

Responsibility Readiness: When Good Performance Is Not Enough

Current performance, potential and readiness answer different questions.



Strong performance today is important. It does not automatically demonstrate that someone is ready for the different demands, accountabilities and Human-Centric capability required by greater or changing responsibility.

The relevant question is not simply: Is this person performing well? It is: Ready for what comes next?

Developed by Michael J Bolam with AI-assisted research, analysis and editorial support. Final judgement and approval remain human.

Organisations often need to make decisions about promotion, succession, expanded responsibility or changing roles. The temptation is to use current performance as the main indicator of future readiness. That can be misleading because effectiveness in the existing role and readiness for a prospective responsibility are not the same judgement.

Skillogy PERFORM™ separates four related but distinct ideas: Current Performance, Potential, Responsibility Readiness and Transition Performance. Keeping those judgements separate makes development decisions clearer and reduces the risk of assuming that past success will automatically transfer into a different responsibility context.

FOUR DIFFERENT JUDGEMENTS

Performance, potential, readiness and transition should not be collapsed into one.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE - How effectively is the person performing now? Evidence of effectiveness in the existing role. It is important, but should not be treated as proof of readiness for greater responsibility.

POTENTIAL - Is there capacity for greater or different responsibility? Potential is a future-capacity judgement. It does not mean the required capability has already been developed, nor does it guarantee opportunity or successful transition.

RESPONSIBILITY READINESS - Has the relevant capability been developed and can it be applied?

Responsibility Readiness concerns the Human-Centric Skills required for a defined prospective field of responsibility. The target context therefore matters.

TRANSITION PERFORMANCE - What happens after responsibility changes? Transition Performance is the successful application of relevant capability after the change has occurred. It should not be confused with pre-transition readiness.

The distinction is practical. Someone can be an excellent individual contributor and still need development before managing others. A successful manager may show leadership potential while still needing to develop the capabilities required to create direction, commitment and organisational agility. Equally, a role can become more demanding without any promotion at all.

THE GAP CAN ARISE IN MORE THAN ONE WAY

Responsibility can move faster than capability.

Skillogy uses Responsibility-Capability Gap as the broader condition in which the demands of responsibility exceed the available Human-Centric capability. Two forms are particularly important.

Promotion Gap

A Promotion Gap arises when responsibility increases through promotion faster than the Human-Centric capability required at the new level has developed. The risk is not the promotion itself. The risk is expecting capability to appear automatically once the title changes.

Role-Evolution Gap

A Role-Evolution Gap can arise without promotion. AI, technology, restructuring, transformation, market change or redesigned work can alter what a role requires while the job title remains unchanged. The person may therefore face new judgement, communication, accountability or decision demands without a formal transition.

Responsibility can change vertically through promotion or horizontally through the evolution of the work. Readiness has to address both.

READINESS HAS TO BE SPECIFIC

Ready is not a generic label.

Responsibility Readiness only becomes meaningful when the prospective responsibility is clear. A broad judgement that someone is simply "ready" can hide the capability actually required.

The stronger question is: what will this person be responsible for, and which Human-Centric Skills will that responsibility require? That may include capabilities in communication, planning, delegation, decision-making, performance management, adaptability, influence, judgement or leadership. The relevant combination depends on the responsibility rather than the status of the role alone.

This is why development should be role-relevant rather than generic. The purpose is not to sort people permanently into types. It is to identify the capability that would help someone perform effectively in the responsibility they may be moving towards.

Readiness requires application, not simply awareness

Knowing what good management or leadership looks like does not demonstrate that the relevant capability can be applied. Development therefore needs opportunities to practise, review, reflect and build evidence before or around a transition. Readiness is strengthened when the person can connect learning to realistic work-based situations rather than relying solely on course completion or confidence.

A BETTER DEVELOPMENT CONVERSATION

Five questions help make readiness more evidence-based.

- 1. What prospective responsibility are we preparing for?** Define the context clearly enough to identify what will actually change.
- 2. What Human-Centric capability will that responsibility require?** Identify the relevant skills and abilities rather than relying on a broad label such as leadership potential.
- 3. What does current performance tell us - and what does it not tell us?** Use present effectiveness as evidence of current performance, not as automatic proof of future readiness.
- 4. What development and workplace application are needed before the change?** Create practical opportunities to build and apply the relevant capability in advance where possible.
- 5. How will we support and review the transition afterwards?** Once responsibility changes, examine Transition Performance and continue development rather than assuming the preparation phase is complete.

Readiness is not assumed. It is built through clarity about the responsibility, development of the relevant capability and evidence that it can be applied.

A more disciplined readiness conversation benefits both the individual and the organisation. It makes promotion and succession decisions more transparent, gives people a clearer development path and reduces the risk of placing capable people into responsibilities for which the required Human-Centric capability has not yet had time to develop.

Development and content integrity note. These Insights are developed by Michael J Bolam with AI-assisted research, analysis and editorial support. AI may help question, compare, synthesise and draft, but the author determines the subject, challenges assumptions, reviews evidence, makes substantive judgements and approves the final content. AI does not generate, rewrite or replace approved Skillogy PERFORM™ course content.