

Skills Inventory and LMX-7 Questionnaire

Posted on October 2, 2018

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Introduction

The Skills Inventory and LMX-7 questionnaire provide two complementary perspectives on leadership development. A skills inventory considers capabilities such as technical knowledge, interpersonal effectiveness, and conceptual thinking, while LMX-7 focuses on the quality of the working relationship between a leader and a particular follower. My responses confirm strengths I already recognize in myself, especially reliability, attention to quality, open communication, and commitment to constructive relationships. I usually meet deadlines, try to address problems early, and prefer honest discussion rather than allowing misunderstandings to continue. These habits can support trust, but a self-assessment should not be treated as objective proof of leadership competence. Memory, mood, social desirability, and confidence can influence how I rate my own behavior. The most useful interpretation is therefore developmental rather than judgmental. I can use the instruments to identify patterns, compare my self-perception with feedback from others, and translate broad strengths into specific behaviors that improve relationships, fairness, delegation, conflict management, and team performance (Northouse, 2022).

Leadership Skills and Relationship Quality

Leadership skills and leader-member exchange are related, but they measure different aspects of effectiveness. Technical skill concerns knowledge of methods, procedures, and specialized work; human skill concerns communication, empathy, cooperation, and conflict management; and conceptual skill concerns recognizing patterns, connecting daily decisions with organizational goals, and understanding how different functions affect one another. LMX theory adds a relational perspective by proposing that leadership develops through repeated exchanges between a leader and each member rather than existing only as a trait of the person holding authority. High-quality exchanges tend to involve mutual trust, respect, support, and influence, whereas lower-quality exchanges may remain limited to formal job requirements (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This distinction matters because a person can possess strong technical ability while having a weak relationship with a particular colleague, or enjoy a positive relationship without demonstrating sound strategic judgment. Using both approaches gives me a broader picture of how capability becomes visible through everyday interaction.

Strengths Revealed Through Reflection

Reliability is one of the clearest strengths in my reflection because I place considerable importance on completing work according to agreed deadlines and quality standards. When colleagues can predict that I will follow through, they can coordinate their own tasks with greater confidence. I also value open communication between employees and management because operational problems are often visible to frontline staff before senior decision-makers understand them fully. These strengths can improve both performance and trust, but they need careful boundaries. Reliability does not mean accepting every request regardless of capacity, because overcommitment can eventually damage the same trust I am trying to build. Similarly, an open-door attitude has little value if people who raise concerns are ignored, embarrassed, or treated as disloyal. I therefore need to define expectations clearly, communicate constraints before deadlines are threatened, listen without interruption, and explain decisions even when a suggestion cannot be adopted. These behaviors turn good intentions into observable leadership practice.

Bias, Feedback, and Ethical Relationship Building

Self-assessment is useful only when I recognize its limitations. Social-desirability bias can encourage answers that fit the image of a responsible leader, confirmation bias can make positive examples easier to remember than failures, and recent events can influence how I interpret an entire relationship. LMX is also inherently relational, which means my view of a working relationship may differ from the other person's experience. I may believe communication is open while a colleague experiences me as hurried, defensive, or difficult to approach. For this reason, I should compare questionnaire results with specific feedback from a supervisor, peers, and people I support. Ethical relationship building also requires attention to fairness. Strong LMX relationships can unintentionally create an informal in-group that receives better information, advice, or developmental assignments. My goal should not be identical relationships with everyone, but equitable access to respect, necessary information, feedback, and meaningful opportunities. Trust should never become favoritism or protection from accountability.

Development Priorities for Delegation and Conflict

Two areas deserve deliberate attention: delegation and conflict management. Dependable employees often keep too much work because completing tasks personally feels faster or safer, but leadership requires creating opportunities for others to learn. Effective delegation should clarify purpose, expected results, authority, resources, deadlines, and check-in points while leaving reasonable freedom over how the work is completed. I need to tolerate approaches that differ from mine when they meet the required standard. Conflict management presents a related challenge. Positive relationships should not depend on avoiding disagreement. When a problem occurs, I should separate

the person from the issue, identify evidence, clarify shared goals, and invite alternative interpretations before deciding on action. Power differences are especially important because a subordinate may agree publicly even when they see a serious problem. Asking for contrary views before stating my own position can reduce conformity and create safer discussion. These practices strengthen both the skills measured by leadership inventories and the relationships emphasized by LMX theory.

Mentoring, Coaching, and Deliberate Practice

Leadership improves when reflection is connected with repeated practice and feedback. A mentor can help me interpret difficult organizational situations, challenge assumptions, and provide perspective drawn from experience, while coaching can focus more narrowly on a recurring behavior such as delegation, conflict, or communication. Neither process is valuable if advice remains abstract. I need to define a behavior, try a different approach in a real situation, review the outcome, and adjust. I can support this process by keeping a brief leadership journal that records important interactions, decisions, mistakes, and lessons. Over time, patterns may become visible, including situations in which I communicate well and situations that make me defensive or overly controlling. I also want to seek multi-source feedback instead of relying only on a repeated self-report questionnaire. Improvement should appear in practical outcomes such as clearer handoffs, earlier reporting of problems, more balanced participation, successful delegated work, and greater confidence among colleagues that disagreement can occur without damaging the relationship (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Conclusion

The Skills Inventory and LMX-7 questionnaire are most valuable when they are treated as tools for disciplined reflection rather than as certificates of leadership ability. My results reinforce strengths in reliability, quality, communication, and relationship building, yet they also remind me that self-perception is incomplete. LMX-7 describes the quality of a particular leader-member relationship, while a skills inventory examines broader capabilities; neither instrument alone captures ethics, context, power, or performance. My development should therefore focus on observable behavior. I need to communicate capacity honestly, invite critical feedback, handle disagreement directly, delegate developmental work fairly, and monitor whether stronger relationships are available across the team rather than concentrated among people most similar to me. Mentoring, coaching, deliberate practice, and multi-source feedback can help convert these intentions into consistent habits. The strongest outcome is not a high questionnaire score. It is a leadership approach in which trust is combined with accountability, support with fairness, and open communication with measurable improvement in the work people accomplish together.

References

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