



How can we help people perform at their best in new teams and promotions?

Introduction

Getting a promotion or transitioning into a new role can feel like stepping into uncharted waters – exciting, rewarding, but also daunting. The initial thrill of success often gives way to a complex set of emotions as new colleagues, processes, and cultural expectations demand fresh approaches and mindsets. How individuals respond to these challenges can define not only their success but also their long-term growth.

Research consistently shows that behaviour, more than technical skills or even previous achievements, is the real differentiator in how quickly and effectively someone adapts to a new role.

The reality of role transitions can be harsh. According to DDI's Leadership Transitions Report 2021, around **40%** of people said becoming an executive wasn't a positive experience – many even described it as more stressful than going through a divorce or raising teenagers. Internally promoted executives fail at a rate of **35%**, a figure that jumps to **47%** for external hires. Often, this failure isn't about capability. It's about behavioural mismatch – the ability (or inability) to shift how you show up in a new context.

This study explores these challenges through the lens of behaviour and resilience. Drawing on research with 200 UK professionals who had recently transitioned into new roles – either through internal promotions, lateral moves, or joining new organisations – we reveal the critical behavioural factors that make or break success during career transitions.



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Adaptation isn't optional – it's the bridge to success. Those who develop self-awareness, behavioural flexibility, and resilience will not just survive career transitions, but thrive.

Adapt or Stall: Change Demands New Behaviour

Adapting to a new role isn't just about learning the technical skills or mastering a fresh set of objectives. It's about reshaping how you show up every day, finding the right balance between your natural personality strengths and the new challenges you face. For many, this means becoming more aware of how their deeper, underlying traits influence their behaviour in high-stakes, unfamiliar contexts. It means knowing when to lean into your strengths and when to dial back potential overextensions.



Don't let your strongest behaviours become your biggest crash sites!

ADAPT!

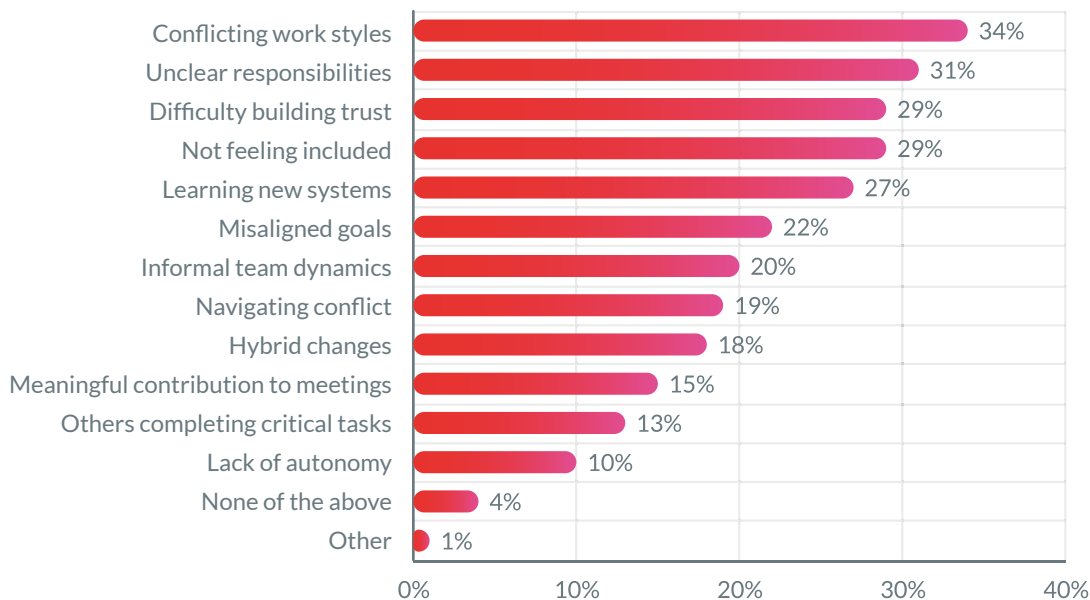
— Stewart Desson, CEO and Business Psychologist

As Carl Jung once said, ***“The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are”***. This captures the heart of adapting to new challenges: staying true to yourself while learning to flex.

Having strong self-awareness before you step into a new opportunity is critical. Change isn't polite — it forces us to rethink, reshape, and realign our behaviours. And when we land in new territory, the need to adapt only intensifies. New teams, fresh cultures, evolving expectations — all of them call for new skills and a different way of connecting. You might even find that your new boss is the complete opposite of the manager you worked with before. In these moments, adaptability isn't just useful — it's essential. As Darwin famously highlighted, survival favours those who adapt best to changing conditions.

Adaptability isn't just a valuable trait — it's what allows us to thrive when the world shifts. And as the Roman playwright Terence wisely said back in 161 BC: ***“Fortune favours the brave”***.

The winners aren't necessarily the strongest, but they may be the bravest when they need to move with the demands emerging around them. Mastering this starts with recognising and flexing your natural tendencies, knowing when to stay authentic, and when to stretch yourself into new behaviours. Often, the people who succeed most quickly are those who embrace the paradoxes within themselves – being confident yet open, determined yet adaptable, bold yet thoughtful – shifting gears as each moment demands.



Note: Percentage of respondents reporting experience of this challenge when transitioning into a new role. Respondents could select up to three challenges. n=200

In our research of professional staff, over a third (**34%**) of those going through a transition shared they found it hard to adapt when the workplace had “Conflicting working styles within the team”.

This experience isn't unique. Research by Keller and Meaney (2018) similarly found that many leaders are underprepared for – and under-supported – during transitions into new roles, making early setbacks surprisingly common. They conclude that this is one reason leaders with good technical capabilities are prone to early failure during change.

Conflicting work styles, or an inability to value opposites?

These clashes come in many different forms, often due to opposing, but equally valid, ways of achieving our goals that are often misunderstood. Here are 8 high level Aspects of behaviour that we tend to see show up in the workplace. While seemingly opposite at first glance, when integrated well and valued equally, they can be used together to great effect, either within yourself or with those around you.



Embracing Paradox

Inspiration Driven

Adaptable
Flexible
Spontaneous

Discipline Driven

Purposeful
Structured
Reliable

Big Picture Thinking

Conceptual
Imaginative
Radical

Down to Earth

Practical
Evidence-Based
Cautious

Extraverted

Sociable
Demonstrative
Takes Charge

Introverted

Observing
Measured
Intimate

Outcome Focused

Tough
Competitive
Logical

People Focused

Accommodating
Collaborative
Empathetic



Room for growth when
we value different ways
of being



Reflection Pause: How often have you seen one of these aspects of behaviour, or the collective of qualities within that Aspect, assumed to be inherently negative? What was the impact of this on you?

When we fail to see the value in a particular aspect, quality or behaviour, conflict becomes far more likely as we might incorrectly assume the rationale of someone else's position.

That's why having a framework for understanding behaviour in the workplace that distinguishes between effective vs overextended behaviour is so helpful for better teamwork.

Self-Awareness as a Starting Point

Terblanche, Albertyn, and van Coller-Peter (2017) found that despite good technical upskilling, nearly half of promoted senior leaders underperformed during a transition as they were not prepared for the necessary profound shift required in behaviour and mindset. Our research highlights a crucial link between self-awareness and the shifts required. People who engage in self-reflection are more likely to adapt successfully to new roles, take the initiative, and develop a growth mindset (we got a whopping correlation of **$r=.50$** between these success behaviours and self-reflection). This positive relationship suggests that those who invest time in understanding their personality and behaviour are better equipped to handle the ambiguity of new roles. Conversely, masking our authenticity (when we bite our tongue too much and give away our power) is linked to a lack of growth mindset (a negative correlation at **$r=-.22$**). Our data also says that masking our authenticity also creates unhelpful ambiguity and significantly reduces proactive attitude (**$r=-.26$ to $r=-.28$**). This also suggests we need to let out our authenticity even more when we experience a role transition.

As Abraham Maslow said, ***“What is necessary to change a person is to change their awareness of themselves”.***



Reflection Pause: Think about a recent role change or major shift in your responsibilities. Which of your natural qualities helped you adjust quickly? Were there any strengths that you found yourself overplaying or holding back?

Self-awareness isn't just a nice-to-have; it's a catalyst for meaningful adaptation. Reflecting on how you naturally prefer to act, communicate, and collaborate gives you a better chance of thriving in a new context. It also reduces the risk of masking your true self — a costly habit linked to lower proactivity, less role clarity, and a weaker growth mindset.

	Self-Reflection	Adapting Behaviours	Authenticity at Work
Growth Mindset	.50	.43	.22
Role Clarity	.48	.29	.26
Proactive Attitude	.53	.27	.28

Weak 0.00 - 0.29
 Moderate 0.30 - 0.59
 Strong 0.60 and above

Balancing Strengths and Overextensions

When adapting to new roles, it's essential to understand how your natural qualities can show up in different ways, depending on the context and your state of mind, through three distinct personas of personality:



Underlying — Who you are at your core, your natural, instinctive self, when you feel completely at ease and free to be yourself.



Everyday — The version of you that shows up in your day-to-day work, influenced by the expectations and responsibilities of your role.



Overextended — How you might behave when under significant stress or pressure, when your strengths risk becoming liabilities.

As Carl Rogers reminds us, *“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change”*.

True adaptation starts with honest self-acceptance.

Consider the patterns that emerge when these personas are out of sync. For example:



Hidden Treasures – High Underlying but Low Everyday. This might be someone with high **Underlying Imaginative** (creative, innovative) but low **Everyday Imaginative** (suppresses these ideas in their day-to-day), potentially leading to missed opportunities for innovation.



Amplifications – Low Underlying but High Everyday. This could be someone with low **Underlying Tough** (perhaps more naturally diplomatic) but high **Everyday Tough** (takes on a more direct, assertive style in their day-to-day work), potentially risking conflict if Overextended.



Paradoxes – High scores on qualities that typically oppose each other, like being both **Sociable** (outgoing, energetic and talkative) and **Observing** (thoughtful and reserved), which can be a powerful but challenging combination to integrate.



Overextensions – Sometimes, when we fail to notice our triggers, our strengths can become liabilities, and liabilities can appear in unhelpful ways. This can often lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication, especially when working with others who may be very different from us.



Effective

Inspiration Driven

Adaptable

Flexible

Spontaneous

Big Picture Thinking

Conceptual

Imaginative

Radical

Extraverted

Sociable

Demonstrative

Takes Charge

Outcome Focused

Tough

Competitive

Logical



Overextended

Unfocused

Chaotic

Impulsive

Unfeasible

Fantast

Change for the Sake
of Change

Can't be Alone

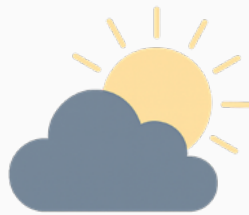
Overbearing

Controlling

Seeks Conflict

Win at All Costs

Argumentative



Space to notice your
triggers and stay
composed



Effective

Discipline Driven

Purposeful

Structured

Reliable

Down to Earth

Practical

Evidence-Based

Cautious

Introverted

Observing

Measured

Intimate

People Focused

Accommodating

Collaborative

Empathetic



Overextended

Goal-Fixated

Rigid Planning

Hesitant

Narrow-Sighted

Lost in the Details

Change-Resistant

Detached and Aloof

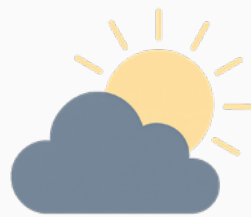
Serious and Withdrawn

Passive

Acquiescing

Consensus-Obsessed

Emotionally Stretched



Space to notice your
triggers and stay
composed



Reflection Pause: Consider a time when one of your core strengths became a barrier. How did it impact your relationships, decisions, or ability to stay resilient? What might you have done differently?

Building Resilience through Self-Awareness

Stepping into a new role can be challenging, especially when faced with unfamiliar expectations, team dynamics, or cultural norms. Building resilience starts with self-awareness — knowing when to push yourself and when to conserve your energy. It's about understanding your triggers for overextension and consciously choosing when to lean in or pull back. For example, someone with high **Underlying Flexible** (prefers to adjust their approach and try new methods) but low **Everyday Flexible** (may struggle to adapt quickly under pressure) might feel overwhelmed by constant change, while someone with high **Everyday Competitive** (driven to win and excel) but low **Underlying Competitive** (naturally more collaborative) may overextend by pushing too hard in a high-stakes environment.

Viktor Frankl himself said, *“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves”*.



Reflection Pause: What situations or challenges tend to push you into overextension? How can you anticipate and manage these triggers as you settle into a new role?

The Bottom Line — Behavioural Flexibility is Non-Negotiable

Stepping into a new role is rarely just about picking up fresh technical knowledge or ticking off a new set of goals. It's about rethinking how you present yourself day-to-day, and consciously navigating the balance between your innate strengths (Lumina Learning calls this your Underlying Persona) and the unfamiliar demands ahead. It requires a deeper awareness of how your core personality traits show up in behaviour — we call this your Everyday Persona. This is particularly key when the

pressure's on and the environment is shifting fast. Success isn't just about playing to your strengths; it's about recognising when to pull back from overusing them.

Self-awareness is the foundation of successful role transitions. It enables you to lean into your strengths without letting them become liabilities, adapt to new expectations without losing your authentic style, and build the resilience needed to thrive in the face of change.

As you prepare for your next role, invest in your self-awareness. Reflect. Recalibrate. Refine. The more consciously you adapt, the stronger, more authentic and more resilient you'll become.

Build Resilience in Real Time: Notice the Space

The beauty of music lies in the spaces between the notes. The strength of resilience lies in the spaces between stimulus & response.



Stepping into new roles is not about constant action or endless effort – it’s about finding your balance under pressure, maintaining your composure, and choosing your next move wisely when the ground beneath you shifts. Resilience lives in this balance: staying composed, choosing consciously, and moving forward even when uncertainty tries to knock you off course.

As Carl Jung reminds us, ***“Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes”.***

Viktor Frankl captured this truth perfectly when he taught – and Dr. K. Bradford Brown later brought to life practically – that:

Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies my power to choose. And in my choice lies my growth and my freedom.

For those stepping into new roles, that space is where true resilience lives – the moment when you choose not to overextend your natural strengths, but instead stay adaptable, purposeful and composed.

Research by Niessen, Swarowsky, and Leiz (2010) highlights that while valuable, greater work experience can make stepping into new roles harder, as deep-rooted patterns of behaviour can resist change and lower resilience.

The Real Challenges of Resilience

Resilience isn't built in theory – it's tested in real life. Our research with professionals moving into new roles revealed the most common resilience hurdles they faced:

Resilience Challenge	% of participants that selected this challenge
Managing a heavier or more complex workload than expected	40%
Dealing with unclear or constantly changing expectations	33%
Balancing new responsibilities with existing ones	32%
Feeling emotionally overwhelmed or drained during the transition	31%
Pressure to prove myself quickly while managing a high or unrealistic workload	31%
Working under a manager or stakeholder with high demands	22%
Navigating failure, mistakes or difficult feedback	20%
Struggling with self-confidence or doubt during uncertainty	19%
Difficulty maintaining energy or motivation throughout the transition	14%
Dealing with scrutiny or criticism directed at myself	14%
Recovering after missing deadlines or falling behind on expectations	10%
None of the above	3%
Other	1%

While these challenges are common, the way they manifest often depends on the individual's underlying personality. For example:

Extraverts are often the first to say 'yes' – volunteering ideas, energy, and action. But this enthusiasm can leave them juggling a complex, overwhelming workload before they even realise it (**$r=.15, p < .05$**). The data also showed that Extraverts can also struggle to balance competing demands. Although (ironically) they tend to show more confidence during uncertainty, others will likely conclude they have little self-doubt.

Those high in **Outcome Focused** qualities (**Tough, Competitive, Logical**) often push themselves hard to meet demanding goals, and risk feeling emotionally overwhelmed during transitions (although they may well hide these feelings from you and “power on”!). This drive for results can be an asset, but without careful self-management, it can lead to burnout.

People with strong **Inspiration Driven** qualities (**Adaptable, Flexible, Spontaneous**) often feel pressure to prove themselves quickly, taking on ambitious and sometimes unrealistic projects in the spur of the moment. However, this same adaptability can become chaotic if not managed carefully.

By contrast, individuals high in **Big Picture Thinking** tend to have a natural buffer against self-doubt, with a lower likelihood of struggling with confidence during uncertainty. They see the broader context and are less likely to be thrown off by short-term setbacks.

How does our personality relate to the challenges we face during role changes?

	Inspiration Driven	Big Picture Thinking	Extraverted	Outcome Focused	Discipline Driven	Down to Earth	Introverted	People Focused	Reward Reactor	Risk Reactor
Managing a heavier or more complex workload than expected	.01	.09	.15	.15	.01	.00	-.09	.14	.14	.14
Struggling with self-confidence or doubt during uncertainty	-.20	-.18	-.15	-.31	-.21	-.09	-.01	.03	-.11	-.14
Dealing with unclear or constantly changing expectations	.13	.08	.02	-.03	.06	.15	.15	.00	-.04	.01
Balancing new responsibilities with existing ones	-.01	.02	.15	.07	.00	-.01	-.09	-.09	.08	.08
Feeling emotionally overwhelmed or drained during the transition	.03	-.02	-.05	.23	.05	.02	.05	-.03	-.04	-.01
Recovering after missing deadlines or falling behind on expectations	.16	.05	.04	.08	.07	.08	.13	.13	.02	.01
Pressure to prove myself quickly while managing a high or unrealistic workload	.14	-.03	.02	.01	.11	-.06	-.05	-.05	-.01	.00
Dealing with scrutiny or criticism directed at myself	-.04	-.07	-.01	.08	-.10	-.04	-.11	-.02	-.07	-.17
Navigating failure, mistakes, or difficult feedback	.07	.04	-.05	-.08	-.06	.00	.10	.10	-.21	.06

Note: Highlighted correlations are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Recognising Your Triggers

Awareness isn't the end of resilience. It's the beginning. Equally, resilience isn't just about being tough — it's about knowing when you're being pushed beyond your limits and choosing to respond differently. This self-awareness can make the difference between thriving in a new role and burning out. For example:

Someone with high **People Focused** qualities (**Empathetic, Collaborative, Accommodating**) might take on too much emotional labour, struggling to set boundaries and risking burnout as they try to support everyone around them.

Those high in **Discipline Driven** qualities (**Purposeful, Structured, Reliable**) might resist changing course, becoming overly rigid when expectations shift, even if a more flexible approach is needed.

Individuals with strong **Down to Earth** qualities (**Practical, Evidence-Based, Cautious**) can become bogged down by details, struggling to adapt to rapidly changing environments.



Reflection Pause: Think back to a moment when pressure got the better of you. What natural strengths did you overuse? What small choice could you make in that “space” next time to recover faster and stay in control?

Finding Composure in the Moment

Staying composed under pressure isn't about ignoring stress — it's about recognising it early and consciously choosing a different response. For instance:

An **Extraverted** person who feels overwhelmed might instinctively push harder, talking through their stress in meetings or taking on too many responsibilities. Recognising this pattern can be the first step to regaining balance, perhaps by leaning into more reflective, introverted qualities to regain focus.

Someone with a strong **Outcome Focused** mindset might double down on their high standards under pressure, becoming overly critical or argumentative. Instead, they might find drawing on their **Collaborative** side more effective, focusing on shared wins rather than individual achievement.

Those with high **Inspiration Driven** energy may be tempted to jump from idea to idea in a crisis, struggling to prioritise. Finding their footing might involve drawing on more **Purposeful** or **Structured** qualities to stay focused on long-term goals.

The Path to Long-Term Resilience

Building resilience isn't just about surviving the challenging moments — it's about becoming more adaptable over time. Every day, in every challenge, we face a choice.

As Abraham Maslow put it: ***“One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.”***



Choosing growth isn't a one-time decision — it's something we recommit to, especially when fear or uncertainty tempts us to retreat. Winston Churchill captured this spirit when he said: ***“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”*** Building long-term resilience means having the courage to continue. It requires a deep understanding of your natural tendencies and the triggers that push you into overextension. It also means being intentional about recovery — choosing to step back, breathe, and reset when you feel yourself tipping into a less effective state.

Long-term resilience means choosing growth — not once, but repeatedly, even when fear or uncertainty tempts us to retreat. It requires a deep understanding of your natural tendencies and the triggers that push you into overextension.



Reflection Pause: Think about a time when you successfully managed a challenging situation. What personal qualities did you lean into, and how did they help you stay composed? What might you have done differently to recover even faster?

Speed Read Your Team: Faster Rapport = Faster Results

The best handshakes don't just connect hands – they connect hearts, minds, and intentions through rapport.

Thriving in new teams isn't about sitting back and waiting to understand people – it's about “speed reading” your colleagues from day one. Quickly picking up on their communication preferences, behavioural styles, and motivations is like learning the local language before trying to build relationships abroad: the faster you tune in, the faster collaboration takes off.

It's not about expecting everyone to adapt to you; it's about flexing your own approach to meet others where they are. The quicker you build genuine rapport, the sooner communication flows easily. And when communication clicks, collaboration follows naturally. The most successful teams aren't made up of identical thinkers – they succeed by embracing the tension between seemingly opposite strengths: combining structure with adaptability, ambition with patience, creativity with discipline. It's by recognising and celebrating these paradoxes that teams accelerate performance. The faster you bridge these differences, the sooner everyone feels empowered to contribute their best.



Behaviour Shapes Outcomes, Not Just Skills

Lumina Spark's research and philosophy assert that behaviour – more than technical skill or past experience – is what truly shapes outcomes, especially in times of transition. Yet organisations often undervalue this, focusing heavily on qualifications, knowledge, or experience when they bring people into new positions. What gets overlooked is that the very behaviours that led to success in a previous role can actually create friction in a new environment. Every new role, new team, or new promotion demands a conscious choice: How will I show up now? What aspects of my natural style need to be flexed, and which paradoxes in my personality must I embrace to succeed here?

The Data is Clear: Speed Reading Matters

To explore this, we looked closely at 200 professional staff in a global sample who had undergone a recent transition – roughly a third were new to their organisation, and two-thirds had moved internally to new teams or roles. The insights were striking.

One of the clearest findings? **Speed reading is key to communication.** The ability to quickly pick up on the behavioural and cultural cues in a new environment, can make or break early success. Research on organisational socialisation (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011) supports this, showing that early success hinges not only on mastering tasks but also on quickly navigating the unspoken norms, values, and behaviours of the new environment. Yet adjusting communication style is easier said than done. In fact, **42%** of professionals in our study noted that adapting how they communicated with senior stakeholders or leaders was their **biggest communication challenge.**

Outcome Focused vs People Focused: The Core Tension

This isn't surprising when we dig deeper. Our data shows that many leaders display strong **Outcome Focused** – targets, results, and delivery drive them. This can create immediate tension for new staff, especially those who naturally lead with **People Focused**. In our research, **35% of new professional staff** reported uncertainty about **how assertive to be** in team discussions or decision-making.

Communication Challenge	% of participants that selected this challenge
Adjusting how I communicate with senior stakeholders or leaders	42%
Not knowing how assertive I should be in team discussions or decision-making	35%
Holding back my views to avoid stepping on toes	31%
Adapting to a different tone or communication culture	30%
Uncertainty about how to balance honesty with diplomacy in sensitive conversations	30%
Not feeling listened to or taken seriously in early conversations	26%
Difficulty articulating my ideas clearly and confidently	21%
Misinterpreting or misunderstanding what others meant	19%
Feeling unsure how to take on feedback or apply it constructively	13%
Finding it difficult to deliver feedback clearly or confidently	13%
Struggling to influence others or get buy-in	11%
None of the above	3%

Behavioural Mismatch: A Hidden Challenge

This hesitation isn't necessarily about a lack of confidence. Often, it's a behavioural mismatch: the communication style that worked with previous managers or colleagues doesn't fit neatly with the new environment. Whether moving from one company to another or just shifting internally to a new boss or team, many professionals find that the subtle rules of engagement have changed, and they must speed read the new tone, culture, and expectations quickly.

Mastering the Paradox: Assertiveness vs Diplomacy

One of the most important behavioural paradoxes they must manage is between **Outcome Focused** and **People Focused**. Communicating well means embracing this polarity. It's about balancing being clear, direct, and honest (**Outcome Focused**) with being sensitive, diplomatic, and relationship-oriented (**People Focused**). Our research showed that **30% of staff found this balance particularly hard in sensitive conversations**, struggling with how to stay honest without coming across as aggressive or blunt.

Train the Flex – In Fact, Make it a Superpower!

This tension between assertiveness and diplomacy is a timeless polarity – it's not new. But it's also not something to fear. In fact, it's a skill that can be trained and developed. With good **self-awareness around your natural preferences** (whether you're more outcome or people focused) and effective **behavioural skills training**, individuals can learn to adapt their communication style with real agility. When this happens, what was once a challenge becomes a **superpower** – the ability to flex naturally between task and relationship, depending on what the moment demands.

Invest in Behaviour, Not Just Knowledge

Organisations that want to support successful transitions must invest in this deeper layer of behavioural development. It's not enough to tell new staff to “communicate better” or “be more assertive”. They need tools, training, and feedback to build the self-awareness and adaptability required to thrive. And perhaps most importantly, teams and leaders need to role model embracing paradoxes – showing that it's possible, and powerful, to be both strong and sensitive, focused and flexible, driven and empathetic.

Unlocking Real Potential

By helping people to speed-read their environment, flex their communication style, and embrace the paradoxes within themselves and their teams, we unlock the real potential that new roles and promotions can bring.

Shape the Culture: Foster Belonging, Growth, and Authenticity



**AUTHENTICITY IS THE ROOT.
GROWTH IS THE BLOOM.**

Culture Grows from the Roots Up

A thriving culture is like a living tree. Authenticity forms the deep, anchoring roots, giving strength, stability, and nourishment to everything above the surface. Without strong roots, growth is fragile. When leaders create an environment where people can bring their true selves to work, they give their teams the grounding needed to stretch, adapt, and thrive.



The deeper the roots of belonging, the higher the branches of growth can reach.

— Jonathan Cannon, Psychologist and Writer

The colourful leaves and vibrant branches symbolise the different ways of being in a team – the visible bloom that emerges when leaders shape a diverse, inclusive culture. As the image reminds us: **“Authenticity is the root. Growth is the bloom”**.

Outstanding leadership isn’t about forcing change from the top down; it’s about nurturing the roots and creating the conditions where belonging, adaptability, and potential naturally flourish. Research by Maturro, Barrella, and Benitez (2017) found that when new joiners enter ambiguous

environments with unclear processes, adaptation suffers, reinforcing how critical it is for leaders to create welcoming, structured, and psychologically safe spaces.

Leaders Set the Tone – For Better or Worse

For leaders, responsibility runs even deeper. They don't just influence the culture – they actively shape it through their behaviours, choices, and interactions. Role modelling is constant, whether conscious or not.

What you want to ignite in others must first burn inside yourself.

– Charlotte Brontë

Creating a place where diverse styles and perspectives are genuinely valued is critical. People stepping into new roles must feel they belong, not by masking who they are, but by bringing their authentic selves into the team.

At the same time, leaders must build a culture of growth: embedding learning, feedback, and challenge into everyday life. And crucially, they must lead by example – showing that stretching yourself while staying true to yourself is not just possible, but essential.

The Goldilocks Challenge: Balancing Vision and Stability

Our research across 200 professionals navigating role transitions showed two key insights:

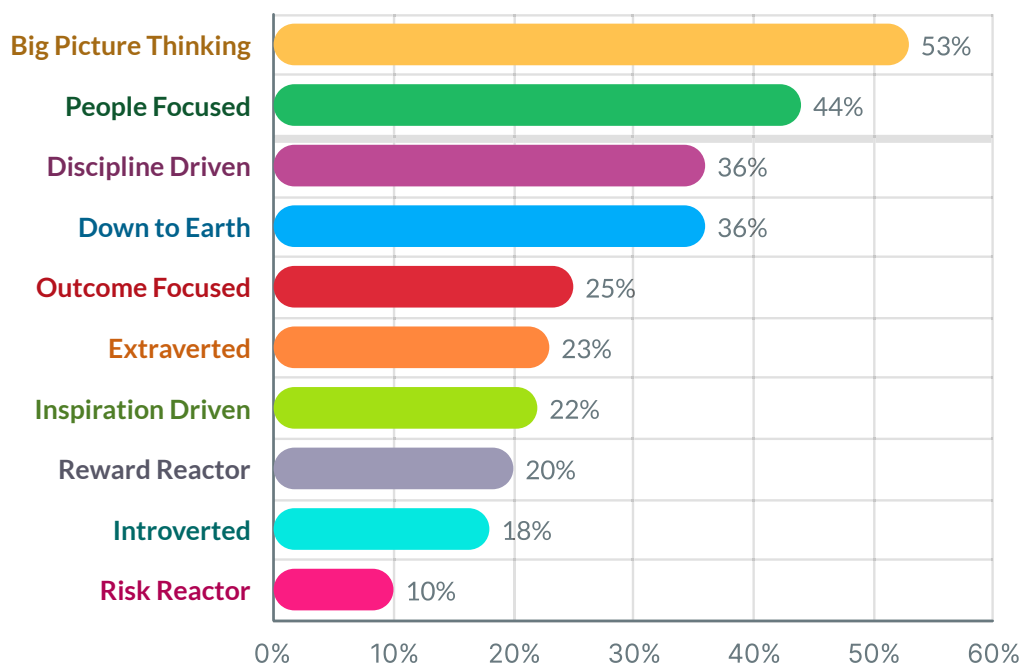
Leaders who blended **Big Picture Thinking** with **People Focused** created the most supportive environments. Teams had the courage to try, fail, stretch, and succeed, knowing they would be heard and valued.

However, overextending **Big Picture Thinking** led to chaotic, exhausting cultures – “change for the sake of change”. Finding the Goldilocks balance – structured, yet open – is essential.

Leadership is not about stirring the waters; it's about shaping the riverbed through which ideas can flow.

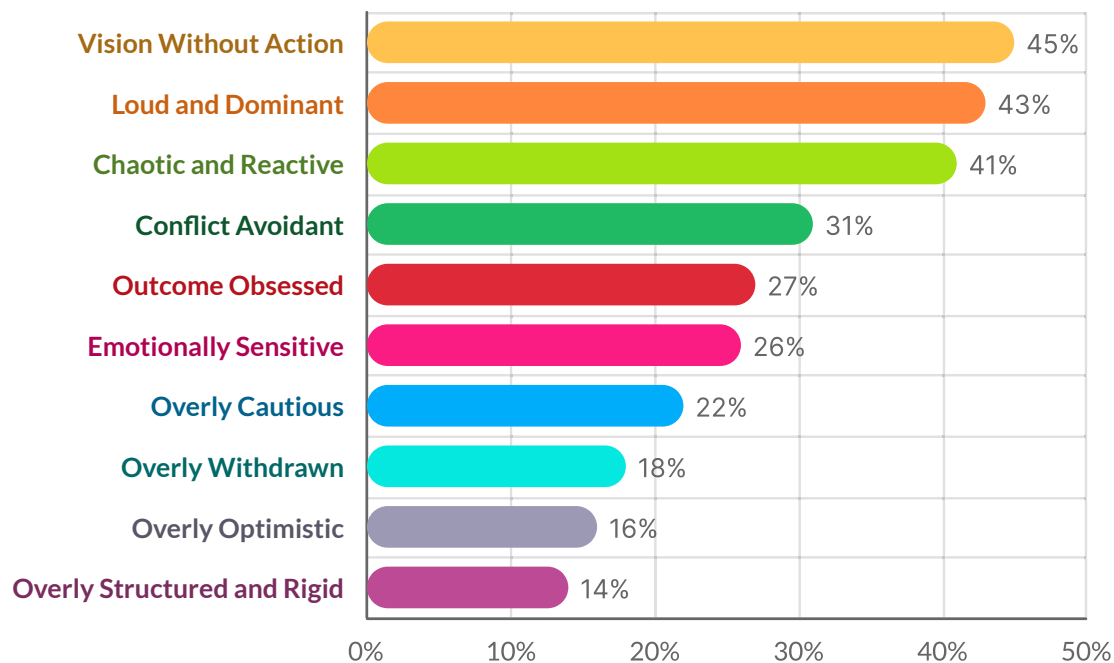
– Inspired by Lumina Spark ideas

The aspects of an organisational culture that new starters report helps them succeed



Note: Percentages represent the proportion of participants who selected each culture type. Participants could select up to three options. N = 200

The aspects of Overextended organisational culture that new starters report makes their transition harder



Note: Percentages represent the proportion of participants who selected each culture type. Participants could select up to three options. N = 200

One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.

— Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*

Leader Takeaway:

Keep stretching the vision, but don't overwhelm people. Growth is steady, not chaotic.

Belonging Isn't a Luxury – It's Essential

One of the biggest barriers to success during transition is exclusion.

In our study:

29% of participants struggled to be included in decision-making early on.

34% found conflicting working styles within their teams to be a major challenge.

Feeling excluded doesn't just slow performance; it crushes confidence and resilience.

Supporting this, Bauer and Erdogan (2011) emphasise that effective onboarding is not just about task learning but about internalising new cultural norms, while Cable, Gino, and Staats (2013) argue that encouraging authentic self-expression from day one reduces emotional exhaustion and accelerates performance.



People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

— Maya Angelou



Lumina Spark's philosophy teaches that we thrive; not by asking people to "fit in" but by making space for paradox – Extraversion and Introversion, Imagination and Practicality, Outcome Focused and People Focused, all existing together.

As one leader wisely put it: *"When I stopped asking people to act like me, and started celebrating how differently they thought, our team's best ideas finally emerged".*



Reflection Pause: How can you create space for both similarities and differences in your team this week?

Authenticity and Adaptability: Twin Engines of Growth

At Lumina, we believe that authenticity and adaptability aren't opposites – they're complementary strengths. Masking your authenticity correlates negatively with growth mindset (**$r=-0.22$**) and proactive behaviour (**$r=-0.28$**).

Those who reflect, flex consciously, and act authentically — even under pressure—are far more likely to thrive.



Adaptability without authenticity is hollow. Authenticity without adaptability is brittle. True resilience grows from holding both.

— Stewart Desson, CEO and Business Psychologist

Leader Takeaway:

Role model adaptability and authenticity. Show that change doesn't mean losing yourself — it means becoming even more fully yourself.

Final Word: Leaders Shape the Culture Every Day

If you want your team to stretch and grow without losing themselves, you must stretch and grow without losing yourself.

Conclusion

Adapt or Stall: Change Demands New Behaviour

Individual self-awareness before stepping into a new role is absolutely key. Change demands that we adapt our behavioural strengths, and in new roles, we need to do it even more. New contexts bring new expectations, fresh dynamics, and unfamiliar challenges. New jobs require new competencies. New colleagues require new ways of interacting. Your new boss, for instance, might be the complete opposite of your last one. Adaptation isn't a luxury – it's survival. As Darwin put it, it's not the strongest who thrive, but the most adaptable. Recognising and flexing your natural qualities – and knowing when to stretch them – becomes the critical skill. Success often depends on embracing the paradoxes within our personality: being both strong and flexible, assertive and collaborative, bold and reflective, depending on what the situation demands.

Build Resilience in Real Time: Notice the Space

At an individual level, success demands putting Viktor Frankl's insight into action: *“Between stimulus and response, there is a space”*. In that space lies your power to choose your response. Self-awareness helps you spot potential triggers in advance, giving you the chance to stay composed and avoid overextending your natural strengths. And when you do react emotionally, because nobody's perfect, resilience means regaining your balance quickly, resetting, and choosing your next move consciously. This is resilience in action, and it's the foundation of sustained high performance, especially in the turbulence of transition.

Speed Read Your Team: Faster Rapport = Faster Results

In teams, adapting behaviour wisely starts with “speed reading” your new colleagues – quickly tuning into their preferences, communication styles, and underlying values. It's about recognising different ways of thinking and working, and flexing your style to meet them. Building rapport from the outset strengthens communication, and excellent communication unlocks collaboration. Teams that perform at their best are those that embrace paradoxes between people – valuing both structure and flexibility, ambition and patience, creativity and focus – rather than forcing everyone

into one mould. The faster teams build this bridge, the quicker they hit their stride, and the more each person's unique qualities can shine.

Shape the Culture: Foster Belonging, Growth, and Authenticity

For leaders, the responsibility runs even deeper. Leaders shape the culture. It's essential to create an environment where diversity of thought, personality, and approach is not just accepted but valued. New people need to feel they belong and that they can bring their whole selves to work. Equally, it's about cultivating a growth mindset — where learning, feedback, and personal stretch are part of everyday life. And when it comes to balancing authenticity with adapting to new expectations, leaders must go first. If we want our teams to stretch and grow without losing themselves, we must show them how by doing it ourselves — role modelling it first, and showing that embracing paradox is not a weakness but a strength.

Final Word: Behavioural Adaptation Wins

As Sullivan and Al Ariss (2021) point out, individuals are not passive during transitions; they actively reshape either their roles to fit their identities or their identities to adapt to new demands. It is clear that the future belongs to those who adapt. In new roles, new teams, and new challenges, it's not your technical skills alone that set you apart — it's your ability to flex your behaviour while staying true to your best self.

Self-awareness is the catalyst. Conscious adaptation is the accelerator. Courage is the fuel.

Change doesn't ask politely. It demands that we notice, stretch, recalibrate, and choose wisely — again and again.

As Darwin said, it's not the strongest who thrive, but the most adaptable. And as Viktor Frankl reminded us, between stimulus and response lies our greatest freedom — the power to choose.

Adapt boldly.

Stretch wisely.

Lead with heart.

The future is yours to shape.

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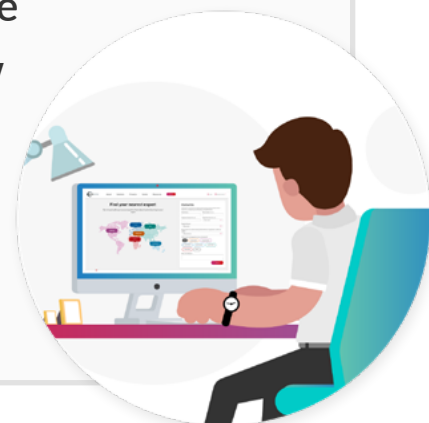
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