

EXECUTIVE GROWTH. PURPOSEFUL IMPACT. LASTING LEGACY.



AQUILA

TALENT SOLUTIONS



by Dr. C

THE EXECUTIVE READINESS CHECK

10 QUESTIONS EVERY HIGH-
PERFORMING MANAGER SHOULD ASK
BEFORE THEIR NEXT PROMOTION



Excelling at your current role and being seen as ready for the next one are not the same thing. This is where you find out which one is true for you.



For senior managers and directors preparing for their next executive-level role.

Developed by a registered Industrial-Organizational Psychologist.

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Introduction

High performance gets you noticed. It rarely gets you promoted on its own. Most high-performing managers assume the next level is a straight extension of the one they're already on: do excellent work, deliver results, wait to be recognized. For a while, that's true. Then it stops being true, and nobody tells you when.

The next level runs on different evidence. Not better work – different signals: how you think, how you come across under pressure, who advocates for you when you're not in the room. Two people can do equally strong work and be read completely differently by the people deciding who moves up.

This check surfaces where you actually stand on those signals, not your output.

How to complete it:

Take 5-10 minutes. Answer based on what you actually do – not what you intend to do, or did once, memorably. For each question, rate yourself:

1 Rarely • 2 Occasionally • 3 Sometimes • 4 Usually • 5 Consistently

- I bring leadership a recommended path forward, not just a well-framed problem.

1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 5

- Senior leaders outside my own chain can describe, specifically, what I've delivered this year.

1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 5

If you can't answer that specifically, that's the signal – not the score.

The Executive Readiness Questions

- I state my position clearly in a room full of more senior people, even when I'm the only one who holds it.

1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 5

- People outside my formal authority act on what I recommend, without my having to follow up.

1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 5

- At least one senior leader has advocated for me when I wasn't in the room.

1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 5

Name that person. If you can't, that's worth sitting with.

The Executive Readiness Questions

- I can explain how the work I lead moves the organization's actual strategy, not just its output.

1 ○ ○ ○ ○ 5

- I can summarize a complex initiative for an executive in under two minutes, unprompted.

1 ○ ○ ○ ○ 5

- In team or project discussions, I set direction and make calls a level above my current title – without waiting for permission to do so.

1 ○ ○ ○ ○ 5

Notice whether you hesitated on this one.

- I can name three senior leaders outside my department who would take my call this week.

1 ○ ○ ○ ○ 5

- I can disagree with a senior stakeholder's idea, with evidence, without softening it into a non-statement.

1 ○ ○ ○ ○ 5

10-20	21-30	31-40	41-50
The Quiet Contributor	The Ascending Operator	The Executive-in-Motion	The Boardroom-Ready Leader
Strong work, limited visibility and positioning	Real momentum, inconsistent under senior pressure	Most readiness markers present, refining the final layer	Consistently demonstrating what gets people chosen

Before you total your score, circle your two lowest-rated questions.

That pattern is more diagnostic than the number itself.

Add your 10 ratings.

Total score: 10-50.



THE NEXT LEVEL, BY DESIGN

This check doesn't train anything. it only shows you where you stand — specifically, where competence ends and perceived readiness begins. Naming that gap is the part most people can do alone. Closing it, deliberately and on a defined timeline, is what the 90-Day Executive Readiness Programme exists to do.

IN 90 DAYS, THE PROGRAMME HELPS YOU:

- Think and speak at the altitude your next role actually requires — not the one you've already mastered.
- Build the visibility and sponsorship that put you in the room when decisions are made, not after.
- Carry the presence and influence of the role you're moving into, before the title catches up.

Who it's for. High-performing managers who've already proven their competence and are ready to be just as deliberate about how they're perceived as they've been about how they perform. It isn't for anyone looking for a shortcut around doing that work.

The next step. A 20-minute Readiness Conversation — not a pitch. Together, we'll name the specific gap this check surfaced and what closing it in 90 days would actually require for you.

Dr. Candice McClendon is a registered Industrial-Organizational Psychologist with nearly 20 years developing leaders across professional services, pharmaceutical, financial services, and technology organizations in the US and South Africa. She is the creator of Aquila's proprietary leadership-readiness frameworks, used throughout her coaching practice.

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