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Leadership Styles & The Skill of Adaptivity

Tools and Tactics

While the content of this tactical toolkit is based on research, it is not necessarily exhaustive. An individual's experience may vary from descriptions or definitions below.

5 LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS

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How do you present yourself?

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How do you naturally relate to others—individuals, teams and organizations?

This tactical toolkit explores different dimensions of leadership attributes, as well as how and when to use them. Each attribute consists of a spectrum ranging from one extreme polarity to its opposite. Rarely does any leader operate within only one end of the dichotomies presented in this tactical toolkit. Rather, **leaders will likely display and utilize a combination of these attributes (and gradations thereof along their respective spectrums) to accommodate different situations**—hence the skill of **adaptivity**.

THE SKILL OF ADAPTIVITY

As defined by Merriam-Webster, to adapt (transitive verb) is “to make fit (as for a new use) often by modification”¹ and to become adapted (intransitive verb) is to become “suited by nature, character, or

¹ “Adapt,” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/adapt> (February 28, 2020).

design to a particular use, purpose, or situation.”² Adapting requires proactive assessment and intentional action. It necessitates reading and understanding (or making best assumptions about) a situation, a person and/or a group and tailoring how you approach that situation or people according to what you know to be true about it or them. It requires not only awareness of others and awareness of context, but also a high level of self-awareness.

Importantly, adaptivity is merely one tool in the vast toolkit of necessary leadership skills. It can, like financial modeling, professional writing or public speaking be developed over time with effort and commitment. It entails being attuned to one’s environment and the personalities, needs and styles of those around you—all of which require empathy. Adaptivity should never involve compromising your integrity or moral code, but it may require you to accommodate others in new ways or meet people “where they are at” in order to achieve your personal or professional objectives. For example, your interactions with direct reports who are much younger than you may require a friendlier or more gentle approach (particularly if you are decades more senior in your leadership position). Alternatively, if you are interacting with c-suite men who are your peers but are trying to assert their dominance over you in a particular situation, acting with equal, if not greater, confidence and power may be your most effective approach. Again, situational specificity paired with strong insights about your audience will inform which style you choose to deploy, as will your own intersectional identity.

While there already exists a great deal of research and literature on leadership styles, this toolkit focuses on styles that can be particularly complex or important for leaders who are women or members of other historically underrepresented groups (URGs). The same leadership approach may be received differently depending on the individual using it and your specific intersecting identities. For example, while likeability and success generally are positively correlated for men, research has found that when women are more successful, they are liked less by both men and women.³ Women are expected to be friendly, cooperative, warm and nurturing, but leaders are expected to be assertive, competitive and decisive. When women violate beliefs of how they should act, they have found themselves facing criticism from others for being “too masculine” and “insufficiently feminine.”⁴ These conflicting expectations are often exacerbated for women of color or with other marginalized identities. Navigating these conflicting expectations without compromising your personal value system requires awareness of your natural leadership style and whether/when to deploy other styles.

These differing expectations of or additional burdens faced by women and members of other URGs are rooted in individual and systemic bias, and this is *not* the ideal state of the world; however, it is the current, challenging reality in many contexts. Importantly, this tactical toolkit does not necessarily condone placing the burden on individuals to code-switch (changing how an individual expresses

² “Adapted,” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/adapted> (February 28, 2020).

³ Across a variety of studies, Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), p. 50. For research on how aggressive women violate social norms, see Madeline E. Heilman and Tyler G. Okimoto, “Why Are Women Penalized for Success at Male Tasks? The Implied Communitarity Deficit,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 1 (2007): 81-92; Madeline E. Heilman et al, “Penalties for Success: Reactions to Women Who Succeed at Male Gender-Typed Tasks,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 3 (2004): 416-27; Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau, “Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice (2002): 573-98; and Madeline E. Heilman, “Description and Prescription: How Gender STereotypes Prevent Women’s Ascent up the Organizational Ladder,” *Journal of Social Issues* 57, no. 4 (2001): 657-74.

⁴ Marianne Cooper, “For Women Leaders, Likability and Success Hardly Go Hand-in-Hand,” *Harvard Business Review*, April 30, 2013, <https://hbr.org/2013/04/for-women-leaders-likability-a> (November 15, 2018).

themselves in order to fit in/advance in the workplace)⁵ or adapt to dominant culture norms. However, it does offer that increasing self-awareness regarding your own leadership skills and understanding how to adapt your style *if* you so choose can be helpful for *any* leader—regardless of your intersectional identity. It should be noted that the goal is to strengthen your leadership, but that this is just one way to do so. Some of the tactics will be useful for any leader, and some are particularly beneficial in response to workplace bias. This tactical toolkit is intended to empower you to achieve your individual goals.

When driven by curiosity and compassion, leaders integrate feedback loops and embrace critical feedback as an opportunity to better serve your teams, employees, customers and organizations. Effective leaders need to be aware (of self, others and context), confident, courageous, empathetic and humble enough to adapt your behavior in a nimble manner, pivoting when needed—all while upholding a strong moral code. Remember, **adaptivity, like flexibility, is a skill**. Leadership requires intentionally adapting how you act, react and interact as you move incessantly between divergent contexts, groups and challenges. Adaptivity may include tapping into authentic aspects of who you are, as well as pulling from a toolkit of well-developed skills and approaches to accommodate the needs of specific situations and audiences. Each section below includes questions for reflection to help you increase your self-awareness and be intentional about your leadership choices.

SELF-EFFACING ↔ SELF-PROMOTING

How do you present yourself?

Self-effacing: Not claiming attention for oneself; retiring and modest.⁶

Self-promoting: Promoting or publicizing oneself or one's activities, especially in a forceful way.⁷

Self-effacing leaders are inclined to put the focus on their team's success and their organization's results, rather than seeking acknowledgment of their own personal contribution or results. In contrast, **self-promoting** leaders, driven by high motivation for reward and for success, often focus on highlighting their individual contributions rather than on team results.

How you present yourself along this spectrum will affect your leadership presence—your ability “to engage, align, inspire, and move people to act.”⁸ Executive presence expert Suzanne Bates found that

⁵ Theresa Avila, “3 Women On The Real Emotional Toll Of Code-Switching At Work,” *Girlboss*, August 29, 2018, <https://www.girlboss.com/identity/code-switching-at-work> (September 19, 2019).

⁶ “Self-Effacing,” *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/self-effacing> (March 27, 2019).

⁷ “Self-Promoting,” *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/self-promoting> (March 28, 2019).

⁸ Suzanne Bates, “Five Steps To Achieving Extraordinary Executive Presence,” *Fortune*, April 17, 2016, <https://fortune.com/2016/04/17/five-steps-executive-presence/> (October 2, 2019).

presence is made up of characteristics including confidence, humility, assertiveness and inclusiveness.⁹ While these traits have the potential to conflict with each other, you may need to exhibit each as you adopt different positions along the spectrum between a self-promoting and self-effacing leadership style. Presence is not just how you present yourself, but also how others perceive you.

This dichotomy may be especially hard to navigate for women and other underrepresented groups that suffer a double bind: self-promoting behavior may be necessary for successful negotiation and career advancement, yet as one study notes, “women, even those in positions of leadership and authority, suffer an agency penalty for exhibiting actions or emotions that are assertive, confident, aggressive, angry, or dominant.”¹⁰

Different stereotypes of women of color may also impact the ways in which colleagues or superiors receive their displays of self-advocacy. For instance, some studies have shown that Asian American women are perceived as “passive” and “mild-tempered,” meaning that when they exhibit agentic behavior they are perceived as more strongly violating the prescribed gender norms.¹¹ Backlash can include racial harassment, being perceived as conniving and untrustworthy, lack of access to professional social networks and halted career advancement.¹² See LAAF.org for toolkits that address these issues, including *Increasing Inclusion, Mentorship and Sponsorship* and more.

It is also important to note that these styles are situational. The way you lead your team may be different than how you act with your boss or an executive team. For example, you may minimize your personal contributions while working with your team to help build your colleagues up and then be sure to make your work known later to your supervisor to ensure you receive proper recognition. Conversely, you may need to promote yourself more within your team to make your voice heard, while you may need to highlight your colleagues’ work to external parties.

Questions for reflection:

- How comfortable do you feel sharing your professional successes and pointing to your specific contributions or achievements? How often do others acknowledge your contributions?
- How often do you prioritize highlighting the contributions of others? Is this in addition to or instead of sharing your own contributions?
- How comfortable are you with advocating for yourself (e.g., in negotiation around salary, promotion or opportunities for development)?
- How would you measure your own success/trajectory relative to your personal and professional goals? Are there areas where you are further ahead than you expected or further

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Drawn from six studies of varying sample sizes, Robert W. Livingston, “Gender, Race, and Leadership: An Examination of the Challenges Facing Non-prototypical Leaders,” 2013, <https://docplayer.net/5676323-Robert-w-livingston-gender-race-and-leadership-research-symposium-ender-challenging-conventional-wisdom.html> (January 15, 2019).

¹¹ Drawn from a study with 259 student participants in introductory psychology classes, Ashleigh S. Rosette et al., “Race matters for women leaders: Intersectional effects on agentic deficiencies and penalties,” *The Leadership Quarterly* (June 30, 2016): 11.

¹² Drawn from qualitative analysis in two different books, Ibid, 11–12.

behind than you would like to be? Are there individuals in your organization with similar experience/tenure as you who are advancing more or less quickly?

- Do you present your accomplishments as yours or the organization's?

Tools and Tactics: Developing Your **Adaptivity Skill**

Flexing Your Self-Effacing Leadership Skills	Flexing Your Self-Promoting Leadership Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask for structured 1:1 meetings with higher ups and bring agendas with updates on projects you're working on. Attribute contributions from and collaboration with team members with specificity (<i>i.e., Jane researched X, and I used that for Y report</i>). Use those progress reports as proof of your achievements and opportunities to lift up the leadership of others. - In presentations, deliver the introduction and conclusion, and use these sections to note your satisfaction with the team's work and ability to drive results. Then, ask the people who contributed different aspects of the project to present their sections. Your work as the manager/team leader will be evident, and you can benefit from primacy and recency effects in how others view your contributions to the project. - Ask for constructive feedback on your work from superiors and reports. Always thank others for feedback, and send a follow-up email summarizing feedback that includes specific steps detailing your plan to incorporate it into your professional growth. - Share leadership opportunities. If you are regularly tapped for special projects, development opportunities, etc., consider how you can share your learning or bring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Record the work you do every day. (You can use a project management tool to simplify tracking). Describe it quickly, including its impact or outcome as it relates to both the goals of your team as well as the specific performance metrics on which you will be evaluated. Compile that information so that you have quick access in an easily readable/shareable format whenever there is a question about your past accomplishments. - When you receive positive feedback, track the details in a log that notes the feedback, related project(s), date received and the person who provided the feedback. If received verbally, ask the feedback provider if they can share the information via email as well (this is especially important in teams with high turnover). Use your accomplishments log for performance reviews and other forums in which you need to demonstrate your value and contributions. - When you receive constructive feedback, track the details in a log that notes the feedback, related project(s), date received and the person who provided the feedback. If received verbally, ask the feedback provider if they can share the information via email as well and include specific examples. Track the specific steps you took to improve your behavior,

other colleagues along with you (e.g., proposing a specific function so that another member of the team can attend a high-level meeting or event, as well).

performance, output and/or interactions based on that feedback. If possible, ask the person who provided feedback to give commentary on your improvements.

- **Grow your brand outside of the office.** Think of ways you can share your insights in spaces adjacent to, but outside of your office. This can include posting on social media, participating in conferences or contributing to thought leadership. Demonstrating your business acumen outside of the office allows you to show competence without directly competing with others in your organization.
- **Create a knowledge management system.** Create a space (online forum, weekly brown bag, etc.) for your coworkers to share their knowledge and insights. Lead the charge by being the first and most frequent contributor. “[T]he goal is to make your accomplishments more visible and allow others to benefit at the same time”¹³
- **When you’ve completed a project or deliverable, immediately send a short email to your manager describing the outcome.**¹⁴ This allows your manager greater insight into what you’ve accomplished as well as provides a retrievable record of your work.

COLLABORATIVE ↔ AUTHORITATIVE

How do you make decisions?

¹³ Tara Mohr, “Four Ways Women Can Strategically Tout Their Accomplishments,” *Fast Company*, January 1, 2016, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3055590/four-ways-women-can-strategically-tout-their-accomplishments> (January 25, 2019).

¹⁴ The Muse, “Get Visible: The Secrets of Self-Promotion,” *Forbes*, December 21, 2011, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dailymuse/2011/12/21/get-visible-the-secrets-of-self-promotion/#627402181e6c> (March 6, 2019).

Collaborative: Produced by or involving two or more parties working together.¹⁵

Authoritative: Commanding and self-confident; likely to be respected and obeyed.¹⁶

All leaders must constantly evaluate how much control over strategy, decisions, management and execution they cede to others. An **authoritative** leader generally prefers structure and centralized decision-making, while a **collaborative** leader is more inclined to make decisions with input from a group or delegate them, potentially allowing greater flexibility about the final outcome.

Success is correlated with both competence and confidence, and despite similar levels of competence, men tend to show more confidence and authority than women.¹⁷ An authoritative style may help a leader of any gender identity project increased confidence, but an important caveat exists: managerial positions do not necessarily translate to authority gains.¹⁸

A collaborative style, which certainly has many benefits, is consistent with expectations that women are communal, which might reinforce other stereotypes about women that do not align with traditional definitions and models of leadership. Additionally, women may be less likely to take ownership of individual success in favor of giving credit to their teams, resulting in less opportunity for promotions or pay raises.

Questions for reflection:

- How effectively do you inspire confidence in others?
- How invested does your team feel in outcomes of decisions? How does that impact performance, retention and employee engagement?
- How comfortable are you with making decisions and owning the impact of those, even if there are unintended consequences?
- How much structure or clarity do you prefer in a decision making process? Do you know and how do you take into account the preferences of those who work with you?
- What is your comfort level with risk?

¹⁵ "Collaborative," *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/collaborative> (March 28, 2019).

¹⁶ "Authoritative," *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/authoritative> (March 28, 2019).

¹⁷ From a study with 119 Cornell University students, Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, "The Confidence Gap," *The Atlantic*, May 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/> (March 25, 2019).

¹⁸ "The progress that women have made in recent years in entering managerial occupations has not translated into authority gains for women as a whole, however. This is probably because women who became managers tended to move into positions that did not carry high levels of authority. In 2004, for example, women accounted for 23.3 percent of CEOs and 26.7 percent of general and operations managers, but they were overrepresented as human resource managers (64.4 percent), social and community service managers (67 percent), medical and health service managers (71.7 percent), and educational administrators (62.6 percent) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2006). Thus, one of the processes contributing to the continuing gender gap in authority seems to be the reproduction, within managerial ranks, of the occupational gender segregation characterizing the broader labor market. The smaller proportion of women who occupy positions that wield genuine authority is not large enough to increase the overall authority rankings of women as a group, and this is true across race or ethnicity." Drawn from General Social Survey taken from Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of the Census and Labor Statistics, Beth Mintz and Daniel H. Krymkoski, "THE ETHNIC, RACE, AND GENDER GAPS IN WORKPLACE AUTHORITY: Changes over Time in the United States," *The Sociological Quarterly* (January 2010): 51.

Tools and Tactics: Developing Your **Adaptivity Skill**

Flexing Your Collaborative Leadership Skills	Flexing Your Authoritative Leadership Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schedule brief 1:1 meetings with colleagues and direct reports to solicit feedback about specific strategic, operational and financial decisions as appropriate before and after making decisions. These meetings will help strengthen your working relationship with that colleague or direct report, and give you more control over your response than if you solicit ideas openly in a large meeting. It also provides you with useful insight and makes others feel valued and involved. - Explicitly call for diverse points of view and perspectives, especially when starting meetings. Call on individuals (by name) who do not volunteer.¹⁹ If a specific person is more introverted or lacking in confidence, lead with a comment that recognizes their value. For example, “Sarah, you brought excellent financial analysis to Project X, and I would welcome your thoughts now.” You may also give less vocal employees/team members a heads-up that you will ask for their thoughts or analysis during an upcoming meeting. - Recruit a co-lead, preferably one with a more collaborative style. Work together to set a clear direction and plan. Even if there are still some authoritative aspects of your approach, the delivery from a duo or team reduces the perception that you alone are setting direction for the larger group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publish project plans, and ask employees to report to you on the deadlines set out in the plan on a weekly basis (either in brief 1:1 meetings or by email). Asking for weekly updates will demonstrate that you expect deadlines and plans to be followed closely. - When starting a new project, determine the ideal five W’s (who, what, when, where, why) and H (how) before meeting with your team. Present the desired approach, as outlined by your answers to these six key questions, to your team. This will help ensure that you provide clear expectations and rationale. - Invest in professional development related to your function and/or industry, such as hiring an executive coach or completing an industry certification. Increased coaching and skills can increase your confidence, making you more willing and able to lead authoritatively. - Increase your tolerance for risk. Try to identify smaller decisions or actions where the consequences won’t be as significant or widely felt. Practice thinking more innovatively about potential solutions or approaches and increase your comfort with being more decisive or assertive as needed. Be open to changing course or deciding something won’t work without seeing this as a failure.

¹⁹ Judith Humphrey, “These 5 Speaking Habits Make People Want To Collaborate With You,” Fast Company, March 21, 2018, <https://www.fastcompany.com/40546622/these-5-speaking-habits-make-people-want-to-collaborate-with-you> (February 11, 2019).

- **Pay attention to process.** Even if you are the ultimate decision-maker, consider where and how you can create opportunities for input or provide transparency regarding the factors you're considering or options you're weighing. Investing people in the process can increase buy-in in the decision, even if they aren't directly involved.

RESULTS-DRIVEN ↔ DEVELOPMENT-DRIVEN

How do you measure success?

Result: A thing that is caused or produced by something else; a consequence or outcome.²⁰

Development: A specified state of growth or advancement.²¹

Leaders who use a **development-driven** style are more interested in growing subordinates' ability to implement their own approaches to tasks and goals (based on what they understand to be their employees' strengths) to develop them for the future. **Results-driven** leaders, on the other hand, may prioritize immediate mobilization towards a vision or a set of measurable outputs or goals.

Eagly and Carli write in *Through the Labyrinth* that although there is equal task-orientation in men and women leaders, "gender norms tend to steer male leaders toward a task-oriented style, and female leaders toward an interpersonally oriented style."²² In other instances, women leaders may be penalized for the opposite—such as using a results-oriented approach because it is inconsistent with expectations for them to be people- or relationship-driven and supportive.

Having results and outputs that are quantifiable and can be understood easily by both internal and external stakeholders can be especially important for women and URGs. Those individuals are more likely to be negatively evaluated along subjective, but sometimes heavily weighted dimensions such as

²⁰ "Result," Lexico, *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/result> (September 19, 2019).

²¹ "Development," Lexico, *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/development> (September 19, 2019).

²² Alice Eagly and Linda Carli, *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth about how Women Become Leaders*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2007), p. 122.

“culture fit” and “executive presence²³.” That said, “lack of executive presence” affects men in their career growth, as well.²⁴ Having more consistent and measurable metrics helps diminish the impact of conscious and unconscious bias in performance reviews.²⁵

Questions for reflection:

- How much do you currently prioritize your own development or that of the staff whom you manage?
- Is this development formally tracked or documented anywhere? Do you have specific resources allocated for professional development?
- How do you currently track and measure results for yourself? How do these align, if at all, to team or company-wide performance goals?

Tools and Tactics: Developing Your **Adaptivity Skill**

Flexing Your Results-Driven Leadership Skills	Flexing Your Development-Driven Leadership Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate each of your team member’s goals against your company’s strategy and ensure each goal can be directly mapped to an organizational priority. - Compare your team members’ individual work and goals against your organization’s bottom line (however that is defined for your field). The majority of your goals (80-90%) should directly tie to that bottom line. - Set specific, measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) for each member of your team, to ensure each member is tied directly to a set of clear, quantifiable deliverables that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep track of your direct reports’ goals, motivators, working style and feedback in a spreadsheet. Update this on a weekly basis so that your feedback to them and attention to their professional development are informed by patterns over time.²⁶ Alternatively, task each team member with tracking this information and meet with them monthly to discuss. - Map the results your team needs to produce against the members’ current, respective skill sets. Wherever skill gaps exist that impact the team’s productivity, document development areas along with specific and measurable standards each

²³ Miriam Grobman, “What’s Executive Presence? The Art and Science of Getting Ahead at Work” *Trello*, March 25, 2019, <https://blog.trello.com/executive-presence-leadership-at-work> (October 3, 2019).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Lori Mackenzie, JoAnne Wehner and Shelley Correll, “Why Most Performance Evaluations Are Biased, and How to Fix Them,” *Harvard Business Review*, January 11, 2019, p. 6.

²⁶ Sydney Finkelstein, “Why a One-Size-Fits-All Approach to Employee Development Doesn’t Work,” *Harvard Business Review*, March 5, 2019, <https://hbr.org/2019/03/why-a-one-size-fits-all-approach-to-employee-development-doesnt-work> (March 25, 2019).

push the team forward. Make sure that the KPIs are tied to strategic goals. This also creates the foundation for a more standardized and objective way of evaluating staff performance.

employee must achieve to demonstrate sufficient knowledge. Tie that development to specific, measurable goals that help drive the organization's strategic and financial goals.

- **Create a professional development budget for each employee**, and ask each employee to write a short case statement for why any allocation of that budget advances their skill sets in a way that will help drive the team or organization's priorities and objectives. You may also want to set professional development goals so these are tracked and assessed like other individual performance goals to ensure they get prioritized.

ENVISIONING ↔ EXECUTING

How do you work?

Envision: *Imagine as a future possibility; visualize.*²⁷

Execute: *Put (a plan, order or course of action) into effect.*²⁸

A leader who prefers **envisioning** will focus more on visionary (big-picture) work, spending most of their energy creating strategy for long-term goals. **Executing** leaders, meanwhile, will allocate their time primarily to implementing plans based on strategy and/or overseeing the day-to-day operations of their organization.

All leaders must understand both the short-, intermediate- and long-term objectives and activities of their organization, though some may have greater expertise and facility, not to mention preference, for focusing more on either strategy or execution. At different stages of your career, you may also have to focus more on one than the other. The most transformational leaders, however, are innovative visionaries who can also execute at the highest level—but they have the self-awareness to adapt²⁹ depending on context, organizational stage, stakeholders and objectives.

²⁷ "Envision," *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/envision> (March 27, 2019).

²⁸ "Execute," *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/execute> (March 27, 2019).

²⁹ Ron Carucci, "Organizations Can't Change If Leaders Can't Change with Them," *Harvard Business Review*, October 24, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/10/organizations-cant-change-if-leaders-cant-change-with-them> (September 20, 2019).

In a study of 360-degree evaluations of 2,816 executives, researchers found that “female leaders were rated lower by their male observers (but not by women) on their capabilities in ‘envisioning.’”³⁰ Other research has found that women are perceived as less creative than men. In one study aggregating ratings of the 100 most viewed TED talks within each of TED.com’s six “Popular Topics,” viewers rated men’s talks as more “ingenious” than women’s, even if the talks were equally ‘informative’ or ‘persuasive.’³¹ Recognizing that women and other URGs may be received differently may motivate some to strategically combine executing and envisioning approaches. For example, having vision is a common requirement for a CEO or president, and practicing this style of leadership may elevate more women and URGs to higher level, strategic positions, *particularly* when backed by evidence of high-level execution.

Diverse perspectives and lived experiences can strengthen product innovation, as diverse insights can help identify and address the needs of a more diverse population. For example, one study on gender diversity within R&D teams found that gender diversity in R&D teams is positively related to “radical innovation.”³²

Questions for reflection:

- What experience do you have setting a vision for yourself or others? How comfortable are you with big-picture thinking and imagining a reality that may not exist yet?
- Do you prefer coming up with big ideas or figuring out how to achieve them?
- Do you currently have effective systems to track and manage your projects and priorities, as well as those of any staff whom you manage?
- How successful are you at meeting deadlines, projecting how long something will take and identifying the capacity needed to complete it?

Tools and Tactics: Developing Your **Adaptivity Skill**

Flexing Your Envisioning Leadership Skills	Flexing Your Executing Leadership Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schedule regular check-ins with leaders or peers on other teams to gain exposure to issues and opportunities impacting your direct line of work. Share those findings with your team along with ideas on how 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Go back to the basic questions (who, what, when, where, why and how). For any new ideas that you propose, document who will be responsible, what they will execute, by when it must be accomplished, etc. This will ensure you are not only providing vision for

³⁰Herminia Ibarra and Otilia Obodary, “Women and the Vision Thing,” *Harvard Business Review*, January 2009, <https://hbr.org/2009/01/women-and-the-vision-thing> (January 10, 2019).

³¹ Devon Proudfoot, Aaron C. Kay & Christy Z. Koval, “A Gender Bias in the Attribution of Creativity: Archival and Experimental Evidence for the Perceived Association Between Masculinity and Creative Thinking,” *Psychological Science* (November 2015): 26.

³² Cristina Diaz-Garcia, Angela Gonzalez-Moreno & Francisco Saez-Martinez, “Gender Diversity within R&D teams: Its impact on radicalness of innovation,” *Innovation: Management, Policy & Practice* (April 2012): 15.

those insights can be applied to your team's work.

- **Practice your personal pitch.** Explain your professional story and leadership trajectory as an arc that demonstrates vision, creativity, curiosity and drive.
- **Attend external conferences and/or networking events that expose you to new ideas, insights and market developments** and use those venues to meet other professionals and leaders within your industry or related industries.
- **Consider hiring or appointing a deputy to share some of the tactical management responsibilities and execution work.** As your capacity increases, you will have more time to explore strategic opportunities.
- **Create a clear, personal vision statement** describing the impact you want to make in your industry, company or cause over the course of your career. Most companies and organizations have a clear vision statement, but doing this for yourself can help you stay focused on what you're trying to achieve and offer a guide to inform your decisions and actions as a leader. This will also help increase your comfort in setting and following a vision.

new ideas, but also carefully considering and communicating expectations, implementation requirements, feasibility and impacts to personnel and company resources.

- **Use a project-management tool to track deadlines and identify which projects and tasks fall behind on their projected timelines.** This can help to identify key inefficiencies. Ask employees to discuss what caused the setback in timeline in weekly 1:1s, so that resources can be re-allocated to better hit KPIs.
- **Clearly communicate to employees how their role fits into the organizational strategy.**³³ This will help to increase their motivation to complete core tasks and stay within projected timelines. Align individual employee goals and performance review assessments directly to organizational strategy and goals.

COMPETITIVE ↔ COOPERATIVE

How do you naturally relate to others—individuals, teams and organizations?

³³ Paul Leinwand and Joachim Rotering, "How to Excel at Both Strategy and Execution," Harvard Business Review, November 17, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/11/how-to-excel-at-both-strategy-and-execution> (March 29, 2019).

Competitive: *Relating to or characterized by competition.*³⁴

Cooperative: *Willing to be of assistance.*³⁵

A leader who elevates their **competitive** instincts thrives in high stakes environments, and would prefer to try to set themselves, their team and/or their organization apart from other individuals, teams and organizations in a given space or industry. A more **cooperative** leader may prefer to pursue 'growing the pie' of an industry and to collaborate with other individuals, teams or organizations through partnerships and communication. Rather than vying for individual success, they are inclined to put more energy towards team improvement.

Like the other polarities outlined, competition and cooperation work best in concert with each other. Cooperation is becoming increasingly important for everyone, as the nature of work changes. Competition can hinder innovation and creativity by making employees (especially those who are not in the dominant group) afraid to speak up and more focused on getting ahead than creating effective solutions.³⁶ Creating a culture of cooperation can help teams work well together and collaborate to generate the next great idea—thereby making your organization as a whole more competitive against external competitors.³⁷ Competition can be a way to motivate people. It can allow individuals to shine through clear work results, which may help combat implicit bias against women and other URGs. It is important to note that competition is not just about competing with others, it is also about competing with yourself. Competitive teams will push themselves to exceed their past successes and seek to continuously learn and improve. However, even in an environment where competition is valued, women still may be penalized for competitive behavior. The same competitive behaviors that people see as a sign of passion in men are considered “aggressive” coming from women³⁸—thus impacting how successful women may be in that environment.

Questions for reflection:

- How do you define professional success for yourself? Is it more about what you personally accomplish or what you are able to do in partnership with others?
- What motivates you to do your best?
- How do your colleagues or direct reports define success? What motivates them to do their best work?

Tools and Tactics: Developing Your **Adaptivity Skill**

³⁴ “Competitive,” *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/competitive> (March 27, 2019).

³⁵ “Cooperative,” *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2019, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cooperative> (March 28, 2019).

³⁶ Monique Svazlian Tallon, *Leading Gracefully: A Woman's Guide to Confident, Authentic & Effective Leadership* (Highest Path Publishing, 2016), p. 137–138.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

³⁸ Across a variety of studies in fields including athletics and male-dominated occupations such as electrical engineering, Eagly and Carli, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

Flexing Your Competitive Leadership Skills	Flexing Your Cooperative Leadership Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask your manager to assign you at least one distinct deliverable per month or quarter so you can offer clear evidence of your accomplishments. After successful completion, ask for two measurable deliverables, etc. - Keep a log of research about your field and update it once weekly with articles and publications and one critical takeaway from them. Review this document frequently, in order to distinguish yourself by working background knowledge into conversations with colleagues or superiors. Consider sharing this market information as a blog to your team and related teams. - Create an “accomplishment log” and track your individual contributions to your team and the organization (ideally aligned with profit, strategy and operational goals), to ensure you can effectively advocate for yourself with clear examples. - Access regular opportunities for development and building your personal brand, including attending or speaking at conferences, participating in skill-based training or applying for fellowships that can help position your leadership in the broader sector. - Create a culture that celebrates high performers and high expectations by doing regular shoutouts or finding other ways to lift up the work of individuals or teams during meetings, via internal messaging apps, emails or newsletters, etc. Be sure to highlight not 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When onboarding new employees, introduce them to at least 12 colleagues to promote developing critical working relationships and encourage people to cooperate with others within and beyond their immediate team.³⁹ This will help make the cooperative value clear. Organize an informal team event to welcome the new employee and build team culture. - Create templates for work that you can share with teammates or other teams—e.g., templates for 1:1 meeting notes, slide decks, progress reports, etc. Sharing this will help support others’ success and make your commitment to group success clear. It will also create a distinctive value-add that you provide to the organization and can reference during your performance assessment. - Build a culture of true teamwork—the team is in it together, and assignments are distributed and clear among the team. You can promote a sense of unity and collective investment in results by doing things like distributing “shared work,” such as following up on administrative tasks after a meeting, equally. This lends visibility to that work, including those tasks that may be associated with gender stereotypes. This also ensures team members understand they will be recognized for that work as well as their individual contributions and deliverables. “If you find that women in your organization are carrying a disproportionate share of the collaborative work, you can take steps to

³⁹ Lynda Gratton, “How to Foster a Cooperative Culture,” *Harvard Business Review*, January 15, 2009, <https://hbr.org/2009/01/four-ways-to-encourage-more-pr> (March 29, 2019).

only successes but also lessons learned, which can elevate the importance of innovation, risk-taking and continuous improvement.

neutralize the imbalance by building a culture of mutual accountability.”⁴⁰

- **Identify organizations that share values or key goals with your organization.** Connect with members of those organizations to build the foundation for future cooperation, should the opportunity arise.

⁴⁰ Renee Cullinan, “In Collaborative Cultures, Women Carry More of the Weight,” *Harvard Business Review*, July 24, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2018/07/in-collaborative-work-cultures-women-carry-more-of-the-weight> (November 10, 2018).