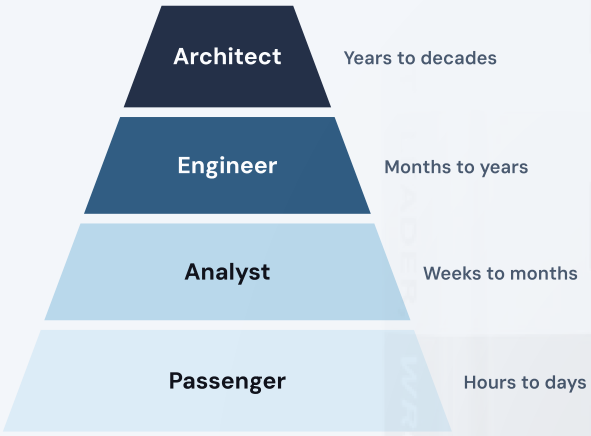
The four levels of leaders

Each level sees further ahead than the one below. You build that reach one level at a time, and your manager can help.

In 1969, Laurence Peter described a pattern many people recognize: people are promoted until they reach a job they cannot do.[1] Elliott Jaques found that roles higher in an organization make decisions whose results take longer to show.[2] *Right Leader, Wrong Arena* treats that time horizon as one reason for the pattern. It also treats it as a capability a leader can build.

How far ahead each level sees



Higher levels are rarer. The pyramid shows the order only, because no validated figures exist for how many leaders are at each level.

What each level does with a problem

LEVEL	HOW THE LEADER SEES THE ARENA	PROBLEMS
Passenger	The arena is invisible. Consequences arrive from beyond their horizon, and they cannot trace them to a cause. "I am applying what I know."	**Endures them.**
Analyst	The arena is visible, but fixed. They see patterns others miss, and they cannot yet change them. "I understand why this is happening."	**Identifies them.**
Engineer	Parts of the arena respond to pressure. They keep a fix going until the results show. "I shape conditions."	**Solves them.**
Architect	The arena can be shaped so others thrive. They set conditions before problems appear. "I create conditions where others thrive."	**Prevents them.**

How a leader reaches the next level

Passenger to Analyst
SIGN Outcomes keep surprising you, and proven approaches stop working.
NEXT STEP Ask "what am I not seeing?" each time a result is a surprise.

Analyst to Engineer
SIGN Your diagnosis is accurate, and the situation has not changed.
NEXT STEP Change one force and watch what happens.

Engineer to Architect
SIGN Your changes mostly help your own situation.
NEXT STEP Look at the forces bearing on the people around you.

You cannot skip a level. Each step takes work you cannot handle yet, and time to think about what happened.

You create the arena for your team

The pressure on you → **Your decisions** → **Your team's arena**

What pace do you set for your team?	How much of the pressure on you do you pass on?
Which of your shortages do you pass on?	What do your actions show matters most?

You may not control the arena you work in. **You do control the arena you create for your team.**

The levels describe where a leader is now, as a starting point for development. P×E supports reflection and development. It is not a validated hiring, promotion, or performance-prediction tool.

From *Right Leader, Wrong Arena* by Damon Wells, 2026. amazon.com/dp/B0GFWSR6B8

1. Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull, *The Peter Principle*, 1969.
2. Elliott Jaques, *Requisite Organization*, 1989. Jaques measured a role's level by the longest task it is given, in months or years.
3. The four levels come from *Right Leader, Wrong Arena*. The book bases them on research by Kegan; Dreyfus and Dreyfus; Lord and Hall; and Day.

How far ahead do your supervisors need to think? Talk it through on a 30-minute call. **Book a call** calendly.com/summaryleadership/30min