

Learning from Work Experience



Center for  
Creative  
Leadership®

# JOB CHALLENGE PROFILE

Participant Workbook

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# Introduction

**THINK ABOUT HOW YOU HAVE LEARNED** much of what has made you successful thus far in your career. If you are like most people, you have learned a great deal from your actual work experiences—from handling the tasks, responsibilities, and pressures in each of your job assignments. Thus, it probably comes as no surprise to you that people’s jobs are a rich source of continuous learning.

But some jobs provide more learning opportunities than others. When people describe their *most developmental jobs*, they more often than not use a particular adjective: *challenging*. What do they mean by challenging? Challenge means being stretched beyond one’s current capacities. Challenge means being in a dynamic setting with problems to solve and choices to make under conditions of risk and uncertainty.

By asking successful executives to describe their most developmental jobs and by asking managers what and how much they are learning from their current jobs, we have isolated a set of job components that are particularly potent for the development of managerial skills and perspectives. When one of these components is present in a job, managers are more likely to feel challenged and to report learning and growing as a result of that job.

On the *Job Challenge Profile*, you rated the degree to which you experience these job components in your current job. Your ratings reflect your scores on what we have determined to be the ten most developmental job components. These fall into the five clusters that represent different aspects of managerial work listed below. Each component is defined further in Table 1.

### **Experiencing a Job Transition**

- Unfamiliar Responsibilities

### **Creating Change**

- New Directions
- Inherited Problems
- Problems with Employees

### **Managing at High Levels of Responsibility**

- High Stakes
- Scope and Scale

### **Managing Boundaries**

- External Pressure
- Influence Without Authority

### **Dealing with Diversity**

- Work Across Cultures
- Work Group Diversity

This workbook is designed to help you:

- Interpret your scores on the *Job Challenge Profile*;
- Focus on the learning potential of your current job; and
- Use job assignments for your ongoing development.

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**Table 1****Components of a Developmental Job**

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**Experiencing a Job Transition**

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Unfamiliar Responsibilities      You must handle responsibilities that are new or very different from previous ones you have handled.

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**Creating Change**

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New Directions      You are responsible for starting something new in the organization or making strategic changes in the business.

Inherited Problems      You have to fix problems created by a predecessor or existing when you took the job.

Problems with Employees      Your employees lack adequate experience, are incompetent, or are resistant to change.

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**Managing at High Levels of Responsibility**

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High Stakes      Clear deadlines, pressure from senior managers, high visibility, and responsibility for key decisions make success or failure in your job clearly evident.

Scope and Scale      The sheer size of your job is large, and you have responsibility for multiple functions, groups, products, or services.

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**Managing Boundaries**

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External Pressure      You manage the interface with important groups outside the organization, such as customers, unions, or government agencies.

Influence Without Authority      Doing your job requires influencing peers, higher management, or other key people over whom you have no direct authority.

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**Dealing with Diversity**

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Work Across Cultures      You must work with people from different cultures or with institutions in other countries.

Work Group Diversity      You are responsible for the work of people of both genders and different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

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# The

## *Job Challenge Profile*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Decide how well each of the following statements describes something you face *in your current job*. Circle the number to the right of each statement that best corresponds to your response.

1 Not at all descriptive   2 Slightly descriptive   3 Moderately descriptive   4 Quite descriptive   5 Extremely descriptive

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. You lack experience important to carrying out some aspect of your job (for example, financial or market analysis, negotiation, or budgeting). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. You have to carry out a major reorganization as a result of a merger, acquisition, downsizing, or rapid growth.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. You inherited widespread morale problems.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Your direct reports resist your initiatives.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Your success or failure in this job will be evident to higher management.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. This job is a dramatic increase in scope for you (managing significantly more people, dollars, sites, functions, and so forth).               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The customer base you work with is extremely varied.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. You have to coordinate action across dispersed sites over which you have no direct authority.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. You conduct business with people from different countries.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. In terms of demographic variables, you have a diverse group of direct reports.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. You have to manage something, such as a function, product, technology, or market, with which you are unfamiliar.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. You have to make major strategic changes in the business—its direction, structure, technology systems, or operations.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. You need to restore the credibility of your unit with the rest of the organization.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. There is an interpersonal conflict between you and at least one of your key direct reports.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. You are responsible for decisive action in a highly charged environment.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. The job is potentially more than even a good delegator can handle.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

# Thrive on challenge!

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), founded over forty years ago, is the world's premier institution devoted to leadership development. Hundreds of thousands of leaders have learned from CCL how to enable groups of people to work together in productive and meaningful ways. Practitioners across the world look to CCL for proven, innovative ideas on leadership effectiveness. The *Job Challenge Profile (JCP)* is a development tool created at CCL by some of the top practitioners in the field.

The experts at CCL have found that successful managers acquire many core skills from their work assignments. Jobs are a rich source of learning. But some jobs provide more of a learning opportunity than others. And many employees don't focus on the learning potential of their day-to-day tasks.

From time to time, everyone feels overburdened by challenging job responsibilities. Some projects are never-ending struggles from which we feel we derive little more than exhaustion. Managers who become overwhelmed by such tasks may find their careers unsatisfying and avoid additional responsibilities that might prove enriching. Here's the antidote we've waited for! This field-tested profile shows employees how to seek challenge and to draw knowledge from their professional lives.

You'll use the feedback from the *JCP* to learn from

- Handling unfamiliar tasks
- Driving workplace transformation
- Seeking additional responsibilities
- Dealing with external pressure
- Managing group diversity—and much more!

You'll quickly be able to score and interpret the included survey using the practical Participant Workbook. With the aid of this action guide, you'll determine what and how much you are learning, what parts of your job hold key challenges, and what strategies you might adopt to derive maximal learning from these experiences.

Thrive on challenge! With the assistance of a world-renowned leadership authority, you'll enhance your job satisfaction.

