

# SENIOR EXECUTIVES:

Most Critical Competencies,  
Strengths and Development Needs



# OUR RICH DATASET FOR SENIOR EXECUTIVES

The PROFILOR® 360 degree feedback instrument has been in use by organizations across the world for decades now, yielding a rich database of over 750,000 leaders who have completed The PROFILOR®.

These leaders have completed one of our nine standard PROFILOR® 360s representing the following levels and functions: Senior Executive, Business Unit Leader, Mid-Level Leader, First-Level Leader, Individual Contributor, Internal Consultant, IT Manager, Sales Manager, Key Account Manager.

The research gathered across this time has yielded many important answers for leaders in all of these roles.

This specific research focuses on Senior Executives based on the most recent data from 1,555 leaders who completed The PROFILOR® for Senior Executives (2017 through 2025).

## We asked the following questions:

**1**

What competencies are most critical for Senior Executive success? Has this changed over time?

**2**

What competencies represent strengths and development needs for Senior Executives? Has this changed over time?

**3**

What competencies are most related to assessments of current performance, long-term advancement potential, and likelihood of derailing?

# SENIOR EXECUTIVE COMPETENCIES

The Senior Executive model has 17 competencies grouped into four super-factors:



## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- Use Astute Judgment
- Shape Strategy
- Display Vision
- Apply Financial Insights
- Drive Global Integration



## PEOPLE LEADERSHIP

- Use Organizational Influence
- Energize the Organization
- Develop Organizational Talent
- Ensure Collaboration
- Build Organizational Relationships



## RESULTS LEADERSHIP

- Ensure Customer Focus
- Align the Organization
- Optimize Execution
- Drive Organizational Success
- Lead Boldly



## PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

- Earn Unwavering Trust
- Demonstrate Agility

Each competency is made up of a number of behaviors. The behaviors are rated by multiple perspectives (Self, Manager(s), Peers, Direct Reports, and Others) on a 5-point competence scale (1 – Not Developed; 3 – Competent; 5 – Outstanding).

## MOST IMPORTANT COMPETENCIES

The following table shows the five most important competencies as rated by the Boss/Primary Manager, Secondary Manager, and Self. Importance is rated on a 7-point scale.

“*Use Astute Judgment*” is the most critical competency for Senior Executive success.

PRIMARY MANAGER	SECONDARY MANAGER	SELF
1. Use Astute Judgment (M = 5.47)	1. Use Astute Judgment (M = 5.42)	1. Use Astute Judgment (M = 5.52)
2. Earn Unwavering Trust (M = 5.28)	2. Ensure Collaboration (M = 5.25)	2. Earn Unwavering Trust (M = 5.51)
3. Use Organizational Influence (M = 5.16)	3. Build Organizational Relationships (M = 5.23)	3. Ensure Collaboration (M = 5.12)
4. Ensure Collaboration (M = 5.14)	4. Earn Unwavering Trust (M = 5.22)	4. Develop Organizational Talent (M = 5.12)
5. Develop Organizational Talent (M = 5.05)	5. Use Organizational Influence (M = 5.14)	5. Drive Organizational Success (M = 5.09)

All three perspectives noted that Use Astute Judgment is the most critical competency. All three perspectives rated Use Astute Judgment, Earn Unwavering Trust, and Ensure Collaboration in the top five most important competencies.

Additional analyses examined whether importance assessments changed over time. In almost every scenario, the importance assessments did not change over time. The most noticeable change over time was for Earn Unwavering Trust, which declined in importance

over time (year accounted for 10% and 4% of the variance in ratings for Secondary Manager and Primary Manager respectively). Overall, however, it is still the second-highest competency in Primary Manager importance ratings over the years examined.

While this section looked at ratings of importance for the three rater groups, the remainder of this summary report will focus on the Primary Manager’s assessment of Importance, as this generally takes precedence for a person receiving PROFILOR® feedback.

# CRITICAL COMPETENCIES, STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

For the five competencies rated highest in importance by the Primary Manager, the “Average Others” competency ratings are shown below. Generally, it is the “Average Others” rating that is used to assess a person’s strength in particular competencies.

COMPETENCY	AVERAGE OTHERS RATING
Use Astute Judgment	3.84 (moderate)
Earn Unwavering Trust	4.08 (clear strength)
Use Organizational Influence	3.75 (clear development area)
Ensure Collaboration	3.78 (clear development area)
Develop Organizational Talent	3.63 (clear development area)

Of the five competencies considered most important by Primary Managers, only one is a clear strength – Earn Unwavering Trust. In fact, it was the only competency out of 17 that had an “Average Others” rating higher than 4.0. Earn Unwavering Trust is the highest rated competency across all 17 competencies; Ensure Customer Focus is the second highest rated competency; Build Organizational Relationships is the third highest rated competency.

Develop Organizational Talent (rated lowest of 17 competencies), Use Organizational Influence (rated 4th lowest of 17 competencies), and Ensure Collaboration (rated 5th lowest of 17 competencies) are clear development needs. The other lowest rated competencies among the 17 are Optimize Execution (2nd lowest) and Align the Organization (3rd lowest).



**“‘Earn Unwavering Trust’ is the only critically important competency that is also a strength for Senior Executives. Three of the critically important competencies were clear development areas: Develop Organizational Talent, Use Organizational Influence, and Ensure Collaboration.**

The table below shows the competencies ranked from most to least important based on the Primary Managers’ assessments, and the Average Others (all except Self) rating for each of these competencies (dark blue – above 4.0; gray- 3.8 – 4.0; light blue – below 3.8). This view highlights the fact that Senior Executives have weaker skillsets in several areas most critical for their success.

	Use Astute Judgment	Earn Unwavering Trust	Use Organizational Influence	Ensure Collaboration	Develop Organizational Talent	Drive Organizational Success	Build Organizational Relationships	Energize the Organization	Optimize Execution	Ensure Customer Focus	Display Vision	Align the Organization	Lead Boldly	Demonstrate Agility	Shape Strategy	Apply Financial Insights	Drive Global Integration
Average Others Rating	3.84	4.08	3.75	3.78	3.63	3.88	3.89	3.84	3.71	3.96	3.88	3.74	3.84	3.82	3.82	3.84	3.86

Additional analyses were completed to examine if there are year over year differences in competency effectiveness ratings (Average Others). The most meaningful changes in ratings over time (increasing) were for Earn Unwavering Trust (year accounted for 3% of variance in ratings).

# COMPETENCIES MOST

RELATED TO PERFORMANCE, ADVANCEMENT  
POTENTIAL, AND CAREER DIFFICULTY

## PERFORMANCE

In a portion of this sample (N =228 - 361), data exists for the Primary Manager's assessment of a person's competence in current role on the following scale: Outstanding; Clearly One of the Best; Somewhat Above Average; Average; Somewhat Below Average; Clearly Below Average; and Very Weak. The Primary Manager's average competency ratings for all 17 competencies are significantly related to these assessments of competence, with correlations ranging from -.442 (competence ratings are reverse scored) to -.620. **The competencies most related to assessments of competence in current role are: Lead Boldly (-.620), Drive Organizational Success (-.615), Use Astute Judgment (-.609).**

“ *Lead Boldly, Drive Organizational Success, and Use Astute* are most related to assessments of competence in current role.

## ADVANCEMENT POTENTIAL

In a portion of this sample (N =226 - 358), data exists for the Primary Manager's assessment of a person's long-range advancement potential: CEO or President; Senior Executive; Executive; Upper Middle Management; Middle Management; First-line Management; Not Suited for Management. The Primary Manager's average competency ratings for all 17 competencies are significantly related to these assessments of potential, with correlations ranging from -.237 (advancement potential ratings are reverse scored) to -.466. **The competencies most related to assessments of long-range advancement potential are: Display Vision (-.466), Lead Boldly (-.448), and Use Astute Judgment (-.442).**

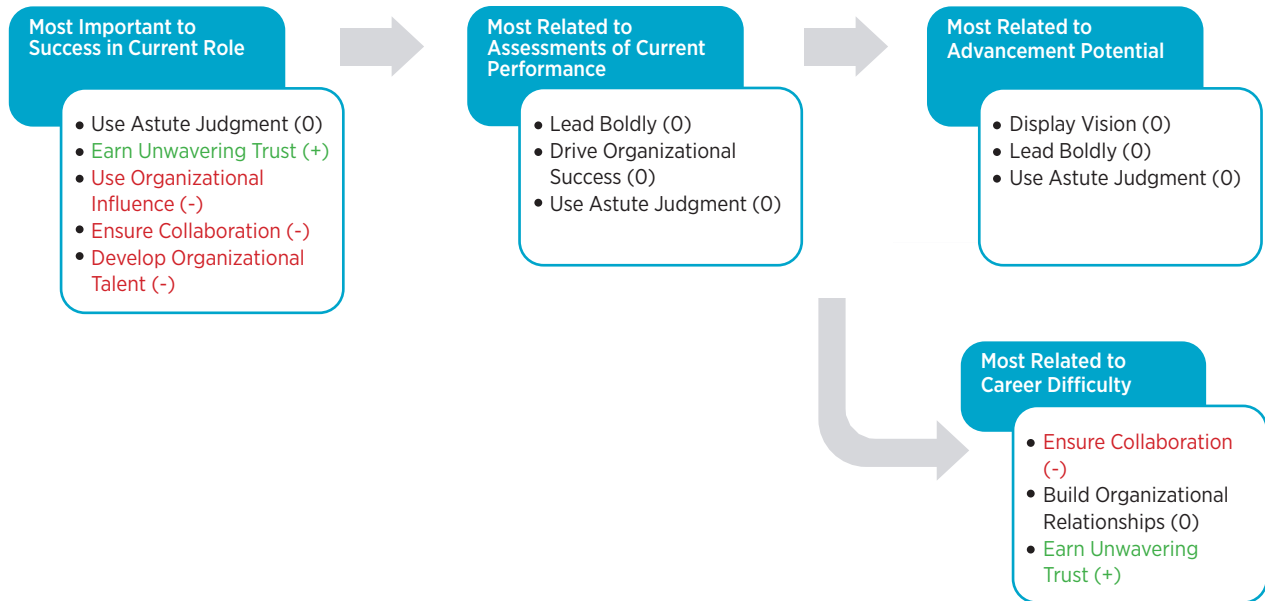
Use Astute Judgment is important to success in the Senior Executive role, and highly related to managers' judgments of current competence. Because Use Astute Judgment is also related to long-range advancement potential, Senior Executives have another reason to seek to improve their skills in this arena. In addition, while Lead Boldly and Display Vision are not identified as development areas for Senior Executives in their current roles, their future progression may have a good deal to do with their strength in these areas.

## CAREER DIFFICULTY

Primary Managers were also asked to assess an individual's risk of experiencing career difficulty due to factors under their personal control on the following scale: Very High Risk; High Risk; Moderate Risk; Slight Risk; Little to No Risk. Correlations between competency ratings and Primary Managers' assessments of career difficulty are available for 225 - 358 leaders, depending on the competency. The correlations range from -.248 to -.469 (career difficulty ratings are reverse scored). **The competencies most related to higher risk of career difficulty (i.e., doing poorly on the competencies is related to higher ratings of risk of career difficulty) are: Ensure Collaboration (-.469), Build Organizational Relationships (-.440), and Earn Unwavering Trust (-.410).**

# SUMMARY

The following graphic summarizes the results of this research for Senior Executives.



Note: Competencies in red (-) represent development needs for Senior Executives; in green (+), represent strengths; in black (0), represent moderate areas.

Of the competencies considered critical, Senior Executives are strongest at Earning Unwavering Trust, and weakest at Using Organizational Influence, Ensuring Collaboration, and Developing Organizational Talent. Two of the areas most related to assessments of current performance are exactly the same as the areas most related to advancement potential: Use Astute Judgment and Lead Boldly. There is certainly room for improvement in these areas, as well as Display Vision, especially if advancement is desired.

Senior Executives at threat of having career difficulties are likely struggling now with some of the People Leadership and Personal Leadership areas. Most related to threat of career difficulty are Ensure Collaboration, Build Organizational Relationships and Earn Unwavering Trust. Of these, Senior Executives as a whole have the most work to do related to Ensuring Collaboration (a current development need).

Follow Assessments International @ [www.assessmentsinternationalinc.com](http://www.assessmentsinternationalinc.com) for more research from our rich 360 feedback data. Additional research focuses on similar questions related to First-Level Leaders, Mid-Level Leaders, and Business Unit Leaders to uncover what matters most to each level and moving from level to level.