

The Dragon Matrix: Executive Execution Audit

Instructions: Under pressure, no leader stays in the Golden Zone 100% of the time. When the timeline compresses and the stakes rise, we default to our stress archetypes. Read the corporate scenarios below and select the reaction that most honestly reflects your default operational strategy when the pressure spikes.

Question 1: The Delivery Crisis

A major project is 48 hours from launch, and your team is visibly behind schedule and paralyzed by scope creep. What is your automatic reaction?

1. Take over the keyboard, rewrite the critical strategy or code yourself, and push it across the finish line to protect the team from failure.
2. Let the deadline hit to teach them a lesson in accountability, then deliver a harsh post-mortem on their lack of execution.
3. Negotiate an extension with the client or board, moving the goalposts to alleviate the stress on your team.
4. Institute immediate micro-standups, take total command of the workflow, and demand hourly progress updates until launch.

Question 2: The Cross-Functional Conflict

The boundaries between departments have blurred. Sales is bypassing the official pipeline and making urgent, unvetted requests directly to your production team, causing massive friction. You:

1. Shut the backdoor down aggressively, reprimand both teams publicly, and mandate strict adherence to the SLA.
2. Let the blurred lines continue for now to maintain a "collaborative" cross-department culture and avoid a political fight with the VP of Sales.
3. Step in as the permanent middleman, manually reviewing and routing every single request yourself to shield your team from the chaos.
4. Tell your team they need to learn to manage stakeholders better, label it a communication issue, and leave them to figure it out.

Question 3: The Strategy Pivot

The executive board drops a sudden verdict, forcing your team to drop a project they have spent three months building to pivot to a new priority. You:

1. Hand down the mandate with zero context. You expect them to be professionals, accept the reality, and execute without complaining.
2. Apologize profusely, validate their frustration, and try to make the new transition as soft and frictionless as possible.
3. Force the pivot instantly, cancel upcoming PTO if necessary, and demand total, immediate alignment with the new directive.
4. Take on the heavy lifting of the new strategy yourself so the team doesn't have to feel the whiplash of the pivot.

Question 4: The Post-Mortem

A high-visibility initiative has officially failed. The data is bad, and the executive team is looking for answers. In the review meeting, you:

1. Rush past the failure to focus heavily on "what we did well" and "lessons learned" to ensure team morale doesn't drop.
2. Interrogate the timeline to find the exact breakdown in compliance and make it clear who dropped the ball.
3. Fall on the sword completely. You take 100% of the blame in front of leadership so your team never feels the heat.
4. Sit back, shake your head, and highlight the team's operational flaws without offering a systemic solution to fix them.

Question 5: The Talent Drain

Your top performer is showing signs of quiet quitting. They are disengaged, doing the bare minimum, and looking disconnected in meetings. You:

1. Reduce their workload, take their most difficult projects off their plate, and offer them better perks to keep them happy.
2. Write them off mentally. If they don't want to hustle, you will invest your energy into employees who actually want to be there.
3. Back off entirely and give them complete autonomy without check-ins, hoping that space will naturally fix their engagement.
4. Put them on a strict, metric-driven Performance Improvement Plan to force their engagement numbers back up.

The Dragon Matrix: Decoder

Find the sequence below that matches the numbers you selected during the Executive Execution Audit. Tally up how many times you chose the specific numbers for each group to find your default leadership archetype under stress.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
The Dictator	4	1	3	2	4
The Enabler	1	3	4	3	1
The Judge	2	4	1	4	2
The Pleaser	3	2	2	1	3

Your Corporate Ecosystem Diagnosis

The Dictator

Habitat: HighControl / High Pressure

Your Dragon:**The Dragon of Control.** You disguise micromanagement as "high standards." You are terrified that if you let go for one second, the team will fail.

The Team's Dragon: **The Dragon of Fear.** Your team is paralyzed. They stop innovating and wait for your orders because they are terrified of making a mistake.

The Golden Zone Shift: Give up the control. Provide the opportunity for **Ownership**. Trust your people to figure out the solution their way.

The Enabler

Habitat: HighControl / Low Pressure

Your Dragon:**The Dragon of Anxiety.** You disguise rescuing as "servant leadership." You act as the team's external brain, fixing their messes so they never feel the heat.

The Team's Dragon: **The Dragon of Inertia.** Your team learns to do nothing. Their problem-solving muscles atrophy because they know you will eventually swoop in.

The Golden Zone Shift: Give up the anxiety. Provide the opportunity for **Growth**. Let your team face the fire; it is the only way they learn.

The Judge

Habitat: LowControl / High Pressure

Your Dragon:**The Dragon of Resentment.** Driven by exhaustion, you disguise criticism as "accountability." You drop harsh verdicts without providing coaching.

The Team's Dragon: **The Dragon of Shame.** Your team panics, loses trust, and starts quietly updating their LinkedIn profiles.

The Golden Zone Shift: Give up the resentment. Provide the opportunity for **Trust**. Explain the context and open a dialogue to build next steps together.

The Pleaser

Habitat: LowControl / Low Pressure

Your Dragon:**The Dragon of Avoidance.** You disguise conflict avoidance as "culture building." You refuse to set firm boundaries because you want to be the buddy.

The Team's Dragon:**The Dragon of Chaos.** Without boundaries, your team is overwhelmed. They drop the ball because nobody knows who is actually accountable.

The Golden Zone Shift: Give up the avoidance. Provide the opportunity for **Clarity**. Have the courage to set firm boundaries and centralize information flow.

Stop Fixing the People. Start Changing the Game.

Quitting is not a character flaw; it is a design flaw. When you learn to change the environment instead of reacting to the symptoms, you build a resilient culture anchored in Growth, Ownership, Trust, and Clarity.

Want to bring the Golden Zone framework to your next corporate offsite or leadership summit?

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