V View of Failure

Run a fixed post-setback protocol. After a failure, before drawing any conclusion, separate three things in writing: what happened (the event), what it is not (a statement about your worth), and what it teaches (the one adjustment for next time). The protocol converts a verdict into data by forcing a delay between the setback and the meaning assigned to it. **Build a failure résumé:** list your significant failures and what each produced — it makes visible the pattern the debilitating view denies. **For leaders:** make failure discussable by going first; a team takes its view of failure from what the leader visibly does with their own.

09 Strengthening the Execution Engine

The engine facets are not beliefs; they are systems. They respond not to insight but to design — every tactic here engineers a structure so the right action happens without depending on motivation, which is unreliable precisely when it is most needed.

D Direction of Goals

Define a small number of outcome goals with a clear "done." Not "improve at X" but "X looks like this by that date." A goal you cannot tell whether you have hit is not a goal; it is a mood. **Separate lead from lag:** the lag measure is the outcome; the lead measures are the weekly actions that drive it. You cannot will a lag measure — only execute lead measures. **Hold a weekly direction check:** did this week's effort point at the goal, or just fill the week?

R Regulative Ability

Pre-decide with if-then plans. "If it is 9 a.m., then I work on the goal for ninety minutes." Deciding once, ahead of time, removes the dozens of in-the-moment decisions where regulation actually breaks down. **Engineer friction deliberately:** make the right action easy to start and the wrong one costly to reach. Regulation is mostly a design problem wearing a willpower costume. **Build accountability for the unwatched middle** — the stretch where no one is looking is where regulation decides outcomes.

E Endurance of Interest

Set a minimum tenure before you switch. Commit to a direction for a defined period and refuse to re-decide inside it — a commitment device against your own future boredom, which will arrive on schedule and argue persuasively for starting over. **Connect the goal to something larger than the goal:** interest endures across the boring middle when the effort means something past the task. **Make compounding visible:** slow progress feels like no progress, and "no progress" is the story that justifies quitting — track the curve so the compounding you cannot feel becomes something you can see.

10 The Integration Path: Becoming a Driver

The Driver is not born with both pillars. A Driver is a Dreamer who built an engine, or a Doer who developed a catalyst. The two paths are not symmetrical, and the difference is the most practical thing in this paper.

The Dreamer's path — build the engine

The Dreamer already has the catalyst. The missing pillar is execution, and the order matters.

Direction first — and foreclose: the Dreamer's defining move is keeping every option open, so the first discipline is subtraction — choose one direction and deliberately kill the others, at least for a fixed period. **Then regulation — ship something small, weekly:** the Dreamer learns more from one mediocre thing released into the world than a hundred perfect things imagined. **Then endurance — stay past the first plateau.** The Dreamer's hardest move is foreclosing options; everything downstream depends on it.

The Doer's path — build the catalyst

The Doer already has the engine. This path is harder, for a reason worth stating plainly: the Doer does not feel the need. The output is real, the value recognized, and nothing in the daily experience signals that the person has stopped growing. So the path cannot begin with insight; it must begin with a chosen discomfort. **Take a task that risks visible failure** — and stay in it instead of escaping into the next sure deliverable. **Install the failure protocol:** with real failure on the table, the post-setback routine has something to process, and Intellect Belief begins to loosen. **Seek the feedback the output usually buys silence on.** The Doer's hardest move is slowing down voluntarily — nothing in their environment will ask them to, which is exactly why it has to be chosen.

The Drifter's path — scaffold first, then ignite

The Drifter has neither pillar, which changes the order entirely. You cannot start with Direction of Goals: asking a Drifter to set ambitious milestones fails, because their flattened catalyst rejects the possibility of reaching them. The sequence has to run engine-first, and externally imposed at the start.

PHASE 1 — BUILD A BORROWED ENGINE

Impose tightly scoped, short-cycle tasks with an unambiguous "done" and explicit if-then scheduling, bypassing the broken internal regulation.



PHASE 2 — IGNITE THE CATALYST

Once real, completed micro-wins accumulate, log the curve and use process-only feedback to begin loosening the fixed belief.

The individual's hardest move is overcoming the initial inertia; the organization's hardest move is holding its nerve long enough for the borrowed engine to catch before it gives up on the person.

11 The Environmental Filter: Why High-DRIVE People Stall

Everything so far treats growth as an individual matter. It is not — entirely. Individual DRIVE passes through the filter of the organization it sits inside: its culture, its incentives, its operational architecture. A highly developed Driver dropped into a regressive environment does not stay a Driver. The system acts as an inhibitor rather than an accelerator, and the person either flattens into a risk-averse Doer or leaves.

Individual DRIVE expresses only if the environment permits it.

This is the uncomfortable half of the model for leaders: organizations routinely complain about a lack of drive in their people while running the very structures that manufacture the behavior they deplore. Each facet has an environmental catalyst that lets it express — and a corresponding failure mode that suppresses it.

DRIVE FACET	REQUIRED ENVIRONMENTAL CATALYST	THE DAMPENER THAT SUPPRESSES IT
Intellect Belief & View of Failure	High psychological safety — post-mortems focused on systemic causes, not individual blame.	The blame culture: failure brings political damage or sidelining. Forces Drivers to shrink into risk-averse Doers.
Direction of Goals	Strategic transparency — clear, stable multi-quarter priorities and North-Star metrics.	The pivot culture: priorities lurch every quarter on reactive anxiety. Makes individual direction impossible.
Regulative Ability	Low-friction autonomy — real ownership of time, free of performative meetings.	The bureaucratic trap: visibility and compliance tracking crowd out output. Starves self-regulation.
Endurance of Interest	Incentive alignment — rewards that compensate long-cycle compounding.	The quarter-driven matrix: rewards tied only to 90-day returns. Truncates interest endurance.

Table 1 — Environmental catalysts and dampeners, by facet.

The practical implication is a sequencing rule for leaders: before investing in developing individual DRIVE, audit whether the environment will let it survive. Building Drivers inside a blame culture or a quarter-driven incentive matrix is paying to manufacture capability the system is designed to crush.

12 DRIVE for Organizations

Everything above operates on individuals, but the model reads at the team level too — and the team view is where it becomes a management tool. Map a team's DRIVE profiles and a distribution appears that predicts the team's failure mode before it happens.

A team weighted toward Doers ships fast and learns slowly — productive, decisive, and prone to executing energetically in a direction no one paused to question. Its risk is confident motion off a cliff. A team weighted toward Dreamers generates strategy, options, and insight, and struggles to convert any of it — excellent meetings, thin shipping log. A team with Drivers in the key seats balances the two: enough catalyst to keep learning, enough engine to keep shipping. The manager's job, read through DRIVE, is not just to hire capability but to compose the distribution — and to develop individuals along the path their profile, not a generic competency model, prescribes.

13 Conclusion

Capability sets the ceiling. DRIVE determines whether anyone reaches it.

Talent investment underdelivers because it pours resources into capability while leaving untouched the two pillars that decide whether capability is ever engaged — the belief layer that gates effort and the execution layer that converts it. Name both, measure both, and develop the weaker one in the order the profile prescribes, and growth stops being a mystery of motivation and becomes a system you can work. The Dreamer, the Doer, and the Driver are not three kinds of people. They are three configurations of the same raw material — and the second two are reachable from the first, by anyone willing to build the pillar they are missing. Start by knowing which one you are.

Take the DRIVE Index — free →

Then talk to LeadLeap about building DRIVE into your team. leadleap.co →

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About LeadLeap

LeadLeap is a premium corporate training and facilitation practice built on proprietary, research-grounded intellectual property. DRIVE is its flagship framework for diagnosing and developing growth capacity in individuals and teams. LeadLeap designs and delivers executive-level learning experiences that move behavior, not just satisfaction scores.

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About the Author

Norman Yanuar is the founder of LeadLeap. His career spans field engineering at Schlumberger, management consulting at McKinsey and Accenture, and investment and operating roles at Saratoga, one of the most prominent investment companies in Southeast Asia — a practitioner's path from the field to the boardroom. He holds an MBA from Oxford. DRIVE is the synthesis of that path: a model built not in a lab but against the real question of why some capable people compound and others stall.

Note on the DRIVE Index

The DRIVE Index is a formative self-reflection tool, not a normed psychometric instrument. It is designed to prompt structured self-examination and direct development effort — not to produce a clinical, diagnostic, or selection-grade score, and it should not be used for hiring, promotion, or performance decisions.



Think better, **lead better.**