

# Self-Awareness

## A gateway to Leadership Impact

Leadership is an inside out process. It starts with Personal Leadership, the first dimension in our study of various leadership dimensions and how to translate your weaker dimensions into strengths. This research endeavors to establish a relationship between leaders self assessment on Personal Leadership, one key dimension and how their teams assess them. Do those who have rated themselves higher in personal leadership have a higher rating from their teams or it is other way round.

In this research we have also tried to ascertain a relationship between assessment of personal leadership and other dimensions.

This research article concludes with ways to improve self-awareness and its impact on leadership effectiveness.

### **Hypotheses – What we wanted to find out about individuals’ leadership**

1. Is there a correlation between how individual team leaders assess themselves on various leadership dimensions and how their team members assess them?
2. Personal Leadership is about sense of responsibility and ownership both in leaders’ actions and their personal development. We wanted to know whether self-assessment of leaders in this dimension is higher than other dimensions. If so is leaders’ self assessment in other dimensions also correlated with their teams’ assessment on these other dimensions?
3. Some dimensions have a higher correlation between leaders’ self assessment and their team’s assessment?

4. Do different management profiles correlate with different team leaders' self-assessments?

## **The Research**

The research is based on a total of 3 measurements for 2 groups. Group 1 from one company was measured twice, one by self and second by Leadership Expedition team during my wilderness based leadership development Program. Group 2 from another company and a different industry was measured once by self only. A total of 41 participants were studied in this research. Group 1 had 17 participants and Group 2 had 24 Participants. The similarities and differences of these groups are summarized below.

1. Both groups were similar in their diversity of education and technical areas of expertise
2. Both the companies were from industries where technical knowledge was more specialized and individuals in non technical jobs also required good technical knowhow for effective performance of their jobs.
3. The age groups were fairly different. Group 1 has average age of 42 years. Group 2 is much younger with average age of 34 years
4. Group 1 members were at the senior management level where as Group 2 were middle managers

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Group 1: Senior Managers**

**Is there a gap on how team leaders assess themselves and how their teams perceive them?**

This study involving both self and team assessment was conducted with Group 1 only which was at the senior management level.

In Personal Leadership *'high'* self-assessments are contradicted by *'much lower'* Team assessments. This contradiction is to the extent that for 13 leaders, who had rated themselves *'higher'*, 2 were rated *'low'* by their teams and 5 and 6 were rated *'much lower'* and *'very much lower'* respectively by their teams. However, *'Moderate'* self-assessments tend to be supported by *'same'*, or *'lower'* Team assessments.

In the ability to think through future, *'Moderate'* self-assessments of 12 leaders tend to be supported by mix of *'higher, same, or lower'* Team assessments. However few *'Very High'* and *high* self-assessments are contradicted by *'very much lower'* Team assessments.

When it comes to judging people around them, *'Very High'* and *'high'* self-assessments of 14 out of 15 leaders are contradicted by *'lower, much lower, and very much lower'* Team assessments.

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In area of fostering relationships 9 leaders with *'high'* self-assessments were contradicted by *'lower, much lower and 'very much lower'* Team assessments. 7 *'Moderate'* self-assessments tend to be supported by mix of *'higher, same, or lower'* Team assessments.

In bringing people together and managing conflicts, *'high'* self-assessments of 13 leaders are contradicted by *'lower, much lower and very much lower'* Team assessments.

In the willingness to do whatever it takes to achieve objectives, 12 leaders *'high'* self-assessment are contradicted by *'lower, much lower and very much lower'* Team assessments.

*'Moderate'* self-assessments tend to be supported by mix of *'higher, same, or lower'* Team assessments.

Again 13 leaders *'high'* self-assessments are contradicted by 'lower, much lower & very much lower' Team assessments in their comfort to manage complex situation in business. Similarly, 'moderate' self-assessment in this area is supported by 'higher' Team assessments.

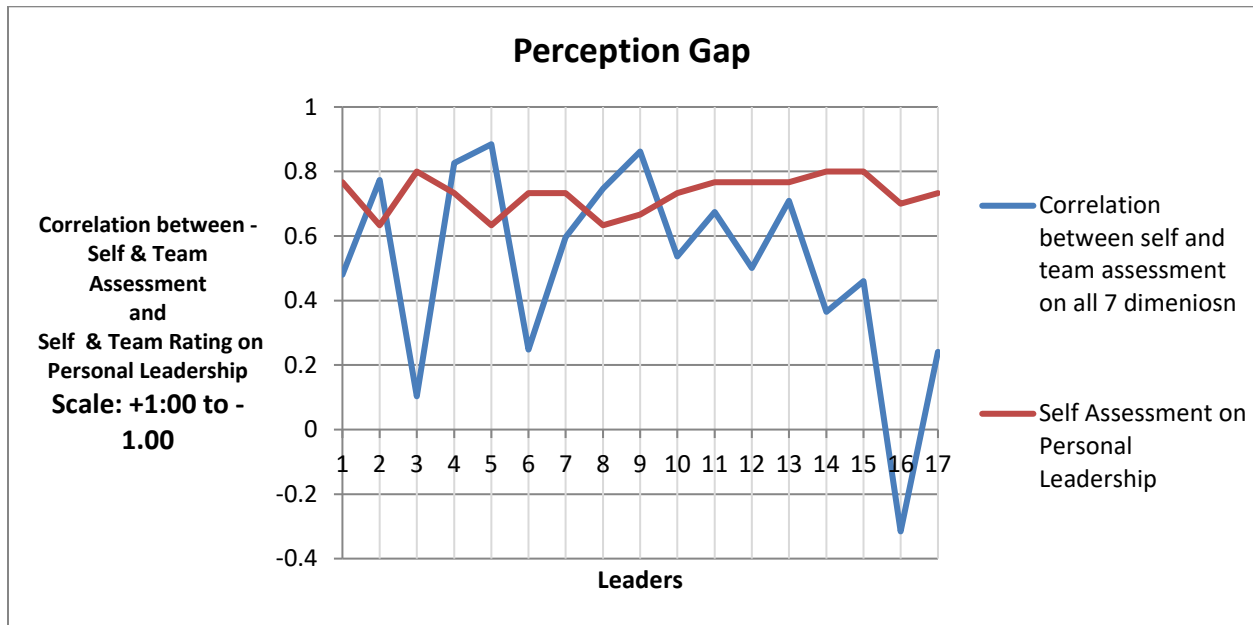
**Is self assessment of leaders in Personal Leadership dimension higher than other dimensions? If so is leaders' self assessment in other dimensions also correlated with their teams' assessment on these other dimensions?**

This analysis was run for Group 1: Senior managers only. As mentioned earlier, Personal Leadership is about taking ownership of personal development and therefore taking stock of own strengths and weaknesses. For business leaders it is important to know, for their own development and effectiveness as leaders, that how their teams assess them in various dimensions. This also helps leaders understand how their own self assessment is different from their teams' perception.

This part of the study is an effort to establish relationship, if any, between the Personal Leadership dimensions of the leaders and their difference of their own perception and that of their teams perception about the leaders in other dimensions.

Red line on the following chart marks the self assessment of leaders on Personal Leadership and the blue line marks correlation between how leaders and their teams have assessed them on other dimensions. A spike on the blue line e.g. for participant number 5 shows that there is a very strong correlation between the self and team assessment of Participant number 5 on all dimensions. This when compared with depression of red line for the same participant shows the low self assessment of the participant on Personal Leadership dimension. Please refer to chart 1 below.

**Chart - 1**



A relatively similar trend is visible for participant numbering 2, 4 and 9. Similarly a reverse trend is seen in case of Participant number 1,3,6,14 and 16 where a sharp dip in blue line (correlation between perception of team and self) is matched by a relatively sharp rise in red line (Self assessment of Personal Leadership Dimension).

This data reveals that those business leaders who are conservative in their self assessments are supported by their teams' assessments.

### **Data Analysis of Group 2: Middle Managers**

**Is self assessment of leaders in Personal Leadership dimension higher than other dimensions?**

This study involving only self assessment was conducted with Group 2 which was at the middle management level to compare Personal Leadership dimension with other dimensions. 52% of the self assessments, on an average, were rated moderate by the participants. Only 5% rated themselves very high and 43% rated themselves high.

These participants rated the Personal Leadership as one of the lower dimensions as compared to the other dimensions. Out of a total of 24, 14 rated themselves *moderate* and 10 rated themselves *high*.

In their ability to think through future 19 rated themselves *moderate* and only 5 rated them *high* with none at very high. This ability came out as one of the lowest in self perception of the participants of this study.

When it comes to judging people, 8 rated themselves *moderate* where as 13 and 3 rated themselves *high* and *very high* respectively. This came out as the 2<sup>nd</sup> strongest dimensions of all.

In area of fostering relationships, 16 rated themselves as *moderate* and 8 rated themselves as *high*. This came out as 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest dimensions

In bringing people together and managing conflicts, only 7 rated themselves as *moderate* compared to 14 and 3 rating themselves *high* and *very high* respectively. This came out as the strongest dimension in this group

In their ability to do whatever it takes to achieve objectives, 14 rated them as *moderate* as compared to 13 and 1 rating themselves as *high* and *very high* respectively.

Finally in the ability to manage complex business situations 10 rated themselves as *moderate* and 13 and 1 rated themselves as *high* and *very high* respectively

## **Comparison between the two groups**

I also compared profile and self assessments of Group-1 and 2 and identified similarities differences.

1. Group 1 had a higher mean rank score as compared to Group 2 in Personal Leadership. This means that those at higher level of management have better scores on Personal Leadership. They are more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and take a greater responsibility and ownership for continuous selfdevelopment and growth. This was also visible during my one on one interaction with members of both the groups in another assignment.
2. Group 1 also rated itself significantly higher as compared to Group 2 in terms of demonstrating ability to develop vision and set clear plan for their teams. They also believe that they can handle complexity of situation with ease. Therefore they are better equipped to handle senior management level challenges as compared to Group 2.
3. At senior manager level individuals also perceive to have demonstrated a higher degree of adaptability to change as compared to the other group. They are flexible, innovative and demonstrate better problem solving skills using more creativity
4. As far as working with teams is concerned groups at both the levels of management demonstrate similar leadership behaviors.
5. Group 1 assessment also establishes that determination to do what needs to be done for the organization also takes you up the ladder.

## **Conclusions - What should team leaders do to improve their self awareness**

**Firstly**, Team Leaders must endeavor to find out from their team members, peers and direct manager. “How am I doing as a team leader?” This will give insight into self as well as perception of those we work with.

**Secondly**, people at senior management level have a better awareness of their own leadership limitations than those in middle management.

**Thirdly**, humility and assessing yourself moderately tends to correlate with team members’ perception. Team members seem to sense your maturity. Having been rated higher by others than self helps in better management of expectations when it comes to delivering results

**Fourthly**, Personal Leadership has come out as a single most significant dimension which drives behaviors towards positive direction in other dimensions as well. Therefore if leaders have a greater sense of ownership, they will demonstrate determination and resilience to achieve results regardless of circumstances. Towards this end leaders will also assess themselves and continue to improve their skills and work behaviors

**Finally**, Leaders who keep track of their own performance and effectiveness on those that they lead are conscious of their own selves in terms of continuous improvement, learning and growth. They seek to listen to others and endeavor to take feedbacks seriously. Bottom line; they take full control of their lives. As a result they reduce perception and expectation gaps of what they think of themselves, what other perceives about them and what they actually achieve for all

## **Acknowledgement**

All those business leaders who participated in this research over a period of last two years

My Endeavor to learn more about leadership continues. Your questions, sharing of ideas and comments will add value to it and are welcome. You may also participate in this research as an organization. Please send email at [nzi@trainingimpact.biz](mailto:nzi@trainingimpact.biz)

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