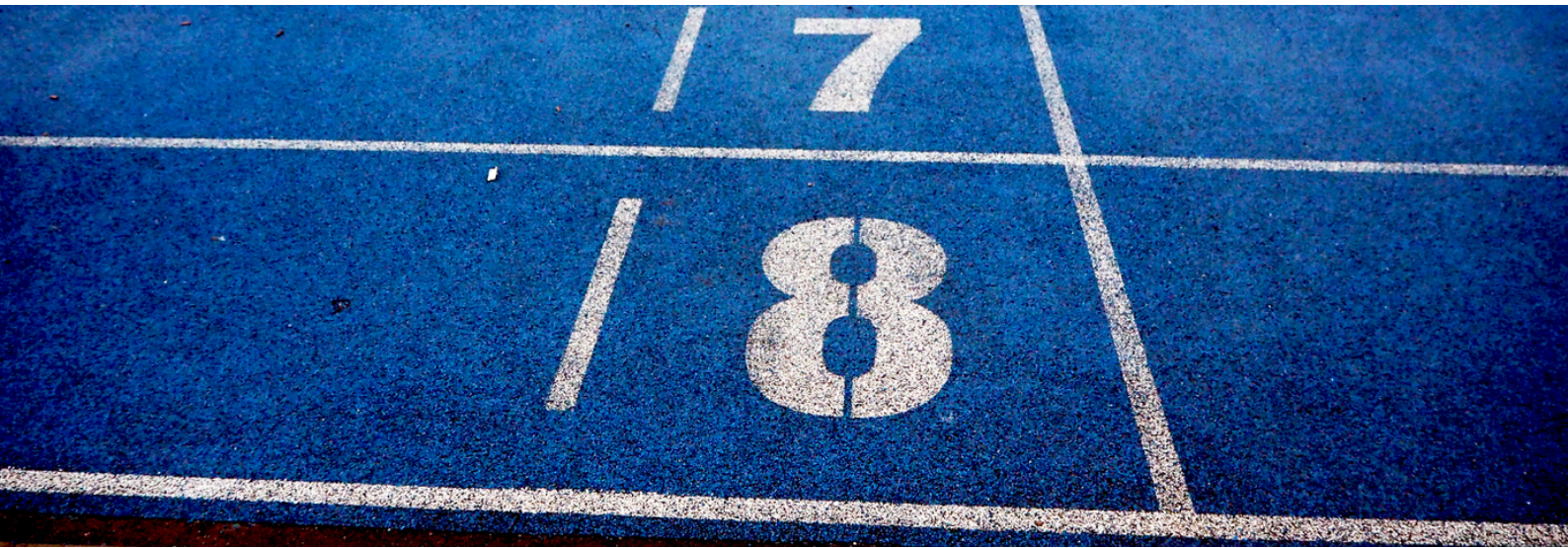


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THE CYCAN LEADERSHIP READINESS ASSESSMENT





IS YOUR ORGANISATION BUILDING THE LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY ITS FUTURE WILL REQUIRE?

Your organisation may have a clear strategy, ambitious growth plans and a leadership team that is performing well today, but that does not automatically mean it is prepared for what comes next.

Leadership readiness is not simply about whether current leaders are competent or whether the organisation is achieving its immediate objectives. It is about whether there is enough leadership depth, capability and continuity across the organisation to execute future strategy, navigate leadership transitions and respond confidently as the operating environment becomes more complex.

A business can perform strongly while still carrying significant leadership exposure beneath the surface. A critical executive may have no credible successor, leadership capability may be concentrated in a small number of individuals, and future leaders may have been identified without being meaningfully prepared for greater responsibility. In other cases, the organisation's strategy may have evolved faster than its leadership capability, leaving a widening gap between where the business wants to go and the leadership required to get there.

These vulnerabilities often remain difficult to see while performance is strong. They tend to become visible when the organisation is already under pressure through growth, transformation, succession, restructuring or an unexpected leadership departure. By then, the organisation is no longer planning for leadership. It is reacting to leadership risk.

The Cycan Leadership Readiness Assessment has been designed to help CEOs, Boards, executive teams and HR leaders look beyond current performance and examine whether the organisation is genuinely building the leadership capacity its future will require.

It provides a practical way to identify where leadership strength already exists, where exposure may be emerging and where greater attention may be required before today's hidden vulnerability becomes tomorrow's strategic constraint.



WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP READINESS REALLY MEAN?

Leadership readiness considers more than the capability of the people currently occupying senior positions.

It asks whether leadership capability is connected to strategy, whether sufficient depth exists beyond today's executives, whether credible successors are being prepared, whether leaders are developing for future complexity and whether the organisation can navigate leadership transitions without losing unnecessary momentum.

The assessment explores five interconnected dimensions:

Five Dimensions of Leadership Readiness

1. **Strategy-to-Leadership Readiness**
   Does your leadership capability match where the organisation is going?
2. **Leadership Bench Strength**
   How much leadership depth exists beyond the people currently in critical roles?
3. **Succession & Critical Role Readiness**
   How vulnerable is the organisation if a critical leader leaves?
4. **Future Capability Readiness**
   Are your leaders becoming capable enough for what comes next?
5. **Transition & Continuity Readiness**
   Can leadership change without the organisation losing momentum?

Together, these dimensions provide a broader view of whether the organisation is prepared not only to perform today, but to continue leading effectively as its circumstances change.



HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The assessment contains 20 statements across five dimensions. Rate each statement according to how accurately it reflects your organisation today, rather than how you would like the organisation to operate.

RESPONSE SCALE

Rate each statement on a scale from 1 to 5.

1	2	3	4	5
STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL / INCONSISTENT	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

Each dimension has a maximum score of 20, creating an overall Leadership Readiness Score out of 100.

The assessment is most valuable when completed honestly. It can be used individually or completed independently by Board members, executives and HR leaders before comparing results.

Do not focus only on the total score. The differences between your five dimensions may reveal the most important leadership priorities.

01
STRATEGY-TO-LEADERSHIP READINESS

DOES YOUR LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY MATCH WHERE THE ORGANISATION IS GOING?

Strategies create leadership requirements because every strategic direction places different demands on the people responsible for delivering it. An organisation entering new markets, for example, may need leaders who can navigate unfamiliar environments, build new relationships and make decisions with less certainty, while a business focused on operational efficiency may require greater discipline, consistency and executional rigour.

Transformation can place greater emphasis on adaptability, collaboration and change leadership, while rapid growth may expose limitations in delegation, decision-making and leadership depth. Technology can also reshape leadership expectations quickly, introducing capabilities that may not have been essential even a few years earlier.

Despite this, many organisations continue to discuss strategy and leadership separately. Strategy defines where the organisation wants to go, while leadership determines whether it has the capability to get there. Leadership readiness begins by connecting these two conversations.

STATEMENT	SCORE
We have clearly identified the leadership capabilities our strategy will require over the next three to five years.	1 2 3 4 5
Changes in business strategy trigger a deliberate review of leadership requirements.	1 2 3 4 5
We can clearly identify where current leadership capability may constrain future growth or transformation.	1 2 3 4 5
Leadership planning forms part of strategic business planning rather than operating as a separate HR activity.	1 2 3 4 5
Your Strategy-to-Leadership Readiness Score: _____ / 20	

A stronger score suggests that future business ambition is being deliberately connected to leadership requirements. A lower score may indicate that leadership decisions remain driven primarily by current roles, vacancies or immediate capability needs rather than where the organisation is going.

Consider:

If your strategy succeeds exactly as planned, will your leadership capability be able to keep up with it?

02
LEADERSHIP BENCH STRENGTH

HOW MUCH LEADERSHIP DEPTH EXISTS BEYOND THE PEOPLE CURRENTLY IN CRITICAL ROLES?

Organisations often have a clear sense of who their strongest leaders are, but the more important question is whether sufficient leadership capability exists beneath them. Organisational resilience cannot depend on a small group of exceptional individuals. When experience, influence and decision-making capability become concentrated among a handful of senior leaders, vulnerability increases.

Growth can stretch existing leaders beyond their capacity, while promotions can solve one leadership need only to create another elsewhere. Unexpected departures can leave critical capability gaps, and new opportunities become harder to pursue when there are not enough experienced leaders ready to assume broader responsibility.

Strong leadership benches therefore need to be built deliberately. Emerging leaders require meaningful exposure before promotion, while potential needs to be tested and developed through experience. When organisations consistently give people opportunities to lead beyond the boundaries of their current responsibilities, leadership depth becomes an organisational capability rather than something left to chance.

STATEMENT	SCORE
We have sufficient leadership depth beneath our current executive team.	1 2 3 4 5
High-potential leaders receive meaningful exposure to increasingly complex responsibilities.	1 2 3 4 5
We know which emerging leaders could realistically assume broader organisational responsibility over time.	1 2 3 4 5
Leadership capability is distributed across the organisation rather than concentrated in a small number of individuals.	1 2 3 4 5
Your Leadership Bench Strength Score: _____ / 20	

A stronger score suggests that leadership capability extends beyond today's executive team. A lower score may indicate dependence on a small number of leaders, limited development opportunities for emerging talent or insufficient clarity about who could assume greater responsibility.

Consider:

If three of your strongest leaders became unavailable tomorrow, how much leadership capacity would remain?

03
SUCCESSION & CRITICAL ROLE READINESS

HOW VULNERABLE IS THE ORGANISATION IF A CRITICAL LEADER LEAVES?

Leadership transitions are inevitable, but their timing is rarely predictable. A CEO may retire according to a carefully planned timeline, while another executive may leave unexpectedly. A high-performing leader may be approached by another organisation, or a founder may decide the time has come to step away.

The greater risk is not necessarily the departure itself, but how prepared the organisation is to respond.

True succession readiness requires far more than identifying possible replacements. Organisations need to understand which roles carry the greatest strategic and operational exposure, where dependence on individual leaders is particularly high, and whether credible successors are genuinely capable of stepping into greater responsibility.

A succession plan that exists primarily as a list of names may create the appearance of preparedness without providing meaningful protection. A stronger succession system develops capability and creates credible options before they are needed.

STATEMENT	SCORE
We have identified the leadership roles whose unexpected vacancy would create the greatest organisational risk.	1 2 3 4 5
Credible succession options exist for our most critical leadership positions.	1 2 3 4 5
Potential successors are being actively prepared rather than simply named on a succession plan.	1 2 3 4 5
We have considered what would happen if a critical executive became unavailable unexpectedly.	1 2 3 4 5
Your Succession & Critical Role Readiness Score: _____ / 20	

A stronger score suggests that the organisation understands its critical-role exposure and is deliberately preparing leadership options. A lower score may reveal dependence on individuals, insufficient succession depth or limited preparation for unexpected leadership change.

Consider:

Where would your organisation feel the greatest impact if leadership changed unexpectedly?

04
FUTURE CAPABILITY READINESS

ARE YOUR LEADERS BECOMING CAPABLE ENOUGH FOR WHAT COMES NEXT?

Leadership experience remains enormously valuable, but experience alone does not guarantee future readiness. The challenges senior leaders will face over the next five years may look very different from those that shaped their careers to date, which means past success cannot be the only measure of future capability.

Technology and artificial intelligence are reshaping work, operating models are becoming more complex, workforces are changing, and customer expectations continue to evolve. These shifts require leaders who can adapt, learn and expand their capabilities rather than relying solely on approaches that have worked in the past.

Future-ready organisations do not wait for capability gaps to become visible. They consider how strategy and the operating environment are changing, identify the leadership capabilities those changes will demand and begin developing them early.

STATEMENT	SCORE
We have identified leadership capabilities that will become increasingly important as our organisation evolves.	1 2 3 4 5
Leadership development priorities are informed by future business requirements, not only current performance gaps.	1 2 3 4 5
Leaders receive opportunities that stretch their capability beyond the requirements of their present roles.	1 2 3 4 5
We regularly reassess whether our leadership capability is keeping pace with changes in the organisation and its environment.	1 2 3 4 5
Your Future Capability Readiness Score: _____ / 20	

A stronger score suggests that the organisation deliberately develops leadership capability ahead of demand. A lower score may indicate that development remains largely reactive and focused on today's requirements rather than tomorrow's complexity.

Consider:

Are you developing leaders for the organisation you have today or the one you are becoming?

05
TRANSITION & CONTINUITY READINESS

CAN LEADERSHIP CHANGE WITHOUT THE ORGANISATION LOSING MOMENTUM?

Even when the right successor has been identified, leadership transition remains a vulnerable period. Critical knowledge can be lost, established relationships shift, and decision-making may slow while an incoming leader develops an understanding of the organisation. Employees can become uncertain, while Boards, customers and other stakeholders watch closely for signs of stability and confidence.

A new executive may bring exceptional experience and capability to a role and still struggle if the organisation assumes that a successful appointment automatically leads to successful integration. New leaders need to understand the organisation's history, culture, relationships, strategic priorities and unwritten dynamics while establishing credibility and beginning to create value.

Leadership continuity therefore requires a deliberate approach to transition that extends beyond traditional onboarding. Effective transition planning protects institutional knowledge, supports stakeholder confidence and reduces the organisation's dependence on any one individual.

STATEMENT	SCORE
We have a deliberate approach to transferring critical knowledge when senior leaders transition.	1 2 3 4 5
Newly appointed executives receive structured support beyond standard organisational onboarding.	1 2 3 4 5
Leadership transitions are planned with organisational continuity, stakeholder confidence and strategic momentum in mind.	1 2 3 4 5
Our organisation could navigate an unexpected senior leadership transition without becoming overly dependent on emergency external solutions.	1 2 3 4 5
Your Transition & Continuity Readiness Score: _____ / 20	

A stronger score suggests that leadership transitions are managed with deliberate attention to knowledge, integration and continuity. A lower score may reveal dependence on individuals, weak transition planning or insufficient support for incoming executives.

Consider:

When a senior leader leaves, does the organisation retain what they helped build or begin rebuilding from scratch?



Your Leadership Readiness Score

Transfer the scores from each dimension below.

LEADERSHIP READINESS DIMENSION	SCORE
1 Strategy-to-Leadership Readiness	_____ / 20
2 Leadership Bench Strength	_____ / 20
3 Succession & Critical Role Readiness	_____ / 20
4 Future Capability Readiness	_____ / 20
5 Transition & Continuity Readiness	_____ / 20
TOTAL LEADERSHIP READINESS	**_____ / 100**

Understanding Your Result

0–39 Leadership Exposure

Your results suggest that important leadership dependencies or future capability gaps may be creating organisational exposure. This does not necessarily mean that you lack strong leaders. Rather, leadership strength may be concentrated in too few individuals, succession options may be limited, future capability requirements may not yet be sufficiently understood or leadership transitions may create disproportionate disruption.

Your priority: Identify your two lowest-scoring dimensions and determine which gaps present the greatest risk to future strategy, continuity or growth.

40–59 Leadership Foundations Developing

Your organisation has some important leadership foundations, but readiness remains uneven. Certain areas may be progressing well while others remain dependent on individuals, underdeveloped or insufficiently connected to future strategic requirements.

Your priority: Focus on the two lowest-scoring dimensions and identify practical actions that can strengthen leadership readiness over the next 12 months.

60–79 Leadership Capacity Building

Your organisation demonstrates meaningful leadership strength and appears to be building capability deliberately. Leadership depth, succession and future capability are receiving attention, although some areas may still require greater consistency or integration.

Your priority: Strengthen the connection between strategy, succession, leadership development and transition planning so that individual initiatives begin operating as a more connected leadership system.

80–100 Future Leadership Ready

Your results suggest that leadership is being approached as a strategic organisational capability rather than a collection of isolated activities. The organisation appears to have meaningful leadership depth and a proactive approach to future capability, succession and transition.

Readiness, however, is never permanent. Strategies evolve, executives move and organisational requirements change.

Your priority: Continue testing leadership readiness against future strategy and emerging complexity so that today's strength does not become tomorrow's complacency.

Your Score Is Only the Beginning

Your overall score provides a useful indication of readiness, but it should never be interpreted in isolation.

The relationship between your five dimensions can reveal where leadership risk is actually concentrated.

Strong Strategy-to-Leadership Readiness + Weak Bench Strength

You understand what leadership your future strategy requires, but may not yet have enough leadership depth to provide it.

The question: Where will the leadership capacity required to execute your strategy come from?

Strong Bench Strength + Weak Succession Readiness

You may have talented emerging leaders, but they are not necessarily being deliberately prepared for the roles that matter most.

The question: Are your strongest future leaders being developed towards your most critical leadership requirements?

Strong Succession Readiness + Weak Future Capability

You may have credible replacements for today's leadership roles without sufficiently considering how those roles and their capability requirements will change.

The question: Are you preparing successors for today's organisation or tomorrow's?

Strong Future Capability + Weak Transition & Continuity Readiness

You may be developing capable leaders while remaining vulnerable when senior leadership actually changes.

The question: Can leadership transition without unnecessary loss of knowledge, confidence or momentum?

One Dimension Significantly Lower Than the Rest

A strong overall score can conceal concentrated exposure. If one dimension sits materially below the others, it deserves attention even if your overall result falls into a stronger readiness category.

The question: What would happen if this particular weakness were tested tomorrow?

Leadership Readiness Looks Beyond Performance

Leadership readiness is not a judgement of whether your current leaders are performing well. An organisation can have highly capable executives and still carry significant future leadership exposure.

Performance tells you how leadership is functioning today.

Readiness considers whether the organisation has sufficient

- **leadership depth**
- **future capability**
- **succession options**
- **transition resilience**

to continue creating value as circumstances change.

Succession planning is therefore an important component of leadership readiness, but it is not the whole picture. Leadership readiness asks a broader question:

Will our organisation have the leadership capability it needs when the future arrives?

Use the Assessment With Your Leadership Team

Leadership readiness sits at the intersection of strategy, people and organisational risk, which means responsibility for it cannot sit with HR alone.

Boards	need visibility into critical leadership exposure and succession risk.
CEOs	need confidence that leadership capability can support strategy and future growth.
HR Leaders	need to understand where leadership pipelines, development and succession require greater attention.

For a deeper organisational view, ask relevant Board members, executives and HR leaders to **complete the assessment independently before comparing their results**

Do not expect identical scores.

Differences in perception can reveal important gaps in visibility and assumptions. A Board that believes succession readiness is strong while the CEO or HR leadership scores it considerably lower has discovered something worth discussing.

The objective is not agreement for its own sake. It is a more informed conversation about where the organisation is genuinely prepared and where greater attention may be required.

From Leadership Readiness to Leadership Continuity

Leadership readiness helps you understand **where your organisation stands today**

Leadership continuity asks what you do with that understanding.

The **Cycan Leadership Continuity Framework** considers leadership as a connected organisational system:

Acquire → Develop → Align → Sustain

Acquire	the capability that does not currently exist within the organisation.
Develop	leadership capability continuously rather than waiting for gaps to emerge.
Align	leaders around shared strategic and organisational priorities.
Sustain	leadership strength by building depth, preparing successors and reducing dependence on individuals.

Leadership readiness can help identify where this system requires greater attention.

Turn Your Results Into Action

Your score is not the end of the assessment.

It is the beginning of a better leadership conversation.

Start with your **two lowest-scoring dimensions** and ask three questions.

1 What is driving this result?

Look beneath the score. Is the underlying issue insufficient capability, limited leadership depth, overdependence on individuals, weak succession options or poor transition preparation?

2 What happens if nothing changes?

Consider the strategic and organisational consequences. Which ambitions become harder to achieve? Which transitions become riskier? Where does the organisation become overly dependent on individual leaders?

3 What could we meaningfully change within the next 12 months?

Avoid trying to solve everything at once. Identify the leadership priorities that would most materially strengthen future readiness and establish clear actions around them.

The purpose of the assessment is not to produce a score.

It is to improve the quality of the leadership decisions that follow.

The Question Is Not Whether Leadership Will Change

Leadership will inevitably change as people move into new roles, strategies evolve, organisations grow and new challenges emerge that today's leaders may not yet have encountered. No organisation can predict every transition, disruption or opportunity it will face, nor can it know with certainty which leadership capabilities will become most important as its environment continues to change.

The organisations best prepared for these moments are not those attempting to predict every possible future. They are those deliberately building sufficient leadership capability, depth and continuity to respond effectively when change occurs. By developing future leaders, strengthening succession options and continually assessing whether leadership capability remains aligned with strategic direction, organisations create greater capacity to navigate uncertainty without compromising momentum.

Leadership readiness creates options and confidence. It reduces dependence on individual leaders, strengthens the organisation's ability to respond to transition and ensures that leadership can continue evolving alongside the business. Rather than allowing leadership to become a potential point of organisational vulnerability, readiness turns it into a source of resilience and long-term strength.

How Ready Is Your Organisation for the Leadership Its Future Will Require?

Take the Next Step

Your assessment has given you a view of where leadership strength exists and where future exposure may be emerging.

The next step is understanding **what those results mean in the context of your organisation.**

Cycan can facilitate a focused **Leadership Readiness Conversation** with CEOs, Boards, executive teams and HR leaders to explore your results against your organisation's strategic direction, future capability requirements, critical-role exposure, succession depth and leadership pipeline.

The objective is not to prescribe another generic leadership programme. It is to identify the leadership priorities that matter most to your organisation and determine what needs attention now, before those gaps become urgent.

Book a Leadership Readiness Conversation

www.cycan.co.za

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