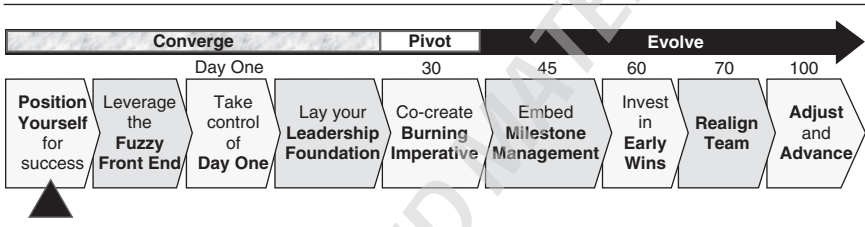


Position Yourself for Success

GET THE JOB. MAKE SURE IT IS RIGHT FOR YOU.
AVOID COMMON LAND MINES.



As discussed in the executive summary, the four main ideas in this book are:

1. Get a head start.
2. Manage the message.
3. Set direction. Build the team.
4. Sustain momentum. Deliver results.

As you start to position yourself for success, know that leadership is personal. Your message is the key that unlocks personal connections. The greater the congruence between your own preferences across behaviors, relationships, attitudes, values, and environment

(BRAVE) and the new culture you enter or create, the stronger those connections will be. This is why the best messages aren't crafted—they emerge. This is why great leaders live their messages not because they can, but because they must. "Here I stand; I can do no other."¹

An organization's culture is the collective character of its members. Understanding your own BRAVE preferences helps you understand and explain your character. This will help you figure out your fit with potential new organizations and how you would influence and impact their cultures.

Along the way, be sure to take into account your perspective on evolving topics such as work environment (remote versus in-person), work-life balance, diversity, equity and inclusion, and the integration of new generations into the workforce and the leadership ranks.

Take time to stop and figure out which of those are more important to you and which are less important and how your preferences and character have evolved over time. Be clear on what are the mandatory overlaps between your BRAVE preferences and the culture of an organization in which you can thrive.

Knowing your strengths, motivations, and preferences will help you create career options that are a fit for you, will allow you to effectively position yourself in interviews (sell before you buy), and will guide you to mitigate risks through targeted due diligence.

"I wish I'd read this chapter before I accepted that job!" We hear that a lot.

Culture First

In many respects, leadership is an exercise in building culture. However, you define it, culture is the glue that holds organizations together. Culture is often impacted by pivotal events, such as a new leader joining an organization, combining organizations post-M&A, or a significant external event. These moments present opportunities to accelerate culture change and deliver better results. Culture change

¹ Attributed to Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, 1521, when asked to recant his earlier writings.

is about bridging the gap between the current state and the desired state which better enables a team to achieve the organization’s mission and goals.

The greater the cultural differences, the more difficult the adaptation or change will be. There’s real power in understanding the most important cultural differences and then building a plan to bridge those gaps over time.

Some define culture simply as “the way we do things around here.” Others conduct complex analyses to define it more scientifically. Instead, blend both schools of thought into an implementable approach that defines culture as an organization’s behaviors, relationships, attitudes, values, and the environment (BRAVE). The BRAVE framework is relatively easy to apply yet offers a relatively robust way to identify, engage, and change a culture. It makes culture real, tangible, identifiable, and easy to talk about.

It’s helpful to tackle the BRAVE components from the outside in with five questions, as shown in Table 1.1.

When evaluating each element of culture, think of it on a sliding scale (say 1–5) rather than in absolute terms. The specific dimensions within each cultural component may vary from situation to situation.

You may find the components and dimensions in Tool 1.1 helpful.

The impact on culture is an essential consideration in almost every action, tool, and communication you will deploy in your first 100 days and beyond. Many organizational experts argue that culture is the only truly sustainable competitive advantage for an organization over the long run.

Table 1.1
BRAVE Framework

Component	Question	Essence
Environment	Where to play?	(Context)
Values	What matters and why?	(Purpose)
Attitudes	How to win?	(Choices)
Relationships	How to connect?	(Influence)
Behaviors	What Impact?	(Implementation)

NOTE ON CULTURE

You must consider culture throughout your 100-Day Plan, especially when you:

- Prepare for interviews (to answer cultural fit questions)
- Complete your due diligence (to mitigate organizational, role, and personal land mines)
- Choose your onboarding approach (by comparing the business's need for change to the culture's readiness for change)
- Converge into the organization's culture
- Evolve the organization's culture

In short, consider the cultural impact of every choice you make, or don't make in your first 100 days . . . and beyond. Forever.

See Tool 1A.10 at primegenesis.com/tools for a discussion of culture across all the steps of onboarding. (Same material as in the book, just compiled into a single tool on BRAVE culture.)

Sell Before You Buy

Securing a new leadership position usually requires interviews. You can ace any interview if you remember three things during the process:

Thing 1: You cannot turn down or accept a job offer that you have not received.

Thing 2: There are only three fundamental interview questions—ever.

Thing 3: There are only three fundamental interview answers—ever.

Thing 1

Before you accept a job, you must first get an offer. Then, and only then, can you decide whether you should accept it. Do not do these steps out of order. Your initial focus should be on getting the job offer.

If you start to imagine or assume you have the job before you have the offer, you have diverted some of your energy away from reality and are wasting your time. Once you have received the offer, your approach should change.

Everything you do in the interview process should be designed to get someone else to offer you the job. This includes not only your answers to their questions but also your questions to them. At this stage in the process, your questions are not about helping you decide whether you want the job. They are about helping them decide to offer it to you. Sell yourself first. Secure the offer. Then, after you have the offer, and only then, figure out whether it's right for you.

Thing 2

There are only three interview questions. Every question you've ever been asked, and every question you've ever asked in any interview, is a subset of one of these three fundamental questions:

1. Can you do the job?
2. Will you love the job?
3. Can we tolerate working with you?

Those three questions asked in a more traditional way are:

1. What are your strengths?
2. Will you be motivated to do the job?
3. Are you a fit?

That's it: strengths, motivation, fit. The questions may be asked in different ways, but every question, however worded, is just a variation on one of these. As each question comes, it is your task to determine which of the three is really being asked.

Thing 3

Because there are only three fundamental interview questions, there are only three fundamental interview answers.

Every answer you give in an interview should be a subset of these three answers:

1. My strengths are a match for this job.
2. My motivations are a match for this job.
3. I am a good fit for this organization.

That's it. Those three. Your answers to questions will be more elaborate, but your answers should always be dressed-up versions of one of the three.

Because there are only three interview questions and only three interview answers, all you have to do is to prepare three answers in advance and recognize what question you are being asked. Then you are ready to ace any interview.

The bad news is that it is going to be a lot more work than you might think to prepare these answers in advance of each interview. Interviews are exercises in solution selling. They are not about you. They are about your interviewers—their needs, their problems. You are the solution. Think of the interview process as a chance for you to show your ability to see, hear, and solve the organization and interviewer's problem.

If interviewers know what they are doing, they will be looking beyond a narrowly defined problem (and solution) and for technical expertise across a broader set of criteria: strengths, motivations, and fit. When they don't really know what they're doing, they can be brought around to seeing things the right way. Still, in every case the solution must be presented from their perspective. Thoughtful preparation can be the deciding factor between a yes and a no. This is tricky stuff, but it is worth the investment of time.

Question 1: Can you do the job? Or more likely, what are your strengths? (Strengths)

Answer 1: Prepare three situation/action/results examples that highlight your strengths in the areas most important over the short term and long term to the people interviewing you. Refer not only to what you've learned from the position description, the recruiter, and those interviewing you but also consider recent events (competitors' moves, marketplace changes, economic

policies, global shifts, political changes, crises, and others) that may indicate a change in the requirements for the job.

Meanwhile, it's counterintuitive, but strive to be the 90–10 loser. Your goal is not to get every and any job offer. Your goal should be to get the right job. Instead of being generally right for 60 percent of the jobs, be wrong for 90 percent of them, and look to be the “must have” candidate for 10 percent of them. If you answer your interview questions by focusing on strength, motivation, and fit, you will land a job based on your innate talent, learned knowledge, practiced skills, hard-won experience, and cultural fit. Those are the jobs where you will truly excel.

Question 2: Will you love the job? Or more likely, what are you looking to do? (Motivation)

Answer 2: Discuss how the role you are applying for matches what matters most to you. Smart interviewers' first question will be “Why would you want this job?” They'll know instantly whether you care more about doing good for others, doing things you're good at, or doing good for yourself. Be sure to tie your responses clearly to what will make a difference for the person, and the organization interviewing you.

Question 3: Can I tolerate working with you? Or more likely, what sort of people do you like to work with? (Fit)

Answer 3: Discuss how your preferences across behaviors, relationships, attitudes, values, and the environment match the organization's culture on those dimensions.

In some cases, where role specifications are not as clear as you'd like (they often are not), it can be useful to imagine that you are interviewing for a job where a new leader and a new team are being put together to solve a specific problem or to address a specific need or goal. To become the winning candidate, you may need to act as a management consultant, helping the decision-makers and team members get a better sense of what the problems, or needs, really are, and then conveying confidence that under your supervision the right things will get done.

Note you'll find more discussion about the questions behind the questions at primegenesis.com/tools.

HOT TIP

Everything is part of the interview: You won't go too far wrong if you imagine that everything you do and say is being videotaped to be shown to the final decision-maker. This is why you must use every part of every interaction with everybody in the organization as an opportunity to reinforce your strengths, motivation, and fit. Until you've been offered a job, it's all about getting the offer.

The Seven Deadly Land Mines

The first 100 days in your new role will be rife with land mines; just like the real thing, they are usually hidden and are often undetected until it is too late. Being aware that land mines exist and learning how to anticipate them will limit their devastating potential. Learning how to deactivate them safely will help you sail straight through to success.

Land mines will always exist but they are most easily hidden from you leading up to and through your first 100 days. Know that you must always be mitigating all of these land mines during and well beyond your transition.

WARNING!

What follows discusses these land mines one by one, but they frequently come in multiples and often interact with each other. Exposure to one risk heightens others, and failure has a way of gaining its own terrible and often unstoppable momentum.

Additionally, land mines are particularly challenging to diagnose when an interview process is more remote than in person, where the organization's external environment is more changing than stable, or when there are disconnects across the interviewing team. Be sure to gather multiple perspectives both inside and outside the company when these kinds of circumstances exist.

Land Mine 1: Organization

The lack of a clear, concise, differentiating, and winning strategy creates an organizational land mine.

You do not want to get on a ship that is doomed to sink. Some people thrive on this risk and want to be part of the turnaround. It is one thing to be a turnaround expert going into an organization that knows it needs to make significant changes fast. It is a recipe for disaster if you are not a turnaround expert and you're going into an organization that needs those skills but doesn't actually realize it.

Best time to mitigate/deactivate: Before accepting the job.

Deactivation method: Ask tough questions early and often to internal and external sources.

Land Mine 2: Role

If expectations, resources, or key stakeholders are not aligned, you will encounter a role land mine. Often, new leaders step into jobs that are virtually impossible from the start because the expectations are unrealistic or cannot be delivered for whatever reason.

The role land mine can be particularly common when a leader is entering a role that is new to the organization and "sits between" existing functions and departments.

Best time to mitigate/deactivate: Before accepting the job.

Deactivation method: Listen for inconsistencies or uncertainty around your (1) role and responsibilities, (2) deliverables, (3) timetable, (4) decision-making authority, (5) interactions, and (6) access to essential resources.

Land Mine 3: Personal

Personal land mines are the ones that you bring to the new job. They are activated when significant gaps exist in your strengths, motivation, or fit for the job. Often executives assume that their strengths are well matched to a particular role, when in fact they are not. Assumptions about strengths usually are based on prior success without a true in-depth assessment of the match between strengths and the particular situation. Although a new job may sound like your former job, there will be a whole new range of dynamics that may require significantly

different skill sets. By missing this factor, leaders often fail to realize that they may not possess certain strengths that are essential for success in the new role. But this is not you.

Best time to mitigate/deactivate: Before accepting the job.

Deactivation method: Ask yourself the tough questions about whether you really have the strengths, motivation, and fit required for success for this particular role.

Land Mine 4: Relationships

If you fail to identify, establish, or maintain key relationships up, across, or down, you will encounter relationship land mines. (There may be clusters of these, and they can set each other off in succession; watch out!) These key relationships are those that have a stake in or can impact your success. These stakeholders can be found up, down, or across the organization from you.

When you miss the needs or agendas of other key stakeholders or outside influencers, there is a good chance that some impact will be felt. The problem is you won't necessarily know that this has started to happen, but it can get a life and a momentum of its own outside of your presence or even awareness. If you lend an insufficient or ineffective effort to building a productive teamwork environment with direct reports, land mines are often the result. If expectations of up stakeholders are not clearly understood, go unchecked, or frequently change, this is certainly dangerous territory for land mines. Finally, poor preparation and communication follow-through are often key culprits in activating these land mines.

Relationship land mines catch many executives completely unaware. These are especially tricky because sometimes the results of stepping on one do not show up for months, or longer. What is worse, you can get caught by these land mines just by pure neglect of a key stakeholder or someone who you didn't even know should be a key stakeholder: "I was just too busy to reach out to her." "He has a role in all this? He's just the head of investor relations!"

Relationship risks are particularly severe for people who are brought in as change agents. Often those people come in with a hero mentality, thinking they are the organization's savior. This is not necessarily a problem and sometimes they're right. The problem occurs when new leaders *act* as if they are saviors. Nobody wants to see that,

especially those who have been part of the situation that needs saving. Don't be a savior. Be a team leader. History is littered with many dead heroes who never made it home.

Best time to mitigate/deactivate: Between acceptance and start. Ongoing.

Deactivation method: Activate a 360-relationship compass and use it to help guide you to potential challenges and land mines. Continually evaluate your stakeholder list up, down, and across to ensure you're not missing anyone critical to your success. Often your boss, human resources, close colleagues, and even recruiters can provide insight on anyone you may be missing. Don't be afraid to ask.

Land Mine 5: Learning

Fail to grasp key information in any of the 6 Cs (customers, collaborators, culture, capabilities, competitors, conditions) and you have effectively created learning land mines. Executives often miss the importance of certain Cs or diminish the importance of one or more. If you don't have a learning plan in place for each and every C, the likelihood of undetected land mines greatly increases.

If you don't know what you need to know or—worse yet—don't know what you don't know, then land mines will surely be plentiful. So what do you need to know? At the very least, you need to know critical information about each of the 6 Cs, especially about the real value chain of your business. If you use our guidelines for your 6 Cs analysis, the information you gather will significantly diminish the risk of learning land mines.

Learning is essential. Being perceived as wanting to learn is almost as important as learning itself. You have heard it before: “Seek first to understand,”² “Don't come in with the answer,”³ “Wisdom begins in wonder.”⁴ You hear it repeatedly in many different ways because it is proven advice. Heed it. You need to learn and you'll want to be perceived as being hungry to learn, not only about the “hard

² Stephen Covey, 1989, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

³ Michael Watkins, 2003, *The First 90 Days*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

⁴ Attributed to Socrates.

facts” of the business, but also about cultural factors such as decision-making processes, communication styles, and the like.

Best time to mitigate/deactivate: Between acceptance and start. Ongoing, especially during first 60 days.

Deactivation method: Activate an ongoing learning campaign, with inputs from multiple sources, to thoroughly master the 6 Cs.

Land Mine 6: Delivery

In the end, it boils down to delivery. It's not what you do; it's the results you deliver. If you deliver, the organization can tolerate many other faults. If you are leading a team, you cannot deliver if the team does not deliver. At the end of your first 100 days, the most dangerous land mine is failing to build a high-performing team fast enough to deliver the expected results in the expected time frame.

Best time to mitigate/deactivate: First 100 days.

Deactivation method: Identify clear and genuine winning deliverables and timetables. Validate with key stakeholders. Empower and execute with the team.

Land Mine 7: Adjustment

You can do everything correctly to this point, but if you do not see or react to the inevitable situational changes, then new land mines will certainly be created. The act of planning and managing is not a static exercise. You must be keenly aware of the fluid dynamics of your team's situation. Missing the need to survey the environment constantly and adjust accordingly is just like a skipper setting sail for a destination and never adjusting his or her sails for the ever-changing seas and weather conditions.

Things change, and you and your team need to change when they do. Sometimes you can get away with minor adjustments. Sometimes a complete restart is required. The risk lies in not seeing the need to change, in not understanding how to change effectively, or in being too slow to react to the changes you do see.

Best time to mitigate/deactivate: As appropriate.

Deactivation method: Monitor business conditions, results, and organization changes actively. Gain stakeholder feedback. Understand the causes and implications of change. Course correct quickly.

You've got a choice. You can leverage our suggested approach to uncover and help you assess and mitigate those risks. Or you can send us an e-mail later saying, "I wish I'd read this chapter before I accepted that job!" You won't be alone.

Do Your Due Diligence Before You Accept the Job Offer

Should I take this job? To know the answer to that question, you need to make an informed assessment of the degree of risk. Almost nobody wants to do due diligence. Almost nobody likes to do due diligence. Almost nobody knows how to do due diligence well. It's as though people don't want to do anything to spoil the moment of getting a job offer. Ignorance can be bliss—until the things you didn't see show up and conk you on the head.

At the core, due diligence is an exercise in collecting and analyzing information from multiple sources to understand the risk inherent in a decision. As with just about everything discussed in this book, a carefully thought out and methodical approach will help. Don't be afraid of any negative news you learn. At worst, it might provide a strong indication that this is not the job for you, and at best it will help you get an accurate picture of the challenge at hand before you start the job. In either scenario, you are better off for knowing before you accept the job.

Mitigate Risk Before You Accept a Job

To avoid trying to boil the ocean, you've got to focus your risk assessment on exploring the few most important areas. Before accepting a job, you must gather information in the following areas to answer three fundamental questions around organization, role, and personal risks.

Start by doing a complete 6 Cs situation assessment using Tool 1.2, and then pull it all together with a SWOT analysis.

Once you've gathered your information, you've analyzed it, and thought about it, now what do you do? Categorize the risk as low, manageable, mission crippling, or insurmountable and then take appropriate action. Use Tool 1.4 for this exercise.

Summary and Implications

- **Culture**—Understand your own cultural preferences and strengths in the context of potential job opportunities.
- **Sell before you buy**—Get the offer first. You cannot turn down an offer you have not received. So sell before you buy, positioning your strengths, motivation, and fit in the context of the interviewing organization's needs.
- **Due diligence**—Do a real due diligence before accepting; understand the level of risk you face across the seven deadly land mines (organization, role, personal, relationship, learning, delivery, and adjustment).
- **Manage risk**—Manage that risk appropriately with the help you need.

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF

Culture—Am I clear on my cultural preferences? How do my preferences compare with the organization's culture?

Sell before you buy—Do I have examples to support my answers to the three interview questions?

Due diligence—Have I done sufficient due diligence with a sufficiently broad array of inputs?

Manage risk—Do I understand the risks and have I thought through my approach to manage those risks?

Summary

Note the most up-to-date, full, editable versions of all tools are downloadable at primegenesis.com/tools.

TOOL 1.1

**BRAVE Culture Assessment/
Preference**

For each of the following components, estimate on a scale of 1–5, where 1 indicates the text in the left column completely describes the preference and 5 indicates the text in the right column completely describes the preference. Score your preferences and the organization’s preferences. Add and score other subcomponents as you identify them. Identify the most important gaps and determine whether or how the gaps can be bridged.

Environment—Where play

WORKPLACE

Remote, virtual, open, informal 1–2–3–4–5 In-person, closed, formal

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Health and wellness first 1–2–3–4–5 Near-term productivity first

ENABLERS

Human/interpersonal/societal 1–2–3–4–5 Technical/mechanical/scientific

Values—What matters and why

FOCUS

Do good for others/ESG 1–2–3–4–5 Do good for selves/what good at

RISK APPETITE

Risk more/gain more (confidence) 1–2–3–4–5 Protect what have/minimize mistakes

LEARNING

Open/shared/value diversity 1–2–3–4–5 Directed/individual/single-minded

Attitude—How win

STRATEGY

Premium price/service/innovation 1–2–3–4–5 Low cost/low-service/min. viable

FOCUS

Divergence from competitors 1–2–3–4–5 Convergence on market leader

POSTURE

Proactive/breakthrough innovation 1–2–3–4–5 Responsive/reliable steady progress

(continued)

TOOL 1.1 BRAVE Culture Assessment/Preference (continued)

Relationships—How Connect**POWER, DECISION-MAKING**

Diffused/debated—confront issues 1–2–3–4–5 Controlled/monarchical

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY,
INCLUSION**All welcome, valued, respected 1–2–3–4–5 Bias to work with people
just like us**COMMUNICATION, CONTROLS**

Informal/verbal/face-to-face 1–2–3–4–5 Formal/directed/written

Behaviors—What Impact**WORKING UNITS**

One org. Interdependent teams 1–2–3–4–5 Independent individuals, units

DISCIPLINE

Fluid/flexible (guidelines) 1–2–3–4–5 Structured/disciplined (policies)

DELEGATION

Inspire, enable, empower, trust 1–2–3–4–5 Narrow task-focused direction

TOOL 1.2

6 Cs Situation Analysis

Consider the following items as a framework for gathering information and drawing conclusions both opportunistically and proactively during your onboarding period. See Tool 1.3 and pull it all together in a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to help draw conclusions about:

- Sources, drivers, hinderers of revenue, and value
- Current strategy/resource deployment: Coherent? Adequate?
- Insights and scenarios

1. **Customers** (First line, customer chain, end users, influencers)

Needs, hopes, preference, commitment, strategies, price/value perspective by segment:

First Line/Direct Customers

- Universe of opportunity—total market, volume by segment
- Current situation—volume by customer; profit by customer

Customer Chain

- Customers' customers—total market, volume by segment
- Current customers' strategies, volume, and profitability by segment

End Users

- Preference, consumption, usage, loyalty, and price value data and perceptions for our products and competitors' products

Influencers

- Key influencers of customer and end user purchase and usage decisions

2. **Collaborators** (Suppliers, business allies, partners, government/community leaders)

- Strategies, profit/value models for external and internal stakeholders (up, across, down)

3. **Culture**

- Behaviors—What impact (implementation)
- Relationships—How connect (communication)
- Attitudes—How to win (choices)
- Values—What matters and why (purpose)
- Environment—Where to plan (context)

4. **Capabilities**

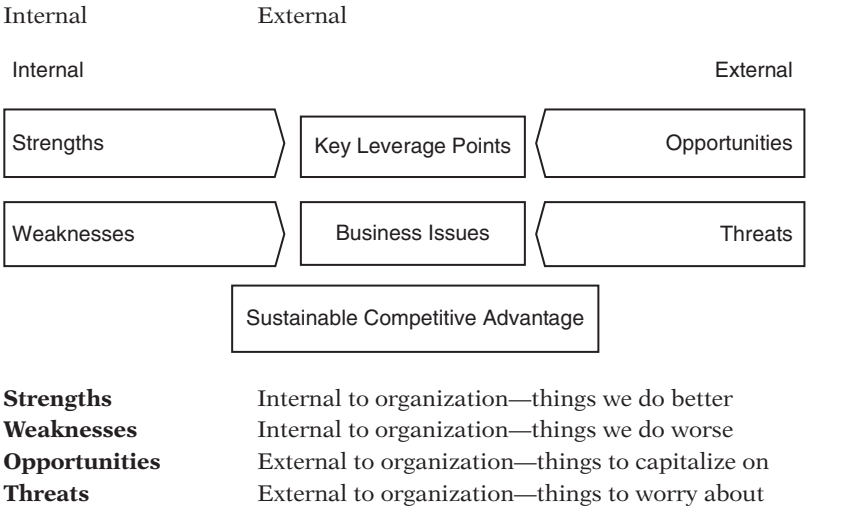
- Human (includes style and quality of management, strategy dissemination, culture, values, norms, focus, discipline, innovation, teamwork, execution, urgency, politics)
- Operational (includes integrity of business processes, effectiveness of organization structure, links between measures and rewards, and corporate governance)
- Financial (includes capital and asset utilization and investor management)

(continued)

TOOL 1.2 6 Cs Situation Analysis (continued)

- Technical (includes core processes, IT systems, and supporting skills)
 - Key assets (includes brands and intellectual property)
5. **Competitors** (Direct, indirect, potential)
- Strategies, profit/value models, profit pools by segment, source of pride
6. **Conditions**
- Social/demographic—trends
 - Political/government/regulatory—trends
 - Economic—macro and micro—trends
 - Market definition, inflows, outflows, substitutes—trends
 - Macro health and climate change impact on your organization

TOOL 1.3
SWOT



Key Leverage Points

Opportunities we can leverage our strengths against (where play to win)

Business Implications

Threats our weaknesses make us vulnerable to (where play not to lose)

Sustainable Competitive Advantages

Key leverage points that can be sustained over extended period of time

TOOL 1.4

Risk Assessment

For each of the components below, estimate the level of risk for each land mine on a scale of 1–4: 1 = low; 2 = manageable; 3 = mission-crippling; 4 = insurmountable. Then look at the individual rankings to come up with an overall risk assessment.

Organization: Assess risks of organization’s strategy and ability to implement (1–2–3–4):

(Look for the organization’s sustainable competitive advantage)

Role: Assess risks of stakeholders’ alignment around expectations and resources (1–2–3–4):

(Understand who had concerns about the role and what was done to address them)

Personal: Assess risk of gaps in your strengths, motivation, or fit (1–2–3–4):

(Understand what, specifically, about you led to your getting the offer)

Relationships: Assess risks in your ability to build and maintain key relationships (1–2–3–4):

(continued)

TOOL 1.4 Risk Assessment (continued)

Learning: Assess risks in your ability to gain adequate information and knowledge (1–2–3–4)

Delivery: Assess risks in your ability to build a high-performing team that can deliver fast enough (1–2–3–4)

Adjustment: Assess risks in your ability to see or react to situational changes down the road (1–2–3–4)

Assess overall risk and if it's

Relatively low, do nothing out of the ordinary (but keep your eyes open for the inevitable changes).

Manageable, manage it in the normal course of your job.

Mission-crippling, resolve before accepting the job or mitigate before doing anything else.

Insurmountable, walk away.
