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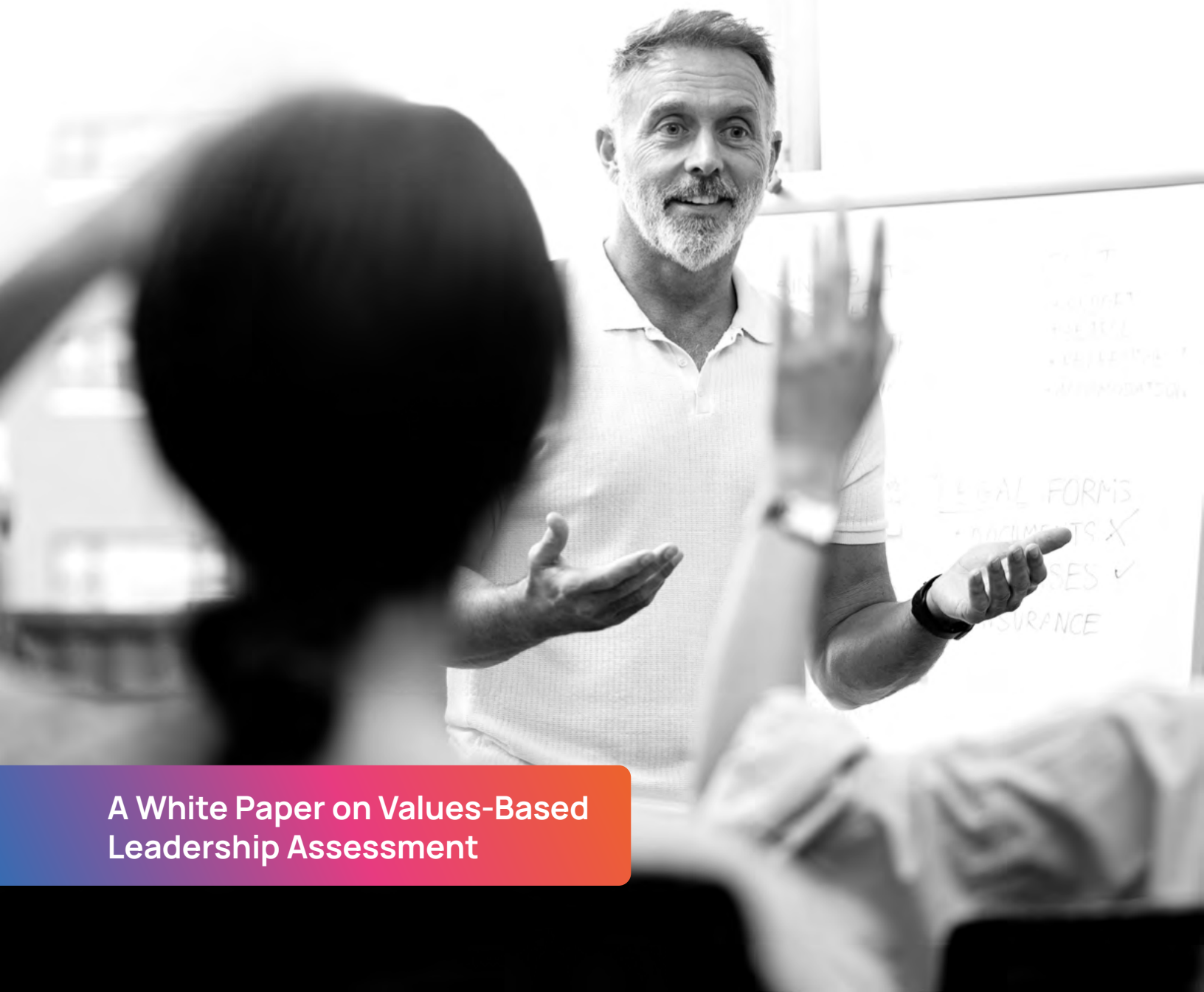
The Core Values Navigator:

A Breakthrough Approach to Leadership Development

A White Paper on Values-Based Leadership Assessment

Executive Summary

Values serve as the fundamental compass that guides human decision-making and thought processes. While the topic of values has been extensively studied over the past several decades and there are traditional assessment approaches designed to identify these individual values - we recognized a critical gap: most traditional assessment approaches have failed to capture the dynamic complexity of how values manifest in leadership co ntexts. The Core Values Navigator represents a breakthrough in values assessment technology, offering a scientifically-grounded framework that addresses critical limitations in existing models while providing actionable insights for leadership development.

Built upon decades of research from leading psychological theories that have been validated across 42 countries, our proprietary framework measures ten distinct values organized within three core value orientations. Unlike traditional approaches that merely classify values, the Core Values Navigator explicitly maps the dynamic interplay between values and underlying motivational states, providing leaders with unprecedented insight into their authentic leadership identity and potential impact.

This white paper examines the scientific foundation underlying the Core Values Navigator, demonstrates its practical applications, and presents compelling evidence for values-based leadership development approaches that are 3.4x more effective than generic methodologies.

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Introduction: The Leadership Values Gap

In today's complex business environment, technical expertise and industry knowledge are no longer sufficient differentiators for leadership effectiveness. Research consistently demonstrates that leaders who understand their core values make more authentic decisions, build stronger relationships, and navigate challenging situations with greater clarity and confidence (Schwartz, 2012).

Yet despite this evidence, most leadership development approaches continue to focus primarily on skills and competencies while neglecting the deeper values foundation that drives authentic leadership behavior. This gap represents a critical missed opportunity, as values function as the internal compass that guides our decisions, actions, and priorities—particularly in high-pressure situations where analytical thinking may be compromised by time constraints or complexity.

As Schwartz (2012) notes, "Values are beliefs linked inextricably to affect. When values are activated, they become infused with feeling." This emotional component makes values particularly powerful drivers of behavior, especially in leadership contexts where decisions carry significant organizational and human impact.

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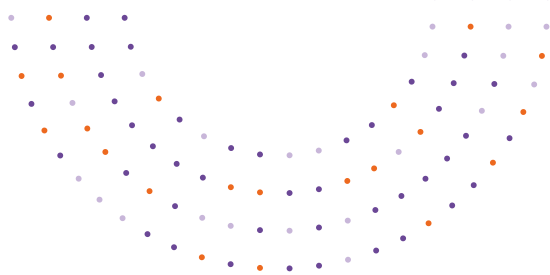
Integration of Leading Values Theories

The Core Values Navigator builds upon and integrates insights from the most respected values theories in psychological science:

Schwartz Theory of Basic Values

The Schwartz Theory of Basic Values (2012) identifies ten universal values. At the heart of this theory is the idea that human values are not isolated traits, but are interconnected. This interconnection exists because each value is driven by an underlying motivation, which Schwartz visualizes in a circular structure. For example, Schwartz (2012) notes that achievement (a value) is motivated by the desire for personal success (the motivational goal) and security is motivated by a need for safety and stability. Understanding this circular structure and the interconnections among values offers insights into their relationships. Specifically, it shows how some values are compatible while others may conflict, helping us understand why pursuing one value can make it more difficult to prioritize another. As Schwartz explains, "actions in pursuit of any value have consequences that conflict with some values but are congruent with others"—a dynamic particularly evident in leadership decision-making.

Our Core Values framework adopts this circular-type structure while enhancing it with leadership-specific applications and contextual adaptations. This model becomes especially relevant in the practice of leadership, where decision-making often involves balancing competing values such as Power vs Universalism or Autonomy vs Security. By building on Schwartz's circular model and applying it to leadership, our framework provides a clear and flexible way to understand how values influence behavior.
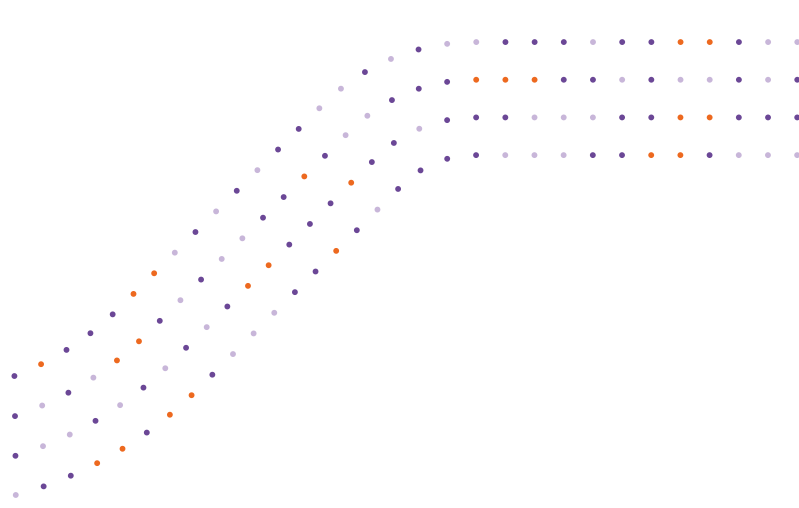
Hogan's Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI)

The Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI) developed by Hogan & Hogan (2010) assesses ten core values that influence workplace behavior and leadership: Recognition, Power, Hedonism, Altruistic, Affiliation, Tradition, Security, Commerce, Aesthetics, and Science. As the authors note, "Values are the key to understanding what people desire and strive to attain." The MVPI has become a widely respected tool in organizational psychology. Our framework builds on this foundation by aligning with several of the MVPI's dimensions while enhancing them with leadership-specific depth and contextual clarity. While MVPI provides a valuable view of broad motivational drivers, our approach refines and reinterprets these

drivers in ways that make them directly relevant to real-world leadership dynamics. Additionally, our framework is designed to offer greater granularity, especially when leaders must make decisions that involve navigating value tensions that may occur from competing values. Rather than offering static profiles, we emphasize the dynamic expression of values in specific contexts, making our assessment actionable for leadership development, executive coaching, succession planning, and more.

Sources of Meaning Framework

Incorporating insights from Schnell's (2009) research on sources of meaning, our framework recognizes that values serve as pathways to meaningful leadership experiences. As Schnell notes, values form hierarchical structures where "higher levels provide the integrative framework for lower levels." Our approach specifically examines how leadership values contribute to meaningful leadership identities and practices.

The Core Values Navigator Framework

Addressing Limitations in Existing Models

Traditional values assessment approaches suffer from several critical limitations that the Core Values Navigator addresses:

1 **Static Classification:** Existing frameworks merely classify values without examining their dynamic interplay and contextual manifestation

Example: A leader might score high on both "achievement" and "compassion," but traditional tools fail to show how these values can create tension during performance reviews or how they shift in priority during crisis situations.

2 **Generic Application:** General values frameworks apply broadly but lack leadership-specific contextualization

Example: While a tool might identify "integrity" as a core value, it doesn't address how integrity manifests differently when leading organizational change versus managing day-to-day operations.

3 **Limited Actionability:** Beyond description, most approaches provide insufficient guidance for practical leadership development
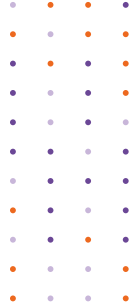
Example: An assessment might reveal that "innovation" is a top value, but provides no roadmap for how a leader can practically foster innovative thinking within their team's weekly workflows.

4 **Cultural Constraints:** Many frameworks lack cross-cultural validation, limiting their applicability in global leadership contexts

Example: A values framework developed in individualistic cultures may misinterpret collective decision-making as indecisiveness rather than recognizing it as a manifestation of community-oriented values.
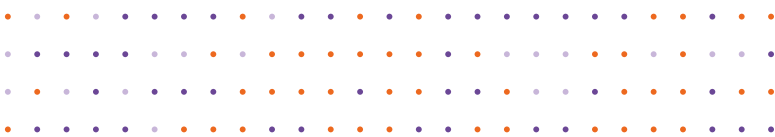
The Ten Core Values Dimensions
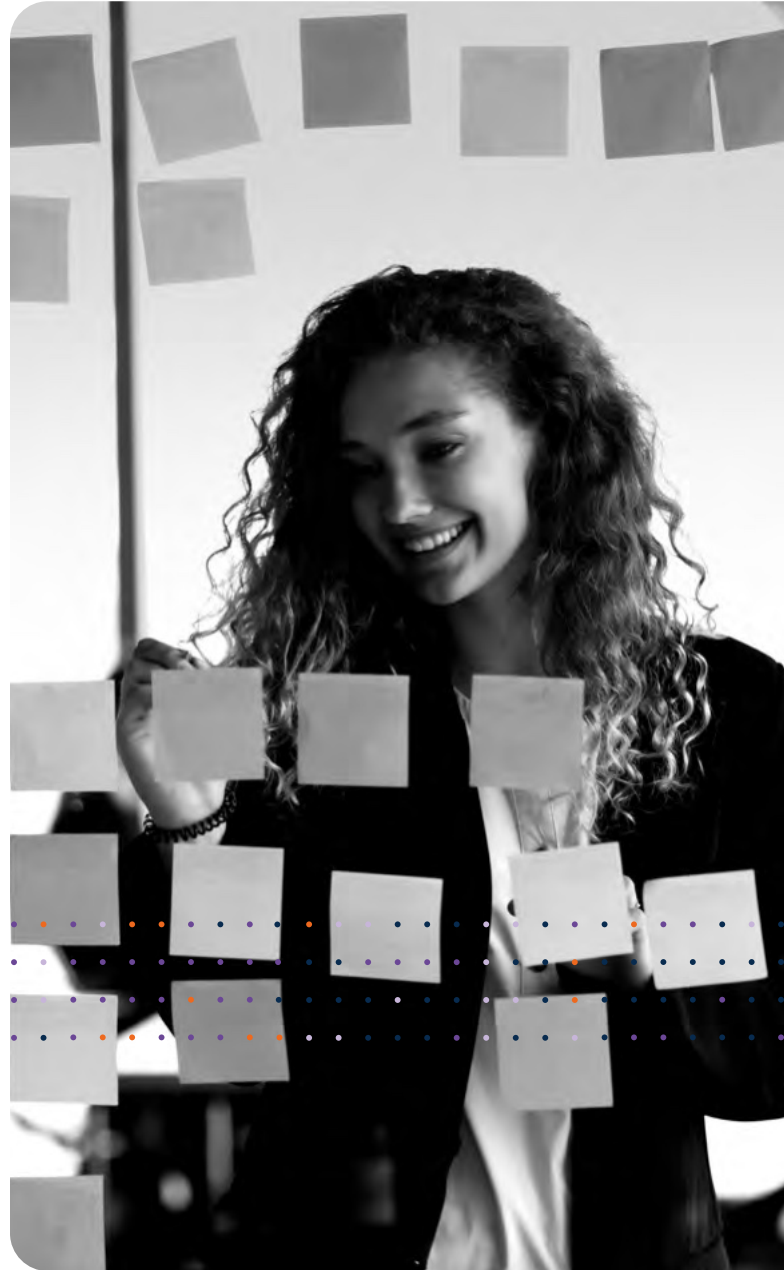
Each value dimension contains specific facets that provide nuanced understanding of how values manifest in leadership contexts:

Values:

> **Stability:** Encompasses safety/security, predictability, harmony, consistency, and resilience against change. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that emphasize protection from harm and maintenance of order.

> > Financial Security: Desire to have stable and sufficient income coupled with responsible financial management to meet one's needs and maintain economic well-being.

> > Job Security: The value placed on stability and continuity in employment with a strong desire for predictable, long-term employment with little risk of job loss.

> > Predictability: The value placed on the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and control future events through routine, structure, and environmental knowledge.

> **Tradition:** Defined as a value placed on respecting, preserving, and adhering to established customs, rituals, and cultural norms. It encompasses a desire for consistency, respect for history, and commitment to long-standing practices and beliefs. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up Tradition.

> > History: The value placed on understanding, preserving, and honoring the culture and history of a community or society as a source of inspiration and guidance.

> > Hierarchy: The value placed on established structures of authority that organize roles, responsibilities, and power within communities or organizations.

> > Routine: The value placed on consistent habits, schedules, and repetitive practices that provide structure, predictability, and emotional security.

> **Visibility:** Defined as value placed on being acknowledged, appreciated, and visible to others. It reflects a motivation for external validation, social approval and recognition of one's contributions or achievements. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up Visibility.

> > Acknowledgement: The value placed on being known and remembered by others in social and professional contexts for one's presence and identity.

> > Praise: The value placed on receiving verbal or written acknowledgment and appreciation for one's achievements, efforts, or qualities.

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> **Power:** Defined as value placed on achieving influence, control, and authority over others and resources. It reflects a motivation for social status, prestige, and the ability to direct or shape outcomes in personal, organizational or societal contexts. Power is rooted in the desire to assert dominance, gain recognition, and maintain leadership roles. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up Power.

  > Leadership: The value placed on guiding, influencing, and directing others toward achieving shared goals with authority and responsibility.

  > Status: The value placed on achieving social recognition, respect, and prestige within a community or organization.

  > Competition: The value placed on outperforming others and achieving superior results through excellence and effort in competitive environments.

> **Rationality:** Defined as a value that motivates individuals to prioritize reasoning, evidence-based thinking, and systematic approaches in their decision-making processes. It reflects a commitment to objectivity, intellectual growth, and the pursuit of truth through logical inquiry. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up Rationality.

  > Science: A systematic approach to understanding phenomena through empirical evidence, experimentation, and rigorous methodologies.

> Data: Reliance on factual, quantitative, and empirical information to guide decision-making with accuracy and objectivity.

> Logic: Structured reasoning, coherence, and consistency in analyzing problems and deriving conclusions through systematic thought processes.

> **Autonomy:** Defined as the value placed on independence, self-reliance, and the freedom to think, act, and express oneself without undue external influence. It reflect a motivation to prioritize personal agency, individuality, and the ability to make choices that align with one's own beliefs and goals. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up Autonomy.

  > Freedom: The capacity to make choices without external pressure, allowing individuals to act according to their own will and preferences.

  > Individuality: The value placed on expressing and maintaining one's unique characteristics, beliefs, and behaviors, preferring self-expression over conformity.

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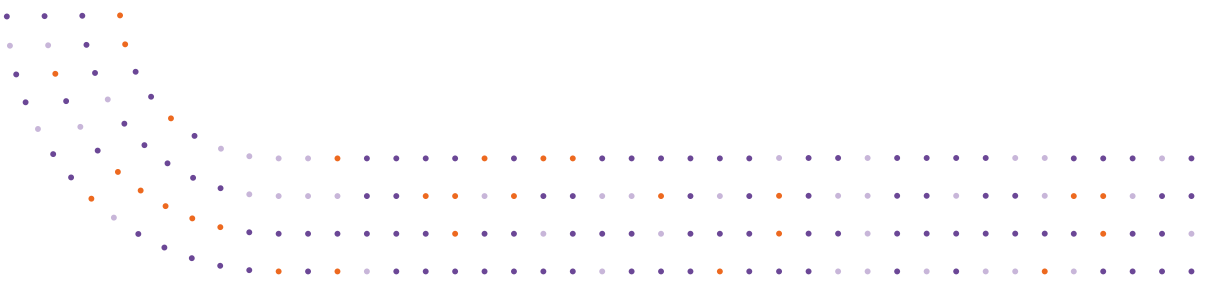
Community: Defined as the value placed on creating meaningful relationships, mutual support, and collective well-being within social groups. It reflects a motivation to connect with others, contribute to shared goals, and enhance the welfare of individuals and the broader community. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up the Community.

> Altruism: The value placed on selflessly helping others driven by empathy and compassion without seeking personal gain or recognition.

> Affiliation: The value placed on forming and maintaining close, friendly relationships with a motivation to connect emotionally and feel belonging within a group.

Aesthetic Appreciation: Defined as the value placed on beauty, creativity, self-expression, and appreciation of form and quality in both natural and human-made environments. It reflects a motivation to engage with and create experiences that evoke sensory pleasure, emotional responses, and intellectual stimulation through artistic and creative pursuits. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up Aesthetic Appreciation.

> Nature: A motivation to seek out, appreciate, and protect natural environments for their beauty, restorative qualities, and ability to inspire awe.

> Design: The value placed on creating and appreciating functional and visually pleasing products, environments, and presentations.

> Experience: The value placed on engaging with sensory, emotional, and intellectual experiences that arise from encountering beauty, art, or meaningful environments.

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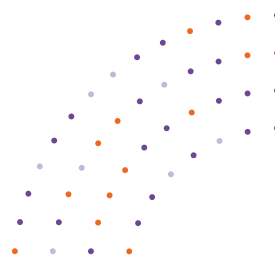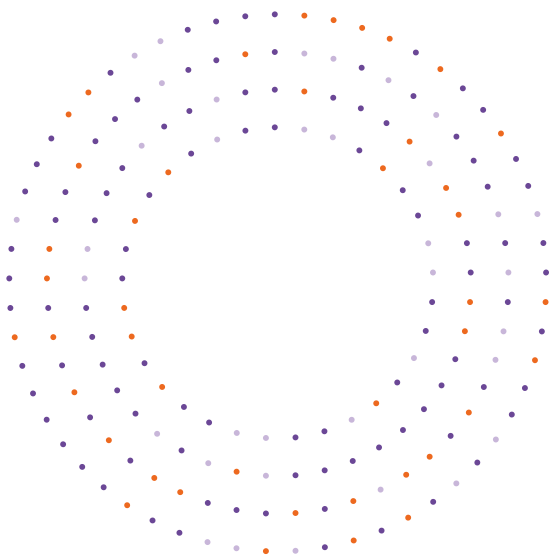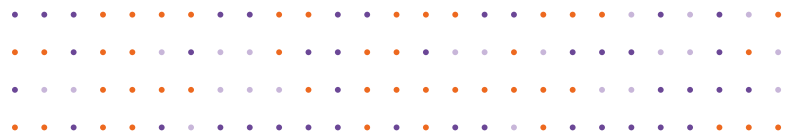
> **Enjoyment:** Defined as value placed on experiencing pleasure, engagement, and positive emotional states through activities, interactions, and leisure. Enjoyment encompasses both indulgence in pleasurable experiences and participation in stimulating or entertaining activities that enhance quality of life. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up Enjoyment.

> Indulgence: The value placed on freely pursuing and experiencing pleasures involving non-essential or luxurious activities without feelings of guilt.

> Entertainment: The value placed on engaging in activities designed to provide amusement, relaxation, and diversion from daily routines.

> **Well-being:** Defined as a value that motivates individuals to prioritize physical health, emotional resilience, meaningful relationships, and life balance in pursuit of a fulfilled life. It integrates self care practices, effective life integration strategies, and reliance on support systems to achieve harmony across various dimensions of wellness. Each sub-dimension below reflects motivational goals that make up Well-being.

> Self-care: The value placed on engaging in intentional activities and practices to maintain and enhance one's physical, mental, emotional, and social health.

> Life Integration: The value placed on effectively managing the interplay between work and personal life to create harmony, flexibility, and fulfillment.

> Support System: The value placed on creating, maintaining, and investing in meaningful relationships with family and friends to enhance emotional and mental well-being.

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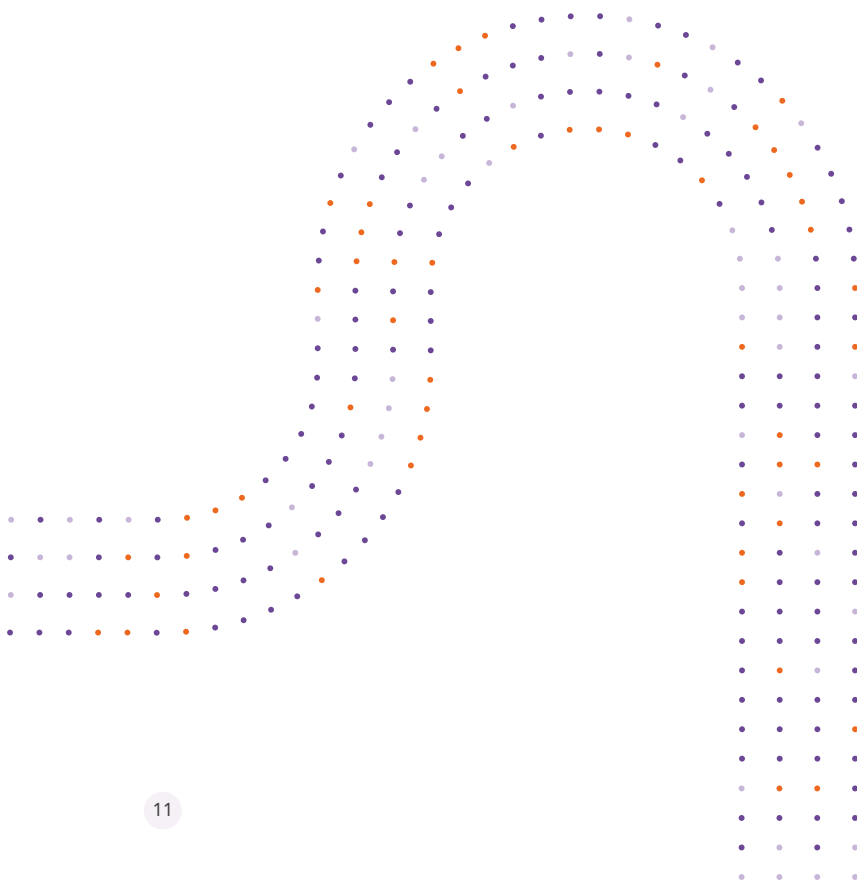
The Three Value Orientations

Our research reveals that the ten core values cluster into three value orientations that provide foundational understanding of leadership orientations:

1 Preservation

Focuses on maintaining order, continuity, and security. Leaders strong in Preservation values prioritize stability, predictability, and respect for established structures and practices. This orientation encompasses:

> **Stability:** Financial security, job security, and predictability

> **Tradition:** History, hierarchy, and routine

2 Ambition

Represents drive, success, autonomy, and intellect. Leaders strong in Ambition values demonstrate analytical decision-making, seek positions of authority, and are motivated by achievement and recognition. This orientation includes:

> **Power:** Leadership, status, and competition

> **Visibility:** Acknowledgment and praise

> **Rationality:** Science, data, and logic

> **Autonomy:** Freedom and individuality

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3   Fulfillment

Centers on connection, happiness, and creative expression. Leaders strong in Fulfillment values prioritize well-being, interpersonal relationships, and environments that foster both individual and collective thriving. This orientation encompasses:

> **Community:** Altruism and affiliation

> **Aesthetic Appreciation:** Nature, design, and experience

> **Enjoyment:** Indulgence and entertainment

> **Well-being:** Self-care, life integration, and support systems

Research Validation and Impact

Research Foundation Validation

The Core Values Navigator builds upon research that has undergone extensive validation across 42 countries, particularly Schwartz's foundational work on universal values. This robust research foundation ensures our framework captures universal aspects of values while respecting cultural variations, providing confidence in the framework's applicability across diverse leadership contexts and organizational cultures.

Leadership Effectiveness Outcomes

Research demonstrates that values awareness contributes to leadership effectiveness through several key mechanisms:

Enhanced Decision-Making

Values function as decision-making filters, particularly in ambiguous situations. Schnell (2009) notes that values "serve as internalized guides for individuals" and help evaluate whether actions are "justified or illegitimate." Leaders with clear values awareness make more consistent decisions aligned with both personal and organizational principles.

Authentic Leadership Development

Values awareness is foundational to authentic leadership. As Schwartz (2012) observes, "Values are ordered by importance relative to one another. People's values form an ordered system of priorities that characterize them as individuals." This ordered system provides the core around which authentic leadership develops.

Cultural Alignment and Performance

Leadership effectiveness depends significantly on value alignment between leader and organization. According to Hogan & Hogan (2010), "If people choose careers and work in organizations whose cultures are inconsistent with their values, they are usually unhappy and unable to perform effectively." The Core Values Navigator specifically assesses this critical alignment.

Motivated Performance

Values energize and direct behavior toward valued goals. Understanding this motivational landscape helps leaders tap into their authentic sources of energy and commitment, leading to more sustainable high performance.

Practical Applications and Business Impact

Leadership Development ROI

Our research demonstrates that development efforts aligned with core values are 3.4x more likely to produce lasting behavioral change than generic approaches. This dramatic improvement in effectiveness stems from the framework's ability to identify authentic motivational drivers and align development interventions accordingly.

Team Composition and Performance

Understanding team members' values enables strategic team composition that balances complementary perspectives. Research by Hogan & Hogan (2010) demonstrates that teams with balanced value profiles outperform homogeneous teams by 27% on complex problem-solving tasks. The Core Values Navigator provides the insight necessary to achieve this optimal balance.

Organizational Culture Building

Leaders consciously or unconsciously shape organizational culture through the values they emphasize. The framework helps identify which cultural elements leaders naturally reinforce and which may require more deliberate attention, enabling more intentional culture development.

Career Planning and Succession

As Schnell (2009) notes, individuals who "choose careers and work in organizations that are consistent with their values, are usually more satisfied and perform more effectively." The Core Values Navigator provides guidance for long-term career decisions and succession planning that maximizes both fulfillment and organizational impact.

Implementation Framework

Assessment Process

The Core Values Navigator employs a sophisticated assessment methodology that measures value priorities across the ten core dimensions. Results are presented through an intuitive radar chart visualization that allows leaders to quickly identify their strongest and weakest value orientations.

Interpretation Guidelines

The framework provides comprehensive interpretation guidance that examines:

> **Distinctive Patterns:** Values scoring in the 75th percentile or above (core values) and 25th percentile or below (background values)

> **Complementary Relationships:** Value combinations that naturally reinforce each other

> **Potential Tensions:** Value combinations that might create internal conflicts

> **Blind Spots:** Areas that may represent overlooked perspectives

> **Contextual Fit:** Alignment between values and organizational culture
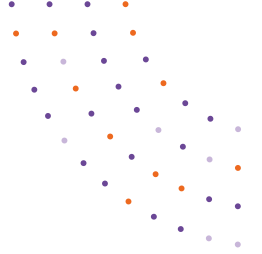
Strategic Application Planning

The assessment includes a Strategic Value Application Plan that helps leaders:

1 **Leverage Core Values:** Identify authentic expressions of top values in current roles

2 **Address Value Gaps:** Develop practices to strengthen lower-scoring areas when organizationally necessary

3 **Navigate Value Tensions:** Recognize and manage conflicts between competing values

4 **Build Complementary Teams:** Partner with colleagues whose values complement their own
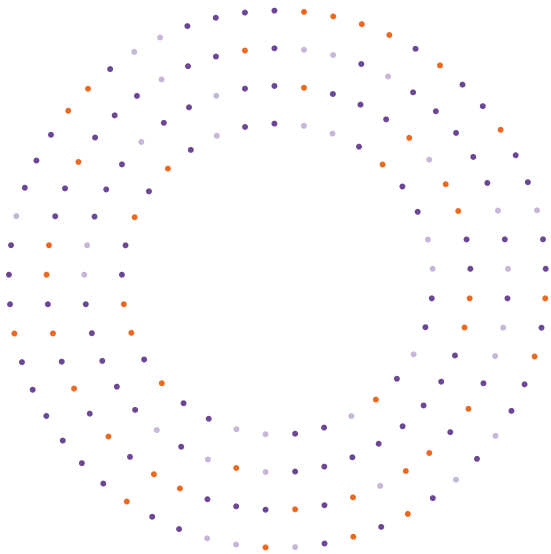
Future Directions and Conclusion

The Core Values Navigator represents a significant advancement in values assessment technology, providing leaders with unprecedented insight into the relationship between personal values and leadership effectiveness. By addressing limitations in existing frameworks while building upon established psychological theories, our approach offers both deep understanding and practical guidance for authentic leadership development.

Future research directions include longitudinal studies examining values evolution throughout leadership careers, investigation of values-based leadership effectiveness across different organizational contexts, and continued refinement of the framework based on emerging psychological research.

Organizations seeking to develop more authentic, effective leaders would benefit significantly from implementing values-based assessment and development approaches. The Core Values Navigator provides the scientific rigor and practical applicability necessary to transform leadership development from generic skill-building to authentic values-driven growth.

As the business environment continues to increase in complexity and ambiguity, leaders who understand and leverage their core values will possess a critical advantage in navigating uncertainty, building trust, and creating sustainable organizational success.

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For more information about the Core Values Navigator and AIIR Analytics' leadership assessment solutions, visit www.aiiranalytics.com or contact our research team.

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