

May 2026

The Second Level of Attentional Leadership:

Learning to See and Lead Others More Clearly

(7 minutes to understand, 7 minutes to reflect, 1 minute to take a micro action)

Briefing
#12

Moving Your Attention from Inward to Outward

In our previous Strategic Brief (#11), we stepped back and looked at leadership through the lens of Attentional Leadership, recognizing that:

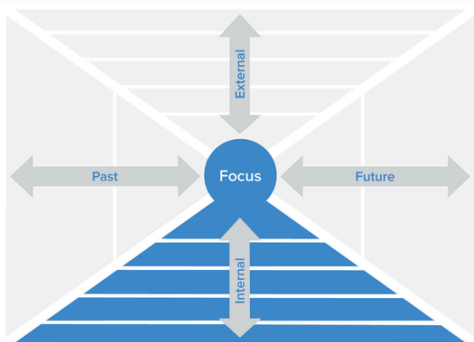
At its core, leadership is influence.
Influence is shaped by attention.

And at the center of effective leadership is this simple but demanding discipline: knowing where your attention needs to go, when it needs to go there, and how long it should stay on a given part of the system you are leading.

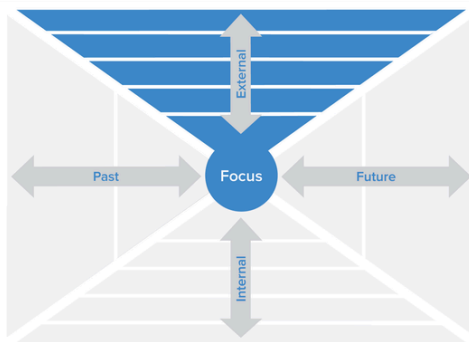
In Brief #11, we applied that idea to the first and most fundamental leadership system: yourself.

We introduced the **15 Dimensions of Attentional Leadership** as a high-level scan to help you see and understand yourself more clearly through three core domains:

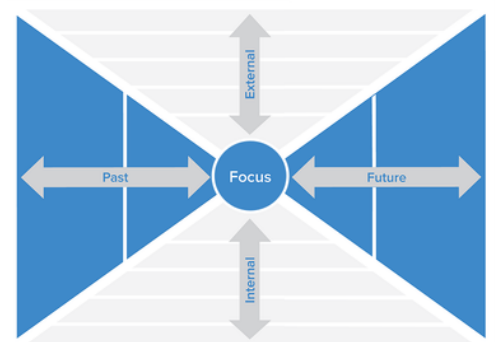
Internal dimensions



External dimensions



Temporal dimensions



Each domain contains five dimensions, creating a **15-dimension reflection tool** to help leaders step back and ask:

- Where am I functioning well?
- Where is interference, distraction, or drag affecting my performance?
- Where might a more strategic placement of attention improve my clarity, steadiness, and effectiveness?

The purpose of that exercise was not diagnosis, but to identify personal themes and increase self-awareness.

Because leadership improves when leaders learn to see themselves more clearly—including the blind spots, strains, and patterns that shape how they influence and lead others.

But leadership does not stop with the self. It often begins there, but it extends outward.

The Second Level of Attentional Leadership

That means the next step in thinking like an attentional leader is learning to shift your attention towards others.

Not simply toward the organization in the abstract, but toward the people who make that organization move.

Organizations do not act. People do.

Every work group, team, department, and strategic initiative ultimately depends on the **performance**, energy, clarity, and alignment of individual people working inside those systems.

Which means part of your responsibility as a leader is not just guiding the organization. It is helping the individuals within your organization operate at their best—especially those closest to your leadership and stewardship.

Seeing the People Inside the System

As a senior leader, you have influence across many layers of the organization. But your direct attention isn't distributed evenly among everyone—nor should it.

Like most leaders, you have a smaller group of people with whom you interact most directly: senior staff, key functional leaders, or individuals responsible for critical strategic initiatives, etc.

From time to time, an essential part of your role is to step back and ask a simple but powerful question:

How well do I really understand the people I am trying to influence and support?

Not simply their job descriptions.
Not merely their performance outputs.
But the human systems they represent.

Because just like you, every person in your organization operates within internal, temporal, and external dynamics that shape their ability to perform.

Each has their own **Flow Assets and Flow Liabilities**.
Each has unique sources of energy and drag.
Each has distinct pressures, motivations, histories, and aspirations.

Every person you lead is, in a very real sense, their own universe—a living system far more complex than most leaders take time to understand. They, too, have a distinct formula for their success. And this needs to be understood.

The better you understand those dynamics, the more effectively you can support that person's performance, growth, and contribution.

For this brief, I want to give you a simple exercise.

A Strategic Scan of the People You Lead

First, step back and scan the people within your organization over whom you have the most direct leadership influence. These may include your CFO, a department leader, your executive assistant, or another key contributor whose role significantly affects the outcomes.

As you think about that group, ask yourself:

Which three individuals might benefit most from my focused attention right now?

Not because they are failing.

Not because they are underperforming.

But because helping them operate more fully at their best could strengthen their contribution, the people around them, and the organization as a whole.

Once you have identified those three individuals, choose one person for this reflection exercise.

Seeing One Person Through an Attentional Lens

In Brief #11, you used the 15-dimension scan to look at yourself strategically.

Now let's seek to apply the same lens to one of your key people.

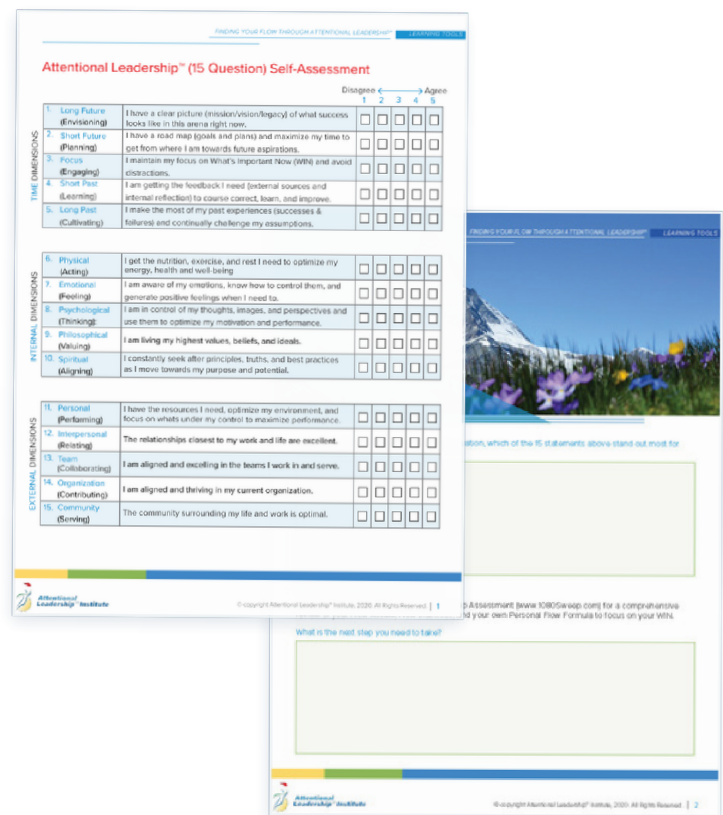
The **15Q assessment** is a simple reflection tool built around the 15 Dimensions of Attentional Leadership.

Its purpose is to help you quickly scan yourself or others more holistically as a system and identify where greater understanding, support, or focused attention may be needed.

Write that person's name at the top of the 15Q reflection tool **attached with this brief**.

Then consider each dimension from that individual's perspective.

- How are they doing physically?
- Emotionally?
- Psychologically?
- Philosophically?
- Spiritually?



Attentional Leadership™ (15 Question) Self-Assessment

Disagree ← → Agree
1 2 3 4 5

Dimension	Description	1	2	3	4	5		
TIME DIMENSIONS	1. Long Future (Envisioning)	I have a clear picture (mission/vision/strategy) of what success looks like in this arena right now.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Short Future (Planning)	I have a road map (goals and plans) and maximize my time to get from where I am towards future aspirations.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Focus (Engaging)	I maintain my focus on What's Important Now (WIN) and avoid distractions.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Short Past (Learning)	I am getting the feedback I need (external sources and internal reflection) to course correct, learn, and improve.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Long Past (Cultivating)	I make the most of my past experiences (successes & failures) and continually challenge my assumptions.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
INTERNAL DIMENSIONS	6. Physical (Acting)	I get the nutrition, exercise, and rest I need to optimize my energy, health and well-being		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	7. Emotional (Feeling)	I am aware of my emotions, know how to control them, and generate positive feelings when I need to.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	8. Psychological (Thinking)	I am in control of my thoughts, images, and perspectives and use them to optimize my motivation and performance.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	9. Philosophical (Believing)	I am living my highest values, beliefs, and ideals.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	10. Spiritual (Aligning)	I constantly seek after principles, truths, and best practices as I move towards my purpose and potential.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS	11. Personal (Performing)	I have the resources I need, optimize my environment, and focus on what's under my control to maximize performance.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	12. Interpersonal (Sharing)	The relationships closest to my work and life are reciprocal.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	13. Team (Collaborating)	I am aligned and excelling in the teams I work in and serve.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	14. Organization (Contributing)	I am aligned and thriving in my current organization.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	15. Community (Serving)	The community surrounding my life and work is optimal.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is the next step you need to take?

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How are they relating to their long future and short future?
How well are they able to focus, execute, and stay on target?
What supports or inhibits that?
What role might their recent past or deeper past be playing in how they show up today?

And externally:

How are they experiencing and engaging their work environment?
Their relationships at work?
The teams they are part of?
The organization as a whole?
Even the broader community your organization serves?

You may not know all the answers. That is not the point.

The purpose is to help you step back and see that person more fully as a system.

Turning Awareness into Conversation

Once you have reflected on these dimensions, consider taking one additional step. Share the same 15Q reflection tool with that individual and invite them to complete it themselves. Then sit down together and compare perspectives.

Not as an evaluation.

Not as a performance review.

But as a leadership conversation—one about optimization and thriving.

You might ask:

1. Which of these dimensions feels strongest for you right now?
2. Which might be under strain?
3. Where do you experience the most flow in your role?
4. Where do you feel the most drag, noise, or interference?
5. What might help you operate more fully at your best within the work we are doing together?

These conversations can open the door to deeper understanding, stronger trust, and more effective leadership support.

Note: at ALL we use a more in-depth assessment touching more than 100 factors for more specific understanding, but starting at the dimension level gets a discussion started.

Sometimes what people need most from their leader is not another directive. It is a leader who seeks to understand them more fully.

Years ago, in a deep conversation with Stephen R. Covey, I asked him what he believed was one of the greatest human needs. His answer was immediate: **To be understood.**

As a leader, one of your greatest opportunities is to understand others more clearly—and help them become more fully operational in the roles they have been entrusted to carry.

Reflection Questions

As you complete this exercise, reflect on the following:

1. Which three individuals in my organization would benefit most from my focused leadership attention right now? Who might I start with?
2. What might I discover if I tried to understand that person and/or their leadership system more fully?
3. What conversation might become possible if I invited that person to reflect on these dimensions?
4. What might change if I made this kind of scan a regular leadership practice?
5. How might it help them professionally/personally?

Looking Ahead

This brief continues our series on thinking like an attentional leader.

In Brief #11, we focused on leading yourself. In this brief, we explored leading others.

Over the next three briefs, we will expand the same lens outward to explore:

- Leading work groups and teams
- Leading the organization as a whole
- Leading within the broader community your organization ultimately serves

Because attentional leadership is not just about managing tasks or performance moments. It is about learning to see and influence systems of people more clearly and more effectively.

And it begins with knowing where your attention should go next.

If helpful, use the 15Q reflection tool attached to this brief as a practical guide for that conversation.

Warmly,



Bruce H. Jackson, MBA/MPA, Ph.D.
Principal
Attentional Leadership Institute

1-Minute Micro Action

Identify one individual within your leadership sphere and complete the **15Q reflection tool** (attached with this brief) from your perspective.

Consider inviting that person to complete the same scan and having a short conversation about what you each see.

Sometimes the most meaningful leadership breakthroughs begin with a single, thoughtful conversation where specific themes and dimensions can be explored.

Attentional Leadership™ (15 Question) Self-Assessment

Disagree ←————→ Agree
 1 2 3 4 5

TIME DIMENSIONS

1. Long Future (Envisioning)	I have a clear picture (mission/vision/legacy) of what success looks like in this arena right now.					
2. Short Future (Planning)	I have a road map (goals and plans) and maximize my time to get from where I am towards future aspirations.					
3. Focus (Engaging)	I maintain my focus on What's Important Now (WIN) and avoid distractions.					
4. Short Past (Learning)	I am getting the feedback I need (external sources and internal reflection) to course correct, learn, and improve.					
5. Long Past (Cultivating)	I make the most of my past experiences (successes & failures) and continually challenge my assumptions.					

INTERNAL DIMENSIONS

6. Physical (Acting)	I get the nutrition, exercise, and rest I need to optimize my energy, health and well-being.					
7. Emotional (Feeling)	I am aware of my emotions, know how to control them, and generate positive feelings when I need to.					
8. Psychological (Thinking):	I am in control of my thoughts, images, and perspectives and use them to optimize my motivation and performance.					
9. Philosophical (Valuing)	I am living my highest values, beliefs, and ideals.					
10. Spiritual (Aligning)	I constantly seek after principles, truths, and best practices as I move towards my purpose and potential.					

EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS

11. Personal (Performing)	I have the resources I need, optimize my environment, and focus on what's under my control to maximize performance.					
12. Interpersonal (Relating)	The relationships closest to my work and life are excellent.					
13. Team (Collaborating)	I am aligned and excelling in the teams I work in and serve.					
14. Organization (Contributing)	I am aligned and thriving in my current organization.					
15. Community (Serving)	The community surrounding my life and work is optimal.					



Taking a 50,000-foot view of your current situation, which of the 15 statements above stand out most for you and why?

Want to take a deeper look?

Take the Attentional Leadership™ 1080° Sweep Assessment (www.1080Sweep.com) for a comprehensive review of your Flow Assets, Flow Liabilities, and your own Personal Flow Formula to focus on your WIN.

What is the next step you need to take?