

CLARITY IN THE CRITICAL MOMENTS OF LEADERSHIP

One philosophy. Two brands. Different buyers.

How executive judgement can be strengthened inside organisations
and in the private work of individual leaders.

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Better decisions begin with a better view of what is really happening.

01 • Executive summary

At the most consequential moments, experienced leaders and executive teams rarely fail because they lack intelligence, expertise or data. They fail because pressure changes what they can see, what can be said, how disagreement is handled, and when commitment hardens into action.

My work is organised through two complementary routes. One serves organisations that need stronger executive judgement around a live business situation. The other serves senior individuals who choose to undertake private developmental work themselves. The buyer, the contract and the confidentiality architecture differ; the intellectual foundation does not.

This paper sets out that shared foundation, the two routes into it, and the kinds of situation in which each is useful. It is not a product catalogue. Its purpose is to help a reader recognise which problem they are actually trying to solve — and through which door the work should begin.

02 • Who this is for

- Chief executives, CHROs, board members and transformation sponsors assessing organisation-funded support.
- Senior executives, founders and portfolio leaders considering private, self-funded developmental work.
- Advisers and introducers who need a clear boundary between organisational intervention, individual development and responsible referral.

03 • The proposition

Executive judgement is not a fixed trait. It is a capacity — individual and collective — that can deteriorate under pressure and can be deliberately strengthened.

Executive judgement is the repeatable capacity of an executive or executive team to form, test, choose, communicate and revise consequential courses of action — integrating evidence, context, multiple perspectives, values, trade-offs and downstream consequences, at sufficient speed, under uncertainty and interdependence.

Pressure is more than workload. It is the combined effect of material stakes, uncertainty, time compression, exposure, interdependence, conflict and identity threat. Under those conditions, capable people may narrow attention, distort evidence, defer to status, fragment into competing realities, move at the wrong tempo, or stay locked into a failing course.

Evidence note. This is a controlled practice architecture, informed by established research on threat-rigidity, sensemaking, psychological safety, acute stress and collective intelligence. It is not a validated psychometric instrument and does not claim to predict outcomes.

04 • Two routes into one body of work

The two routes are not alternative labels for the same sale. They are different contractual paths into a shared body of work, and the honest question that separates them is simply who the work is for: your organisation, or you.

On the organisation-funded route, the work runs through established advisory vehicles, each fitted to the situation rather than sold from a catalogue: a discreet senior intervention around a live, high-consequence moment; an executive strategy day as a low-friction entry; a team programme where the executive group itself is the unit of change; an individual pathway for a single leader whose judgement is decisive; a focused capability intervention for a team under sustained pressure; and a retained advisory relationship where the need is ongoing. The right vehicle is chosen from the situation, and the smallest credible one is chosen first.

05 • Methodological discipline

The same discipline governs both routes.

- Begin with the situation, not with a preferred programme or theory.
- Use the least intrusive method capable of addressing the issue responsibly.
- Distinguish fact, interpretation, hypothesis and recommendation.
- Protect confidentiality — without using confidentiality to protect avoidance or harmful conduct.
- Convert reflection into decisions, experiments, routines or governance changes.

Organisations purchase the consequence of the method: a better decision system around a live business issue. Individuals who fund their own work purchase the depth itself: a disciplined examination of the patterns that govern them. The sequence is shared; the standing differs.

06 • The individual route in depth — the developmental framework

For a reader considering the private, self-initiated route, it is worth being transparent about the mechanism, because the individual work is more than a series of conversations. It is organised through a structured developmental framework, the Alchemy of Leadership.

It is not decorative mysticism. It is a disciplined way of working with the domains, postures and developmental passage that conventional competency models tend to leave untouched.

Five elements — the territory. The domains of a leader's functioning that come under strain when the stakes rise, and that a competency model rarely reaches.

Four archetypes — the postures. The stances a leader adopts, each carrying its characteristic strength and its shadow — the same quality that builds success and, under pressure, begins to cost.

Four phases — the passage. The developmental sequence through which change is actually worked, rather than declared: what has to be dissolved before something more reliable can be formed.

This framework belongs to the individual route. Organisation-funded work draws on the same underlying understanding but is expressed in the language of situation, judgement and consequence.

o7 • Illustrative situations

The examples below are generic composites, not descriptions of client outcomes.

Where an organisation may initiate and sponsor the work:

- A leadership transition where authority has passed but judgement has not yet settled.
- A transformation in which the executive team is quietly fragmenting into competing realities.
- Alignment that holds inside the room and dissolves the moment people leave it.
- Executive derailment risk, where a capable leader's signature strength has begun to work against them.
- A restructuring or a post-merger integration where tempo, commitment and reality-contact are mismatched across the team.

Where an individual may decide to self-fund the work:

- A senior leader who has noticed a recurring pattern that others have stopped naming.
- A transition or a plateau that looks like success from outside and feels like a question from within.
- A matter of identity, purpose or legacy that a leader would rather examine privately, without an employer sponsor or an audience.

This is not a substitute for screening where there is clinical need, an acute crisis, or a live organisational process — where those are present, the responsible step is a referral, not an engagement.

o8 • Choosing the right starting point

The right starting point depends on a single question: whether the work is for your organisation or for you personally. That one question settles the client, the confidentiality architecture and the standing of every participant, which is why it is resolved first, and resolved honestly.

Whichever route applies, the approach is the same: recommend the smallest credible engagement, whilst ensuring the value delivered.

09 • Boundaries — what this is not

This work is not therapy, crisis containment, investigation, legal advice, or a way to outsource ownership of a decision. It does not diagnose, and it does not predict. Where a need falls outside its scope, the action is transparency and a referral. Confidentiality is protected on both routes — but confidentiality is never used to shelter avoidance or harmful conduct.

10 • Evidence foundations

Hambrick, D. C. and Mason, P. A. (1984) “Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers”, *Academy of Management Review*, 9(2), 193–206.

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Weick, K. E. (1993) “The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster”, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38(4), 628–652.

Edmondson, A. (1999) “Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams”, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383.

Woolley, A. W. et al. (2010) “Evidence for a collective intelligence factor in the performance of human groups”, *Science*, 330(6004), 686–688.

Shields, G. S., Sazma, M. A. and Yonelinas, A. P. (2016) “The effects of acute stress on core executive functions”, *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 68, 651–668.

Where to begin

The most useful first step is usually a short, confidential conversation — to work out which problem you are actually solving, and whether either route is right for you. Contact via the websites, or directly at: laszlo.cser@vantarisconsulting.com

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LASZLO CSER

One founder. One intellectual foundation.
Two routes into the work.



Organisations engage through Vantaris Consulting.

Self-funded senior leaders engage through Vantaris Leader.

Both begin with the same question: what is the situation asking of your judgement now?

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