

Leadership Assessment: Servant Confirmations, Adaptive Opportunities

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Abstract

This analysis will review responses from a personal leadership assessment, provided to the author, peers, and direct managers. Servant leadership and adaptive leadership play heavily into the results, affirming prior expectations while opening new avenues for research and practice.

Overall lessons on the author's leadership style conclude the review.

Keywords: Leadership assessment, leadership analysis, servant leadership, adaptive leadership

Leadership Assessment: Servant Confirmations, Adaptive Opportunities

Identifying a leadership style seems natural at first. Traits and skills immediately come to mind, as if completing a personality questionnaire or reviewing educational accomplishments. However, assessing leadership qualities requires more than superficial trait acknowledgments. An emerging leader should assess leadership abilities from a variety of perspectives, including behavioral, transformational, transactional, goal-oriented, and enthusiastic. The personality traits serve as a starting point for further analysis, leading to the leadership types that most align with personal values.

When building my leadership assessment, I combined facets of two major leadership theories: servant leadership and adaptive leadership. Both theories involve elements of context and culture (Northouse, 2019), and are driven by the leader's desire to serve and empower followers toward action. My traits gravitate toward servant leadership, but I retained adaptive questions to gauge gaps in skills.

Each of the assessment's categories focused on a specific element in either servant or adaptive leadership: a focus on empowerment, a focus on behavior, and a focus on feedback. The assessment was provided to seven colleagues at my organization: three subordinates in practitioner roles, three peers in other managerial roles, and my direct supervisor as chief marketing officer. Responses were provided along a five-point Likert scale, ranging from not likely to very likely in describing my abilities. I also completed the survey for reference.

Results

The assessment's first section focused on empowerment. Questions within this section highlighted the ability to help others solve problems, encourage open discussion of issues, and providing helpful solutions. This first section had the largest range of responses, though

primarily centered around the question of issue avoidance. Respondents varied in their assessment of my ability to encourage addressing difficult issues, with all responses in the middle ranges. This matched my neutral assessment of the question. However, the remaining questions in this section trended toward higher values – and the question about enjoying the problem-solving process scored the highest marks.

The assessment's second section focused on behavior. While all the responses trended toward the higher ranges, there was a considerable split between neutral responses and high responses. This was especially present in questions about placing other's interests above my own and helping with personal problems – both drawing split neutral and high-neutral responses. This also matched my high-neutral assessment. Given my relatively short time at the organization, and the sudden shift to telecommuting two months into my tenure, I didn't have much time to build relationships with peers. Still, other questions on confidence and servant attitude drew universally high marks.

The assessment's third section focused on feedback. Responses in this section were more uniform than the others, all trending at high marks. I gave myself the highest marks on these questions, which does open some minor gaps between personal and peer assessments. I received only one neutral response, within a question on understanding organizational goals. However, this could also be related to my short tenure. Questions on setting a responsible example and making the job easier for others drew universally high marks in contrast. Peer analysis and supervisor expectations appeared to coincide among responses. My supervisor rated me on a slightly higher overall scale than my peers, though my interactions with her are far more frequent and influential.

Analysis

Results from this assessment identified consistencies with servant leadership while opening new gaps with adaptive leadership qualities. Ebener and O'Connell (2010) identified three mechanisms of servant leadership that directly affect peer behavior: invitation, inspiration, and affection. Invitation involves the ability of a leader to advocate for feedback, while inspiration and affection involve follower responses to leader actions. Responses within the assessment sections on feedback and behavior demonstrate an affinity for these qualities. These are the sections that also generated the highest overall totals, especially when factoring in responsibility and helping others complete tasks.

This conclusion is most prevalent in the universally high-response rate to the question about problem-solving. Wong et al., (2018) noted that servant leaders can manage problems and conflicts co-operatively, focusing primarily on the benefits of the team. This is perhaps my most visible leadership trait: a natural desire to help address problems and provide solutions. The data confirm this conclusion. However, there are still gaps in servant qualities between my responses and peer responses. The very nature of servant leadership involves placing the needs of others above my own – and that quality has not been universally observed at my current organization.

Regarding adaptive leadership practices, the response rate suggests a mixed assessment. Questions on the empowerment of others produced the widest range of responses -- and the only low-neutral answers among all respondents. Empowering others to tackle difficult issues is a special skill that I have not yet mastered, and the data bear that conclusion. A large part of this result lends to a desire for personal problem-solving over delegation. Even in a leadership role, I am more willing to address a problem myself than task others to handle it – even if I am not the reason for the issue. Good delegation skills allow team members to share equal or fair task loads,

which can reduce overburdening and give everyone a better chance at success (Drouvelis et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Results from this initial leadership assessment were both surprising and affirming. Although I have been at this organization for less than a year, my role is the first in my career with considerable leadership expectations. Drawing from the traits and skills I demonstrated as a leader has helped shaped both servant and adaptive abilities, though there are clear gaps between my perceptions and those of my peers. Still, the assessment showed how I can bridge those gaps by outwardly projecting servant behaviors and practicing better delegation skills. These qualities are merely the first steps toward a more cohesive leader framework – while still rooted in the servant and adaptive traits that have led me to this point.

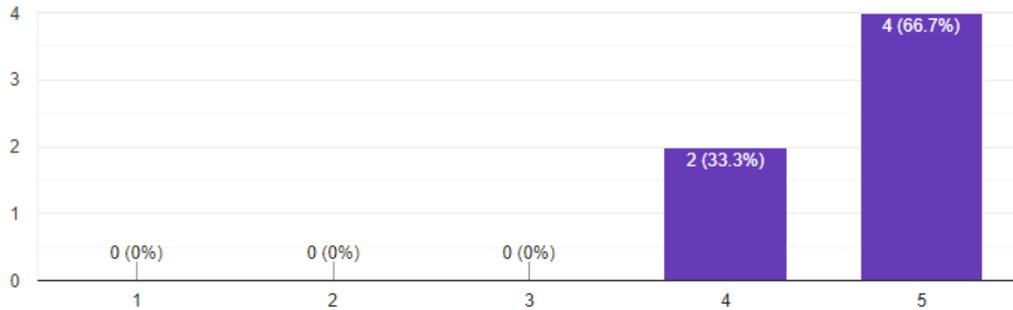
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Appendix A

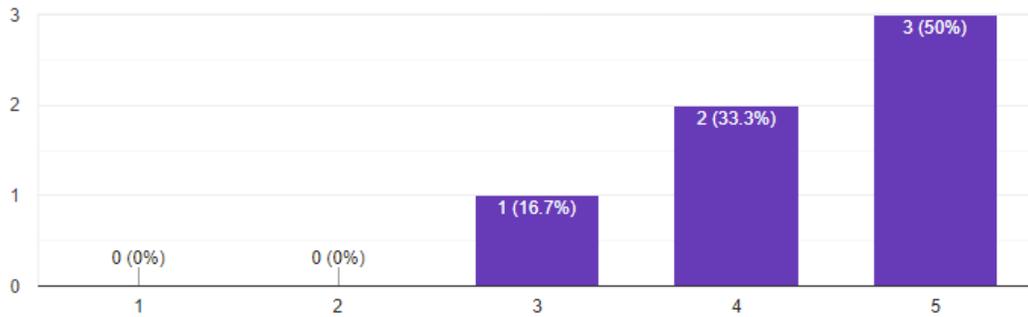
Nick looks to help other people solve their problems, and offers ideas for addressing team roadblocks.

6 responses



When conflicts arise, Nick encourages team members to openly address the issues.

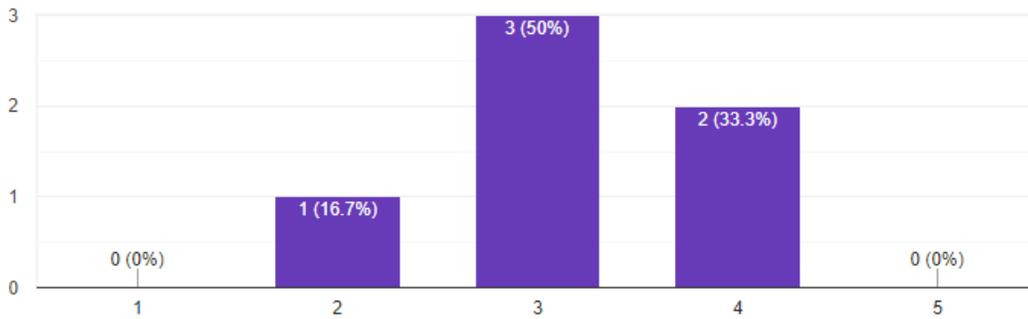
6 responses



Nick gets people to focus on the issues they are trying to avoid.



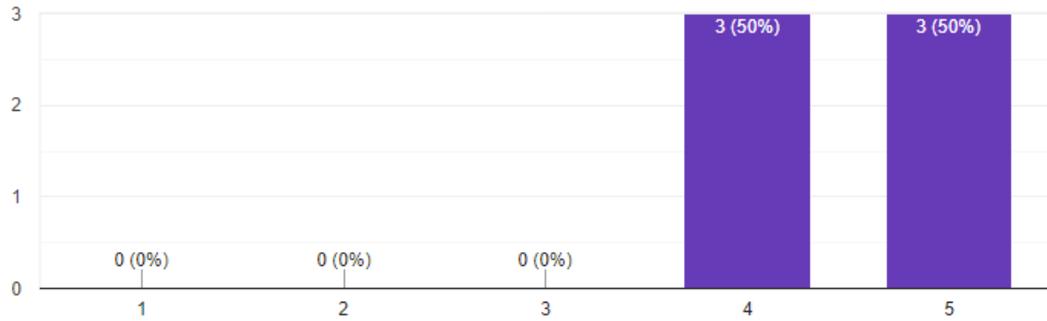
6 responses



Nick understands the technical and conceptual issues we must face in achieving the team's goals.

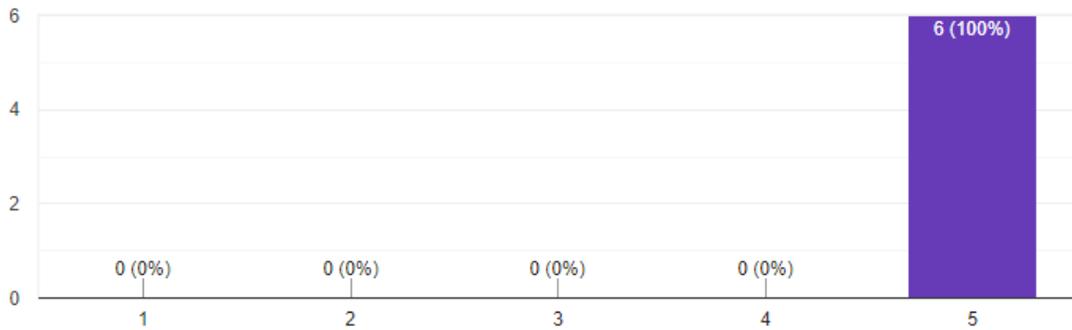


6 responses



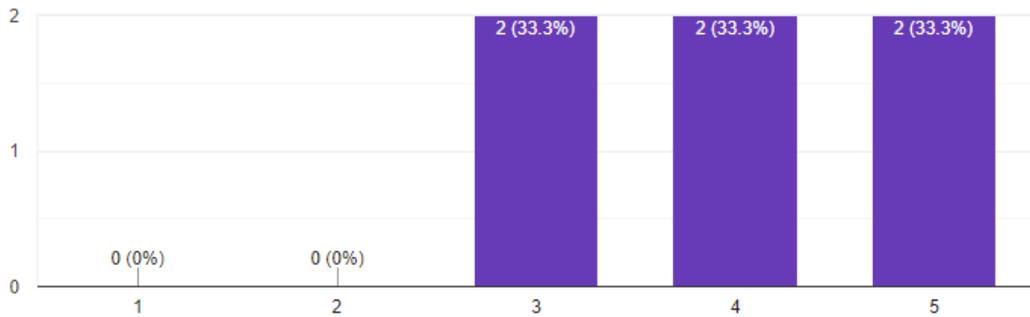
When people look to Nick to solve problems, he enjoys providing solutions.

6 responses



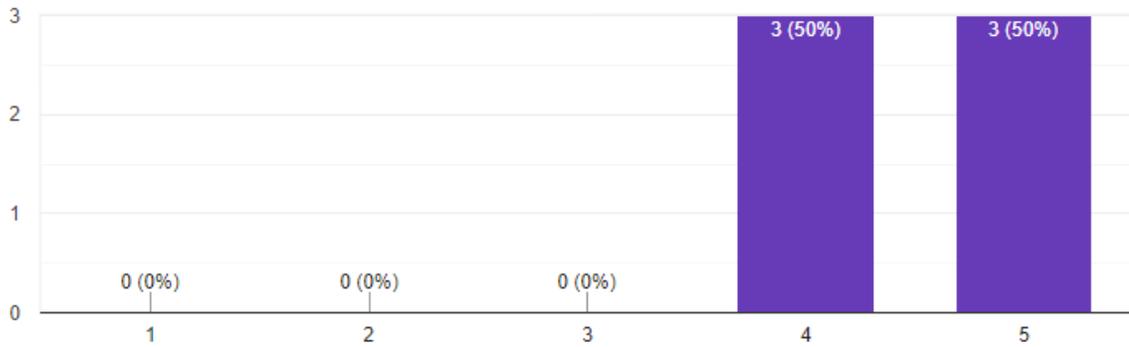
Nick tends to puts others' best interests above his own.

6 responses



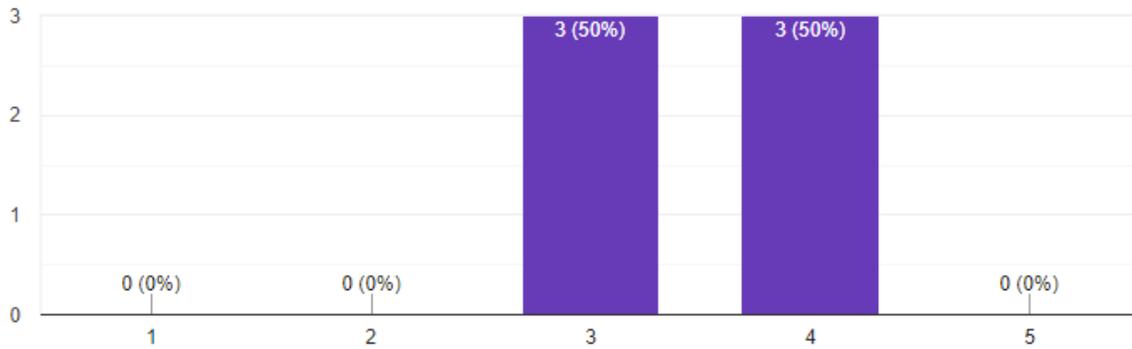
Nick shows confidence in tackling challenging problems.

6 responses



Others would seek help from Nick if they had a personal problem.

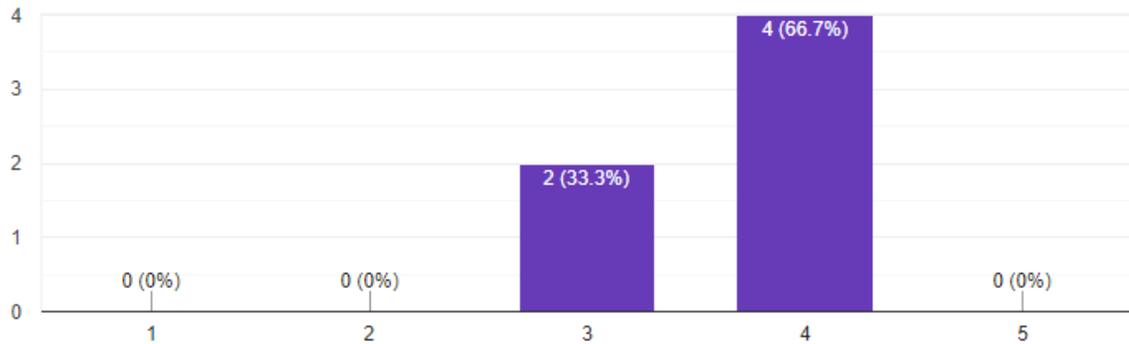
6 responses



Nick sacrifices his own interests to meet others' needs.

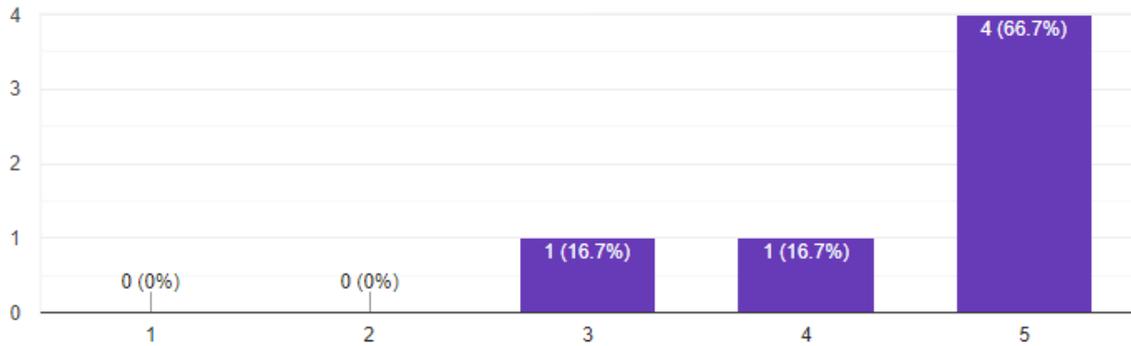


6 responses



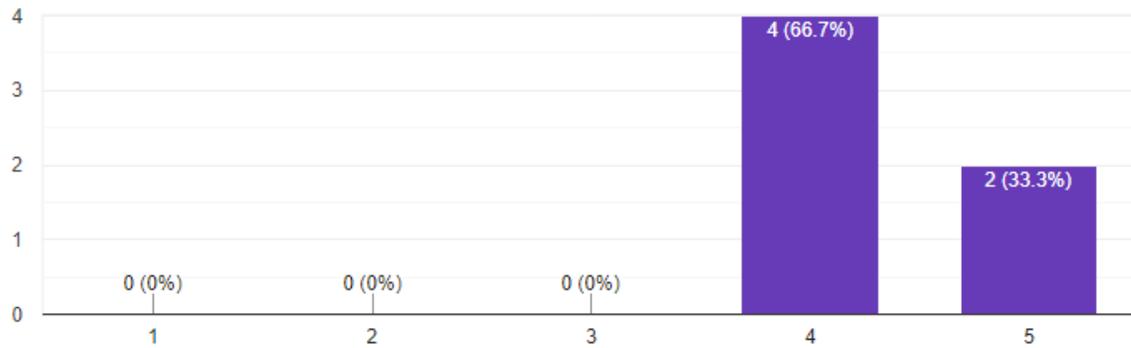
Nick is always interested in helping people in the organization and greater community.

6 responses



Nick listens carefully to the feedback and ideas of others before making decisions.

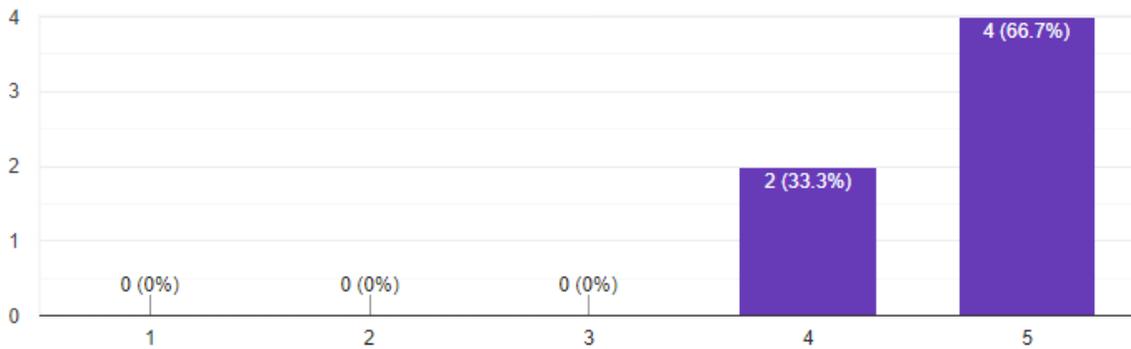
6 responses



Nick openly admits mistakes and resolves to address them.

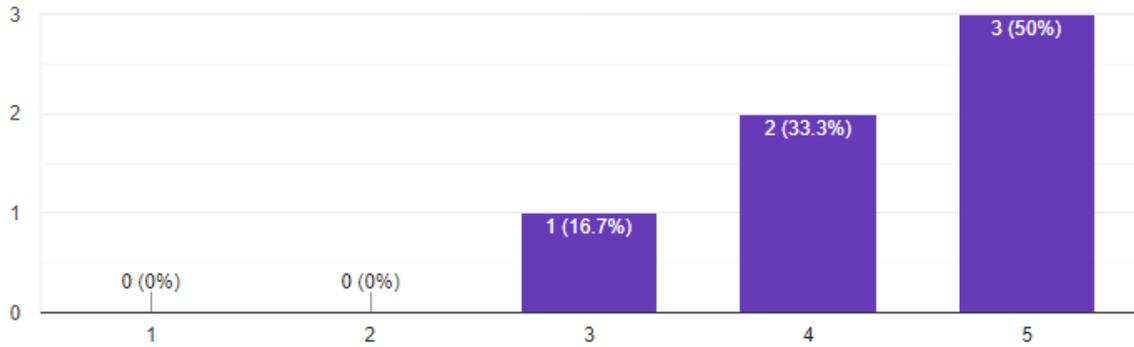


6 responses



Nick has a thorough understanding of the organization and its goals.

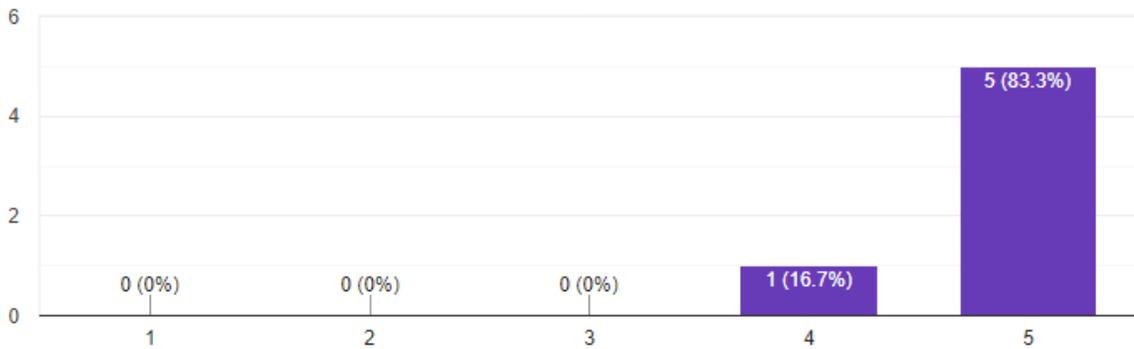
6 responses



Nick does what he can to make others' jobs easier.



6 responses



Nick sets a responsible example for other managers and leaders.



6 responses

