Longevity-Centered Leadership Competencies: Translating Principles into Practice

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Abstract

Beyond understanding foundational principles or identifying the right leadership attitudes, achieving and sustaining corporate longevity demands the systematic development of specific leadership competencies that enable translation of strategic intent into sustained value creation. Drawing empirical observations from organizations navigating extreme turbulence, we introduce eleven competencies organized around a root competency, Making Valuable Commitments, and three supporting clusters: Competencies of Scope, Style-Based Competencies, and Instrumental Competencies. Each competency is defined through behavioral descriptors that enable objective assessment and deliberate development. Rather than treating competencies as ends in themselves, we present them as practical tools that CEOs and boards can leverage to build robust leadership pipelines capable of sustaining competitive advantage in volatile environments. The article provides specific key patterns to track for assessing each competency's presence, development pathways for building them, and practical guidance for embedding competencies into organizational culture through systematic assessment, deliberate development architecture, and cultural reinforcement mechanisms.

Introduction: From Knowing to Doing in Longevity-Centered Leadership

Achieving organizational long-term growth and prosperity is at the core of the strategic management discipline. Despite the general awareness of what drives success, corporate longevity in the Western world continues to decline.[1] Leaders might understand the foundational principles for achieving longevity through sustained value creation in turbulent environments.[2] Many can identify potential winning leaders for promotion and development.[3] Yet understanding *what* principles matter and *who* should lead proves insufficient. The persistent gap between knowing and doing suggests that organizations lack a systematic approach to the *"how"*, or the specific, developable competencies that enable leaders to operationalize these frameworks in practice.

Setting the motivation for the current study, this gap carries profound consequences. CEOs and boards recognize that corporate longevity depends on building sustainable leadership pipelines, not relying on individual charismatic executives. Yet most leadership development efforts focus on building competence (knowledge and skills) rather than competency (consistent behavioral application under real conditions). The result is a leadership pool that is rich in frameworks but poor in execution; the individuals can articulate strategy brilliantly yet fail to mobilize their organizations to deliver sustained value creation.

The challenge is particularly acute because adults change their behavior only under demanding conditions, including genuine dissatisfaction with current patterns, clear behavioral alternatives, structured practice environments, and accountability systems that reinforce desired behaviors. Without these elements deliberately engineered into organizational systems, competency frameworks remain aspirational documents rather than transformation engines. This is why competency development represents a fundamental responsibility of CEOs and corporate boards, as only they possess the authority to create the conditions under which behavioral change becomes both necessary and possible across leadership ranks.

Bridging the knowing-doing gap requires moving beyond conceptual understanding to systematic competency development grounded in behavioral change. This article provides management practitioners with a comprehensive framework for diagnosing current competency gaps, designing targeted development interventions, and embedding longevity-centered behaviors into organizational culture. The eleven competencies we present (each defined through observable descriptors and accompanied by diagnostic questions) provide the actionable tools that enable this translation from principle to practice, from individual knowledge and skills to organizational capacity, and ultimately from aspiration to sustained competitive advantage.

Box 1. Research Context and Methodological Note

This study synthesizes insights from two interconnected research streams. First, the Global Business Models Study, a longitudinal investigation (2015-2025) exploring business model changes and organizational longevity across firms spanning North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. Second, the Ukrainian Extension (2022-2025), incorporating 14+ Ukrainian firms across industries operating under conditions of extreme disruption and existential risk during the full-scale Russian invasion.

Through structured interviews with senior leaders complemented by secondary data, we identified recurring patterns of leadership behavior that enabled sustained value creation under extreme conditions. The eleven competencies presented emerged inductively from this analysis, representing behavioral patterns observed among leaders who successfully operationalized the foundational principles of longevity-centered leadership. These competencies were further validated through dialogue with senior leaders engaged in deliberate leadership pipeline development within their organizations.

Longevity-Centered Leadership: Definition, What and Who

Before articulating the competencies that operationalize this leadership approach, we must establish what longevity-centered leadership entails. It represents a leadership approach dedicated to securing an organization's long-term prosperity by ensuring sustained value creation, resilience, and capacity to thrive when confronting environmental uncertainty and turbulence.[4] This form of leadership maintains strategic continuity while enabling timely adaptation to shifting external conditions, emerging risks, and evolving stakeholder expectations.

At its core, longevity-centered leadership is manifested in two interdependent capabilities: First, the ability to sustain the "winner business model" state where customer value (benefits exceeding price paid) and business value (prices exceeding costs) are simultaneously maintained and continuously improved.[5] Second, the capacity to lead this value creation process not through individual heroics but by developing robust leadership pipelines across organizational levels, i.e., moving from "leadership by self-example" to "leadership by example of others."[6]

This leadership approach is grounded in five foundational principles that emerged from empirical analysis of organizations navigating extreme conditions: (1) Clarity (ensuring strategic specificity and eliminating ambiguity across decision-making levels); (2) Proactivity (acting early and purposefully rather than reactively adapting after disruptions occur); (3) Alignment (achieving coherence across teams, functions, systems, and external stakeholders); (4) Co-Creation (grounding strategy in continuous engagement with customers, partners, and other stakeholders); and (5) Learning (building adaptive capacity through structured reflection and renewal).[7] These principles provide the "*what*" of longevity-centered leadership. The Attention/Accountability Matrix identifies the "*who*", the winning leaders capable of sustaining value creation with an external focus of attention (concentration on customers, markets, and organizational dynamics) and an internal focus of accountability (assuming responsibility for outcomes rather than deflecting to circumstances).[8] What remains is the "*how,*" or the specific competencies that translate principles into practice.

The Competency Challenge: From Tools to Habits

A critical distinction shapes our entire analysis: the difference between competence and competency. Competence refers to underlying capability, knowledge, or skill, i.e., the *potential* to understand or execute. Competency refers to the consistent application of that capability in *observable behavior* within *organizational contexts*. A manager may possess deep competence in strategic planning methodologies yet lack the competency to translate insights into executable initiatives that mobilize teams and deliver results. Organizations frequently invest in building competence through training programs, yet often fail to cultivate competency through structured practice, feedback, and accountability mechanisms.

The competencies of longevity-centered leadership we present are explicitly defined through behavioral descriptors, or observable, assessable manifestations of a particular competency in action. Each is characterized not by what leaders know or could do, but by what they actually do when faced with ambiguity, resource constraints, and stakeholder complexity. The ultimate expression of competency mastery is habitual practice, i.e., sets of behaviors so ingrained they operate automatically rather than requiring conscious deliberation. The winning leader does not need reminders to scan for emerging opportunities or clarify strategic priorities; these behaviors have become their default cognitive and behavioral response.

Critically, competencies are tools for achieving organizational longevity, not ends in themselves. This reflects the principle of Alignment, suggesting that the competency assessment and development must be explicitly linked to the organization's value creation agenda. The question is never "*Does this manager possess competency X?*" in the abstract, but rather "*Does this manager's mastery of competency X enable them to sustain customer value, drive business value, and adapt to marketplace realities within our specific strategic context?*"

Competency development progresses through three distinct levels, each representing a qualitative shift in leadership behavior. At the Basic Level, managers understand and recognize the competency; they can articulate its components, identify it in others' behavior, and apply it consciously when prompted. However, this understanding remains largely intellectual; under pressure or time constraints, managers at this level frequently revert to ingrained patterns rather than applying the competency consistently. At the Advanced Level, leaders demonstrate emerging proficiency through successful application in specific situations, generating "first wins" that prove the competency's value. Yet these victories remain episodic rather than systematic, when the leader can perform the competency deliberately but not yet reliably under all conditions. Inconsistency persists: the same manager might excel at gaining commitments (competency C9 discussed below) in structured planning sessions but struggle to do so in spontaneous interactions or when facing resistance. Finally, at the Mastery Level, the competency becomes deeply ingrained in habitual practice, operating automatically without conscious deliberation. Leaders at this level apply the competency reflexively across diverse situations, even under stress, time pressure, or ambiguity. Mastery represents the ultimate goal: behaviors so integrated into the leader's cognitive and behavioral repertoire that they become the default response rather than requiring effortful activation. The transition from basic understanding through advanced application to mastery typically requires sustained practice in varied contexts, structured feedback, and organizational systems that reinforce desired behaviors while imposing consequences for regression to old patterns.

The Root Competency: Making Valuable Commitments (C1)

All longevity-centered leadership competencies rest upon a single foundation: Making Valuable Commitments (C1).[9] This competency anchors the entire system because it reflects the internal focus of accountability that distinguishes winning leaders through their readiness to engage with colleagues by providing firm, specific commitments rather than analytical forecasts, aspirational plans, or vague hopes. Without this root competency, all organizational planning actions become academic exercises divorced from the ultimate purpose of leadership: translating strategic intent into measurable value creation.

Making Valuable Commitments operationalizes the core tension at the heart of longevity-centered leadership: the simultaneous need for ambitious aspiration and disciplined accountability. Leaders who master C1 move beyond the passive stance of "*I could have done more if circumstances allowed*" to the proactive declaration of "*Here is the ambitious result we will achieve, and here is what we need to guarantee it.*" Rather than being a pure semantics, this shift in framing represents a fundamental reorientation in how leaders relate to uncertainty, resources, and organizational expectations.

The competency directly enables the five foundational principles of longevity-centered leadership: It provides the Clarity necessary for strategic execution by forcing precise articulation of outcomes; it embodies Proactivity through deliberate stretch targets that anticipate future needs; it enables Alignment by creating explicit contracts between functions and levels; it grounds Co-Creation in specific deliverables validated with stakeholders; and it facilitates Learning by establishing clear baselines against which actual performance can be assessed and understood.

Competency mastery is assessed through observable behaviors, not self-reported intentions. At the same time, CEOs and corporate boards can assess whether their leadership pipeline demonstrates C1 mastery through several diagnostic questions. The behavioral descriptions and diagnostic questions for the competency C1 emerging from our study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Competency C1. Making Valuable Commitments

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Confirmation of Value and Strategic Linkage *Leaders explicitly connect each commitment to strategic objectives through "back-testing" (validating value by asking what would have been gained if delivered last year), ensuring initiatives advance the winner business model rather than consuming resources without clear strategic contribution* (2) Setting the Highest Possible Bar *Leaders establish ambitious targets at the upper boundary of achievable ambition, shifting organizational culture from "resource-constrained planning" (negotiating what's possible with existing resources) to "commitment-driven resourcing" (starting with the needed outcome and working backward to identify required support).* (3) Precision in Defining Target Results as Commitments *Leaders visualize and articulate commitments with concrete specificity (defining precise functionality, user impacts, related tasks, and contribution to profit drivers), to ensure that all stakeholders share identical understanding and prevent the common failure where parties interpret commitments differently ("We expected more" vs. "We only meant this").*	a) When managers present initiatives, do they articulate specific commitments ("we will deliver X by Y") or vague intentions ("we plan to improve X")? b) Can managers clearly explain how their commitments link to strategic objectives and profit drivers, or do they justify initiatives through activity metrics and process improvements? c) Do managers set ambitious targets that stretch capabilities, or do they negotiate comfortable goals that build in a buffer against accountability? d) When commitments are not met, do managers explain what they learned and how they will adjust, or do they attribute shortfalls to external circumstances? e) Are commitments visualized with sufficient precision that all stakeholders share a common understanding of target outcomes?

The behavioral shift C1 requires is illustrated by contrasting two common management postures: the Forecast and the Commitment postures. The Forecast Posture is reflected in a statement like "*Based on current trends and assuming stable conditions, we project achieving X*." This approach emphasizes analysis over accountability. When results fall short, the explanation defaults to "conditions changed" or "assumptions proved invalid." The forecast posture reflects an external focus of accountability, when the circumstances beyond the manager's control determine outcomes. The Commitment Posture, on the other hand, reflects the perspective "*We commit to delivering X by date Y, and here is specifically what we need to guarantee it.*" This stance emphasizes accountability over prediction. When obstacles arise, the commitment drives problem-solving: What must we do differently? What additional support do we require? How do we maintain progress toward the committed outcome? The commitment posture reflects an internal focus of accountability, when the manager assumes responsibility for mobilizing resources and adapting approaches to achieve the stated outcome.

Leaders who master C1 operate consistently from the commitment posture. They understand that in turbulent environments, forecasts provide false comfort while commitments drive action. This does not mean ignoring uncertainty or refusing to adjust when conditions fundamentally change. Rather, it means that the starting point for strategic dialogue is what we will deliver rather than what we think might happen.

Box 2. Turning Forecasts into Commitments in a Global Logistics Firm

A rapidly expanding international logistics firm (from Eastern Europe) faced the classic challenge of sustaining growth once early entrepreneurial energy began to strain the organization. Leaders realized that their planning conversations were dominated by forecasts ("*what might happen if conditions allowed*") rather than commitments to deliver measurable outcomes. To close this knowing-doing gap, the company introduced a disciplined management approach centered on explicit promises of results.

Each manager began preparing a monthly *Effective Plan*, representing a brief document with written commitment to specific outcomes, timelines, and required resources. When results deviated from plan, teams practiced structured dialogues that focused on learning and recommitment rather than excuses. Over time, performance discussions shifted from "*we expect*" to "*we guarantee*", embedding accountability and precision into daily operations. Within the first year of focusing on this behavioral change, the company's revenue exceeded the annual budget by over 50%, while performance variation across teams dropped sharply as commitments became predictable and repeatable.

This behavioral reorientation from analytical forecasting to actionable valuable commitment became the foundation for predictable performance, aligning ambition with responsibility and exemplifying the root competency of Making Valuable Commitments (C1) in longevity-centered leadership.

Leaders who consistently demonstrate these behaviors, making valuable commitments as habitual practice, provide the foundation upon which all other competencies build. Without C1, even brilliant strategic thinking, sophisticated analytical capabilities, and strong interpersonal skills fail to translate into sustained value creation. The root competency is called "root" precisely because it anchors the entire system of longevity-centered leadership in the fundamental discipline of accountable action.

Competencies of Scope: Defining the Strategic Field of Vision

The five Competencies of Scope (C2, C3, C4, C5, C6) define the strategic field of vision and action for longevity-centered leaders. These scope competencies directly support multiple foundational principles. C2 (Identifying New Market Opportunities) and C6 (Forming Supporting Networks) operationalize Proactivity by systematically scanning for emerging value creation possibilities and Co-Creation by grounding strategy in external stakeholder engagement. C3 (Acting Across Units) enables Alignment by fostering coherence across functions and Co-Creation by facilitating multi-stakeholder problem-solving. C4 (Setting Agenda and Expectations) and C5 (Interacting with Boss) reinforce Clarity through precise communication of strategic priorities and Alignment by ensuring shared understanding across hierarchical levels. Together, they establish the critical communication channels that enable effective value creation: outward toward markets and customers (C2, C6), horizontally across organizational units (C3), vertically downward through the management hierarchy (C4), and vertically upward to senior leadership (C5).

C2. Identifying New Market Opportunities

This competency anchors the external focus of attention that distinguishes winning leaders. It requires managers to function effectively as researchers and disseminators of market intelligence, continuously scanning for emerging opportunities that could enhance the organization's value proposition (see Table 2). C2 is not about sporadic competitive analysis during annual planning cycles but rather about cultivating habitual market alertness that informs daily decision-making.

Table 2. Competency C2. Identifying New Market Opportunities

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Thinking "From the Future Back to the Present"	a) Can managers articulate three specific emerging market opportunities relevant to the organization, with clear evidence supporting each?
(2) Identifying Unmet or Unrecognized Client Needs	b) Do managers regularly engage directly with customers and competitors' customers, or do they rely primarily on secondary research and reports?
(3) Engaging with Competitors' Customers	c) When presenting strategic recommendations, do managers demonstrate thinking "from the future back" by articulating multiple scenarios and their implications?
(4) Asking the Right Questions and Involving Colleagues	d) Are market insights actively shared across the organization through structured processes, or do they remain siloed within individual functions?
	e) Do strategic discussions focus on answering well-formulated questions, or do they revolve around presenting comprehensive analyses?

In organizations where C2 is widely practiced, managers rarely say "we need more analysis"; instead, they say "here are the specific questions we need answered." This shift from analysis-as-activity to inquiry-as-insight fundamentally changes how organizations process market intelligence.

C2 also emphasizes involving colleagues in exploring opportunities. Pioneered by leaders like Jack Welch at General Electric, effective practices include internal platforms where managers share "unexpected findings" about markets, customers, or competitors. Each posting requires: (a) source documentation, (b) interpretation as opportunity or threat, (c) recommended company response. Active, visible sharing ensures critical insights become subjects of collective debate and coordinated action rather than remaining isolated observations.

C3. Acting Across Units

Cross-functional collaboration is not optional in modern organizations. The complexity of contemporary business challenges ensures that solutions require contributions from multiple specializations and functions. C3 competency enables leaders to navigate organizational boundaries effectively, mobilizing collective capabilities toward shared objectives while managing the inevitable tensions that arise from interdependence, resource competition, and divergent functional priorities (see Table 3).

Table 3. Competency C3. Acting Across Units

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Clarifying the Content and Importance of Shared Tasks (2) Giving and Receiving Help (3) Willingness to Share Authorship of Best Ideas	a) When managers present cross-functional initiatives, do they demonstrate clear problem definition with stakeholder alignment, or do they proceed with assumptions about what needs solving? b) Do managers proactively offer assistance to colleagues' initiatives where their capabilities could contribute value? c) When asking for help, do managers clearly articulate both what they need and why it matters to organizational objectives? d) Are managers willing to share authorship of initiatives to secure broader support and ensure execution? e) Do cross-functional projects typically succeed or stall due to political friction that could have been managed through early coalition-building?

C4. Setting Agenda and Expectations

C4 ensures vertical communication clarity, reflected in the ability to translate strategic intent into executable expectations at every organizational level. Without this competency, even brilliant strategies dissolve into ambiguous directives that teams interpret according to convenience rather than strategic necessity. C4 mastery prevents the common failure where leaders believe they have communicated clearly, yet teams deliver outcomes misaligned with intentions.

Box 3. Setting Clear Agendas and Expectations in Kyivstar (Nasdaq: KYIV)

As the leading national telecom operator in Ukraine was navigating war, cyberattacks, and regulatory complexity, the CEO (Oleksandr Komarov) learned that organizational stability depends less on predicting the future and more on making priorities visible and actionable. Each year, he translated the company's strategic vision into a concrete "priority board" behind his desk: a visible, physical calendar connecting long-term goals with monthly and weekly commitments.

This disciplined structure cascaded through every level of management: Teams knew what mattered, how progress would be reviewed, and which trade-offs were acceptable. Weekly operational meetings and board sessions reinforced the same rhythm of alignment, ensuring that every function operated from shared assumptions and a synchronized timeline.

By institutionalizing clarity through turning strategic vision into an explicit and living agenda, Oleksandr Komarov ensured that the company sustained focus despite constant turbulence. Managers no longer acted from reactive urgency but from coordinated intent, exemplifying the Setting Agenda and Expectations (C4) competency of longevity-centered leadership: translating vision into daily direction and behavioral predictability.

Table 4. Competency C4. Setting Agenda and Expectations

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Applying the Rule of Clear Task Understanding (2) Structuring Key Agenda Ideas (3) Tracking Downward Communication	a) When tasks are assigned, can recipients explain precisely what success looks like and why it matters strategically? b) Do leaders test their communications by asking "How might this be misinterpreted?" before disseminating directives? c) Can leaders clearly articulate what their teams should stop, improve, intensify, and start doing? d) Are important discussions followed by written confirmation that establishes shared understanding and accountability? e) When initiatives underperform, is the root cause typically strategic misjudgment or ambiguous communication that allowed misaligned execution?

At the core of C4 lies the practice of agenda-setting that demands thorough preparation. Leaders must answer three questions in plain language that teams can understand and act upon:

(1) What must we be dissatisfied with today? This establishes the problem, or current conditions that are unacceptable and demand change. Without clarity on dissatisfaction, teams lack motivation for difficult adjustments.

(2) What future do we want? This articulates the vision, or the desired outcomes that would represent success. Without clear aspiration, teams cannot align efforts toward shared objectives.

(3) What sequence of actions will get us there? This specifies the path through concrete initiatives in logical order that bridge current reality and desired future. Without explicit sequencing, teams pursue disconnected activities that fail to accumulate toward strategic goals.

Box 4. A practical framework for structuring expectations in agenda setting is SIIS (Stop, Improve, Intensify, Start):[10]

Stop: Which practices are ineffective and should be discontinued?
Improve: Which partially successful practices require refinement to become fully effective?
Intensify: Which practices have demonstrated repeatable success and should expand to other areas?
Start: Which promising new practices should be explored?

This framework is simple yet demands genuine managerial intelligence, reflecting the ability to distinguish between what deserves continuation, enhancement, expansion, or abandonment. Leaders who master C4 use such structures to ensure teams understand not only what to do but what to stop doing, recognizing that organizational capacity is finite and strategic focus requires deliberate choice.

C5. Interacting with Boss

Effective upward communication is as critical to organizational performance as downward communication, yet it receives far less attention in leadership development. C5 competency ensures that leaders manage relationships with their superiors in ways that enable rather than impede value creation (Table 5). This competency reflects the reality that even senior leaders operate within hierarchical contexts where their effectiveness depends partly on securing appropriate support, resources, and clarity from those above them.

Table 5. Competency C5. Interacting with Boss

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Understanding the Higher-Up's Agenda and Style (2) Eliminating Ambiguous Wording (3) Fixing Points of Responsibility Transfer (PRT)	a) When providing status updates to superiors, do managers present clear assessments with recommendations, or do they present problems expecting direction? b) Can managers articulate their boss's top three strategic priorities and explain how their initiatives support those priorities? c) Do managers use ambiguous language ("I'll try," "should be fine") that transfers accountability upward? d) When receiving direction, do managers confirm understanding and establish explicit commitment points? e) Do managers appropriately filter which issues to escalate versus resolve within their authority?

C6. Forming Supporting Networks

While C2 focuses on identifying market opportunities, C6 addresses the complementary challenge of building and maintaining relationships with external stakeholders who enable strategy execution. In increasingly networked business environments, organizational success depends not only on internal capabilities but also on the quality of relationships with customers, partners, suppliers, regulators, and other ecosystem participants. C6 competency ensures leaders can cultivate these relationships strategically (see Table 6).

Table 6. Competency C6. Forming Supporting Networks

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Managing External Stakeholders' Expectations (2) Clear Communication of Values and Promises (3) Building Support Networks	a) Can managers identify their three most critical external stakeholder relationships and articulate what those stakeholders need from the organization? b) Do external stakeholders describe the organization's communications as clear, consistent, and trustworthy? c) When commitments to external partners cannot be met, do managers proactively communicate and propose alternatives, or do they wait for stakeholders to discover problems? d) Are stakeholder insights systematically captured and translated into strategic action, or do they remain isolated in individual relationships? e) Has the organization built relationship capital that enables it to weather disruptions with stakeholder support intact?

C6's highest expression is the systematic cultivation of mutually beneficial long-term relationships with key external constituencies. This requires sincerity, openness, empathy, and proactive identification of stakeholders' key needs. If unmet, this would cause stakeholders to disengage regardless of other relationship strengths.

Leaders who master C6 think strategically about network architecture: Which relationships are mission-critical versus important versus optional? How do we allocate relationship-building effort accordingly? Where are vulnerabilities in our external network that competitors could exploit? Where are opportunities to strengthen ties through deeper collaboration?

This competency also involves creating organizational systems that capture stakeholder feedback and translate it into strategic action. Rather than treating external engagement as individual leader responsibility, C6 mastery means embedding stakeholder input mechanisms into organizational routines through, e.g., regular advisory councils, systematic satisfaction assessments, collaborative innovation initiatives, and transparent reporting on commitments made and delivered.

Style-Based Competencies: Shaping How Leaders Engage

The two Style-Based Competencies (C7, C8) define how longevity-centered leaders engage with people, ideas, and challenges. Unlike scope competencies that establish communication channels and directions, style competencies shape the quality, tone, and effectiveness of those interactions. They determine whether a leader's strategic insights translate into collective action or remain isolated observations, whether conflicts become catalysts for improvement or sources of organizational dysfunction, and whether teams feel energized or depleted by leadership engagement.

These style competencies directly enable multiple foundational principles. C7 (Energizing Others) operationalizes Proactivity by mobilizing organizational energy toward future-oriented action rather than allowing defensive or reactive cultures to dominate. C8 (Managing Tough Situations) enables Alignment by converting conflicts into constructive dialogue that clarifies shared objectives and Learning by ensuring that difficult situations yield insights rather than merely consuming energy.

C7. Energizing Others

Leaders who master C7 understand that sustained value creation depends not merely on having the right strategy but on mobilizing organizational energy and commitment toward executing that strategy (see Table 7). This competency encompasses both the emotional intelligence necessary to understand and influence how people feel about their work and the discipline of leading by personal example that makes behavioral change credible and achievable.

Table 7. Competency C7. Energizing Others

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Emotional Intelligence (2) Leading by Personal Example	a) Do team members describe their leader as authentic, i.e., genuinely committed to stated values rather than performing a role? b) When leaders make mistakes, do they acknowledge them openly and use them as learning opportunities, or do they deflect and defend? c) Do leaders deliberately use rhetoric that balances logic, emotion, and credibility, or do they rely primarily on one mode? d) When introducing new behaviors or standards, do leaders identify and develop early adopters who can teach peers, or do they expect change to cascade directly from their own example? e) Do team energy levels and commitment increase following leader engagement, or do people feel depleted by interactions with leadership?

C8. Managing Tough Situations

Organizational progress inevitably generates conflicts, e.g., over resource allocation, strategic priorities, implementation approaches, and accountability for outcomes. Leaders who lack C8 competency either avoid these conflicts or engage them destructively, turning disagreements into personal attacks that damage relationships and trust. C8 mastery enables leaders to convert conflicts into constructive dialogue that clarifies objectives, surfaces important information, and accelerates problem-solving (Table 8).

Managers demonstrating high level of C8 move conversations systematically from problem identification to solution generation to commitment specification. They consistently ask: "*What am I personally prepared to do in this situation?*" This question grounds abstract discussions in concrete accountability. They articulate benefits and risks of proposed actions clearly, ensuring realistic assessment rather than wishful thinking. Most importantly, they translate analysis into specific actions with assigned responsibility and defined checkpoints.

Table 8. Competency C8. Managing Tough Situations

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Turning Conflicts into Constructive Dialogue (2) Moving from Analysis to Action	a) When conflicts arise, do leaders frame them as opportunities to clarify information and align understanding, or do they avoid conflict or allow it to become personal? b) Can leaders distinguish between conflicts rooted in different information versus different values versus interpersonal dynamics? c) Do difficult conversations move systematically from problem identification to solution generation to commitment specification, or do they circle endlessly without resolution? d) When facing complex situations, do leaders know when analysis has reached diminishing returns and shift to decision-making? e) Do leaders ask "What am I personally prepared to do?" and model the accountability they expect from others?

Instrumental Competencies: Embedding Discipline into Value Creation

The three Instrumental Competencies (C9, C10, C11) provide the practical mechanisms through which leaders execute their strategic agendas and ensure organizational capability development. While scope competencies establish communication channels and style competencies shape interaction quality, instrumental competencies embed systematic discipline into daily management practice. They ensure that strategic commitments translate into concrete action, that performance gaps trigger timely correction, and that organizational learning accumulates rather than dissipates.

These instrumental competencies directly enable multiple foundational principles. C9 (Gaining Commitments) operationalizes Clarity by establishing unambiguous expectations and Alignment by fixing clear points of responsibility transfer. C10 (Providing Corrective Feedback) enables Learning by converting performance gaps into developmental opportunities while maintaining Alignment through timely course correction. C11 (Developing Others) reinforces all five principles by building organizational capacity to sustain them. Most notably, it embodies Proactivity through forward-looking capability building, Co-Creation through collaborative development planning, and Learning through systematic capture of lessons from experience.

C9. Gaining Commitments

Longevity-centered leadership emphasizes mutual clarity of expectations. C9 represents the operational counterpart to C1 (Making Valuable Commitments). While C1 focuses on how leaders themselves formulate and communicate commitments, C9 addresses how leaders elicit commitments from others (Table 9). This competency ensures that strategic intent cascades effectively through organizational levels, with each leader securing genuine commitment rather than superficial compliance from their teams.

Table 9. Competency C9. Gaining Commitments

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Setting Clear Expectations Regarding Employee Results (2) Identifying Optimal Resource Needs to Fix Points of Responsibility Transfer (PRT) (3) Establishing Correct Control Points	a) When delegating tasks, do managers specify expected results or merely describe activities to perform? b) Can employees clearly explain what success looks like, what resources they need, what authority they possess, and what checkpoints will verify progress? c) Do managers help employees identify resource gaps and obstacles proactively, or do problems emerge only during execution? d) Are control points defined by outcomes achieved or merely by dates and activities? e) Do employees propose their own milestones and control points, demonstrating genuine ownership of commitments?

C10. Providing Corrective Feedback

Even when commitments are gained effectively (C9), execution rarely proceeds exactly as planned. Market conditions shift, assumptions prove incorrect, unforeseen obstacles emerge, or capabilities prove insufficient. C10 competency ensures that performance gaps trigger timely correction while maintaining employee ownership and accountability rather than triggering either defensiveness or passive dependence on managerial direction (see Table 10).

Table 10. Competency C10. Providing Corrective Feedback

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Proactivity in Giving Corrective Feedback (2) Ensuring Employee Agreement on Need for Adjustments (3) Securing Promises of Corrective Actions and Results	a) When performance gaps emerge, do managers address them promptly or hope they'll self-correct? b) Does corrective feedback follow a structured dialogue that maintains employee ownership, or does it devolve into either criticism or detailed instructions? c) Can employees clearly explain what they will do differently, why those changes address root causes, and what support they need? d) After receiving feedback, do employees view corrections as their own solutions or as mandates imposed by management? e) Does corrective feedback strengthen or weaken employee commitment and capability?

At the core of the C10 competency lies effective corrective feedback, which should follow a structured dialogue that maintains employee agency and ownership. In successful longevity-centered companies, we observed variants of a five-step algorithm RAWOP: Recognize, Agree, Want, Offer, Promise.

Box 5. RAWOP Approach for Providing Effective Corrective Feedback

Step 1. Recognize: Confirm the employee understands why feedback is needed. Not "you're behind schedule" (which focuses on symptoms) but "the outcome we committed to requires X by date Y, and current progress suggests we'll achieve only 60% of X unless something changes; do you see this gap?" This step ensures shared reality before proceeding to solutions.

Step 2. Agree: Gain explicit agreement on the necessity of corrections. "Given this gap, do you agree that we need to adjust our approach?" Without genuine agreement, subsequent steps generate compliance rather than commitment. If employees disagree about the need for change, the dialogue must address this misalignment before moving forward.

Step 3. Want: Ensure the employee still wants to fulfill the original commitment. Circumstances may have changed such that the outcome is no longer achievable or desirable given current realities. The question "Do you still want to deliver this outcome?" provides an honorable exit if conditions have fundamentally shifted, while also reaffirming commitment if the employee answers affirmatively.

Step 4. Offer: Have the employee propose their own corrective plan. "Given the gap we've identified and your renewed commitment to the outcome, what specifically will you do differently?" The employee should specify: concrete actions to be taken, resources or support needed (with the explicit right to request help), revised timelines if necessary, and new control points to verify the adjusted approach is working.

This step is critical: when employees generate their own solutions, they assume ownership of both the new approach and its outcomes. When managers impose solutions, employees become executors rather than owners, and future problems trigger "you told me to do it this way" rather than proactive problem-solving.

Step 5. Promise: Convert proposals into explicit promises. "So you're committing to deliver X by date Y through approach Z, and you'll need support A from me. Is that your promise?" This final step transforms discussion into renewed commitment, re-establishing the Point of Responsibility Transfer (PRT) with adjusted expectations.

This five-step approach sustains ownership while enabling timely course corrections. It prevents the two failure modes (avoiding feedback or micromanaging) by keeping responsibility with the employee while providing the support and clarity necessary for success.

The effective C10 competency manifested through a variant of a RAWOP approach is usually leading to development of a set of noticeable managerial habits among leaders of longevity-centered organizations, such as: (1) having clearly defined in advance target results of each feedback discussion; (2) not switching between the RAWOP stages (e.g., requesting the Offer for corrective plans before Recognize, Agree and Want stages); (3) fixing the Promises at the end of the feedback discussion, and even (4) outlining the first, preliminary indicators of success of the new plan with the actions and consequences for not meeting the target intermediate milestones.

C11. Developing Others

C11 represents the competency that ensures organizational sustainability through the systematic development of leadership capability across levels rather than relying on a few exceptional individuals (see Table 11). This competency operationalizes the shift from "leadership by self-example" to "leadership by example of others" that characterizes longevity-centered approaches. Without C11, even organizations with strong current leadership face inevitable decline as key individuals depart, retire, or burn out without having built successors capable of sustaining value creation.

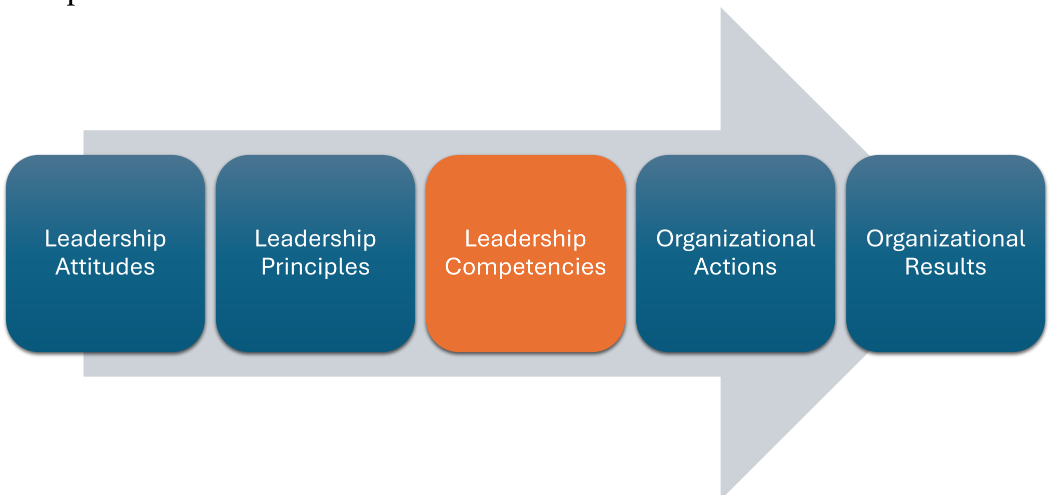
Table 11. Competency C11. Developing Others

Behavioral Descriptors	Key Patterns to Track
(1) Recording Best Practices and Mistakes (2) Understanding Sources of Professional Development (3) Individualized Development Planning	a) Does the organization systematically capture and disseminate lessons from both successes and failures, or does learning remain isolated in individual experiences? b) Can leaders clearly articulate the development needs of their direct reports and the specific actions being taken to address those needs? c) Do development plans link to organizational strategic priorities, or are they generic programs unconnected to value creation requirements? d) Is development progress assessed through observable behavioral change and capability demonstration, or merely through training attendance? e) Do leaders actively create developmental stretch assignments and coaching relationships, or do they rely exclusively on formal HR programs?

Conclusion: From Knowledge and Skills to Competencies

The journey from understanding longevity-centered leadership principles to building organizations capable of sustaining value creation in turbulent environments requires more than conceptual frameworks. It demands systematic competency development across leadership ranks. This article has articulated eleven competencies that translate the "what" (five foundational leadership principles)[11] and "who" (attitudes of the winning leaders)[12] into the "how" of longevity-centered leadership practice. The underlying logic behind the study of longevity-centered competencies is that they form the basis for organizational actions and results, translating the leadership attitudes and principles into practice (see Figure 1):

Figure 1. Longevity-Centered Leadership: The Central Role of Leadership Competencies



Each longevity-centered leadership competency is defined through behavioral descriptors, or observable manifestations of knowledge and skills in action rather than self-reported intentions or theoretical knowledge. This emphasis on behavior reflects a fundamental truth about adult development: competence (knowledge and skills) does not automatically translate into competency (consistent behavioral application under real conditions). Organizations investing in leadership development must create the demanding conditions under which behavioral change becomes both necessary and possible: genuine dissatisfaction with current patterns, clear behavioral alternatives, structured practice environments, and accountability systems that reinforce desired behaviors.

For CEOs and boards committed to organizational longevity, competency development represents a fundamental fiduciary responsibility, not a delegable HR function. Three strategic imperatives emerge from this analysis:

First, systematic assessment: Organizations must diagnose which competencies are strong, which require development, and which gaps are most consequential for sustaining the winner business model. The diagnostic questions accompanying each competency provide starting points for evidence-based assessment. However, assessment must move beyond surveys and self-reports to observation of actual behavior under real conditions: how leaders formulate commitments, scan for opportunities, navigate conflicts, gain commitments from teams, provide corrective feedback, and develop others.

Second, deliberate development architecture: Competency building requires more than training programs. It demands stretch assignments that develop specific capabilities, coaching relationships that accelerate learning, cross-functional rotations that broaden perspective, reflective practices that extract lessons from experience, and accountability mechanisms that prevent regression to old patterns. Development plans must be individualized (addressing each leader's unique profile) yet aligned with organizational strategic needs (concentrating on high-leverage competencies).

Third, cultural reinforcement: The ultimate expression of competency mastery is habitual practice, reflected in behaviors so ingrained they operate automatically. Achieving this requires organizational cultures where longevity-centered behaviors are expected, modeled by senior leaders, rewarded through recognition and advancement, and embedded in daily routines. Cultural transformation begins with CEOs and boards demonstrating these competencies themselves, creating the conditions where others must develop them, and building leadership pipelines that sustain them across generations.

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