

Skills Inventory And LMX 7 Questionnaire

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Purpose of the Skills Inventory and LMX-7 Reflection

The Skills Inventory and the LMX-7 questionnaire provide two different but related ways to reflect on leadership. A skills inventory usually examines capabilities such as technical knowledge, interpersonal skill, and conceptual thinking. The LMX-7 instrument, by contrast, focuses on the quality of the working relationship between a leader and a particular follower. The original reflection correctly emphasizes trust, communication, respect, support, and obligation, but it treats LMX-7 as if it were a complete test of general leadership competence. A more accurate interpretation is that the instrument helps a person assess one leader-member relationship at a time. It does not prove that someone is an effective leader in every setting, nor does it replace feedback from colleagues, supervisors, and measurable work outcomes (Northouse, 2022).

My results were consistent with how I had viewed my work relationships. I consider myself passionate about leadership, dependable in completing assignments, and willing to communicate problems openly. I have developed trust with colleagues and supervisors by meeting deadlines, maintaining quality standards, and responding constructively when difficulties arise. The questionnaire gave me a useful framework for examining those experiences. At the same time, self-assessment can be influenced by confidence, memory, mood, and the desire to see oneself positively. For that reason, I should use the results as a starting point for development rather than as final proof of my leadership ability.

What LMX Theory Measures

Leader-member exchange theory proposes that leadership is created through relationships rather than expressed only through the traits or behavior of the formal leader. A supervisor may have a different quality of exchange with each employee. Some relationships involve mutual trust, respect, support, access, and influence, while others remain limited to the minimum requirements of the employment contract. LMX-7 asks respondents to evaluate features such as whether the leader understands their work problems, recognizes their potential, supports them when necessary, and maintains an effective working relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The instrument is therefore relationship-specific. A high score with one supervisor does not mean I will automatically develop the same relationship with every manager or subordinate. The relationship may be affected by communication style, workload, organizational structure, prior experience, power

differences, and the behavior of both parties. Likewise, a lower score does not prove that either person lacks character. It may reveal unclear expectations, limited contact, unresolved conflict, or an environment that provides little opportunity for mutual support.

Trust

Trust is central to the reflection because I have tried to demonstrate reliability through the quality and timeliness of my work. Trust develops when words and behavior remain consistent. A colleague who knows that I will complete an agreed task, raise a problem early, and protect confidential information can work with me more openly. Trust is not created by demanding loyalty or by presenting oneself as always correct. It grows through repeated evidence.

My tendency to meet deadlines and maintain standards contributes to competence-based trust. However, relational trust also requires honesty about limitations. If I accept every task to appear dependable and later become overwhelmed, I may damage the trust I hoped to strengthen. A development goal should therefore be to negotiate realistic deadlines, communicate capacity, and ask for assistance before a problem becomes a failure.

Respect

Respect involves recognizing the other person's competence, dignity, and contribution. In a strong exchange, leader and member do not need identical opinions, but they should believe that disagreement can occur without humiliation or retaliation. I value open communication because it allows employees to explain operational problems that senior managers may not see directly.

Respect must be visible in behavior. Listening without interruption, crediting another person's idea, pronouncing names correctly, applying standards consistently, and explaining decisions all communicate respect. It is possible to think positively about colleagues while unintentionally excluding them from information or decisions. The questionnaire encourages me to examine not only my intentions but the experience I create for others.

Obligation and Mutual Support

High-quality exchange includes a sense that both parties will assist one another beyond a narrow transaction when circumstances require it. The original reflection notes that colleagues may defend or clarify my work during disputes. Such support can indicate that they trust my record and intentions. It should not become protection from accountability. A healthy colleague can support me while still identifying a mistake honestly.

Mutual obligation must remain ethical and voluntary. Leaders should not expect personal loyalty in exchange for access, favorable assignments, or promotion. Support should be connected with

organizational goals and employee development rather than favoritism. I should be willing to help colleagues solve problems without creating an informal group that excludes people outside my closest relationships.

My Leadership Strengths

Reliability and Quality

One strength identified in my reflection is the ability to complete work according to deadlines and quality expectations. Reliability reduces uncertainty for a team. When people can predict that tasks will be completed, they can coordinate their own work and make commitments to customers or management. Quality also builds credibility because the value of speed disappears when work must be corrected repeatedly.

To continue developing this strength, I should define quality before beginning. Different stakeholders may interpret “good work” differently. Confirming requirements, checking assumptions, and requesting timely review can prevent wasted effort. Reliability is not only personal discipline; it is accurate alignment with the needs of others.

Open Communication

I have advocated communication between employees and management so that operational problems are understood. This is a valuable leadership behavior because frontline employees often possess information that does not reach decision-makers. A leader who creates channels for concerns can identify risk early and improve processes.

Open communication also requires psychological safety. Telling employees that the door is open is insufficient if people who raise concerns are ignored, embarrassed, or described as negative. I should respond to difficult information with curiosity, ask for evidence, and explain what action is possible. When a suggestion cannot be adopted, a respectful explanation preserves trust better than silence.

Relationship Building

The reflection describes strong relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Positive relationships can improve coordination, conflict resolution, learning, and resilience. People are more likely to ask questions and admit uncertainty when they do not fear personal judgment. This relational view of leadership emphasizes that influence develops through ongoing social interaction rather than through position alone (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Relationship building should extend beyond the people with whom I naturally feel comfortable.

Leaders often form stronger exchanges with individuals who share their communication style, background, interests, or work habits. This can create an informal “in-group” with greater information and opportunity and an “out-group” limited to routine contact. The ethical goal is not to make every relationship identical but to ensure that every person receives respect, fair standards, access to necessary information, and a real opportunity to develop trust.

Limitations of My Self-Assessment

The original essay states that it is difficult to be biased in a questionnaire answered directly by the individual. In fact, self-report instruments are vulnerable to several biases. Social-desirability bias may lead a respondent to choose answers that appear admirable. Confirmation bias may cause a person to notice evidence supporting a positive self-image and overlook contrary examples. Mood and recent events can also influence answers.

Another limitation is that a relationship contains at least two perspectives. I may believe that communication is open while a colleague experiences me as hurried or defensive. A supervisor may think support is clear while the employee does not know when it is safe to ask for help. Comparing leader and member responses, when appropriate, can reveal perception gaps.

Scores should also be interpreted carefully. The instrument is not a clinical diagnosis or a permanent label. Small score differences may not be meaningful, and organizational context can affect responses. The most useful question is not whether the score proves I am “high” or “low” in leadership. It is which behaviors and relationships deserve attention.

Skills Inventory and LMX-7 Are Not the Same

A skills inventory often evaluates technical, human, and conceptual skills. Technical skill concerns knowledge of methods, processes, or specialized work. Human skill concerns communication, empathy, conflict management, and cooperation. Conceptual skill concerns seeing the organization as a system, recognizing patterns, and connecting daily decisions with strategic goals.

LMX-7 does not measure all these capabilities directly. A person may possess excellent technical knowledge but have a weak exchange with a particular supervisor. Another person may enjoy a close relationship with a manager without demonstrating strong strategic thinking. Using both tools creates a broader reflection: one examines capabilities, while the other examines how leadership is experienced within a relationship.

Areas for Improvement

Seeking Critical Feedback

Because the results were consistent with my self-image, I need feedback that tests rather than merely confirms the conclusion. I can ask a supervisor and trusted colleagues specific questions: When does my communication help? When do I become unclear? Do I involve people early enough? How do I respond when someone disagrees? Specific questions are more useful than asking whether I am a good leader.

Feedback should be received without immediate defense. I can ask for an example, summarize what I heard, and decide on one behavior to change. A person is unlikely to continue offering honest feedback if every comment becomes an argument.

Managing Conflict

The reflection notes that positive relationships have helped colleagues support me during disputes. I should also strengthen my ability to address conflict directly. Avoiding disagreement to preserve harmony can allow resentment or poor performance to continue. Effective conflict management separates the person from the problem, identifies shared goals, clarifies evidence, and agrees on action.

When power differences exist, I should be especially careful. A subordinate may agree publicly because disagreement feels risky. Inviting alternative views before stating my own position can reduce conformity and reveal better options.

Delegation

Dependable employees often take on too much because doing the task personally feels faster or safer. Leadership requires developing others. Delegation should include purpose, expected result, authority, resources, deadline, and check-in points. It should not involve transferring an unwanted task without support.

By delegating appropriately, I can reduce bottlenecks and demonstrate trust. I must tolerate methods different from my own when they meet the required standard. Excessive control would undermine the autonomy that high-quality exchange should support.

Equitable Relationship Development

I should review whether the same employees repeatedly receive informal advice, high-visibility work, and access to decision-makers. Strong LMX relationships can improve performance, but unequal access may create perceptions of favoritism. Rotating opportunities and using transparent criteria can make relationship development fairer.

Employees differ in how quickly they disclose concerns or seek mentoring. A quieter person may need a scheduled one-to-one conversation rather than an invitation to speak in a large meeting. Equity requires adapting access without lowering standards.

Mentoring as a Development Resource

The original essay identifies mentoring as an important resource. A mentor can share experience, ask challenging questions, model behavior, and help the mentee interpret organizational politics. Effective mentoring is not imitation of the mentor's personality. It helps the learner develop judgment and a leadership style consistent with personal values.

I would benefit from a mentor who observes my work or discusses real situations rather than offering only general advice. A mentoring agreement can define goals, meeting frequency, confidentiality, and expectations. Periodic review ensures that the relationship remains useful.

Coaching and Advisers

Advisers can provide specialized knowledge, while coaching focuses on goals, behavior, and reflection. Trust is necessary, but the original wording suggests that an adviser's trust alone will improve my skills. Improvement occurs when advice is translated into practice and evaluated.

A coach might help me examine one recurring challenge, such as handling disagreement or delegating. We could define the behavior, rehearse a response, apply it at work, and review the outcome. This cycle turns insight into development.

Learning From Other Leaders

Reading biographies, case studies, and leadership research can broaden my understanding. Successful leaders provide examples, but their actions should not be copied without context. A behavior effective in a crisis may be harmful in routine work; a style suited to one culture may fail in another.

I should study both success and failure. Leadership literature sometimes focuses on admired

executives while ignoring employees, luck, institutional advantage, or ethical cost. Comparing several sources helps distinguish evidence from reputation.

Experience and Deliberate Practice

Leadership develops through practice. Taking responsibility for a meeting, project, improvement initiative, or mentoring relationship creates opportunities to apply skills. Experience alone is not enough because a person can repeat the same ineffective behavior for years. Deliberate practice requires a specific goal, feedback, adjustment, and repetition.

I can maintain a brief leadership journal recording important interactions, decisions, outcomes, and lessons. Patterns may become visible over time: situations in which I communicate well, triggers that make me defensive, and employees with whom exchange remains limited.

A Practical Development Plan

My first goal is to improve the quality and consistency of one-to-one communication. For the next three months, I can hold scheduled conversations with relevant team members, use open questions, and document agreed actions. I will ask each person whether the meetings provide useful support and adjust the format.

My second goal is to seek multi-source feedback. I can request observations from a supervisor, two colleagues, and, where appropriate, people I support. I will identify two repeated themes and select one behavior for improvement.

My third goal is equitable delegation. I will track who receives developmental assignments and explain selection criteria. After each assignment, I will review what support was adequate and what I should change.

Measuring Improvement

Improvement should not be measured only by a second self-report score. Evidence may include fewer missed handoffs, earlier reporting of problems, more balanced participation, successful delegated work, and feedback that employees understand expectations. LMX-7 can be repeated with the same relationship after enough time for behavior to change, but the result should be interpreted alongside qualitative examples.

Confidentiality and power must be considered. Employees should not feel pressured to provide artificially positive ratings. An anonymous or independently administered process may produce more honest feedback.

Ethical Leadership

A high-quality exchange is not automatically ethical. A leader and favored employee could trust one another while excluding others or hiding misconduct. Leadership development must therefore include fairness, accountability, transparency, and responsibility to the organization and public.

Trust should never require silence about wrongdoing. The strongest relationship allows respectful challenge and protects people who raise legitimate concerns. My goal should be not simply to create loyalty but to create conditions in which good work and honest communication are possible.

Conclusion

The Skills Inventory and LMX-7 questionnaire helped me reflect on reliability, communication, trust, respect, and relationships. My responses were consistent with my belief that I meet deadlines, maintain quality, communicate problems, and develop constructive relationships with colleagues and supervisors.

The assessment also requires humility. LMX-7 measures the quality of a specific leader-member exchange rather than complete leadership competence, and self-report can be biased. A high score should not be treated as a permanent certificate of effective leadership. It should encourage examination of how the relationship was created and whether similar opportunities are available fairly to others.

Mentoring, coaching, feedback, study, deliberate practice, and equitable delegation can strengthen my leadership. The most valuable outcome of the questionnaire is therefore not the score itself. It is a practical commitment to develop relationships that combine trust with accountability, support with fairness, and open communication with measurable performance.

References

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