



ADMINISTRATOR MANUAL

TRACE™

Behavioral Assessment

A forced-choice instrument for measuring how a person naturally thinks and operates — not what they value or aspire to. This manual explains the architecture, scoring, and how to deliver a debrief that produces real insight.

PUBLISHER

C2 Advising

INSTRUMENT TYPE

Forced-Choice

LEVELS

Four

OUTPUT SCALE

1–9 / 0–100

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Structured conversation, phase by phase — plus what to avoid.

Designed as a working reference — read sections in order for orientation, or jump to the section relevant to the conversation you are preparing for.

PART ONE

What the Assessment Is

01

TRACE™ is a forced-choice behavioral assessment that measures how a person naturally thinks and operates — not what they value or aspire to. Every question asks the respondent to choose between two or three statements that describe natural behavioral tendencies. There are no right or wrong answers. The goal is a profile of authentic behavioral patterns, not a personality test.

The assessment is level-specific. A person is assigned to one of four levels before taking it, and the question set they receive is tailored to the behavioral expectations and vocabulary of that level.

Not what they value or aspire to — how they naturally think and operate.

What TRACE is not. It is not a personality test, not a skills assessment, not a predictor of intelligence or character. It produces a map of behavioral tendencies that, when read in context, becomes a strong signal of how this person is likely to operate in the demands of their current role level.

PART TWO

The Four Levels

02

Each level has its own trait architecture: six **Core Traits** that drive the Predictive Index more heavily, and four **Enabling Traits** that amplify or constrain the core. The pages that follow explore each level's trait map and what each trait measures.

01

EXECUTIVEEnterprise strategy, culture,
direction

02

CORE LEADER

Direct team management

03

TEAM

Collective unit assessment

04

CORE TALENT

Individual contributors

Each level is treated on its own spread. Turn the page to begin with Executive.

LEVEL 01

Executive

For enterprise-level leaders responsible for organizational strategy, culture, and direction. Questions probe how the person leads at scale — across functions, across time horizons, and under genuine uncertainty.

Core Traits · Drive PI More Heavily · 6 Traits

CORE

Strategic Altitude

Ability to think at the organizational system level and across long time horizons.

CORE

Decisiveness in Ambiguity

Making and holding decisions when information is incomplete.

CORE

Adaptive Resilience

Sustaining performance and leadership through sustained adversity.

CORE

Enterprise Ownership

Taking accountability for organizational outcomes beyond one's formal authority.

CORE

Navigating Complexity

Operating effectively amid multi-variable, interconnected problems.

CORE

Entrepreneurial Velocity

Driving urgency, pace, and resource-efficient execution.

Enabling Traits · Amplify or Constrain Core · 4 Traits

ENABLING

Cultural Stewardship

Modeling and protecting the norms and values that define the organization.

ENABLING

Anticipatory Intelligence

Reading early signals and acting on patterns before they become obvious.

ENABLING

Cognitive Empathy

Understanding what drives, concerns, and motivates others; using it to lead better.

ENABLING

Authentic Executive Presence

Projecting credible authority through consistency of character, not title.

LEVEL 02

Core Leader

For leaders who manage teams directly. Questions focus on establishing clarity, developing people, sustaining performance standards, and building team culture.

Core Traits · Drive PI More Heavily · 6 Traits

CORE

Clarity Establishment

Translating goals into specific, actionable expectations the team can operate from.

CORE

Inclusive Authority

Making decisions that incorporate the team's input without abdicating accountability.

CORE

Resilience

Maintaining composure, standards, and momentum when the work gets hard.

CORE

Shared Success

Building ownership culture — attributing wins to the team, not the leader.

CORE

Critical Path Thinking

Identifying what actually matters amid competing demands; protecting team focus.

CORE

Adaptive Thinking

Updating approaches when conditions change; applying learning across domains.

Enabling Traits · Amplify or Constrain Core · 4 Traits

ENABLING

Mission Minded

Connecting team work to purpose; sustaining motivation through meaning.

ENABLING

Challenge Driven

Seeking stretch; engaging problems with energy rather than anxiety.

ENABLING

Values-Based Integrity

Maintaining behavioral standards under pressure; doing what is said.

ENABLING

Cognitive Empathy

Reading what team members need beneath their stated positions.

LEVEL 03

Team

For teams assessed as a collective unit — the questions are written in "we" form. This level measures team behavioral patterns: how the team makes decisions, shares ownership, handles adversity, and learns together.

Core Traits · Drive PI More Heavily · 6 Traits

CORE

Strategic Alignment

Shared understanding of direction; ability to connect individual work to team goals.

CORE

Decision Confidence

Quality of team decision-making; calibrated risk assessment.

CORE

Collective Durability

How well the team sustains performance under sustained pressure.

CORE

Shared Ownership

Distribution of accountability; initiative beyond role.

CORE

Problem Solving Clarity

How the team defines and disciplines its approach to problems.

CORE

Adaptive Execution

How fluidly the team adjusts methods when conditions change.

Enabling Traits · Amplify or Constrain Core · 4 Traits

ENABLING

Cultural Consistency

Adherence to team norms under pressure.

ENABLING

Collective Learning

How the team captures, transfers, and applies what it learns.

ENABLING

Relational Health

The quality of relationships within the team; conflict navigation.

ENABLING

Trust & Credibility

Proactive transparency; delivery reliability; how the team is experienced by others.

LEVEL 04

Core Talent

For individual contributors. Questions probe organizational awareness, ability to influence without authority, adaptability, delivery reliability, and growth orientation.

Core Traits · Drive PI More Heavily · 6 Traits

CORE

Organizational Awareness

Ability to read how the organization actually works — structure, dynamics, priorities.

CORE

Influence Without Authority

Creating movement and alignment without relying on positional power.

CORE

Flexible Adaptability

Comfort with ambiguity; ability to absorb change without destabilization.

CORE

Execution Impact

Reliable delivery with visible contribution and ownership.

CORE

Iterative Problem Solving

Hypothesis-driven thinking; willingness to learn and adjust.

CORE

Intellectual Curiosity

Depth of inquiry; openness to new domains; range of interest.

Enabling Traits · Amplify or Constrain Core · 4 Traits

ENABLING

Values/Purpose Engagement

Drawing motivation from meaningful work and personal values connection.

ENABLING

Growth Mindset

Actively seeking feedback; investing in capability expansion.

ENABLING

Relational Awareness

Reading people and social dynamics accurately.

ENABLING

Sound Personal Judgement

Quality of independent decision-making; risk awareness.

PART THREE

How Questions Work

03

TRACE uses three question formats. Two produce trait signal; one is purely diagnostic. Together they create the behavioral pattern that becomes the profile.

MOST COMMON**Pair Questions**

Two statements; respondent selects the one that most reflects how they naturally think and behave. There is a correct answer for each person — the one that honestly represents them. They are not asked which is better or which they aspire to.

- [A] My strategic strength is most visible in the patterns I track before others see them.
- [B] My strategic strength is most visible in how I map interdependencies and manage downstream consequences.

DIFFERENTIATING**Triad Questions**

Three statements; respondent selects both the most and least representative. The middle option is implied. These apply more differentiation and are particularly useful for separating closely related traits.

MOST · +3 LEAST · -1

- [A] I seek clarity before committing to action.
- [B] I commit early and adjust as I learn.
- [C] I wait for others to define the direction first.

DIAGNOSTIC ONLY**Reliability Mirror Questions**

8 questions in the assessment look similar to questions the respondent already answered but are worded differently. The respondent doesn't know these are repeats. The system compares their answers. Consistent answers indicate genuine, stable self-knowledge. Inconsistent answers can indicate rushing, random clicking, or self-awareness gaps that make results less predictive.

Purely diagnostic — mirror questions don't affect trait scores, only the Response Reliability label.

PART FOUR

How Scores Are Produced

04

The scoring pipeline has four sequential steps. Raw responses become facet points, facet points become normalized 1–9 scores, facets average into traits, and traits feed the Predictive Index.

STEP 01**Raw Points**

Responses add points to specific facets — the sub-components of each trait.

STEP 02**Facet Normalization**

Each facet is scaled to a 1–9 score relative to the person's own response pattern.

STEP 03**Trait Derivation**

Each trait = average of its two facets, rounded and clamped to the 1–9 scale.

STEP 04**Interpretation**

Scores are read as a shape — the combination matters more than any single number.

Point Accumulation

Response Type	Points	Notes
Pair — Chosen	+2	Contributes to the facet associated with the selected statement.
Pair — Unchosen	0	Noted as "seen" but not rewarded.
Triad — Most	+3	Strongest positive signal the instrument collects.
Triad — Middle	+1	Implied middle (not explicitly selected).
Triad — Least	-1	Only penalty in the system; creates meaningful separation.

Facet Normalization Formula

```
// For each facet, scale raw points to 1-9
Facet Score = ((raw - min) ÷ range) × 8 + 1
```

```
// Every trait is built from exactly two facets
Trait Score = average(Facet A, Facet B)
```

Scores are relative. The 9 goes to whatever the person chose most consistently; the 1 goes to what they chose least. A score of 5 is not average in an absolute sense — it means middling relative to the person's own response pattern.

What a 1–9 Score Means

Score	Interpretation
8 – 9	Dominant behavioral pattern — a defining characteristic. High performance impact when well-directed; highest derailer risk when overused.
6 – 7	Strong expression — consistently present; reliable differentiator in the profile.
4 – 5	Moderate expression — situationally present; not a strong identifier in either direction.
2 – 3	Lower expression — this behavior is not a natural default. May be developed, but isn't instinctive.
1	Minimal expression — the person consistently chose other behaviors over this one throughout the assessment.

Low scores are not deficits. They represent the natural shape of a behavioral profile. A 2 in Cognitive Empathy doesn't mean the person is cold — it means they don't lead with emotional attunement as a primary operating mode. Context determines whether that matters.

PART FIVE

The Predictive Index

05

The **Predictive Index (PI)** is a 0–100 score that represents overall behavioral readiness for the current role level. It answers the question: *"How well does this behavioral profile match what the role demands?"*

It is not an IQ score, a performance rating, or a ceiling. It reflects the current strength and distribution of the behavioral traits that predict success at this level. The formula weights **Core Traits at 2x the influence of Enabling Traits** — core traits are the fundamental behavioral demands; enabling traits amplify the core but can't compensate for a weak core.

```
// Core traits carry twice the weight
Raw PI = (Core Avg × 2 + Enabling Avg) ÷ 3

// Scale Raw PI (1-9) into a 0-100 Predictive Index
Predictive Index = ((Raw PI - 1) ÷ 8) × 100
```

PI Bands

Score	Label	What It Means
65 – 100	High Behavioral Readiness	Strong behavioral foundation across both core and enabling traits. The profile strongly supports role performance.
50 – 64	Strong Behavioral Profile	Solid core with some enabling variation. Well-positioned for the demands of the role.
35 – 49	Developing Profile	Core traits are present but unevenly expressed. Enabling traits may be offsetting or underdeveloped. Active development will close the gap.
0 – 34	Early-Stage Profile	Significant gaps in core behavioral expression relative to role demands. Important to distinguish between "wrong role" and "earlier career stage."

Caveats on the PI. A 78 and an 81 are functionally identical — do not over-interpret small differences. The PI says nothing about intelligence, work ethic, skill, or potential — only behavioral pattern match. Someone with a PI of 55 in an Executive role may be exceptionally well-suited to a Core Leader role. Track PI over time for the same individual — growth across assessments is highly meaningful.

PART SIX

Results Sections Explained

06

The report has eleven sections. Each translates the underlying trait profile into a different lens — from raw signal quality to relational guidance.

01 Response Reliability · DIAGNOSTIC

Shows whether the person's answers were consistent across the 8 mirror questions. Displayed as **High**, **Moderate**, or **Low** — no percentage is shown to the participant.

High: Answers were stable across differently-worded versions of similar questions. Results are trustworthy.

Moderate: Minor inconsistency. Results are valid but should be interpreted with slight awareness that some self-perception may be contextually variable.

Low: Significant inconsistency. Could indicate rushing, random responding, or genuine blind spots. Use results as a starting point for conversation, not as definitive findings.

The system also flags unusually fast average response time, or strong positional bias (choosing A or B overwhelmingly regardless of content).

02 Trait Profile · FOUNDATION

All 10 traits scored 1–9. This is the foundation of the entire report. Everything else — competencies, archetypes, derailers, tensions — is derived from these scores.

Read the trait profile as a shape, not a set of individual grades. The combination matters more than any single score. A high-Entrepreneurial Velocity + low-Navigating Complexity profile has very different implications than high-Navigating Complexity + low-Entrepreneurial Velocity, even if both have similar PIs.

03 Behavioral Competencies · COMPOSITE

Eight composite scores derived by weighting combinations of trait scores. Competencies translate the trait profile into behavioral capabilities that are recognizable in a job description or performance framework.

Example (Executive): Decisive Intelligence = Decisiveness in Ambiguity (45%) + Navigating Complexity (35%) + Anticipatory Intelligence (20%).

A competency score of **7+** is a reliable strength. A score of **3 or below** is a genuine gap that likely shows up in performance data.

04 Behavioral Archetype · NARRATIVE

The best-fitting of 8 archetypes for the respondent's level, matched by looking for the highest scores across the two defining traits of each archetype. The archetype gives a human narrative summary of the profile — what it looks like in action, what it produces at its best, and where it tends to break down.

Use the archetype as a conversation opener, not a box. Most people find it resonant. When someone says "that's not quite me," that reaction itself is useful data.

05 Tension Analysis (Paradox) · MOST GENERATIVE

Every profile has behavioral tensions — traits that are both high and naturally in conflict with each other. These aren't problems; they're the friction points where the person does their most interesting leadership work and where they're most at risk of getting stuck.

Example: High Decisiveness in Ambiguity + High Cognitive Empathy creates the Conviction–Empathy tension. The person is naturally both driven to make and hold calls, and driven to understand and integrate what others need. These forces are real and productive in balance, and destructive when one takes over.

Each tension pair includes: what the tension is, what happens when each side locks in (the overuse failure mode), and a coaching prompt for navigating it.

06 Derailer Risk · TRIGGERED AT 7+

For any trait scoring 7 or higher, the report flags the overuse failure mode. High scores are strengths — but every strength has a shadow side that activates under stress, at speed, or when unchecked by feedback.

Derailers are among the most valuable parts of the report for development conversations. They name specific, observable failure modes with enough precision that people can recognize them in their own experience.

Example: High Entrepreneurial Velocity → "Execution Fragmentation" — multiple initiatives launch simultaneously, none receive sustained commitment, teams feel the whiplash of shifting priorities.

07 Motivation & Energy Profile · RETENTION SIGNAL

Derived from the 15 forced-choice motivation pairs embedded throughout the assessment. Shows the person's relative ranking of 10 motivation drivers: Autonomy, Recognition, Challenge, Purpose, Advancement, Collaboration, Mastery, Impact, Variety, Stability.

The profile ranks drivers by wins (each driver competed head-to-head against others 3 times). A driver with 3 wins is a **Primary Driver**. The system then cross-references motivation drivers against the behavioral profile — where high motivation is backed by supporting behavioral traits, there's alignment; where it isn't, there's a **potential friction zone**.

Motivation–Behavior Alignment is particularly useful for retention and role-fit conversations. Someone highly motivated by autonomy but with a behavioral profile that suggests dependence on external structure will experience chronic frustration in roles that require self-direction.

08 Narrative Profile · SYNTHESIS

A prose synthesis of the full profile — written specifically for the respondent. It integrates the trait pattern, archetype, key tensions, and motivation profile into a coherent behavioral story. This is often the section people find most immediately meaningful and use as a reference document.

09 Development Priorities · ACTIONABLE

Identifies the 2–3 behavioral areas where focused development would have the highest leverage, given the current profile and role demands. Also identifies **strengths to protect** — behaviors that are working that development agendas sometimes inadvertently sand down.

10 Manager Guide · RELATIONAL

Practical guidance for whoever works with this person on how to get the best from the profile. Covers communication style, what environments engage this person, what creates friction, how to give feedback, and how to challenge without triggering defensiveness.

11 Longitudinal / Growth Over Time · MULTI-ADMIN

If the person has taken the assessment more than once, this tab shows score movement across administrations. Sustained shifts of **2+ points** in a trait across two assessments indicate real behavioral development. Small fluctuations (1 point) are noise.

PART SEVEN

How to Deliver a Debrief

07

A well-run debrief is a structured conversation, not a PowerPoint walkthrough. The goal is to help the person develop genuine insight about their behavioral pattern — not to read them a document.

The Arc of the Conversation

00

Before the Debrief

Read the full report before the conversation. Don't come in cold. Know the 2–3 highest and lowest trait scores, which archetype came up and whether you find it compelling, the active tension pairs, any derailer flags, and any motivation friction zones. **Form a hypothesis:** "Based on this profile, I expect this person leads with X, struggles with Y in context Z, and probably has a pattern around..." The debrief will either confirm or complicate your hypothesis — both are useful.

01

Opening the Conversation

Don't start by explaining the assessment. Start by asking:

"Before we look at anything, tell me — what's been on your mind about your own leadership lately? What feels like it's working, and what feels like friction?"

02

Introducing the Profile

Start with the Predictive Index and Archetype because they're the most accessible entry points. Let them react. Their reaction — whether agreement, pushback, or nuance — tells you a lot about self-awareness and will shape the rest of the conversation.

"The overall picture that comes out is a [band] profile — that means [plain-language interpretation]. The archetype that best fits is [X]. Before I say anything about it, does that label resonate at all, or does it feel off?"

03

Walking the Trait Profile

Don't read every score. Work the shape. Lead with the highest 2–3 traits — "What's very clear in this profile is [trait] and [trait]. Do you recognize those as real? When do you see them show up?" Introduce the lowest 2–3 traits carefully; don't frame low scores as deficits, frame them as choices: "One thing the profile shows is that [trait] isn't a natural default for you — not absent, but not where you lead from." The best signal that the profile is valid is when the person starts adding specific examples you didn't prompt.

04

The Tension Pairs Conversation

Often the most generative part of the debrief. Introduce tensions as productive friction, not contradictions:

"You're genuinely high on both [Trait A] and [Trait B], and those two things are in real tension with each other. That's not a problem — it's what makes the leadership complex. The question is: which one do you default to when they conflict?"

05

The Derailer Conversation

Requires the most care. Frame derailers as the shadow side of a genuine strength. If you have corroborating performance data or feedback, bring it now — not as accusation, but as pattern recognition.

"Your [trait] score is an 8 — that's a real asset. The thing to watch is that when [trait] is at its best it looks like [positive expression]. When it's under pressure or unchecked, it can look like [derailer name]. Have you ever seen that pattern in yourself, or has someone given you feedback in that direction?"

06

The Motivation Alignment Conversation

If there are friction zones (high motivation not backed by supporting behaviors). This is particularly powerful for retention conversations. People rarely leave because of pay or title. They leave because their motivational fuel and their behavioral reality are in chronic friction.

"[Motivation] is a primary driver for you — that's what consistently fuels your best work. And yet the behavioral profile shows that [supporting trait] is expressed at [score]. In roles where you're depending on [motivation] to sustain you, but the behavioral pattern isn't fully there yet, that tends to create a specific kind of frustration. Does that resonate?"

07

Closing the Debrief

End with two questions, not a summary. The first surfaces what actually landed — which is rarely what you expected. The second converts insight into intention. Without it, even excellent debriefs produce beautiful awareness that never changes anything.

"1. What's the one thing from this conversation that you most want to sit with? · 2. If you were going to do one thing differently based on what we talked about today, what would it be?"

What to Avoid**Don't diagnose**

You're a guide through the data, not an authority on who this person is.

Don't rush low scores

A 2 on a trait is not an emergency. Spend more time on the 8s and 9s — that's where the leverage and the risk both live.

Don't skip the tensions

The paradox section is the most analytically rich part of the report. It's also the most likely to be skipped when time is short. Don't skip it.

Don't use jargon

"Your Cognitive Empathy facet score shows..." is not useful language. Translate: "What comes through strongly is how much you track what's happening for people around you."

Don't treat the report as final

The report is a starting point. The person in front of you is always more complex than the instrument. When something doesn't fit, say so — and explore why.

For Development Planning After the Debrief

Given your profile, what are the 1–2 situations in your actual role where the behavioral gap between where you are and where you need to be costs you the most?

Development that isn't anchored in a specific, lived situation rarely sticks. The profile gives you the map. The person's answer to that question tells you where to start walking.



TRACE™

Behavioral Assessment

Measure how a person naturally thinks and operates — not what they value or aspire to. Then build the conversation that turns that signal into insight, and insight into intention.

C2 ADVISING

Predictive Performance Suite

Building organizations that perform, evolve, and endure.

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