

Digital Leadership Skills

SFIA Week - November 2025

A practical approach to using the 16 generic attributes from SFIA 9 to define, describe, and develop digital leadership capability, and enable early identification and development of leadership talent.

Why I'm here

I'm a leadership and talent strategist who, over the last 30 years has partnered with individuals, teams and companies to develop leadership capabilities and support sustainable performance outcomes.

The truth is that leadership is an elusive capability to develop because it requires a difficult blend of hard and soft skills that are often contradictory.

Many organizations mistakenly promote individuals based on technical or individual contribution skills without identifying and developing the capabilities for people-focused leadership which exist at all levels within an organisation.

Furthermore, effective leadership is not a static trait but a dynamic process of building trust, motivating others, and navigating complex social and strategic challenges in real-time.

Leadership capabilities are hard to define because...

Leadership is plumbing and poetry

James March, Professor of Business, Education and Humanities
Stanford Graduate School of Business

The Leadership Challenge

How do we systematically identify and develop digital leaders?

The Problem

- The definitions of leadership skills can be vague and subjective
- Talent identification relies on intuition
- Development paths lack structure

The Solution

- Adopt a structured, evidence-based framework
- Create clear competency language and definitions
- Identify and implement measurable development pathways

Common focus of existing leadership frameworks



How the SFIA9 generic attributes can map to an established leadership framework

Self Management

- Autonomy
- Learning and Development
- Adaptability
- Security, privacy and ethics

Relationship Management

- Influence
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Leadership

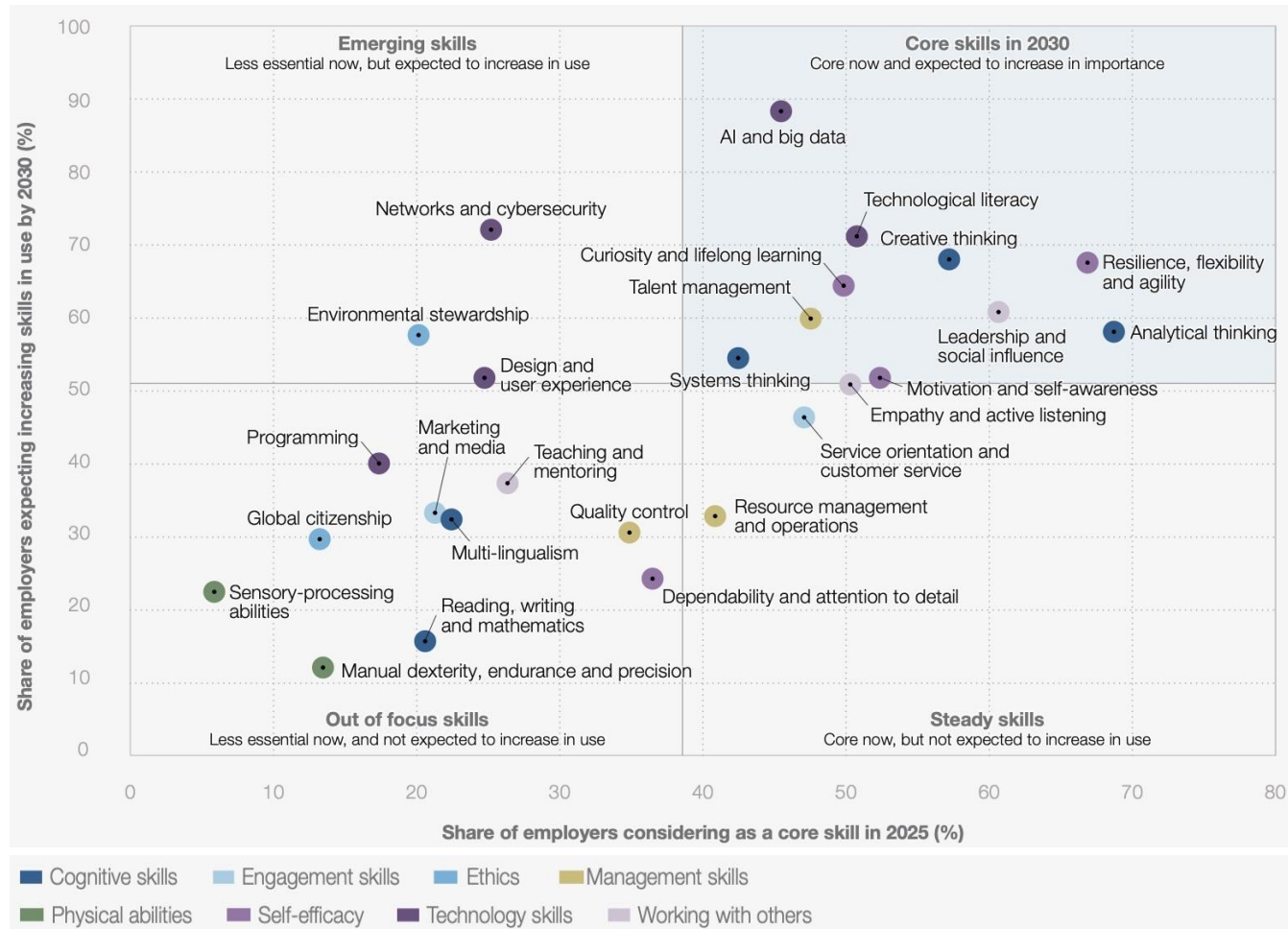
Working in the Business

- Knowledge
- Decision-making
- Planning
- Problem-solving

Working on the Business

- Improvement Mindset
- Creativity
- Digital mindset
- Complexity

Core Skills in 2030 – WEF Future of Jobs Survey, 2024



Source: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/in-full/3-skills-outlook/>

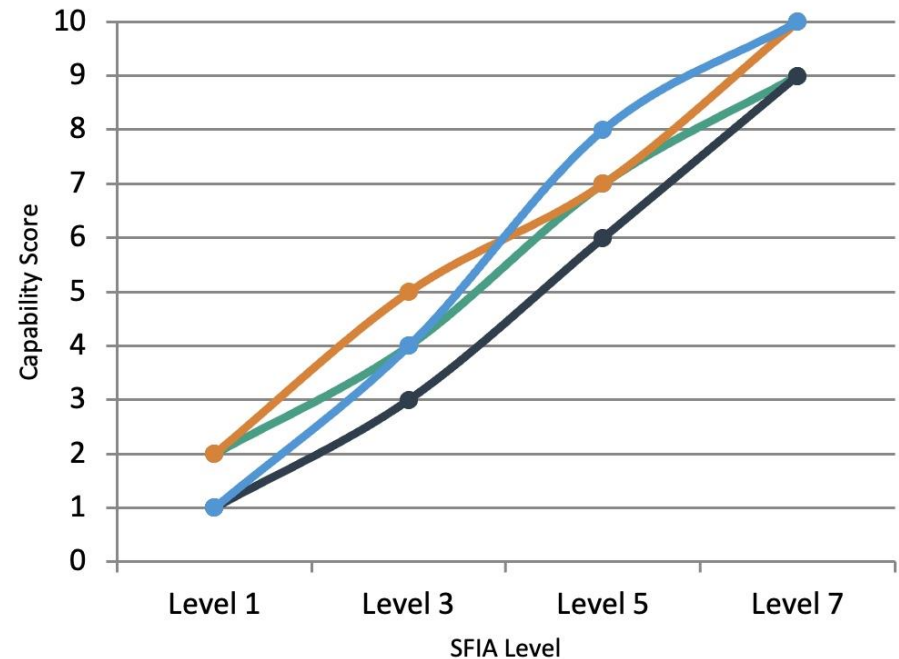
Advantages of applying the generic capabilities for digital leadership

Attribute Progression Across Levels

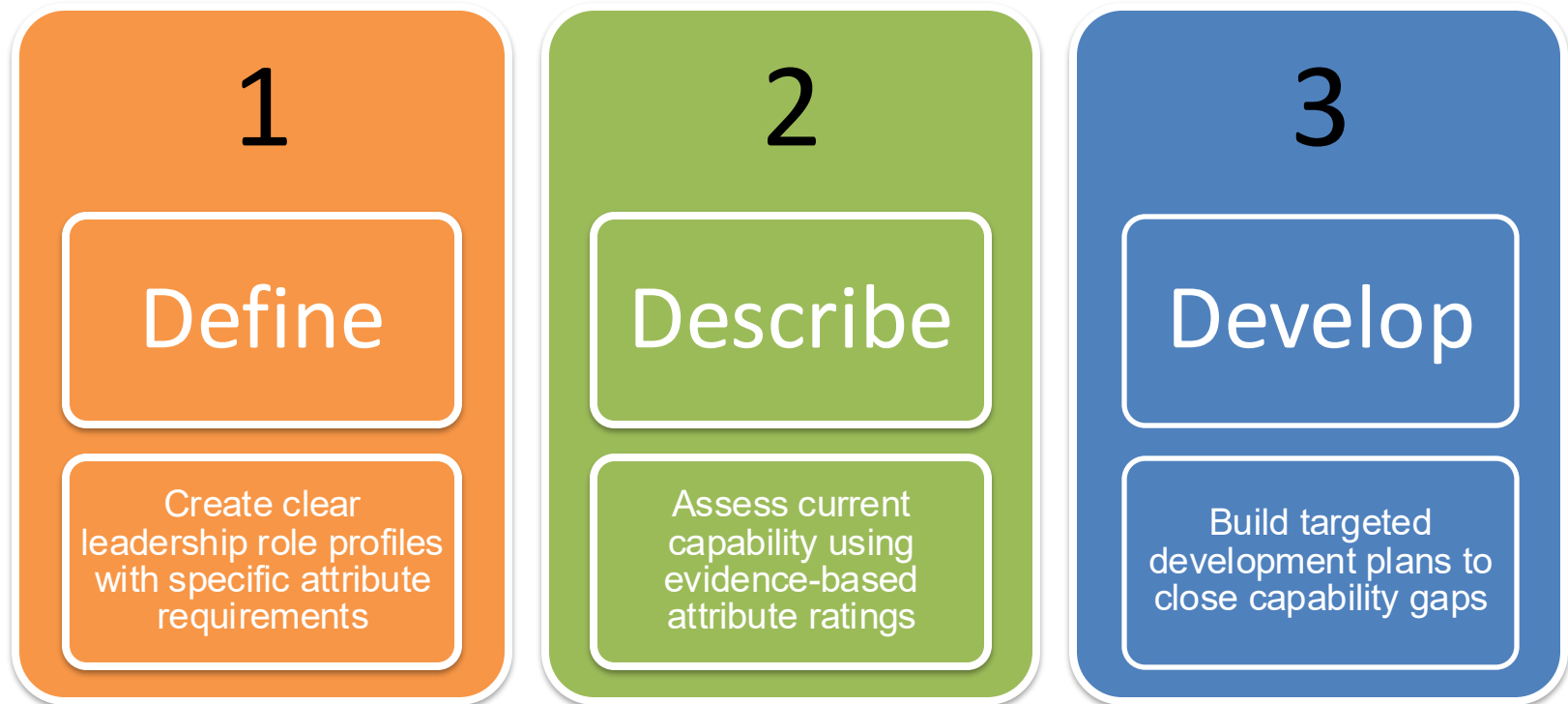
Leadership Growth Pattern

- Early career focuses on technical depth and guidance needs
- Mid-career develops autonomy and influence capabilities
- Senior levels demonstrate strategic thinking and organizational impact

Key Insight: The 16 attributes create a multidimensional profile that captures the full spectrum of leadership capability.



Framework implementation



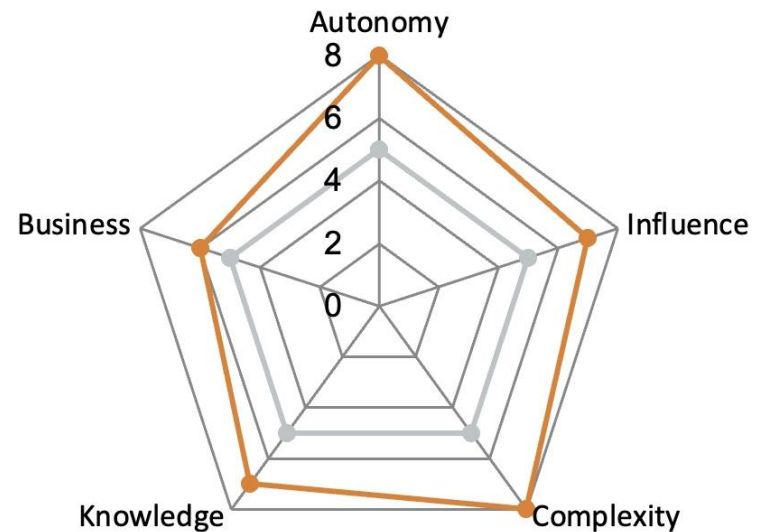
Result: A systematic approach that transforms subjective leadership assessment into objective, actionable insights.

Identifying Leadership Talent

Early Indicators of Leadership Potential

- Autonomy attributes exceed level expectations
- Strong influence skills relative to experience
- Appetite for complexity and ambiguity
- Breadth of knowledge beyond narrow specialism
- Business thinking emerges early

Pro Tip: Look for spiky profiles where 2-3 attribute categories significantly outperform current level.



Identifying and growing digital leadership skills

1

Baseline Assessment

Map current attributes against target leadership level

2

Gap Analysis

Identify priority development areas across the 16 attributes

3

Targeted Interventions

Design experiences, projects, and learning to build specific attributes

4

Progress Tracking

Regular reassessment using evidence-based attribute indicators

Key Principle: Development plans focus on stretching 2-3 attributes at a time through real work, not just training.

SFIA 9 includes an industry leading leadership model

The 16 generic attributes provide an industry leading leadership model.

Easily adapt existing leadership, 'local' or domain specific frameworks to the model.

The depth and reach of the SFIA framework offers additional benefits:

Provides a prescriptive language to identify the required attributes for a role and a descriptive language to articulate individual or team capability.

Identify kaimahi who demonstrate leadership potential earlier in their careers.

Measure aggregate and emerging leadership strengths and opportunities across your workforce.

Establish leadership diversity within your senior teams.