

To Be a Better Leader – First Know Thyself

Written by: Dr. Nanette Miner, Leadership Development and Workplace-Learning Strategy Consultant, The Training Doctor

Once leaders know how to lead themselves, they are prepared to lead individuals, teams, and systems from the inside out. This quote is from the newly released book: *The Journey of Leadership*, published by McKinsey Consulting (I highly recommend picking up a copy or, better yet, getting a copy for everyone on your team and starting a 2025 book club!).

Leading oneself means knowing (and accepting) what you are good at, what you're not particularly good at, having emotional intelligence and self-management skills, and more. Reading that quote made me reflect on how hard it can be to "see oneself" objectively – unless you have help (more on that coming up).

Knowing who you are and how you operate can help you be a more effective construction leader. Assessments can reveal learning styles, personality traits, leadership tendencies, and more; helping you to identify strengths to lean into and potential pitfalls to avoid. When you know how you lead when under stress, for example, you're better able to handle a high-stakes project with your team – a team that includes people who all have different styles as well.

Assessments can give you the insight(s) you need. Many well-known assessments like DiSC, MBTI, and Predictive Index require certified practitioners; and while they're all excellent, here are three assessments that are free and can benefit you or your team by providing awareness of (1) strengths, (2) emotional intelligence, and (3) intrinsic motivations.



Note: These tools, while free, are well-researched and validated.

1. VIA Character Strengths Assessment

[This assessment](#) helps identify personal strengths and work preferences. For instance, are you more driven by clear structure and facts, or do you thrive in creative problem-solving? In a work-related context, knowing this can help you decide if you'd be better suited for planning, jobsite work, or client-facing roles. A standout (but add-on) feature is "Viana," an AI coach that can offer help with personal and professional development.


2. LeadX EQ Self-Assessment

This [Emotional Intelligence \(EQ\) assessment](#) can be helpful when working in diverse, multi-generational teams where

each person will have a different “experience” of how you lead. Being aware that your “default style” will work for some and not for others is critical to harmony and effectiveness in the workplace. Emotional intelligence can be crucial when leading teams under tight deadlines or managing client relationships. After completing the assessment, you’ll receive actionable tips on improving your EQ. There is also a 12-week coaching plan (again, an add-on) if you want to go deeper.

3. Sparketype

[This assessment](#) identifies the intangible motivators that fuel you. The goal is to align your core “spark” with work that’s meaningful to you. In construction, this insight could help you find where you’ll feel most engaged - whether that’s in a leadership role, technical tasks, or working with clients. There is also an accompanying book (for purchase) that delves into the 50 million data points collected from the more than 1 million people who have taken the assessment.

Don’t keep these assessments to yourself! Share them with your team. Using these tools will not only enhance your leadership capabilities but they can uncover strengths and preferences in your team that may transform how they approach challenges, tackle projects, and collaborate on the jobsite. 



About the Author

Dr. Nanette Miner is a leadership development and workplace-learning strategy consultant. Through her firm, [The Training Doctor](#), she has revolutionized the way that individuals are prepared for leadership roles in their organizations. Rather than a chosen few, her process is aimed at ensuring everyone in the company has the skills and business acumen of a leader. This approach ensures both immediate and long-term return-on-investment (ROI) for an organization.

She has written articles for Chief Learning Office magazine, Forbes, and MBA World and is a frequent guest on workplace training and career podcasts and talk radio such as Inc. Radio and America's Workforce Radio.

Nanette regularly speaks at industry conferences and corporate learning events on how to integrate leadership capabilities throughout an organization. An author of eight books, her most recent is Future-Proofing Your Organization.

Any views and opinions expressed in this article may or may not reflect the views and opinions of the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA). By publishing this piece, CMAA is not expressing endorsement of the individual, the article, or their association, organization, or company.