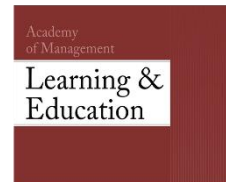




DEVELOPING LEADER CHARACTER: FINDING A WAY FORWARD

Teaching Materials based on and developed by: Crossan, M., Crossan, C., Newstead, T., & Sturm, R. E. (2024). Developing Leader Character: Finding a Way Forward. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 23 (4) 652-675.



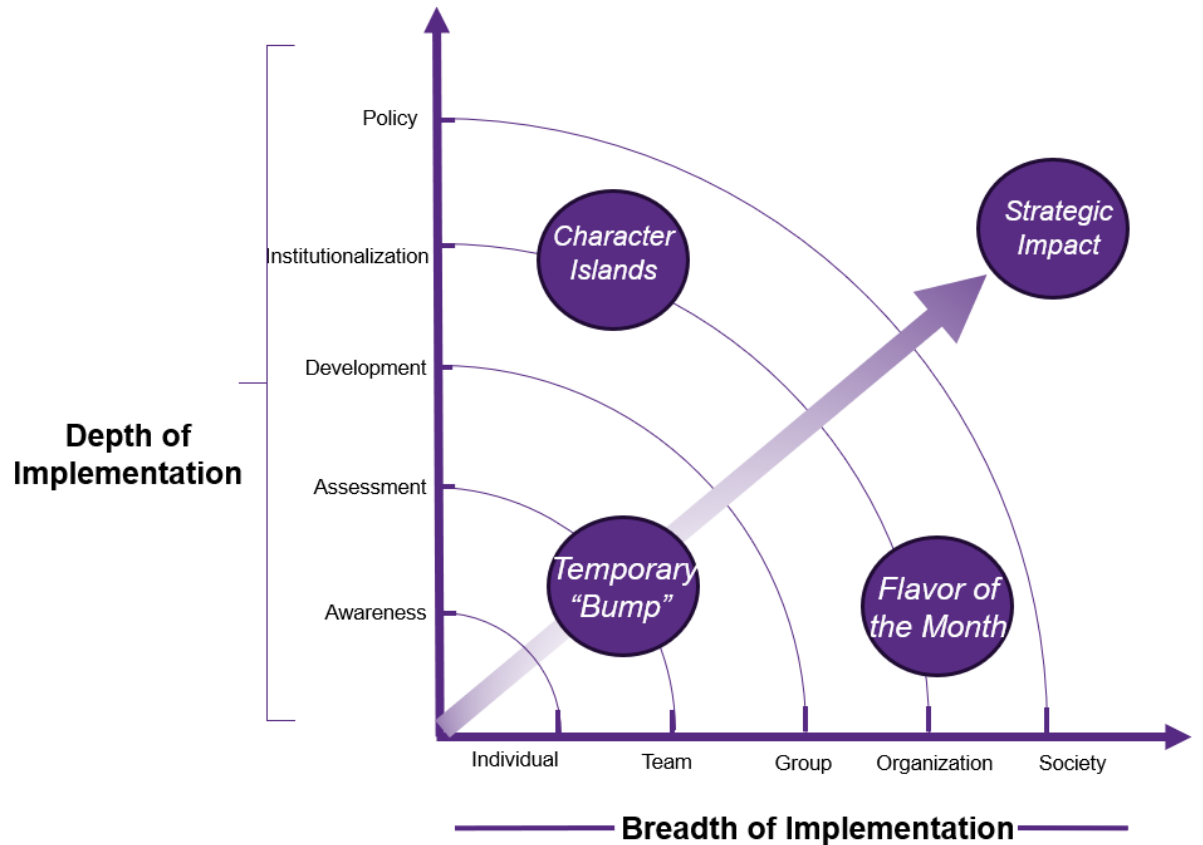
SESSION OBJECTIVES & OVERVIEW

Session Objectives:

- Understand what leader character is, why it matters, and what it means for your continuing leadership development
- Shift from basic awareness of character (temporary bump) to alignment on its strategic importance (strategic impact)

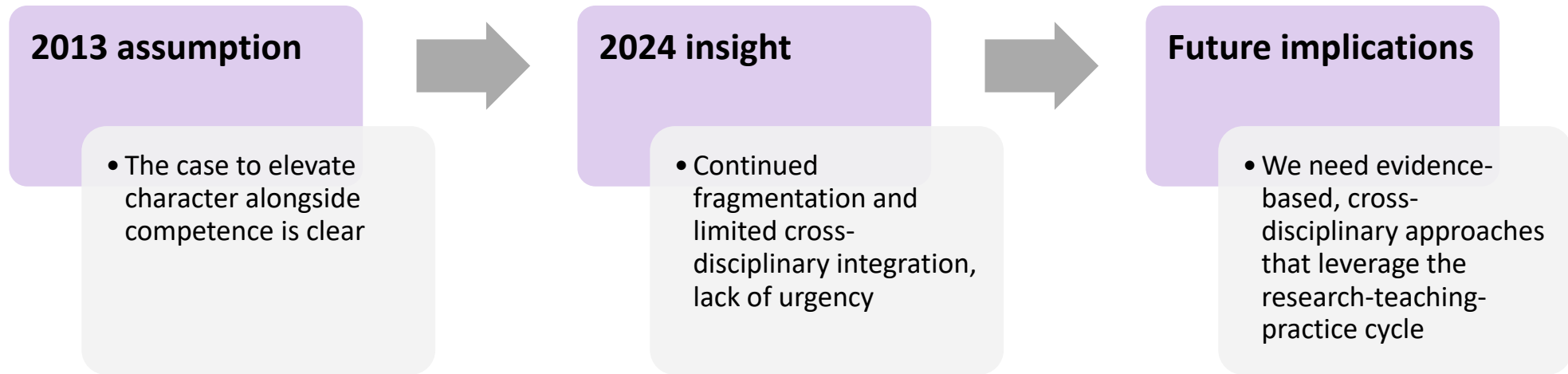
Session Overview:

1. Why leader character matters – evidence and assumptions
2. How leader character is developed – the importance of habituation
3. What we need to know to develop leader character – a new definition
4. Who we are becoming as people and as leaders – when we focus on



WHY

DO WE NEED TO DEVELOP LEADER CHARACTER?



The evidence:

Leaders with strong character have 5x greater ROI including increases in*

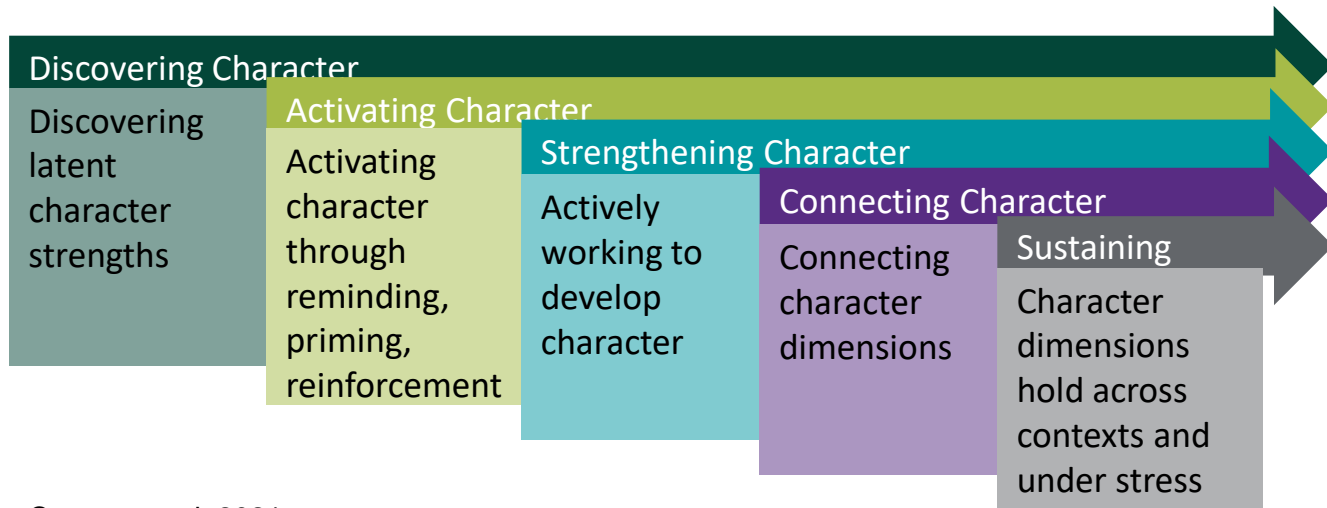
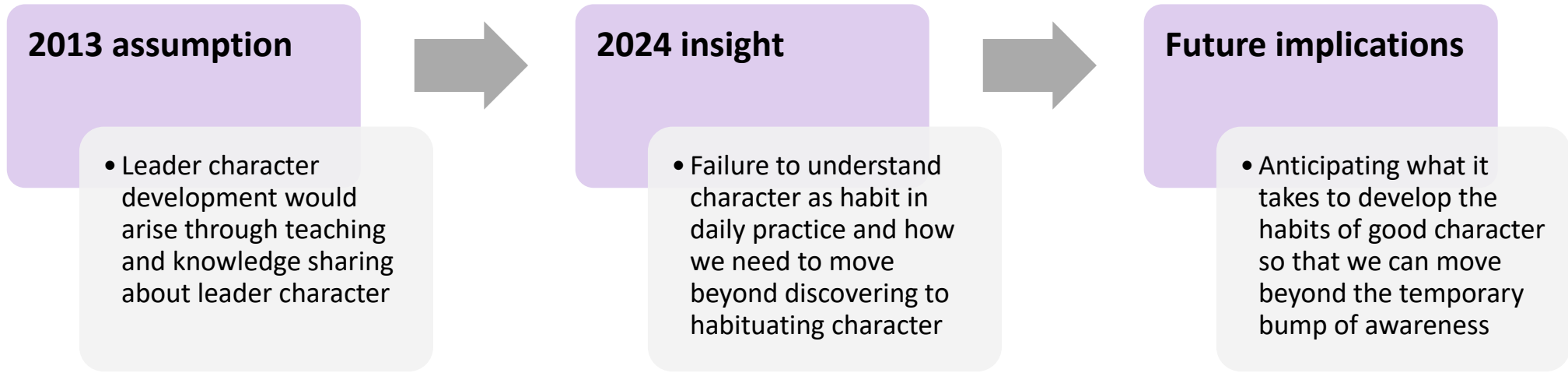
- Effectiveness (14%)
- Promotion potential (6%)
- Psychological safety (16%)
- Wellbeing (10%)
- ...and more

Discuss:

- Why do you think character development is important?
- Why do you think there hasn't been greater urgency to elevate character development alongside competence development?
- What can we do to strengthen the case for leader character development?

*(Crossan et al. 2023; Kiel, 2015)

HOW DO WE GO FROM AWARENESS TO HABITUATION?

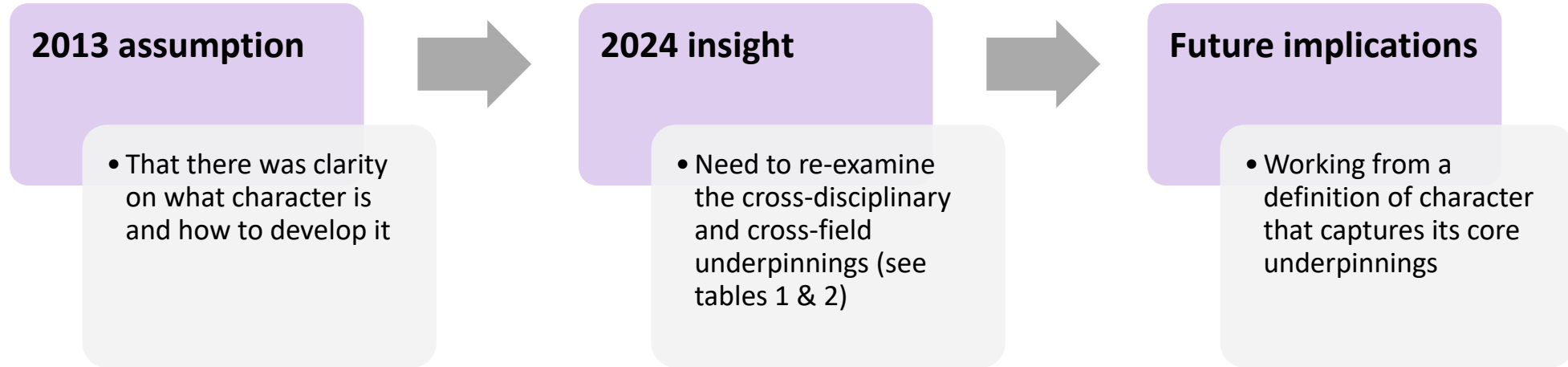


Discuss:

- Why do you think knowledge and/or awareness of character only may limit its development?
- In addition to teaching, how else could leader character development take place at universities?
- How can we move along the continuum from discovering character to sustaining it across contexts and under stress?

WHAT

DO WE NEED TO KNOW TO DEVELOP AND HABITUATE (GOOD) CHARACTER?



A new definition of character:

“an interconnected suite of embodied and virtuous habits. These habits are virtuous insofar as they collectively influence judgment and human flourishing. The dimensions of character can be observed, assessed, and developed. Character is universal yet reflexive to context and can manifest toward deficient or excess vices when high levels of one dimension are not supported by high levels of other dimensions.” (p.653)

Discuss:

- How does our understanding of character change if we remove any part of this definition?
- What can we learn from different areas of study to help us better understand leader character?
- Which aspects of leader character should be prioritized in certain programs, and when?

WHO ARE WE BECOMING?

2013 assumption

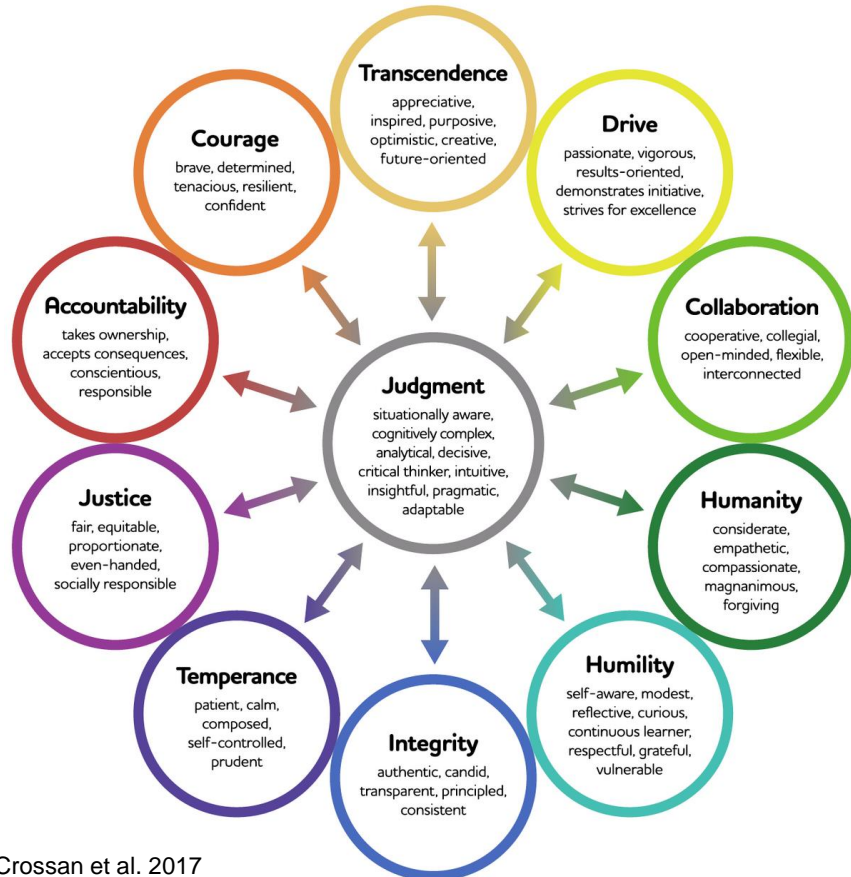
- Not explicitly addressed

2024 insight

- Need greater attention to *“who we are becoming while we are busy doing.”*

Future implications

- Our character is continually evolving, the important thing is to be intentional, rather than accidental, in how our own character develops



A definition-aligned framework

- The dimensions of character are interconnected and revealed in observable behaviors which can be assessed and developed
- All dimensions are equally important and can operate as a deficient or excess vice – we don't want to weaken a strength but rather strengthen a weakness to bring balance between dimensions
- Each dimensions is universal, yet reflexive to context, judgment (or practical wisdom) tells us which dimension to draw on, when, and how

WHO ARE WE BECOMING?

Apply:

1. Rate yourself from 1-10 on each of the 11 dimensions of character, with 1 being very weak and 10 being very strong
2. For each dimension, assess if your “lean” is in the direction of deficient or excess, or both
3. For deficient dimensions, identify one way you can practice and strengthen the associated behaviours
4. For excess dimensions, identify another dimension that can help bring balance

Discuss:

- How does your self-assessment differ to others’?
- How does context shape or change the ways you enact your character dimensions?

Dimension	Deficient Vice	Virtue	Excess Vice
Accountability	Unaccepting Negligent Irresponsible Deflects	Accepts Consequences Conscientious Responsible Takes Ownership	Burdened Obsessive Controlling Can't delegate
Courage	Cowardice Unassured Hesitant Fragile Yielding	Brave Confident Determined Resilient Tenacious	Reckless Arrogant Bull-headed Overly-compensating Stubborn
Transcendence	Unthankful Unimaginative Short-sighted Uninspired Pessimistic Directionless	Appreciative Creative Future-Oriented Inspired Optimistic Purposive	Awe-struck Untethered Missing the present Over-stimulated Delusional Fixated
Drive	Waits for direction Apathetic Aimless Mediocrity Lethargic	Demonstrates Initiative Passionate Results-Oriented Strives for Excellence Vigorous	Dictatorial Fanatical Tunnel-vision Strives for perfection Forceful
Collaboration	Confrontational Self-centered Inflexible Disconnected Narrow-minded	Collegial Cooperative Flexible Interconnected Open-Minded	People-pleaser Conflict-avoider Compliant Boundaryless Abstract
Humanity	Uncaring Oblivious to others Unrelatable Vindictive Aloof	Compassionate Considerate Empathetic Forgiving Magnanimous	Overly concerned Overly-accommodating Overwhelmed by feelings Exploitable Over-bearing
Humility	Fixed mindset Disinterested Ungrateful Braggard Unreflective Disrespectful Unaware Protective	Continuous Learner Curious Grateful Modest Reflective Respectful Self-aware Vulnerable	Lacking focus Transfixed Feeling insignificant Self-effacing Ruminating Fawning Self-conscious Over-exposed
Integrity	Fake Untruthful Inconsistent Unprincipled Manipulative	Authentic Candid Consistent Principled Transparent	Uncompromising Belligerent Rigid Dogmatic Indiscriminate
Temperance	Anxious Agitated Impatient Inattentive Rash	Calm Composed Patient Prudent Self-Controlled	Indifferent Detached Overly accepting Overly cautious Overly-regulating
Justice	Inequitable Biased Unfair Disproportionate Narrow concerns	Equitable Even-Handed Fair Proportionate Socially Responsible	No exceptions No differences "One size fits all" Micromanage proportion Paralyzed by complexity
Judgment	Stagnant Lacking logic Simplistic Lazy thinking Indecisive Lacking instinct Ignorant Unrealistic Oblivious	Adaptable Analytical Cognitively Complex Critical Thinker Decisive Intuitive Insightful Pragmatic Situationaly Aware	Overly malleable Over-analyzing Complicating Overly critical Impulsive Lacking reason Cunning Overly practical Over valuing situations
Virtues & Vices Index (Crossan & Crossan, 2023)			

NEXT STEPS:

Begin with yourself

- Understand, assess, and consciously practice and develop your character
- Use the leader character framework to guide how you will enact, strengthen, and habituate each dimension (for practical support, see resources slide)

Exercise your leadership

- Share with others and move towards strategic impact
- Share these slides, readings, and resources with others
- Engage in the conversation at work and at home
- Advocate for strategic impact

A WAY FORWARD:

As leaders, researchers, educators, and practitioners, the way forward includes addressing the following:

- How can we find common ground that will fuel a collective will?
- How can we challenge ourselves to move beyond the “temporary bump” of awareness to character development and embedding it in organizations?
- How can we bring a stronger transdisciplinary and cross-field approach to understanding what character is and how to develop it?
- How can we start with our own character development to engage challenges and opportunities?

References and further reading

Crossan, M. M., Byrne, A., Seijts, G. H., Reno, M., Monzani, I. & Gandz, J. 2017. Toward a framework of leader character in organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 54, **986-1018**.

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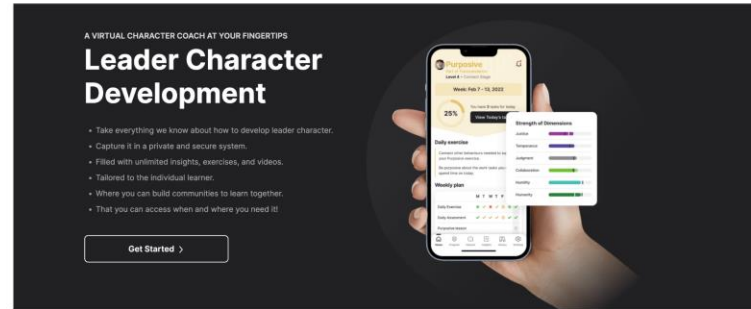
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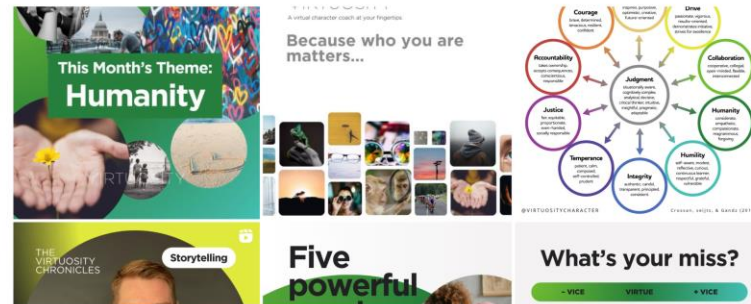
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RESOURCES

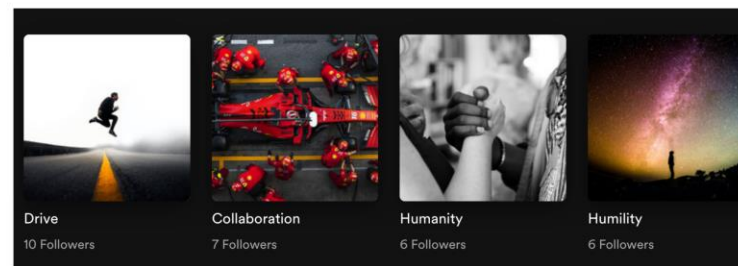
Virtuosity



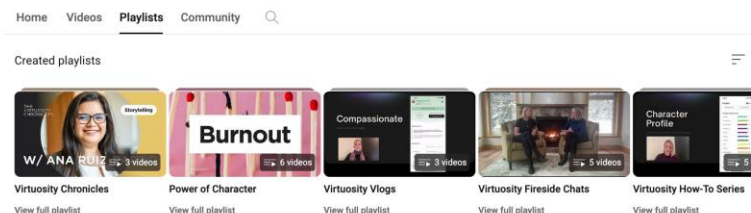
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Spotify



YouTube



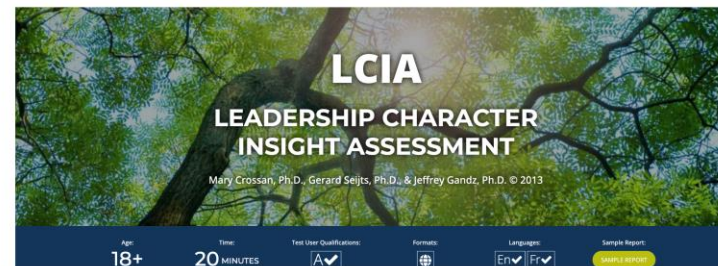
Ivey



LCA



Podcast



Assessment

