Reliable Leadership Advice™

Leadership Through Uncertain Times

To navigate uncertain times effectively, what leadership does your organisation need next?



LEADERSHIP NAVIGATOR

THE FUTURE OF WORK 2027

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Letter From our CEO



Organisations today are operating in an environment of rapid change and rising complexity. Our Leadership Navigator report shows that this is not a short-term disruption, but a continuing reality for leaders across sectors and markets. Drawing on data from more than 700 executives, together with insights from MU Experts, the report explores why some organisations are better led through uncertainty than others.

For executive teams, the central question is clear: **What leadership does our organisation need to perform in uncertain times?** Our research identifies three essential themes for leaders to focus on. Organisations that address these themes more effectively are more likely to build leadership teams that perform strongly under pressure, adapt to change, and deliver results in complex environments.

1. The Future of Leadership is More Contextual and More Complex

In uncertain times, leadership success depends less on generic best practice and more on understanding the organisation's specific context. More than half of executives say the changes they face are unique, even when the pressures themselves are widely shared. Technology and AI, economic pressure, competition, and geopolitical tension are making leadership more complex, but their impact differs by strategy, market position, operating model, and risk exposure. Boards and executive teams therefore need a much clearer view of what leadership success looks like in their own organisation. As context changes faster, many organisations are rethinking leadership structures and capabilities to stay resilient and high-performing.

2. Leadership Requirements Must be Defined More Predictively and More Precisely

As leadership success becomes more contextual, leadership requirements cannot be defined through generic profiles. Organisations need to define leadership needs more predictively by looking ahead to what each role must deliver, not only to what has worked in the past. At the same time, those requirements must be defined more precisely, with clear expectations around results, context, and the experience most relevant to success. In uncertain times, a proven track record in similar situations is often a stronger predictor of performance than broad leadership potential alone, especially in change, complexity, and functional performance. Better leadership decisions start with a sharper view of what will be needed next, and a more precise definition of what success requires.

3. The Best Leadership Decisions Start With Achievement – Then go Beyond it

Once future leadership requirements are clear, leader selection must follow a disciplined, evidence-based, and stepwise process. The first step is to identify candidates with proven achievements relevant to the role's required results, using systematic track record evaluation to assess what they have delivered in comparable situations. The next step is to go beyond achievement by assessing the behaviours and potential that will shape future performance, including curiosity, clear direction-setting, talent attraction, and adaptability. Our research shows that around 66% of selection criteria should focus on relevant achievement, while behaviour and potential add important insight into long-term fit and future readiness. Stronger leadership decisions come from assessing achievement, behaviour, and potential in the right stepwise order, without compensating for weakness in one area with strength in another. With effective selection in hand, leadership development should focus on specific gaps and opportunities for the leader in their specific context.

These themes form the foundation of this year's report. Together, they show that leadership excellence is not defined by broad models alone, but by how well organisations understand their context, define what success requires, and select leaders with the right evidence of performance and potential.

The report also explores future leadership needs across key sectors, including Manufacturing, Life Sciences, Professional Services, Retail & Consumer, and Automotive & Mobility. We hope it offers a valuable perspective for executives seeking to strengthen leadership quality, organisational resilience, and long-term performance in uncertain times.

Richard Moore, CEO.



Core Themes





THEME 1

The Future of Leadership is More Contextual and More Complex

Uncertain times create unique challenges for each organisation. Boards and executives must understand these specific needs. Over 50% of executives believe the changes they face are unique. Successful organisations recognise that even these top four commonly reported challenges in 2026, require a specific response in their context:

1. Technology and AI (30%): How will you adapt to new technologies and the regulatory environment in a way that fits the context of your organisation?

2. Economic pressures (21%): How will you manage costs and efficiency in your unique situation?

3. Competition (16%): Who, precisely, will your competitors be, and what demands will they make?

4. Geopolitical tensions (14%): How will you build supply chain resilience that is fit for purpose in your context?

Organisations must have leaders capable of navigating these complexities. To cope, more than 10% plan to restructure their leadership in the next 1–3 years. **High performance is contextual, and your context is changing.**

THEME 2

Leadership Requirements Must be Defined More Predictively and More Precisely

Leadership success cannot rely on generic frameworks. Effective organisations focus on selecting leaders based on relevant experience, not just generic skills. Our research finding is clear – at least 66% of what you look for in your next leader(s) should focus on their relevant track record in relation to the specifics of their role and situation. Key areas to focus on include:

- **Change:** Leaders should have a relevant track record of adaptability.
- **Complexity:** Look for evidence of previous success in complex roles requiring strategic decision-making, roles in situations like the one you will face.
- **Functional expertise:** Select leaders who show valuable functional skills backed by performance. i.e. demonstrated success in relevant roles within the function your leader will work in.

Leader potential matters, but proven capability within relevant contexts for your organisations circumstances matters most. To build leadership capability that will strengthen your organisation through uncertain times, understand what results must be achieved in each leadership role.





THEME 3

The Best Leadership Decisions Start With Achievement – Then go Beyond it

Leaders should be selected stepwise. The first step is finding leaders with relevant achievements. Evaluate potential leaders based on their past successes first, then consider their skills in navigating change and complexity second.

As the MU Research Institute[1] noted *"Leadership excellence is not only about who one is, but also about what one has accomplished when it truly mattered"*. This means that in selecting leaders from a pool with the right experience, systematic track record evaluation is most important and must be done effectively before other capabilities or potential are assessed. And when it comes to leadership capabilities, important characteristics include:

- Curiosity about change and complexity
- Ability to provide clear direction
- Attractiveness to talented individuals
- Adaptability in interpersonal relationships.

Checklist for Successful Leader Selection:

- 66% of criteria should focus on proven achievements relevant to the specific leader role and required results.
- Use systematic track record evaluation before assessing other capabilities.
- Follow a clear stepwise selection method:
  - Include only those with required experience
  - Use track record evaluation
  - Choose leaders based on relevant achievements and characteristics.

Proper selection relies on a clear process– don't compromise or compensate criteria in one step for another. Once the selection is confirmed, insights from the assessment can be used to develop a tailored onboarding or development plan for the leader.

[1] See appendix on page 62 about the MU Research Institute

New MU Research Institute Studies Underline how Consistent Success in Leadership is Delivered



Mercuri Urval research institute



The MU Research Institute applies MU Leader Selection Science® to ensure that all services and tools used by MU Experts meet the highest ethical and quality-assured standards. As part of this work, continuous evaluations of MU's methods and processes are conducted. Below, two studies are described.

The first study shows how MU experts assess leadership requirements in real appointments, demonstrating that prediction is strengthened by combining evidence of proven performance with a targeted assessment of personal characteristics. The second study explores what organisations actually need from leaders, showing that while some leadership demands are shared across organisations, a substantial proportion are specific to each context. Together, the studies show that MU's success rate is built on two foundations: rigorous prediction of future performance and careful adaptation to the unique needs of each organisation and role.

Study 1

What the Analysis of 389 Executive Search Cases Reveals

A recent study examined 389 Executive Search cases conducted between 2024 and 2025, exploring which types of predictors MU Experts selected when analysing leadership requirements in real-world appointments.

The framework comprises four central capability domains, organisational characteristics, relevant for advanced professional and leadership roles: contextual insight, functional expertise, adaptive ability, and ability to handle complexity.

Context

Contextual insight refers to the required understanding of the structure and dynamics of the relevant market, business environment, and stakeholder context in which the organisation operates. It includes not only current knowledge, but also the ability to continuously develop and strategically apply this insight as conditions change.

Functional

Functional expertise denotes specialised knowledge and skills within a specific domain that go beyond general organisational understanding. It involves mastery of relevant methods and standards, as well as the capacity to further develop and update professional competence over time.

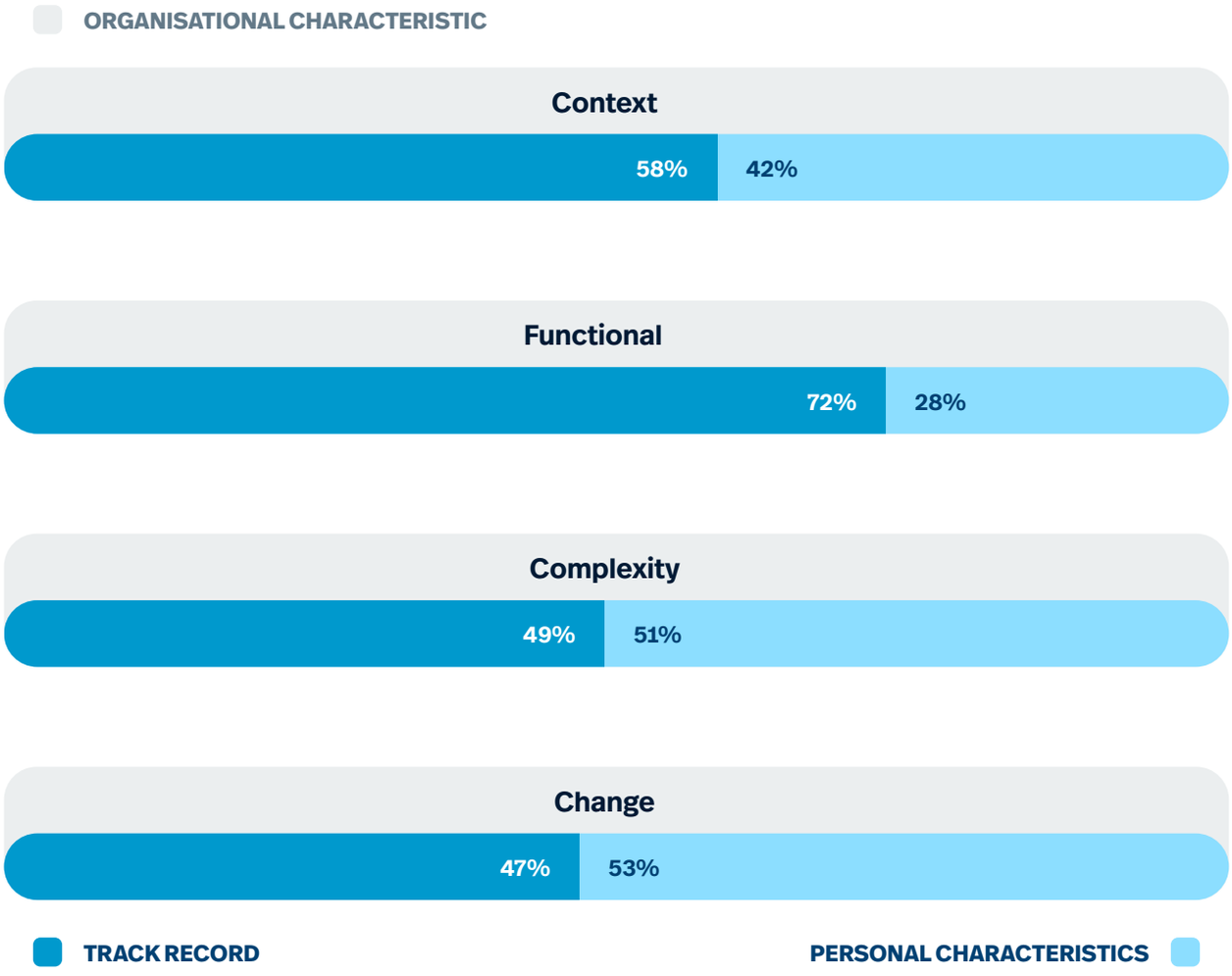
Complexity

Ability to handle complexity refers to the cognitive capacity to analyse, integrate, and utilise information in ambiguous and multifaceted situations, supporting sound problem solving and decision-making.

Change

Adaptive ability captures behavioural flexibility and proactive learning in response to interpersonal, cultural, and organisational change. It reflects the ability to adjust effectively and to update knowledge and skills in dynamic environments.

Overall, experience-based predictors, track record, were used more frequently than personal characteristic predictors, personality and cognitive abilities, though the balance varied systematically by organisational characteristic:



This pattern reveals a balanced and pragmatic approach: Proven performance provides the strongest foundation for prediction, whilst personal characteristics become increasingly relevant under conditions of complexity and change. Notably, even in high-change environments – where adaptability is essential – track-record data still accounts for nearly half of all predictive weight.

What This Means for Leadership Prediction

The findings highlight several critical insights:

1. **Proven performance in relevant contexts remains the strongest indicator of future success.**

   Leaders who have demonstrated success in comparable environments provide the most reliable evidence of future capability, particularly for functional expertise and contextual fit.

2. **Personal characteristics matter most when roles involve complexity or rapid change.**

   Adaptability, cognitive capacity, and interpersonal flexibility are essential for navigating ambiguity. The strongest predictor, however, is a track record of having successfully applied these qualities in practice.

3. **Effective leadership prediction requires a balanced, role-specific approach.**

   Combine evidence of past behaviour with targeted assessments of personality and cognitive ability – calibrated to the specific success criteria of each role. This reflects what organisational science has established: Prediction accuracy improves when multiple, complementary sources of evidence are integrated. This also creates solid foundation for role specific onboarding and development advice.

Study 2

What Organisations Actually Need From Leaders–New Survey Data

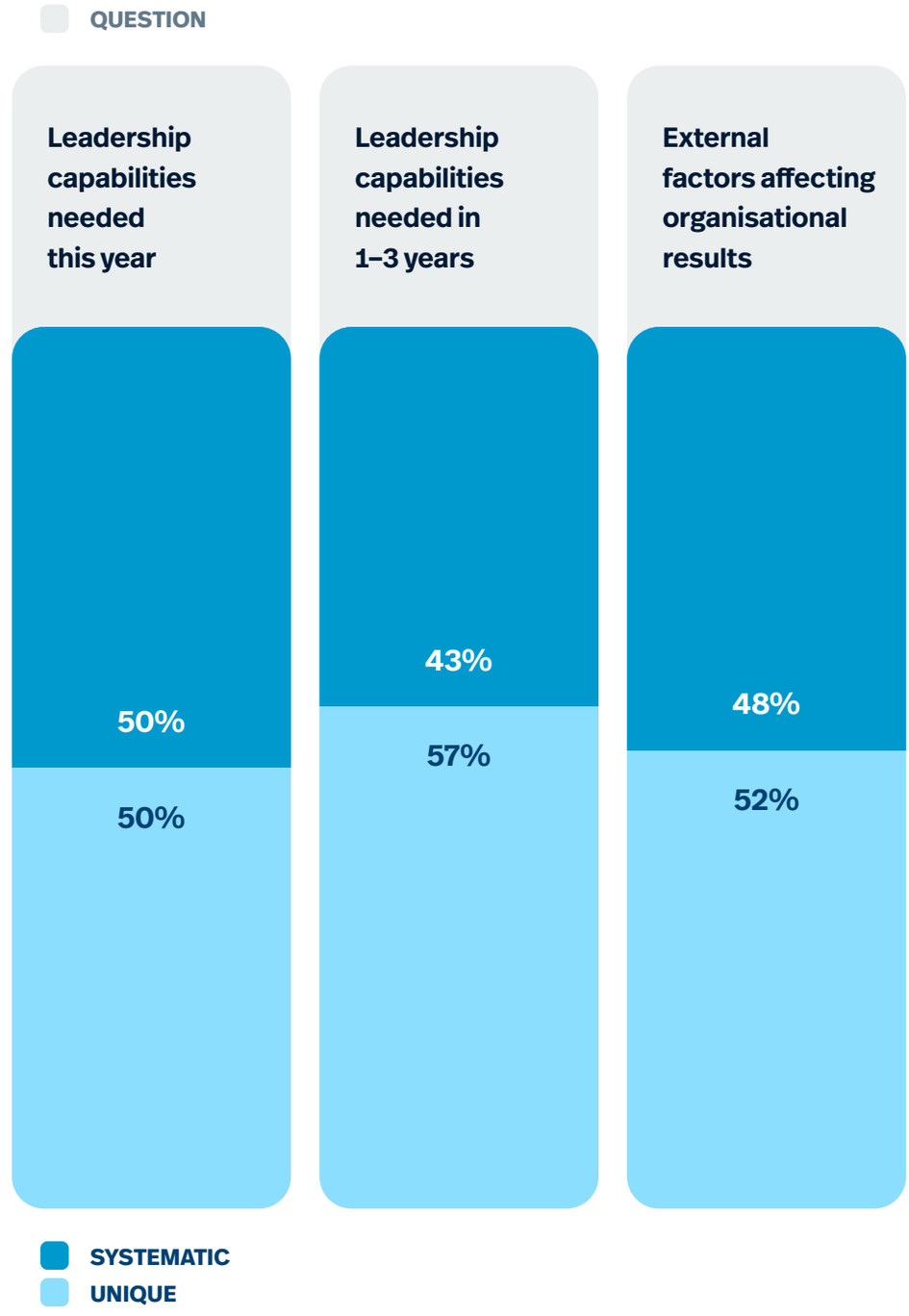
A recent survey of over 400 senior leaders across major organisations provides a critical insight: **Leadership requirements are both universal and unique**–and recognising this distinction is essential for effective selection.

The 50/50 Split: Shared Needs and Context-Specific Requirements

When asked to identify the most important leadership capabilities their organisations need this year, respondents' answers split evenly:

- 50% systematic responses–recurring themes mentioned by multiple respondents.
- 50% unique responses–specific, individual leadership capabilities relevant to particular organisational contexts.

This pattern is remarkably consistent across all three survey questions:



The key insight

Whilst certain leadership capabilities—such as AI & digital innovation, clear structure & direction, and adaptability—are widely recognised as important, **half or more of what organisations actually need is context-specific and cannot be addressed through generic competency models**.

What Leaders Must Navigate: Shared Challenges and Unique Contexts

Immediate priorities (this year)

The most frequently mentioned leadership capabilities for the current year include:

1. AI & digital innovation
2. Clear structure & direction
3. Adaptable & agile.

Yet 50% of responses described organisation-specific needs, such as "leaders who strengthen leadership in areas such as HR and operations" or "building capability in sustainable business transformation".

Strategic priorities (1–3 years)

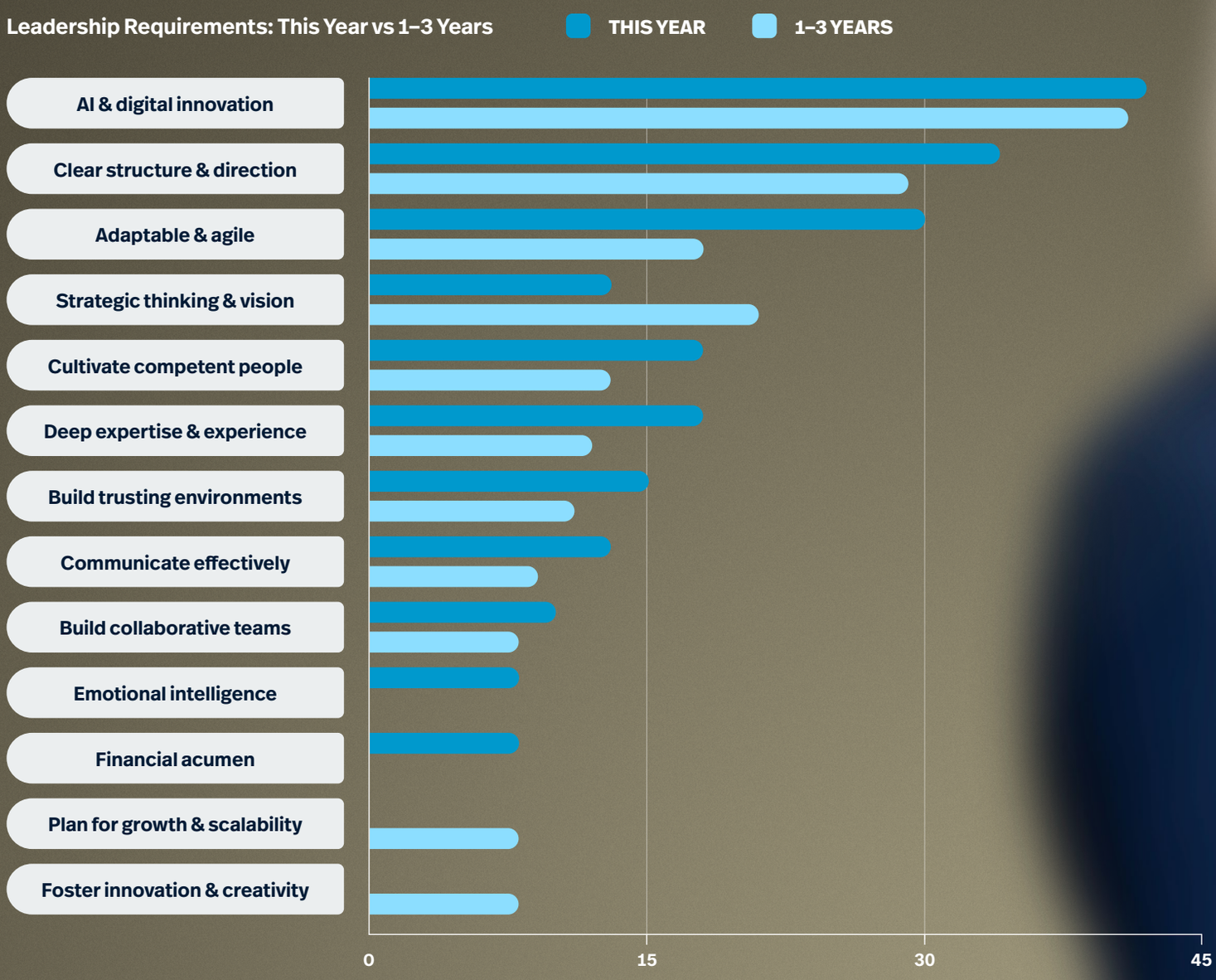
Looking ahead, the proportion of unique responses increases to 57%, suggesting that as organisations evolve, their leadership requirements become increasingly differentiated. Core capabilities such as AI/digital innovation remain paramount, but strategic diversity grows.

External pressures shaping leadership demands

When asked about external factors affecting organisational results, respondents identified both macro-level concerns—technology & AI, economy & inflation—and highly specific contextual pressures unique to their industries and markets (52% of all responses).

Leadership Requirements: The Temporal Shift

What our survey reveals about the changing nature of organisational leadership needs





The one constant: Digital transformation

Amidst all this change, one priority remains steadfast. AI & digital innovation dominates both timeframes with near-identical frequency. This consistency confirms digital transformation isn't a passing trend but a structural imperative – requiring immediate deployment and sustained strategic development regardless of organisational context.

From tactical to strategic: The great inversion

The most notable shift appears in the relationship between tactical and strategic capabilities. Strategic thinking & vision rises markedly with just over 60%, whilst adaptable & agile shows a declining trend of 40%.

This shift reveals a reorientation in how organisations conceive leadership across timeframes. For immediate needs, adaptability dominates – organisations require leaders who can navigate current volatility, respond rapidly to emerging pressures, and adjust course amidst ongoing uncertainty. The emphasis falls on tactical responsiveness: solving today's problems, managing present crises, and maintaining operational continuity.

Yet when executives project 1–3 years forward, this priority structure begins to shift. Strategic thinking & vision – relatively modest in current requirements – becomes substantially more prominent, whilst the emphasis on agility shows a downward trend.

This pattern suggests organisations distinguish between leadership for stability and leadership for transformation. Present leadership must react; future leadership must anticipate. Current leaders navigate the

landscape as it exists; future leaders must chart direction towards landscapes not yet formed. The shift reflects organisational recognition that whilst agility addresses immediate turbulence, strategic vision positions the organisation for longer-term success.

Moreover, the declining trend in agility does not necessarily indicate future environments will be less volatile. Rather, it suggests that reactive agility – however critical today – becomes less sufficient as a distinguishing leadership requirement when strategic horizons extend. Organisations appear to conclude that whilst all leaders must possess baseline agility, competitive differentiation in the 1–3 year timeframe derives from proactive strategic capability rather than reactive tactical skill.

Clear structure & direction remains relatively stable, maintaining a consistent presence across both timeframes, suggesting this capability continues as a baseline requirement rather than a differentiating factor.

Emerging capabilities

Two capabilities appear exclusively in 1–3 year projections, each with 8 systematic mentions:

- Plan for growth & scalability
- Foster innovation & creativity.

Their absence from current systematic themes yet clear appearance in future requirements indicates organisations consciously preparing for different operating environments. Sustainable expansion and creative problem-solving emerge as anticipated needs rather than immediate priorities.

Declining priorities

Emotional intelligence and financial acumen both disappear entirely from systematic future themes (8 → 0 mentions each). When projecting 1–3 years ahead, these capabilities drop off the priority list completely. Executives do not systematically identify them as future requirements, suggesting these competencies become less relevant – or at least less differentiated – as organisations shift towards more strategic, growth-oriented leadership profiles.

What this means for meeting organisational needs

Leadership assessment must account for temporal dynamics. The Success Profile for immediate organisational needs (emphasising agility, structure, operational expertise) differs materially from profiles for 1–3 year horizons (emphasising vision, growth orientation, innovation capacity).

The temporal calibration imperative

Key Insight: This temporal comparison reveals why leadership assessment cannot rely on static frameworks. As organisations evolve, their leadership needs don't simply change – they become more contextually differentiated. The predictors of leadership success must be calibrated not only to current organisational context but to anticipated strategic evolution.

Whilst AI & digital innovation and strategic thinking emerge as enduring themes, effective leadership deployment ultimately depends on matching individual capabilities to the specific, nuanced needs of each organisational context and strategic moment.

What This Means for Leadership Selection and Development

The findings carry a clear implication for organisations: Effective leadership selection and development cannot rely on standardised assessments alone.

1. **Generic competency frameworks miss half the picture.**

   Whilst certain capabilities – digital fluency, strategic clarity, adaptability – are broadly relevant, the survey demonstrates that approximately half of what makes a leader successful is specific to the organisation, its challenges, and its strategic context.

2. **Selection and development processes must be tailored to role-specific success criteria.**

   The high proportion of unique responses underscores the necessity of conducting structured role analyses before beginning assessment. Understanding what success actually requires – not what generic frameworks suggest – is foundational to accurate prediction.

3. **The balance between universal and unique requirements shifts over time.**

   As organisations look further ahead (1–3 years), the diversity of leadership needs increases (from 50% to 57% unique responses). This suggests that strategic leadership selection requires even greater customisation than operational roles.

Industry Perspectives





The findings from the MU Leadership Navigator report, and other developments around the world, influence industry practices in different ways. Based on the findings, our MU practice experts discuss how this might affect their industries and other focus areas. The MU Experts have answered the question *"To Navigate Uncertain Times Effectively – What Leadership Does Your Organisation Need Next?"*

Manufacturing Leadership Must be Defined by Execution



By Nicklas Jungander
Partner & Global Practice
Head Manufacturing



For manufacturing organisations, uncertainty is no longer temporary. It has become a permanent condition.

Leaders today face several pressures at once: geopolitics, rapid technological change, higher expectations on speed and innovation, and continued cost pressure. Together, these forces shape decisions that will affect manufacturing companies for many years.

Uncertainty quickly becomes operational. Boards must reassess where production should be located, how supply chains are structured, and how much risk the organisation is prepared to carry. Some companies move production closer to key markets to improve resilience. Others accept higher exposure to specific regions to remain competitive on cost, scale, or innovation. In both cases, the decisions are difficult to reverse.

These decisions are shaped not only by cost and resilience, but also by long-term sustainability expectations. Such expectations increasingly influence capital allocation and investor confidence. According to the MU Leadership Navigator studies, economic instability, market change, and geopolitics are heavily affecting decision-making in manufacturing leadership. This is also highlighted in *Deloitte's Manufacturing Industry Outlook 2025*[2], where supply chain volatility and long-term investment risk remain key concerns for manufacturing leaders.

At the same time, digitalisation and AI are moving from strategy decks into daily operations. In the report, executives expected AI and Technology to affect their future results – the largest single finding. For many organisations, the challenge is not the technology itself, but execution. Investments must translate into productivity without disrupting production, compromising safety, or destabilising the workforce. Innovation cycles are shorter. Tolerance for disruption is lower. Operational mistakes are increasingly costly. This focus on execution is also emphasised in *Deloitte's Manufacturing Industry Outlook 2025*, which shows that manufacturing performance increasingly depends on close integration between innovation, engineering, production, and supply chain operations.

Leadership Requirements Differ by Context

When manufacturing leaders discuss how to navigate uncertainty, the conversation often turns to adaptability, digitalisation, AI, and speed. These topics matter – a lot. But they take different forms in different industrial settings, such as single-site versus multi-site production, or regional versus global supply chain networks.

These differences shape leadership requirements. Whilst the challenge may be common felt, the effect of it and how to respond remain unique to each organisation. Leading one site involves different challenges than leading multiple sites across regions, suppliers, and regulatory environments. Without a clear understanding of the company's situation, leadership discussions risk becoming too general. It is easy to agree on the right words but still focus on the wrong priorities. Innovation and speed matter, but they must be applied in ways that fit the operating reality.

In many industrial companies, uncertainty also exposes a tension between speed and structure. Companies need to act faster, while still maintaining governance, quality, and compliance. In uncertain times, leadership is about managing this tension in practice. As the studies indicate, systemic changes demand unique responses.

Defining Clear Leadership Expectations

In volatile manufacturing environments, broad leadership roles combined with unclear mandates often become a weakness. What works in stable conditions tends to break down under pressure. Clarity of leadership expectations is therefore critical. Not abstract role descriptions, but clear outcomes that guide decisions when trade-offs are unavoidable. As the studies underline, the ability to give "clear structure and direction" is viewed as essential by today's successfully led firms – the second most important capability needed this year and in the years ahead.

In manufacturing, these outcomes are typically concrete: operational stability, delivery reliability, cost and cash control, risk management, and workforce continuity. When expectations are defined in this way, leaders are better equipped to prioritise under pressure. Clear results also make it easier to assess whether leadership is actually working, not just well intentioned.

The Same Logic Applies to Leadership Selection

When industrial leaders lack relevant experience for the situation they are entering, the impact is often visible quickly through missed deliveries, delayed investments, operational disruption, or increased safety exposure.

For this reason, organisations need to start with relevant experience and proven delivery in comparable industrial contexts. This is also supported by the studies, which shows that approximately 66% of leadership assessment should focus on proven achievements and relevant track record. Leadership characteristics and potential are assessed on top of this foundation, not instead of it. This is particularly relevant in manufacturing organisations with strong industrial legacies, where long-term leadership performance depends on both experience and personal capability.

For boards and senior management, this raises a few practical questions:

- **Which external uncertainties have the greatest impact on our business and operations, and do we have leadership experience that matches this exposure?**
- **As technology and AI reshape operations, do we have leaders who can execute change across factories and supply chains, not only define strategy?**
- **Which geopolitical developments and supply chain shifts are most likely to affect our footprint and business model in the coming years?**

For a window on leaders' perspective, our report provides a clear framework for organisations to investigate in their own context. What does this picture look like to your Board and leadership team?



Graph: External factors on macro-level affecting organisational results

Conclusion

Uncertainty in manufacturing is no longer temporary. Geopolitics, technology shifts, cost pressure, and supply chain exposure continue to reshape how industrial companies operate and where risk sits. For boards and senior management, the challenge is not to eliminate uncertainty, but to ensure the organisation has the leadership required to operate, adapt, and make decisions under these conditions.

[2] Coykendall, J., Morehouse, J., Hardin. K., Shepley, S. (2024). *2025 Manufacturing Industry Outlook*. Deloitte. https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/manufacturing-industrial-products/manufacturing-industry-outlook/2025.html

Leadership in Automotive Must be Defined by Results



By Klaus Steinmann
Partner & Global Practice Head
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& Jonas Nußbaum
Group Director



The automotive and mobility industry is facing some of the biggest changes in its history. The next five years may bring more change than the previous fifty. Over the past five years, the industry has had to deal with continuous disruption. This has included the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruption, semiconductor shortages, and geopolitical tensions such as the wars in Ukraine and Iran and rising tariffs.

At the same time, the industry is managing several major shifts at once: electrification, the move to software and AI-defined vehicles, new Chinese competitors, stricter regulation, and changing customer expectations. This means leadership requirements are changing. Companies do not only need strong general leaders. They need leaders who can perform in a very specific business context and deliver clear business results.

To navigate this environment effectively, organisations in automotive and mobility need leadership that focuses on:

- **Adaptability:** The ability to adjust quickly to changing market conditions, regulation, and new technologies.
- **Sustainability:** A commitment to solutions that meet customer needs while also meeting environmental regulation and broaden ESG expectations.
- **Technological innovation:** The ability to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) across the value chain, accelerate software capabilities, and advance autonomous driving where relevant. This also includes managing the shift to Software and AI-Defined Vehicles (SDV / AIDVs).
- **Customer centricity:** A strong focus on customer needs, user experience, and changing buying behaviour.
- **Using data effectively:** The ability to turn data from connected vehicles and customers into better products, tailored services, stronger loyalty, and new revenue streams.
- **New revenue models:** A focus on developing new sources of revenue, such as mobility services, subscriptions, software updates, and in-car digital features.
- **Collaboration and partnerships:** The ability to work across ecosystems with suppliers, startups, technology players, and universities to reduce cost, share risk, and speed up innovation.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA)[3], electric car sales grew by 20% globally in 2025, exceeding 20 million vehicles, meaning one in four new cars sold worldwide was electric. Sales are projected to rise further to 23 million in 2026, representing 28% of total car sales, underscoring how rapidly the market is transforming and how critical it is for leaders to manage this transition effectively.

Three Principles are Particularly Critical

1. **High-performance leadership is contextual in automotive & mobility.**

   High-performance leadership in automotive and mobility cannot be defined through a generic leadership model alone. The context is too specific, too complex, and too dynamic. What makes a leader successful in one sector, market, or phase of transformation may not work in another.

   The industry is operating in a period of uncertainty marked by industrial transition, margin pressure, rising competition, and regulatory complexity. For example, the pace of EV adoption differs across regions, CO2 regulation is evolving, and customer demand remains uneven in many markets. Key challenges include:

   - **High-cost pressure:** High development costs linked to EV platforms, battery technology, and gigafactory investments.
   - **The shift from ICE to EV manufacturing:** A major industrial change that affects plants, supply chains, workforce capabilities, and capital allocation.
   - **Increasing competition from Asia:** Especially from Chinese EV players with strong speed, cost position, and digital capabilities.
   - **Rising insolvency among European tier suppliers:** This creates risk across the supply base and may lead to strategic dependencies.
   - **Geopolitical uncertainty:** Trade barriers, tariffs, raw material dependencies, and regional instability all affect planning and investment.

   This is why companies should define leadership needs based on business context, not abstract capability lists. For example, a plant leader in an EV conversion programme should be measured differently from a commercial leader building a direct-to-consumer sales model, or an R&D leader responsible for software integration. Each role should be linked to the specific transformation, operational risk, and value creation challenge it is expected to solve.

2. **Defining clear leadership results.**

   To succeed in uncertainty, automotive organisations must move away from broad leadership frameworks and instead define clear, measurable outcomes for each leadership role. The key question should not only be “Does this person show leadership potential?” but also “What must this leader deliver in this role, in this market, over the next 12–36 months?”

   Leaders should focus on specific outcomes, such as:

   - **Cost management:** Tight control of development spending linked to EVs and SDVs, while also responding to lower demand in some markets and heavy price pressure from new entrants.
   - **Profitable growth:** Clear plans to improve margin and grow revenue through stronger product positioning, new business models, and better use of market opportunities.

- **Innovation milestones:** Specific targets for AI, software, connectivity, automation, or IoT integration that improve product competitiveness and operational efficiency.
- **Sustainability targets:** Measurable progress on emissions, compliance, circularity, and other sustainability goals that matter to regulators, investors, and customers.

To make this practical, each leader should have 3–5 role-specific success measures. These should be linked directly to strategic priorities. Examples could include:

- Reducing product development costs by a defined percentage.
- Improving plant conversion timing from ICE to EV production.
- Launching a software-based revenue offer by a target date.
- Increasing supply chain resilience through dual sourcing or localisation.
- Improving market share or profitability in a defined region or segment.

This approach creates much stronger accountability than generic leadership assessments. It also makes leadership development more precise, because gaps can be identified against real business outcomes rather than broad behavioural models.

By defining clear leadership success factors, organisations can build leadership teams that are more accountable, focused, and responsive.

3. **Selecting leaders with proven achievements.**

The selection of leaders in automotive and mobility should be structured, evidence-based, and weighted towards the predictors that matter most for success in the role. In a period of major transformation, relevant experience should carry the greatest weight. In most cases, around 60–70% of the assessment should focus on proven track record: What the leader has already delivered in similar contexts, functions, and business situations. The remaining 30–40% should assess personal characteristics such as cognitive ability, adaptability, and leadership style. For roles with especially high complexity or change, the balance may be closer to 50/50, but proven performance should still remain a central part of the decision.

- **Proven Track Record:** Prioritise candidates who have navigated similar transformations, notably in the shift from ICE to EV production and enhancing supply chain resilience.
- **Cross-Functional Expertise:** Seek leaders who possess the capability to integrate strategies across various segments of the organisation, such as operations, R&D, and marketing.
- **Cultural Leadership:** Choose leaders who can foster a culture of innovation and adaptability as the organisation evolves. International experience gets more important.
- **Responsive Decision-Making:** Leaders should be equipped to make informed decisions based on real-time data and shifting market dynamics. The ability to adjust priorities and strategies can significantly impact an organisation's resilience and profitability.

Selection should therefore focus less on personality-based leadership ideals and more on evidence of delivery in comparable business conditions. Companies should ask: Has this leader created value in a complex transformation? Have they led through uncertainty? Have they delivered measurable business impact? This more rigorous approach helps organisations identify leaders who are better prepared for the complexity of the automotive sector.

In conclusion, as the automotive and mobility industry faces unprecedented disruption, organisations must align leadership selection and development with the realities of the market. This means defining leadership through context and results, not through generic models alone. By focusing on adaptability, sustainability, innovation, and collaboration, and by setting clear business outcomes for each leader, companies can navigate uncertainty more effectively and strengthen their position for the future.

[3] International Energy Agency (IEA). (2026). *Global EV Outlook 2026*. https://www.iea.org/reports/global-ev-outlook-2026

What Leadership Professional Services Firms Need Next



By Geir Lislerud
Partner & Global Practice Head
Professional Services



Professional services firms face simultaneous pressure from technology, talent expectations, pricing competition, and geopolitical uncertainty. The question many boards now face is not whether leadership must change, but what leadership is required next.

Across global professional services firms, leaders are confirming that they are faced with the challenge of not only adapting to new technologies but also rethinking their organisational frameworks and leadership strategies, including the iconic “Partner-to-Associate pyramid” model. As firms reassess how they attract talent and structure teams, the demand for Partners with the right skills has become evident.

The Contextual Nature of Leadership Skills

In uncertain times, particularly amid rapid advances in artificial intelligence, Partners must understand high-performance leadership in relation to their specific organisational context. Research shows that over 50% of executives believe the challenges facing their organisations are unique, shaped not only by technological disruption but also by increasing economic and pricing pressures that reshape client expectations and commercial models.

Evidence shows that effective organisations define leadership requirements based on contextual realities rather than generic capability frameworks. Leaders therefore need strong situational awareness to define clear direction amid technological and commercial uncertainty. By aligning strategy with evolving client demands, competitive pricing pressure, and changing service economics, they are better positioned to drive sustainable growth while managing the risks associated with transformation.

Clearly Defining Leadership Expectations

To realise leadership potential in professional services, firms must define clear, measurable objectives aligned with technological disruption, evolving client demands, and changing market conditions. Many organisations still rely on generic competency frameworks, which provide limited guidance in increasingly complex environments.

Our research indicates that at least 66% of partner assessment criteria should focus on proven track record relevant to the organisation's specific challenges. This includes demonstrated functional credibility, exposure to comparable organisational complexity, and evidence of delivering results under similar commercial and transformation pressures.

Rather than assessing attitudes toward change, organisations benefit from evaluating leaders who have already delivered comparable outcomes in practice, whether it is reshaping service delivery,

> *"Proven achievement does not eliminate uncertainty, but it provides the most reliable foundation for leadership decisions"*

managing transformation, or sustaining performance during periods of uncertainty. Evidence of applied capability provides the strongest foundation for leadership decisions as firms seek to harness technological advancement while managing risk.

Select Leaders With Evidence, not Assumption

In professional services firms, leadership selection is fundamentally a prediction task: Determining who will succeed in a specific partnership role under defined commercial and organisational conditions. As firms navigate technological disruption, evolving client expectations, and increasing competitive pressure, the cost of getting leadership appointments wrong has become significantly higher.

Effective selection therefore begins with clarity about the results a Partner must deliver. Rather than relying on generic competency models, organisations benefit from identifying candidates who have already demonstrated success in comparable environments, whether it is reshaping service delivery, leading transformation initiatives, or sustaining client growth under pressure.

A structured, stepwise approach strengthens decision quality. Firms first narrow the field to candidates with relevant functional and contextual experience. Systematic evaluation of track record then examines what results were achieved and under what conditions. Only after this should personal characteristics and leadership potential be assessed as complementary predictors.

Proven achievement does not eliminate uncertainty, but it provides the most reliable foundation for leadership decisions when organisational performance depends on getting appointments right.

Conclusion

Professional services firms are entering a period in which leadership requirements are becoming increasingly differentiated. Whilst certain capabilities, such as digital fluency, strategic clarity, and the ability to manage change, are widely shared priorities, research shows that a substantial proportion of what organisations need from their leaders is specific to their own context, strategy, and market position.

The critical task is therefore not to define the ideal Partner in general terms, but to determine precisely what results must be achieved in each leadership role. Firms that invest time in understanding their unique challenges are better positioned to select leaders capable of delivering sustainable performance.

Generic competency frameworks alone cannot provide this precision. Effective leadership decisions rely on systematic role analysis and rigorous evaluation of relevant achievement before considering broader leadership characteristics or potential. In an environment shaped by technological acceleration, evolving client demands, and structural change within the partnership model itself, evidence-based selection provides a practical way to reduce risk whilst strengthening long-term competitiveness.

Ultimately, navigating uncertainty in professional services is less about finding universally exceptional leaders and more about appointing the right leaders for the challenges ahead.

Retail & Consumer Leadership in a Structural Recalibration



By Florian Schmitz
Partner & Global Practice Head
Retail & Consumer





Retail and consumer markets are not facing a temporary downturn. They are undergoing structural recalibration. Across Europe, three shifts stand out.

First, **innovation intensity has declined**. Recent market data shows fewer new product launches and lower revenue contribution from innovation across major European brands. While total FMCG value grew by 3.4% in 2024–2025, sales from new innovations actually declined by 4.5% as companies pivoted from “breakthrough” launches to incremental line extensions.[4,5] At the same time, private label continues to gain structural share to a record 42% across the EU, signalling that retailer brands are no longer just “budget” alternatives but structural competitors for the value equation.[6] For branded manufacturers, this raises the bar: Premium positioning now requires demonstrable differentiation and commercial discipline, not just brand heritage.

Second, **restructuring is no longer episodic**, it has become a continuous operational requirement. A significant share of European retailers and consumer companies have implemented or announced organisational simplification and cost programs over the last 12–18 months. Most notably Unilever, which recently initiated a productivity program to deliver €800 million in savings through "delayering" and the spin-off of non-core business units.[7] Layer reduction and overhead scrutiny are no longer just cost-cutting exercises; they are becoming standard responses to persistent margin pressure.

Third, **pricing and mix management have moved decisively up the executive agenda**. Revenue Growth Management is no longer a marketing tool; it is a board-level capability. Commercial excellence in pricing architecture, trade spend governance and portfolio mix is increasingly central to performance.[8, 9]

Taken together, these developments redefine what leadership must deliver. In Consumer & Retail, we are putting a high focus on the ability to execute and to deliver result. If you will, simplify & deliver is the term of the hour.

High Performance is Defined by Value-Driver Clarity

The MU Leadership Navigator studies clearly demonstrate that a leader's proven performance in relevant contexts is the most reliable indicator of future success. To make informed leadership decisions, it is essential to understand your specific context.
In the coming years, senior leaders have indicated that 50% of their leadership capability needs will be context-specific, further highlighting the importance of knowing your context.

For Consumer & Retail companies, profitability now takes precedence over expansion narratives. Fewer innovation bets, tighter portfolio control and disciplined pricing governance define the environment.

Leadership excellence in this context is operational and commercial:

- Can leaders restore or defend margin through mix, pricing and cost discipline?
- Can innovation pipelines be sharpened so that fewer launches generate higher return?
- Can organisational simplification increase decision velocity rather than just reduce cost?
- Can resilience measures in supply chains be implemented without structurally eroding competitiveness?

High performance is contextual. A leader successful in growth acceleration may struggle in a margin recovery cycle. Boards that explicitly define their current economic reality make more accurate leadership decisions.

When markets recalibrate structurally, leadership becomes less about style and more about delivery.

Define Leadership Through Measurable Outcomes, not Capability Slogans

In structurally pressured markets, ambiguity is expensive, with many firms facing similar challenges. However, it is important to recognise that responses to these challenges need to be tailored to the specific circumstances of each firm.

Leadership criteria must therefore be expressed in business outcomes:

- Margin improvement through disciplined mix management.
- Measurable innovation ROI rather than launch volume.
- Clear pricing governance with defined decision rights.
- Reduced complexity and faster cross-functional decisions.
- Tangible improvement in forecast accuracy and operational reliability.

Evidence from this report indicates that leadership predictions are most accurate when a relevant track record holds significant weight in the evaluation process. This finding reflects the predictive value of demonstrated success in comparable contexts, consistently showing that predictive accuracy increases when a relevant track record is prioritised. In execution-intensive industries such as retail and FMCG, proven delivery under comparable economic pressure is a stronger indicator of future success than abstract capability models. Potential and adaptability matter, but only on top of demonstrated commercial execution.

Select Stepwise and Start With Comparable Delivery Under Pressure

Retail and consumer industries operate with short feedback loops. Strategy translates into P&L impact within quarters, not years. In such environments, leadership selection cannot begin with abstract capability models. It must begin with evidence.

Boards and executive teams should therefore ask a simple but demanding question: *Who has already delivered results in situations comparable to the one we face today?*

Effective leader selection should therefore begin with disciplined filtering:

- Has the candidate delivered margin improvement in a structurally pressured market?
- Have they implemented pricing or mix governance that measurably improved performance?
- Have they led organisational simplification while preserving execution quality?
- Have they balanced cost discipline with selective, high-return innovation?

Only once this evidence is established should broader leadership characteristics be assessed. Curiosity, adaptability and strategic thinking matter. But their predictive value increases significantly when they are anchored in demonstrated performance under comparable conditions.

Leadership excellence is therefore not primarily defined by who someone is in theory. It is defined by what they have delivered when trade-offs were real and performance was exposed.

Four Strategic Reminders for Boards and Executive Teams

- What is the structural economic reality of our business today and what leadership does it require?
- Are we defining leadership based on measurable outcomes or on generic capability models?
- Where have our leaders already delivered results under comparable pressure?
- Are we prioritising proven delivery, or are we still selecting leaders primarily on perceived potential?

Retail and consumer markets are becoming more measurable, not less. Leadership decisions must follow the same discipline.

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Leading MedTech Through 2026: Why Context Defines the Leader you Need



By Kristof Schoenaerts
Global Practice Head Life Sciences



The Medical Devices sector faces a triple disruption in 2026. Portfolio realignment is accelerating, companies like Johnson & Johnson carving out big chunks of their business (orthopaedic) to focus on other higher growth areas like cardio. Care delivery is shifting from hospitals to ambulatory surgery centres (ASC), with over 500 procedures now added to the ASC-eligible list in the US alone, a trend also observed in many other countries. And AI is moving from pilot projects to core operational capability. McKinsey's report, The State of AI in 2025[10], suggests the direction of travel is clear, even if progress remains uneven: Almost all surveyed organisations report using AI, but nearly two-thirds say they have not yet begun scaling it across the enterprise. In other words, the leadership challenge is no longer whether to explore AI, but how to embed it effectively, safely, and at scale.

Each of these shifts demands different leadership. Not better leadership in the abstract. Different leadership for a specific context.

This matters because as found in our Leadership Navigator studies, over 50% of executives believe the changes they face are unique. In MedTech, they are right. A company divesting non-core assets to fund growth in pulsed field ablation needs a different leader than one building AI products from scratch. A company rewriting its commercial model for ASC customers needs a different leader than one optimising hospital procurement relationships.

Yet most organisations still select leaders based on generic competency models. They look for "strategic thinkers" and "change agents" without defining what strategy and change mean in their precise situation, in their specific market, at this exact moment.

> *"The leaders who will drive innovation, improve patient outcomes, and maintain competitive advantage in 2027 are not the ones with the most impressive résumés"*

High Performance Leadership is Contextual

The studies confirm what executive search practitioners observe daily: Leadership effectiveness depends on the match between the leader's capabilities and the organisation's specific situation. A MedTech CEO managing aggressive restructuring and margin pressure operates in a fundamentally different context than one scaling a newly acquired neuromodulation platform. Both roles require excellence. Neither role requires the same leader.

Organisations that define their leadership needs through the lens of their actual strategic situation, rather than a universal leadership framework, report better outcomes under pressure. The question is not "who is a great leader?" The question is "who is the right leader for what we need to accomplish in the next 18 to 36 months?"

Define the Leadership Results Your Situation Demands

More than 10% of organisations plan to restructure their leadership teams within one to three years. Before they hire, they should define what success looks like in measurable terms.

For a MedTech company entering the ASC market, the needed leadership result might be: "Build a commercial model that captures 15% of addressable ASC procedure volume within 24 months". For a company scaling AI capabilities, it might be: "Establish

enterprise-wide data governance and deploy three validated AI applications within 18 months".

These are not job descriptions. They are performance contracts. They force clarity about what the organisation needs before the search begins.

Select Leaders Based on Relevant Track Record First

The studies show that at least 66% of what you evaluate in your next leader should focus on their relevant track record in relation to the specifics of the role and situation. This is not about years of experience. It is about demonstrated results in comparable contexts.

A leader who has successfully built ASC commercial channels in orthopaedics brings directly transferable knowledge to a cardiac device company facing the same shift. A leader who has scaled AI governance in diagnostics brings relevant architecture thinking to a surgical robotics firm. Track record in a relevant context is the strongest predictor of future performance.

Leadership excellence is not only about who someone is. It is about what they have accomplished when it truly mattered.

MedTech executives should resist the temptation to hire for generic leadership qualities. Instead, define your specific strategic context. Set clear, measurable leadership results. Then find the leader whose track record proves they have done it before, in a situation that mirrors yours.

The leaders who will drive innovation, improve patient outcomes, and maintain competitive advantage are not the ones with the most impressive résumés. They are the ones whose experience matches your reality.

A 5-Point Checklist for Choosing the Right MedTech Leader

1. **Clarify the business context:** Identify the specific disruption or transition your organisation is facing.
2. **Define the leadership challenge precisely:** Be explicit about what kind of leadership the situation requires, rather than relying on broad competency labels.
3. **Set measurable success criteria:** Describe what success should look like in operational and commercial terms over the next 18–36 months.
4. **Prioritise relevant track record:** Focus assessment on whether the leader has delivered results in a similar context.
5. **Hire for fit with future needs:** Choose the leader whose experience best matches where the business needs to go next.

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Leadership for an Uncertain Public Sector



By Christian Nyhlen
Partner & Global Practice Head
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Why Context, Authenticity and Resilience Matter More Than Ever

The leaders most likely to succeed in uncertain times are not simply those with the strongest presence or the most polished style. They are the ones with a relevant track record and a strong fit with the real conditions their people and organisations face. They also have the self-awareness and openness needed to build trust, encourage learning, and strengthen performance around them. Above all, they are ambidextrous leaders: able to run today's organisation well while also preparing employees and stakeholders for a different future.

This matters greatly for public sector organisations across Europe. Over the last two years, leaders in government, municipalities, healthcare, education, and NGOs have worked under growing pressure. Demand has increased. Budgets have remained tight. Workforce shortages have become more visible. Digital change has accelerated. AI has moved from a future topic to an immediate leadership issue. At the same time, public expectations of service quality, transparency, and fairness have continued to rise.

The next two years are likely to bring more of the same. Public sector organisations will need to improve delivery, increase productivity, modernise services, use technology more effectively, and work more closely across institutional boundaries. They will need leaders who can navigate this reality with sound judgement, practical credibility, and human maturity.

That is why two ideas matter more now than ever. First, high performance in leadership is contextual. What works in one setting may not work in another. Second, authenticity is not simply a matter of personal style. It is becoming a real performance factor, especially where trust, collaboration, and change are critical.

Leadership Effectiveness is Shaped by Context

One of the most important lessons from the MU Leadership Navigator studies is that success is situational. There is no single model of the ideal leader that works across all organisations and all moments.

This is especially true in the public sector. The context of a ministry, a municipality, a hospital group, a university, or an NGO may look similar from a distance, but the leadership challenge is often very different. One organisation may need service redesign under budget pressure. Another may need cultural repair after a difficult period. Another may need stronger digital delivery, better cross-system cooperation, or more stable workforce leadership.

This means public sector organisations need to define leadership roles more precisely. Instead of asking only whether a candidate seems strong in general, they need to ask:

- What results must this leader deliver?
- What kind of complexity will they face?
- What type of change must they lead?
- What evidence shows they have done something similar before?

This is where relevant track record becomes so important. In uncertain conditions, the best guide to future performance is often not broad leadership language, but clear evidence that a person has delivered in a context close to the one they are now entering.

For public sector organisations, this is not only a theoretical point. It is a practical one. Leadership mismatch can slow reform, weaken service quality, reduce employee confidence, and damage public trust. A strong selection process therefore needs to begin with context and outcomes, not only personality and promise.

Authenticity is Becoming a Strategic Leadership Strength

At the same time, another important shift is taking place. Leadership is no longer judged only by decisiveness, authority, or control. Increasingly, effective leaders are those who can be clear and credible without pretending to be flawless.

In complex public sector environments, leaders often need to work through ambiguity, incomplete information, and competing demands. In such conditions, image-managed leadership can quickly become a weakness. If leaders appear to have all the answers, avoid showing uncertainty, or focus too much on appearing perfect, they may reduce openness across the organisation. Teams become less likely to speak up, challenge assumptions, or share risks early.

More genuine leadership creates different conditions. Leaders who show self-awareness, honesty, and appropriate openness make it easier for others to do the same. This can increase trust, learning, and problem-solving. It can also reduce fear, defensiveness, and the pressure to hide mistakes.

This does not mean leaders should become informal, vague, or emotionally exposed in ways that weaken confidence. Public leadership still requires judgement, steadiness, and accountability. But it does mean that authenticity now has practical value. It helps leaders create psychological safety, support collaboration, and build the kind of organisational culture needed for change and resilience.

This is especially relevant in Europe, where leadership is often expected to combine competence with trust, dialogue, and institutional responsibility. In these settings, overly performative or heroic leadership styles may be less effective than those based on credibility, openness, and mature self-management.

Why This Matters Even More now

The public sector is facing a combination of pressures that makes both context and authenticity more important than ever. Resilience is needed within organisations to sustain performance through change. Robustness is required to absorb shocks when change happens quickly. Leaders must support both.

At the same time, several wider pressures are intensifying:

- **Demand continues to rise** in many services, especially in healthcare, social care, and local services.
- **Financial constraints remain tight**. Leaders are being asked to deliver better outcomes with limited additional resources, while managing current operations effectively and preparing people for future challenges.
- **Workforce shortages are creating further strain**. Many organisations face difficulties attracting and retaining people in digital, data, health, care, education, and specialist roles. Leaders need to create environments where people feel respected, included, developed, and able to contribute.
- **Digital transformation remains high on the agenda**, yet many organisations still operate with legacy systems, fragmented data, and uneven capability. Leaders need to modernise carefully and credibly. This requires not only technical understanding, but also the ability to lead change without losing operational grip.
- **AI is sharpening the challenge**. Public organisations must now decide where AI can improve services, productivity, and analysis, and where its use creates too much risk. This requires leaders who can combine innovation with ethics, speed with governance, and ambition with accountability.
- **Cross-boundary collaboration is increasingly essential**. Ministries, municipalities, health systems, education providers, and NGOs increasingly depend on each other. No single institution has all the answers. Leaders therefore need to build cooperation, not just manage their own area.

In all these areas, leadership based only on technical skill or formal authority will not be enough. The future will favour leaders who combine relevant achievement with honesty, adaptability, and the ability to work through others.

- In summary, this combination of complexity and change requires ambidextrous leadership: the ability to deal effectively with today's challenges while preparing for the future.

Better Public Sector Leadership Decisions Should Focus on Impact

These combined insights lead to a clear conclusion. Public sector organisations should be careful not to confuse polish with readiness.

A stronger approach is to select leaders step by step:

- **First**, identify those with relevant achievements in similar conditions.
- **Second**, assess how they achieved results, including how they handled pressure, change, and people.
- **Third**, consider wider qualities such as self-awareness, openness, learning orientation, and the ability to attract trust.

This helps organisations avoid a common mistake: Appointing leaders who speak well and present strongly, but whose experience or style does not match the real demands of the role. One important risk in public sector leadership selection isn't choosing the wrong skills – it's mistaking polish for self-awareness, one quality that can't be assessed in an interview but reveals itself the moment real pressure hits. Organisations that build structured ways to surface it before appointment, not just develop it after.

In uncertain times impact matters. Public sector institutions need leaders who are credible in context and genuine in how they lead. That combination is more likely to support trust, better decisions, and sustainable performance.

Leadership Checklist: Questions Public Sector Leaders Need to be Able to Answer

Beyond role specific requirements, context still matters most. The public sector needs leaders who can answer these questions clearly and credibly:

1. Can I make difficult priorities when demand grows faster than resources?
2. Can I improve productivity and value without damaging trust, quality, or mission?
3. Can I lead change while keeping daily operations stable?
4. Can I be open about uncertainty without creating confusion or losing credibility?
5. Can I create enough trust for people to speak honestly about risks, mistakes, and new ideas?
6. Can I use data and AI progressively and responsibly, in ways that protect fairness, accountability, and public confidence?
7. Can I attract, develop, and retain talented people in a difficult labour market?
8. Can I lead across departments, sectors, and institutions when I do not control every lever?
9. Can I reduce silo working and build shared ownership of outcomes?
10. Can I communicate difficult trade-offs honestly to employees, stakeholders, and the public?

What Boards and CEOs Must get Right About Leadership now





By Christian Schaffenberger & Mieke Weijenberg

Partners & Global Practice Heads
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In today's rapidly changing environment, Boards and CEOs face unprecedented uncertainty. The traditional roles of governance and executive leadership have evolved significantly. Boards must transition from mere compliance and performance oversight to become proactive strategists. They are now required to engage in continuous strategy evaluation, scrutinise underlying assumptions, and anticipate risks early. Concurrently, CEOs need to project confidence and clarity while navigating ambiguity, fostering both agility and strategic coherence within their organisations. This new landscape compels Boards and CEOs to align their leadership strategies distinctly to meet the challenges ahead.

As such, transparent communication emerges as a cornerstone of effective leadership. CEOs must communicate effectively not only with stakeholders and employees but also with the Board to ensure alignment on strategic directions and maintain trust. They must transform uncertainty into a mobilising purpose, working with the Board as strategic partners rather than mere reporting entities, while balancing agility with strategic coherence.

Today's markets shift faster than traditional planning cycles, leading to rapidly eroding competitive advantages. Strategic decisions are increasingly intertwined with multifaceted risks, including geopolitical dynamics, regulatory changes, the acceleration of technology and AI, economic volatility and burgeoning ESG pressures. As Boards respond to systemic rather than isolated risks, stakeholder management grows more complex, with investors demanding performance alongside sustainability, while employees seek purpose and flexibility.

In this context, Boards and CEOs are compelled to make quicker, more informed decisions with often incomplete information, catalysing a necessity for agility as they adapt to ever-changing circumstances.

Understand High-Performance Leadership is Contextual

Organisations confronting uncertainty must recognise the unique high-performance requirements relevant to their specific contexts. The MU Leadership Navigator studies indicate that over 50% of executives believe the changes they face are unique, necessitating tailored leadership responses. High-performance leadership is not one-size-fits-all, it needs to resonate closely with the organisation's specific circumstances, including industry dynamics, stakeholder expectations, and competitive pressures. Each context demands different leadership emphases – even if the underlying capabilities overlap:

- A global technology firm navigating rapid AI disruption requires leadership that is innovative, agile and comfortable with ambiguity.
- A regulated financial institution under supervisory scrutiny requires disciplined risk management and governance precision.
- A family-owned manufacturing business entering succession requires trust-building, stewardship and long-term continuity focus.
- A private equity-backed portfolio company approaching exit requires sharp value creation, speed and financial performance discipline.

In uncertain times, Boards need to balance strategic patience with decisive oversight, as their context varies significantly between public, family-owned, and private equity-backed companies. They navigate long-term value creation, governance, risk oversight, and stakeholder accountability, while CEOs focus on operational performance, organisational alignment, and financial sustainability. Both roles demand high performance but in different ways. There is an increasing emphasis on stakeholder engagement and corporate social responsibility. Additionally, the rise of remote work and digital operations has prompted investments in technology and cyber resilience. Ultimately, effective leadership during uncertainty requires adaptability, forward-thinking, and collaboration from both Boards and CEOs.

The critical issue is not whether leaders are capable but whether their skills align with the current and emerging context facing the organisation. In uncertain times, generic leadership advice falls short. Organisations that clearly define their high-performance requirements tend to make more consistent decisions, align leadership behaviours with strategy, reduce confusion during crises, strengthen accountability, and improve talent management.

When leaders grasp the unique pressures and opportunities of their environment, they can make sharper, more impactful decisions. This understanding enables Boards and CEOs to make informed leadership choices that promote sustainable success.

High-performing organisations take a systematic approach, asking questions such as:

- What uncertainties most threaten or enable our strategy?
- Where is our risk exposure highest?
- What time horizon truly governs our decisions?
- What capabilities are mission-critical in the next 24–36 months?

Boards then use this information to set behavioural expectations for management and assess whether the CEO's leadership style matches current needs and if the executive team is well-suited to navigate upcoming complexities.

Define Clear Needed Leadership Results

Defining clear and measurable leadership results is fundamental for effective governance. Leadership must align with the organisation's strategic priorities, whether focusing on growth, turnaround, or transformation. Boards must clearly articulate the specific outcomes they expect from their leadership. Our Leadership Navigator report shows that organisations with clarity in leadership results tend to better align executive behaviour with strategic objectives, leading to enhanced decision-making and improved performance.

For example, if a company aims for digital transformation, the required leadership style and capabilities will differ significantly

from those necessary for market expansion. Setting measurable goals for each leader not only fosters accountability in leadership roles but also helps prioritise actions that align with organisational objectives. This approach serves as a framework for evaluating performance, reducing subjectivity, and facilitating timely interventions. In an environment where circumstances can shift rapidly, clear objectives help maintain focus and direction, enabling Boards and CEOs to navigate complexity with confidence.

To effectively support organisational performance and success, Boards and CEOs must:

- Establishing clear CEO evaluation criteria
- Using future-context scenario leadership assessments
- Regular capability reviews of the management team.

This approach ensures that goals are relevant, achievable, and aligned with both individual capabilities and organisational objectives, ultimately driving better performance and success.

Leadership is not just about who a person is; it is fundamentally about what they have demonstrably delivered in conditions that mirror future challenges. It is crucial to assess if leaders are capable and if they have the potential to succeed in new contexts and corporate cultures.

Select Leaders Stepwise Based on Relevant Track Record

The selection of leaders must follow a systematic process that prioritises demonstrated achievements relevant to the organisation's context. The studies found that organisations should base at least 66% of their evaluation of potential leaders on demonstrated past success. This means that beyond traditional leadership qualities, organisations must evaluate whether the leader has already solved problems similar to the ones the organisation is about to face at the required scale and complexity. As a second step, their skills in navigating change and complexity can be considered. Following a stepwise methodology reduces risk and biases. Charisma, credentials, reputation, and internal popularity can distort judgment. For example, a CEO appointed to lead a technology firm facing rapid AI advancements should come from a background that reflects success in innovative environments. Conversely, a leader of a regulated financial institution would be better served by experience in risk management and compliance.

This stepwise approach to selection not only mitigates risk but also enhances the possibility of finding a leader who fits well with the company culture and operational demands. In an age of rapid change and uncertainty, such methodical assessments are crucial for identifying individuals whose past results provide a reliable indicator of future success.

Conclusion

In summary, navigating uncertain times requires Boards and CEOs to adopt a multifaceted approach to leadership. They must appreciate that high performance is contextual, clearly define leadership success criteria, and select leaders based on relevant achievements. By implementing these principles, organisations can bolster their resilience and adaptability in the face of shifting landscapes.

Organisations get their leadership decisions right when they:

1. **Context matters:** Understand the unique challenges and opportunities your organisation faces.
2. **Set clear goals:** Define measurable leadership results aligned with strategic priorities for the desired future outcomes.
3. **Prioritise relevant track record:** Choose leaders based on proven achievements relevant to your context.
4. **Foster adaptability:** Embrace change as a strength and build organisational resilience.
5. **Engage in ongoing evaluation:** Continuously assess leadership effectiveness against the evolving landscape and evaluate character and cultural impact.

By adhering to these principles, Boards and CEOs can successfully cultivate a leadership framework that meets the demands of uncertain times and propels their organisations toward sustainable success.

Redefining Leadership Effectiveness for Uncertain Times



By Nicolas Alaerts
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Periods of uncertainty tend to expose leadership more than they transform it. What changes is not the essence of leadership, but the degree to which leaders are required to make sense of ambiguity, align others around direction, and deliver results when established reference points no longer hold. The question organisations face today is about understanding **whether their current leadership system is fit for what comes next**.

From Individual Capability to Leadership Effectiveness in Context

Uncertain environments highlight more the limits of generic leadership definitions. The same behaviours that drive performance in one context may stall progress in another. What matters is not whether leaders demonstrate broadly attractive qualities but if their capabilities are aligned with the organisation's required results, their strategic reality, operating model and change/transformation agenda. As our Leadership Navigator studies show, more than two thirds of the answer to "what leadership capabilities do we need" rests with the unique situation and context of your business. As leadership does not happen in a vacuum, context is king.

This has important implications. Leadership effectiveness cannot be assessed in isolation from context. It must be understood in relation to the following:

- The results the organisation must deliver.
- The complexity leaders are required to manage.
- The pace and direction of change they are expected to lead.

Organisations that navigate uncertainty well continuously revisit this alignment. They test whether leadership roles are still defined around the right outcomes, and whether the people in those roles are equipped, both individually and collectively, to deliver them.

Clarity That Leads to High Impact Development

In times of pressure, many organisations invest quickly in leadership development or coaching. These interventions are most effective when they are anchored in clear expectations about what leaders need to achieve, not just how they need to behave. After all, as found in the studies, the second most important leadership requirement, now and in the future, is "clarity, structure and direction".

Clarity on leadership results creates focus. It allows development efforts to move beyond generic capability building and towards strengthening those aspects of leadership that will most directly impact performance. Coaching becomes more purposeful when it is grounded in concrete leadership challenges. Assessment becomes more meaningful when it is used to sharpen decision making rather than label individuals.

This shift from abstract 'potential' to applied effectiveness is especially important when leadership capacity is stretched. And in uncertain conditions, development time is scarce so insights and learning needs to translate into action and impact. The call for more ROI on leadership development is clear.

Leadership as a Collective Capability

Uncertainty not only stretched individual leaders but tests leadership teams and organisations as systems. Misalignment at the top, unclear decision rights or competing priorities between functions quickly undermine execution even when individual leaders are strong.

Organisations are operating in environments that are more complex, faster and more interdependent than before. In that context individual leadership effectiveness is no longer sufficient. The focus is shifting towards team and organisational effectiveness. *How decisions are made. How information flows. How accountability is shared.* These

questions increasingly determine performance.

Leaders therefore need to be assessed not only on their personal impact but on their contribution to collective results and organisational performance.

The impact leaders have on results, and their organisational contribution must both be in focus. Of the top 10 capabilities needed for the future, our studies found that more than half relate to how leaders interact with and affect the collective leadership of their organisations (adaptability, agility, cultivation of competent teams, building trustful environments, communication and collaboration).

Leadership effectiveness requires leaders to create a result together as well as individually. Teams that perform well under uncertainty tend to have:

- A shared understanding of priorities, mandate, and results to be achieved.
- Sufficient diversity of perspective and capabilities without fragmentation.
- The discipline to translate strategy into coordinated action and to follow up.
- An effective team-dynamic.

Understanding and strengthening these dynamics is a critical part of preparing organisations for what is next.

Leadership for What Comes Next

Uncertain times require leadership that is deliberately aligned with future demands, grounded in reality and continuously reviewed as conditions evolve. Organisations that approach leadership in this way are better able to make informed decisions about selection, development and team effectiveness and ultimately organisational effectiveness. In return, the organisation can create the conditions for leaders to perform not by adding complexity but by giving clarity and mandate where it matters most. By doing that, leadership becomes less about navigating uncertainty reactively and more about building organisational resilience and direction over time.

“Uncertain times require leadership that is deliberately aligned with future demands, grounded in reality and continuously reviewed as conditions evolve”

From ESG Ambition to ESG Execution with the Right Leadership



By Anja Behrens
Partner & ESG Practice Lead



Volatility, regulatory shifts, geopolitical tension and climate-related disruption have fundamentally changed the leadership agenda. But ESG is not only about pressure and risk mitigation. It is equally about business opportunity: new markets, innovation potential, access to capital and long-term value creation.

For today's organisations, sustainability is no longer a side topic or a communications exercise, it is a leadership imperative. At the same time, ESG is inherently complex. It cuts across functions, silos and traditional responsibilities: Strategy, operations, finance, risk, HR, supply chain and corporate affairs are deeply interconnected. ESG therefore changes not only what leaders decide, but how they think and operate.

In practice, ESG leadership means navigating constant trade-offs: short-term performance versus long-term resilience, regulatory compliance versus entrepreneurial freedom, stakeholder expectations versus operational realities. This environment requires a more precise and evidence-based understanding of what kind of leadership truly delivers results.

Three principles are particularly critical.

1. High-Performance Leadership is Contextual – Especially in ESG

There is no universal profile of effective ESG leadership, and this has become increasingly evident in recent years. The ESG landscape has evolved at unprecedented speed, with definitions, priorities and regulatory expectations varying significantly across regions:

- Significantly tighter regulation in many regions, particularly across the EU (e.g. CSRD, EU Taxonomy, supply chain legislation). At the same time, political shifts and regulatory adjustments, including recent discussions around simplification and so-called "Omnibus" packages.
- Rising investor scrutiny and changing capital allocation criteria.
- Increasing litigation and reputational risk.
- Strong industry-specific divergence in material ESG topics.

While recent regulatory adjustments and the EU Omnibus discussions may signal a certain recalibration or simplification, they do not reverse the structural shift. Rather, they add another layer of uncertainty. For leadership, this means navigating not only increasing expectations but also regulatory volatility and changing political signals.

As a result, leadership requirements differ strongly between sectors, geographies and business models. What constitutes excellent ESG leadership in heavy industry looks very different from financial services, technology or consumer goods.

Organisations that outperform under pressure are those that define leadership success in relation to their specific ESG exposure and strategic context, not generic models. 8% of leaders consider ESG and regulations to be the most important issue they face, and over half see that the response they need to make is entirely unique to their situation.

For CEOs and boards, this means asking concrete questions such as:

- Which ESG factors materially affect our business model and profitability in the next 3–5 years?
- Where do regulatory uncertainty and political shifts create the highest leadership risk for us?
- Which stakeholder conflicts will our leaders need to actively navigate?
- What leadership behaviour will make the biggest difference to execution in our specific industry context?

Without these answers, leadership selection remains guesswork.

2. Define Clear Leadership Results – not Abstract Profiles

In complex ESG environments, clarity becomes a strategic asset, both for risk mitigation and for value creation. Instead of relying on generic competency labels, successful organisations define precise leadership outcomes: What value should ESG create for the organisation, its customers and its investors? Which ESG-related risks must be reduced? Which transformation milestones must be achieved? Which KPIs will indicate success? And what does "effective change management" concretely mean in this role – faster implementation cycles, lower resistance, measurable shifts in decision processes?

Only when expectations are translated into measurable outcomes can leadership be assessed meaningfully.

This is particularly important because ESG fundamentally changes the nature of leadership itself. Three shifts illustrate this transformation:

- From managing functions to connecting systems.
- From short-term results to long-term responsibility.
- From compliance to culture and conviction.

Selecting leaders based purely on abstract skills without validating their relevance to these demands creates significant execution risk. Clear objectives and outcome-based definitions are the foundation for accurate assessment. As Professor Anders Sjöberg, the scientific author for our Leadership Navigator studies, states, *"leadership success cannot be predicted through standardised competency frameworks it requires rigorous analysis of organisational context, situation, and specific role requirements"*.

3. Select Leaders Stepwise – Start With Relevant Track Record

ESG leadership is not only about surviving pressure. It is increasingly about creating competitive advantage: developing sustainable products, building trusted brands, accessing new funding sources and driving innovation. To unlock this potential, organisations need leaders who have already demonstrated relevant success in their track record.

A robust selection process therefore starts with:

- Proven experience in comparable ESG-driven transformations.
- Evidence of systems thinking and cross-functional leadership.
- Demonstrated ability to balance economic performance with long-term responsibility.
- Credibility in shaping culture, not just enforcing compliance.

Skills, potential and learning agility matter, but only on top of a solid, relevant track record.

Conclusion

ESG has moved leadership out of the realm of theory and into day-to-day business reality. It affects how strategies are set, how investments are prioritised and how organisations are perceived by markets, regulators and employees.

Even in light of current regulatory adjustments and the EU Omnibus discussions, ESG remains a structural business reality. Simplification may change reporting requirements but it does not eliminate stakeholder expectations, capital market scrutiny or the strategic relevance of sustainability.

Companies that handle this well do three things consistently: They take their specific ESG context seriously, they translate expectations into concrete business results, and they appoint leaders who have already proven they can deliver in comparable situations.

Checklist for Effective ESG Leadership Selection

- ✓ **Define context:** Clearly specify which ESG topics are materially relevant for the business model, industry and geographic footprint, and which are not.
- ✓ **Clarify value and risk:** Establish a shared view on where ESG is expected to create business value (e.g. growth, innovation, access to capital) and where it primarily mitigates risk.
- ✓ **Translate expectations into outcomes:** Convert leadership requirements into concrete, measurable results, including KPIs, transformation milestones and execution priorities – rather than generic competency labels.
- ✓ **Check relevant track record:** Prioritise proven experience delivering results in ESG-driven environments with comparable complexity, regulatory exposure and stakeholder pressure.
- ✓ **Assess systemic leadership capability:** Validate the ability to connect systems, balance short- and long-term priorities, and actively shape culture beyond compliance.

Recommended Further Readings and Sources:

KPMG Global CEO Outlook

This report frequently addresses the needs of CEOs regarding ESG initiatives, demonstrating how organisations can integrate sustainability into their core strategies. It highlights the importance of contextual leadership and offers insights into how businesses can adapt their practices in response to evolving regulatory landscapes.

https://kpmg.com/xx/en/our-insights/esg.html

EY Sustainability: Turning ESG Challenges Into Strategic Value

A useful resource for understanding how ESG can evolve from a reporting exercise into a strategic driver of long-term value, resilience and competitive advantage.

https://www.ey.com/en_gl/services/sustainability

How Uncertainty is Reshaping Digital & Transformation Leadership



By Daniel Müller
Partner & Global Practice Head
Digital & Transformation





Leadership in Uncertain Times is Contextual, not Universal

Uncertain times do not create one single leadership challenge. They create different challenges for different organisations. Strategy, industry, digital maturity, and risk exposure all shape what leadership is required.

One of the clearest insights from the MU Leadership Navigator is that more than 50% of the challenges organisations face are unique to them. This is true but not because uncertainty itself is unique. What differs is the specific mix and intensity of four forces shaping every organisation: technology and AI, economic pressure, competition, and geopolitical tension. From a Digital & Transformation Practice perspective, the conclusion is clear: There is no universal leadership profile for uncertain times. High-performance leadership is contextual.

Technology and AI illustrate this well. A regulated industrial company modernising legacy systems needs leaders with operational discipline and regulatory understanding. A digital-native scale-up embedding AI into its products needs leaders who can experiment quickly and build ecosystems. A mid-sized family business automating its value chain needs leaders who can build trust and bring people along. Academic research[11] confirms that successful digital transformation depends on leaders who are visionary, adaptable, and able to drive organisational change and culture, not just technology adoption. Leaders must be customer-centred, embrace risk, and empower teams to collaborate effectively. Across many transformation projects, one pattern is consistent: Failure is rarely caused by the wrong technology. It is usually caused by leadership that does not fit the organisation's digital maturity and risk context.

> *"We see a clear gap between leaders who treat digital transformation as a cost-saving tool and those who use it to create long-term value"*

Four Forces are Reshaping Leadership Requirements

Economic pressure is forcing many boards to focus on cost efficiency and productivity. But leadership choices still depend on context. In asset-heavy industries, leaders must combine cost discipline with investment courage. In innovation-driven sectors, excessive cost cutting can damage long-term competitiveness.

We see a clear gap between leaders who treat digital transformation as a cost-saving tool and those who use it to create long-term value. The difference is not technology. It is judgment knowing when to optimise and when to invest. Competition is also

changing. Many of the strongest competitors today are not traditional peers. They are platform companies, AI-native entrants, ecosystem players, or state-backed firms. This requires competitive imagination, the ability to see threats early and rethink industry boundaries.

Leadership teams with strong strategic agility and external focus move faster. They launch new business models earlier. They build stronger partnerships. They adapt better when revenue streams shift. The differentiator is not better data. It is better leadership thinking. Geopolitical tensions now directly affect supply chains, technology access, and market entry. Leaders must think in scenarios, not single plans. They must empower decisions closer to the market. They must operate across cultures. Organisations with rigid hierarchies and slow decision processes react too late. Leadership resilience has become a performance driver. Indeed, according to recent research from McKinsey and the World Economic Forum, *84% of executives report feeling underprepared for emerging disruptions: from AI and supply chain fragility to geopolitical tensions and economic volatility*, underscoring the urgent need for context-aligned leadership capabilities.

Aligning Leadership With the Organisation's Reality

In uncertain times, leadership effectiveness is not about having the "best" leaders in abstract terms. It is about having the right leaders for your specific situation. Boards and executive teams should ask three simple questions:

1. Does our leadership team match our digital maturity, competitive risk, geopolitical exposure, and economic pressure?
2. Are we assessing leaders based on future demands or past performance?
3. Are we building succession pipelines for volatility and reinvention or only for stable growth?

At MU, our Leadership Navigator data and Digital Transformation Practice work lead to a clear conviction: Uncertain times do not require stronger leadership. They require leadership that fits the context.

The organisations that will outperform in the coming decade will not simply have better technology. They will have leadership teams precisely aligned with the uncertainty they face. The key question therefore is simple: What leadership does your organisation need next?

[11] Tagscherer, F., Carbon, C-C. (2023). *Leadership for successful digitalization: A literature review on companies' internal and external aspects of digitalization.* ScienceDirect. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2773032823000032

Appendices

MU Research Institute

The MU Research Institute (MU RI) is a specialised, independent body within MU established to develop, validate, and maintain the firm's science-based executive search and leadership assessment methods. It ensures all leadership advisory services align with MU Leader Selection Science®, focusing on evidence-based hiring, diversity, and talent development. The MU Research Institute also produces the studies used in the MU Leadership Navigator.

Key aspects of the MU Research Institute include:

- **Focus areas:** Developing proprietary methods, conducting validation studies (e.g., verifying hiring success rates), and producing research on leadership, inclusion, and diversity.
- **Scientific approach:** Founded to go beyond traditional executive search by applying academic rigor to talent acquisition and assessment.
- **Quality assurance:** Ensures services meet high, often accredited, standards of accuracy, such as ISO 10667-2 for, assessment services.
- **Key publications:** The MU RI publishes findings on leadership trends, such as updates on inclusion and diversity research and success rates of leader appointments.

The institute serves as the cornerstone of MU's reputation for scientific, data-driven leadership advice.



Roger Hagafors
Head of MU RI

Roger Hagafors leads the MU Research Institute.

Roger was awarded a PhD degree in Psychology at Uppsala University 1981, where in 1986 he was appointed as Associate Professor in Psychology. He had research assignments mainly at the University of Uppsala. Roger has published many scientific articles in Expert Judgement and Decision-Making

Roger is an experienced Board Member, General Manager and Executive Search Consultant who has successfully run and grown MU's consulting businesses for more than 40 years.



Anders Sjöberg
Deputy Head of MU RI

Anders Sjöberg obtained his PhD from the Department of Psychology at Stockholm University in 1998 and was appointed Associate Professor at the same institution in 2010. He has published extensively in scientific journals on personality, cognitive ability, personnel selection, and psychometrics. He contributed to the development of ISO 10667 and has been a longstanding member of the Board of Assessments within the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations. Since 2024, he has served as Deputy Head of the MU Research Institute. Anders is the scientific author for the MU Leadership Navigator report.



Emma Jonsson
Head of Applied Research

Emma Jonsson has been awarded a Master of Social Science (MSSc) degree at Uppsala University and has been engaged in the MU Analytics Team since 2017. Since 2021 she has held the position as Head of Applied Research in MU Research Institute. In this role, Emma leads psychometric validation studies for the MU Personality Inventories and Cognitive Tests. She is also responsible for the recurring success-rate follow-up of leader-appointments based on MU assessments and conducting research in the areas of Inclusion and Diversity.

References and Additional Reading

For additional information on MU's validation studies, Inclusion & Diversity research and the ISO standard, continue reading here.

MU Validation Studies

https://www.mercuriurval.com/globalassets/muri/success-rate-for-leader-appointments-2022-2023.pdf

Diversity Analysis

https://www.mercuriurval.com/globalassets/muri/diversity-analysis-2023.pdf

Research on Inclusion & Diversity

https://www.mercuriurval.com/globalassets/muri/research-on-inclusion-and-diversity-2025.pdf

ISO 10667-2 Standard

The purpose of the ISO 10667-2 standard is to describe requirements and recommendations for the procedures and methods used in the measurement and assessment of people for work-related purposes. The standard covers the entire measurement and assessment process. The application of this standard provides better, fairer, and more reliable decision-making support for the organisation.

https://www.iso.org/standards.html

How MU Experts Help Clients Make Better Leadership Decisions in Uncertain Times



As leadership becomes more contextual, more complex, and harder to define through generic profiles, organisations need a more rigorous way to make leadership decisions. The challenge is not only to identify strong leaders in general, but to predict who is most likely to succeed in a specific role, in a specific organisation, facing specific demands.

At MU, leadership selection is approached as a prediction task. The question is not simply who appears impressive, but who is most likely to deliver the required results in the real context of the role. This requires a structured, evidence-based methodology that combines scientific rigour with contextual judgement.

MU's approach is grounded in the **MU Predictive Analysis™**. For every appointment, MU Experts conduct a systematic analysis of the role, including the organisational context, strategic priorities, functional demands, complexity, and degree of change involved. This ensures that leadership assessment is anchored in what the role actually requires, not in generic assumptions about what good leadership looks like.

This matters because effective leadership prediction must be both predictive and precise. It must look ahead to the challenges the leader will face, while also defining clearly the results, context, and capabilities that matter most for success.

To do this, MU Experts assess two broad types of predictors:

- Track-record predictors – experience, knowledge, and demonstrated performance.
- Personal characteristics predictors – cognitive ability, personality traits, and behavioural patterns.

Both are important, but their relative weight depends on the role and its context.

Track-record data plays a central role in MU's methodology because it provides direct evidence of what a candidate has already achieved in relevant situations. Decades of scientific research show that structured assessment of past performance is among the strongest predictors of future success. MU's own outcome validation supports this: **More than 90% of appointments made based on MU assessment method are evaluated as successful by Hiring Managers.**[12]

"Evidence from real performance in comparable situations gives organisations a more reliable basis for prediction than generic competency models or one-size-fits-all leadership frameworks"

In complex and uncertain environments, proven capability is often a stronger guide than broad potential alone. Evidence from real performance in comparable situations gives organisations a more reliable basis for prediction than generic competency models or one-size-fits-all leadership frameworks.

At the same time, MU's methodology does not stop at achievement. The strongest leadership decisions follow a disciplined and stepwise process: First understanding proven achievement, then going beyond it to assess behaviour and potential. This includes qualities such as adaptability, curiosity, judgement, direction-setting, and the ability to attract and build strong teams. These characteristics are often critical, especially in roles shaped by change, ambiguity, and transformation.

MU's work is also guided by recognised professional quality standards, **including ISO 10667, the international standard for accurate and fair leadership assessment** (see appendix on page 63 to learn more). This supports a high-quality, ethical, and systematic approach to assessment, helping clients make decisions that are ethical, valid, and fit for purpose.

The key insight is that leadership prediction is multi-dimensional and context dependent. Some success factors are universal and supported by research. Others are unique to the organisation, the role, and the challenges ahead. Effective leadership assessment therefore requires both:

- Tailored analysis of the specific context, requirements, and performance criteria of the role.
- Evidence-based evaluation of core predictors of success.

This is how MU Experts help clients respond to the leadership challenges many organisations now face: leadership is more contextual and more complex; leadership requirements must be defined more predictively and more precisely; and leadership decisions must start with achievement, then go beyond it.

What gives confidence is a structured, evidence-based approach that combines contextual precision, disciplined assessment, and recognised quality standards.



[12] Jonsson, E. (2025). *Success of Leader Appointments 2022-2023*. Mercuri Urval Research Institute. https://www.mercuriurval.com/global/mercuri-urval-research-institute/

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