

# IRON & INSTINCT

## THE 5-MINUTE SELF-ASSESSMENT A LEADERSHIP TOOL FOR OUTLIERS IN THE TRADES

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### INTRODUCTION

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## DO YOU LEAD WITH YOUR HEAD OR YOUR HEART? THE ANSWER MAY BE COSTING YOU

Most leaders default to one side - technical competence (Iron) or people connection (Instinct). Neither alone is enough. This assessment reveals your natural default, names your blind spot, and gives you concrete action you can take this week.

#### What this Assessment Will Give You:

- Your leadership quadrant (where you naturally operate)
- A clear picture of your blind spot and why it shows up
- The Three Rules for when to lead with Iron and when to lead with Instinct
- A personalized action plan with concrete steps you can start this week
- A reflection worksheet to go deeper on your default pattern

#### How to Use This:

Answer all 14 questions honestly using the 1-5 scale below. There are no right or wrong answers - this is about understanding YOUR natural operating style. Rate yourself as you actually are, not as you aspire to be. The most useful data comes from an honest self-assessment, not wishful thinking.

### THE ASSESSMENT

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Estimated Time: 5-10 minutes

**Instructions:** Rate yourself honestly on each question using the scale below

- 1 = This is definitely me (left statement)
- 2 = Leans towards statement on left
- 3 = Balanced / Depends on situation
- 4 = Leans towards statement on right
- 5 = This is definitely me (right statement)

## IRON QUESTIONS (Questions 1-7)

1.) When entering a meeting where you're the Outlier:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I jump in early to build rapport and feel out of the room

(Survival tactic: first word must be bulletproof)

5 - I stay quiet until I can contribute something technical or data-driven

2.) When you make a mistake at work:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I acknowledge the impact on others first, then explain what happened

5 - I immediately focus on fixing it and explaining what went wrong technically

3.) When presenting to senior leadership:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I lead with the story, the "why it matters," then back it up with data

5 - I immediately focus on fixing it and explaining what went wrong technically

4.) When someone questions your competence or authority:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I use my "read" of the person to neutralize the tension and find a way to align them with me

5 - I respond with evidence, credentials, or examples of my expertise

5.) In a crisis situation (equipment failure, safety issue, urgent deadline):

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I check in with people first, then coordinate the response together

5 - I immediately take charge, give clear directions and solve the problem

6.) When you don't know the answer to something:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I admit I don't know and ask if anyone else has insight or experience with it

5 - I say "I don't know, but I'll find out" and research it immediately

7.) When preparing for an important meeting or presentation:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I spend most of my time thinking about who will be in the room and how to get them on my side

5 - I spend most of my time over-preparing the data so I can't be proven wrong

## INSTINCT QUESTIONS (Questions 8-14)

8.) When a team member comes to you visibly upset:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I ask what the problem is, so I can help solve it

5 - I acknowledge their feelings first and let them vent before problem-solving

9.) When conflict arises on your team:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I focus on the facts of what happened and what needs to change

5 - I focus on how people are feeling and what's causing the tension

10.) When giving feedback to someone on your team:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I'm direct about what needs to improve and how to fix it

5 - I start by acknowledging what's working, then address what needs to change

11.) When networking or meeting new people in your industry

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I talk about my role, experience, and what I bring to the table

5 - I ask about their work and look for common ground before talking about myself

12.) When your're burned out or exhausted:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I become a "machine", focusing solely on the work and ignoring everyone

5 - I lean harder into the "people" side, sometimes at the expense of getting the actual job done

13.) When building a new relationship with a colleague, vendor, or stakeholder:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I establish credibility first by showing I know what I'm doing

5 - I build trust first by being personable, then demonstrate competence

14.) In your day-to-day communication style:

Score: \_\_\_\_

1 - I avoid "small talk" to stay professional and keep a boundary

5 - I use "small talk" as a tool to lower the guard of the people I'm working with

# SCORING YOUR ASSESSMENT

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## STEP 1: Calculate Your Scores

**IRON SCORE:** Add Questions 1-7 = \_\_\_\_\_ (out of 35)

**INSTINCT SCORE:** Add Questions 8-14 = \_\_\_\_\_ (out of 35)

## Understanding Your Scores

### The Tipping Point: 21

A score of 21 means you averaged a “3” (Balanced/Depends on Situation) across all questions in that section. This is the tipping point - it means you’re consciously balancing both sides.

**Anything above 21 is your natural “lead foot” - the side you default to when you are not thinking about it.**

### Score Ranges:

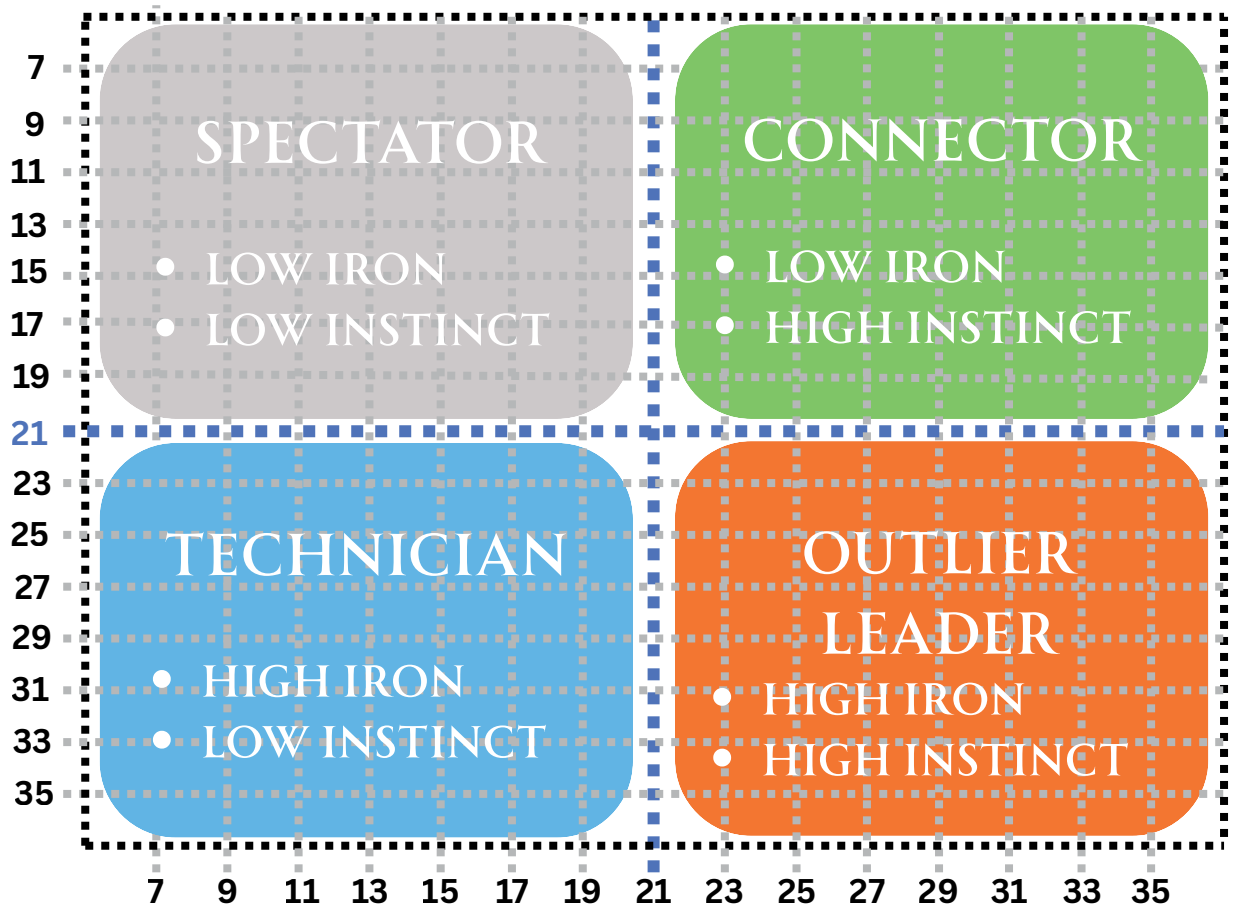
- **7 - 20 = This is NOT your default.** You rarely lead with this side first
- **21 -35 = This IS your default.** You naturally lead with this side

## Find Your Quadrant

Map your two scores on the next page:

- Low Iron (7-20) + Low Instinct (7-20) = The Spectator
- Low Iron (7-20) + High Instinct (21-35) = The Connector
- High Iron (21-35) + Low Instinct (7-20) = The Technician
- High Iron (21-35) + High Instinct (21-35) = The Outlier Leader

IRON SCORE



INSTINCT SCORE

## PRACTICE PLAN - CHOOSE YOUR QUADRANT

### • THE SPECTATOR

Pick ONE side to rebuild.

Burnt out ⇔ Instinct.

New ⇔ Iron.

One real conversation or one technical win.

*Watch for: The temptation to stay invisible*

### • THE CONNECTOR

Lead with data next time you're challenged.

Try saying: "Based on Q4 data..." THEN build consensus.

*Watch for: The urge to soften your stance*

### • THE TECHNICIAN

Start one conversation with a human question before a technical one.

Try saying: "How are you holding up?" THEN "What's the status?"

*Watch for: The urge to skip straight to business*

### • THE OUTLIER LEADER

Notice which side you lean on when you're tired or under pressure.

Practice leading with the OTHER one first

*Watch for: The urge to default to what is "comfortable" when you are tired or stressed - That's your tell*

# THE FOUR QUADRANTS

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## The Spectator (Low Iron/Low Instinct)

### Your Reality:

You're either new to leadership, burned out, or stuck in survival mode. You're not showing up with competence OR connection - you're just trying to get through the day.

### The Truth:

This isn't sustainable. You're invisible, and doesn't lead. You need to pick one and build it back up.

### What to Practice:

Choose ONE thing to rebuild first. If you're burnt out, start with instinct - reconnect with why you are here and who you're serving. If you are new, start with Iron - get one technical win under your belt this week.

## The Connector (Low Iron/High Instinct)

### Your Strength:

People trust you. You build relationships quickly, read the room like a pro, and create psychological safety. You're the glue that holds teams together.

### Your Blind Spot:

You have a great feel, but your seat isn't secure. If they don't trust your technical competence, they'll buck you off when the work gets heavy. Being likeable doesn't mean they'll follow you when it counts.

### What to Practice:

Next time you are questioned, lead with data first. Prove you know what you are talking about BEFORE you try to build a connection

# THE FOUR QUADRANTS

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## The Technician (High Iron/Low Instinct)

### Your Strength:

You are technically bulletproof. People trust you to solve problems, deliver results, and you know your stuff. You are the person they call in a crisis.

### Your Blind Spot:

Your rigging is tight, but you're missing the "feel" of the animal. If you don't read the room, you'll hit the dirt because people won't follow a machine. You might be right, but if nobody wants to work with you, it doesn't matter.

### What to Practice:

Start one conversation this week with a human question before you hit the technical note. Ask "How are you doing?" or "Are things going OK" before you jump into the status, business or technical questions.

## The Outlier Leader (High Iron/High Instinct)

### Your Strength:

You are the whole package. You can prove you belong AND build the relationships that make things happen. You read the room and give it what it needs.

YOU DON'T TRADE - YOU ADD.

### Your Challenge:

Don't get cocky. Under pressure, you will default to one side. Stay aware. Keep practicing BOTH, especially the one you are more comfortable with - that's the one that will slip first when you get pressured or stressed.

### What to Practice:

This week, notice which side you lean on when you get tired or stressed. Practice leading with the OTHER one first, even when you are exhausted.

## A Note for Outliers

If you scored as **The Technician**, this is often a survival tactic you've developed - not a character flaw. You aren't cold. You're protective.

You learned early that your first word had to be bulletproof. That your competence would be questioned in ways it isn't for others. That being "too nice" meant people wouldn't take you seriously.

**The goal isn't to stop leading with iron. The goal is to feel safe enough to add the instinct back in - without losing the credibility you've worked so hard to build.**

**YOU DON'T TRADE - YOU ADD**

## THE THREE RULES

### Rule 1 - Lead with what's in the room

Don't lead with what you are comfortable with. Lead with what the room needs. Panic and chaos needs Iron - clear direction, calm competence. Resentment and burnout needs Instinct - acknowledgement, connection, someone who actually sees them.

*Fleet Example: A vehicle catches fire. Lead with Iron - "Is everyone safe? Good. Here is what we do..." Once it's handled, pivot to Instinct - "You okay? That was intense. Let's debrief when you are ready."*

### Rule 2 - Iron when credibility is questioned; Instinct when trust is broken

- **Credibility gap** - "Do you know what you're doing?" ⇨ Lead with Iron. Prove it first.
- **Trust gap** - "Do you care about us?" ⇨ Lead with Instinct. Rebuild connection first.

*New to the room: Lead with data. Iron gives you Power (the right to be there). Instinct gives you Status (the respect to lead there).*

*Trust broken: "I screwed up. You should have heard this from me first." Connection must be rebuilt before competence matters again.*

### Rule 3 - When in doubt, start with Instinct

People will forgive you for not having all the answers if they trust you care. They won't forgive you for being technically perfect but emotionally absent.

*Someone asks a question you don't know. Option A: "I don't know, but I'll find out. Option B: "That's exactly the kind of thing we should be thinking about - Let me ding in and get back with you at the end of the day."*

*Option B shows you are a leader, not just a data manager.*

# GO DEEPER - ANSWER FOR YOUR QUADRANT

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This is a safe space, no one is watching. Answer honestly. The most useful data comes from real self-assessment, not the version you'd say out loud in a meeting.

## 1. When did you learn that your default was safer than the alternative?

*Was there a moment - early in your career, or a specific situation - where your default protected you? Where did this pattern start?*

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## 2. What would it cost you to lead more with the side you avoid?

*What is the real fear? That people won't take you seriously? That you will lose credibility? That you will seem weak - or cold?*

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## 3. Who in your life has both Iron and Instinct?

*Think of someone who is technically solid AND builds real relationships. What do they do differently than you?*

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**4. What is one moment this week where you can practice the side you avoid?**

*Not a massive overhaul. One conversation, one meeting, one decision where you lead with your non-default side*

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**5. What does your “tell” look like under pressure?**

*When you are exhausted or stressed - what does your default look like? How do others experience it?*

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## ARENA AFFIRMATION

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I AM COMPETENT ENOUGH TO DO THE WORK.  
I AM AUTHENTIC ENOUGH TO BE MYSELF.

I DON'T TRADE. I ADD

## Watch Weekly Leadership Videos

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AI isn't taking your job. But the person who knows how to USE AI  
might take yours. Learn how to use AI as your Technical Spotter  
(Iron) and Communications Bullfighter (Instinct) - without losing  
what makes you human.

*The arena doesn't care if you are ready. The bull doesn't wait for perfect conditions.  
But if you check your rigging, read the room, and stay in the middle - you WILL make your ride.  
Stay in the middle, - Char*