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360 Leadership Assessment Report

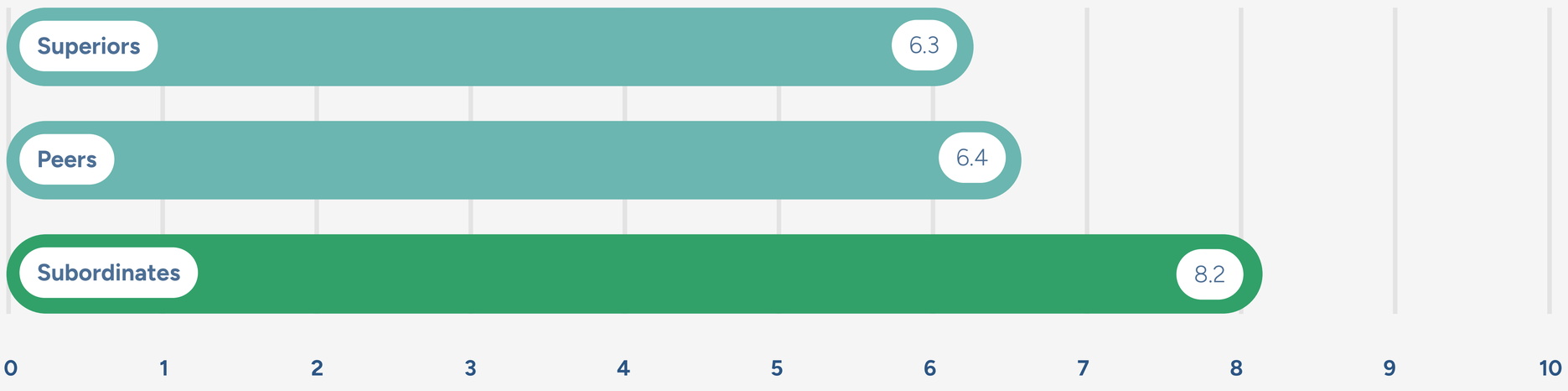
Susan Smith

March 2025

This report includes the following sections:

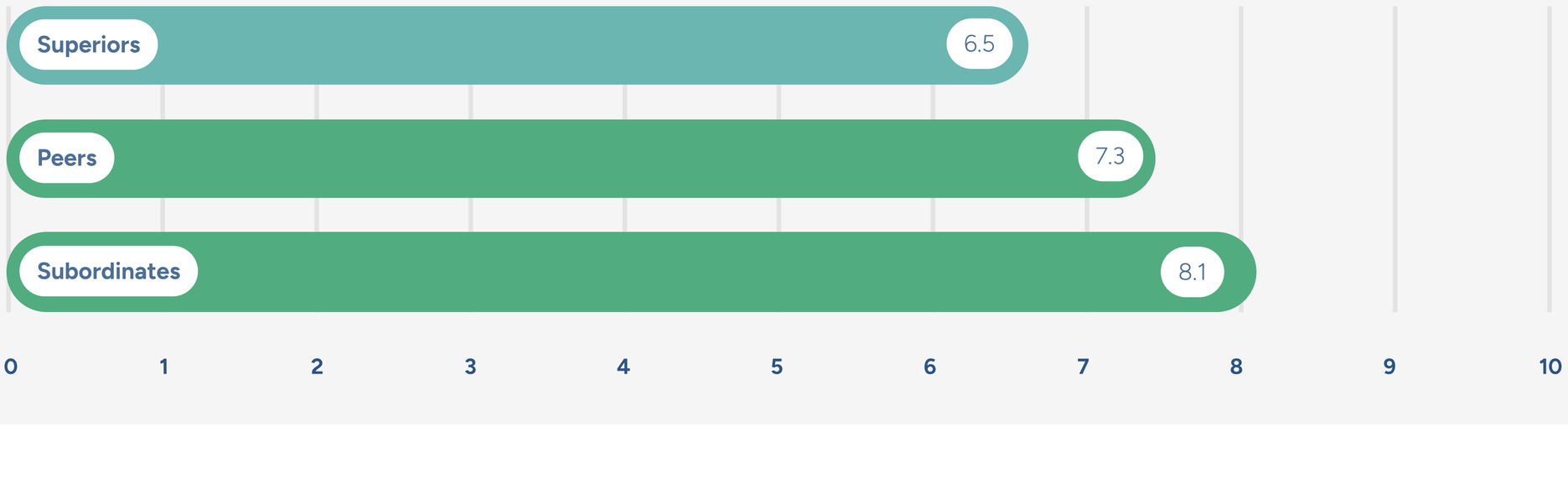
- Stakeholder Ratings
- Executive Summary
- Stakeholder Feedback
- Stakeholder Recommendations
- Conclusion

Communication



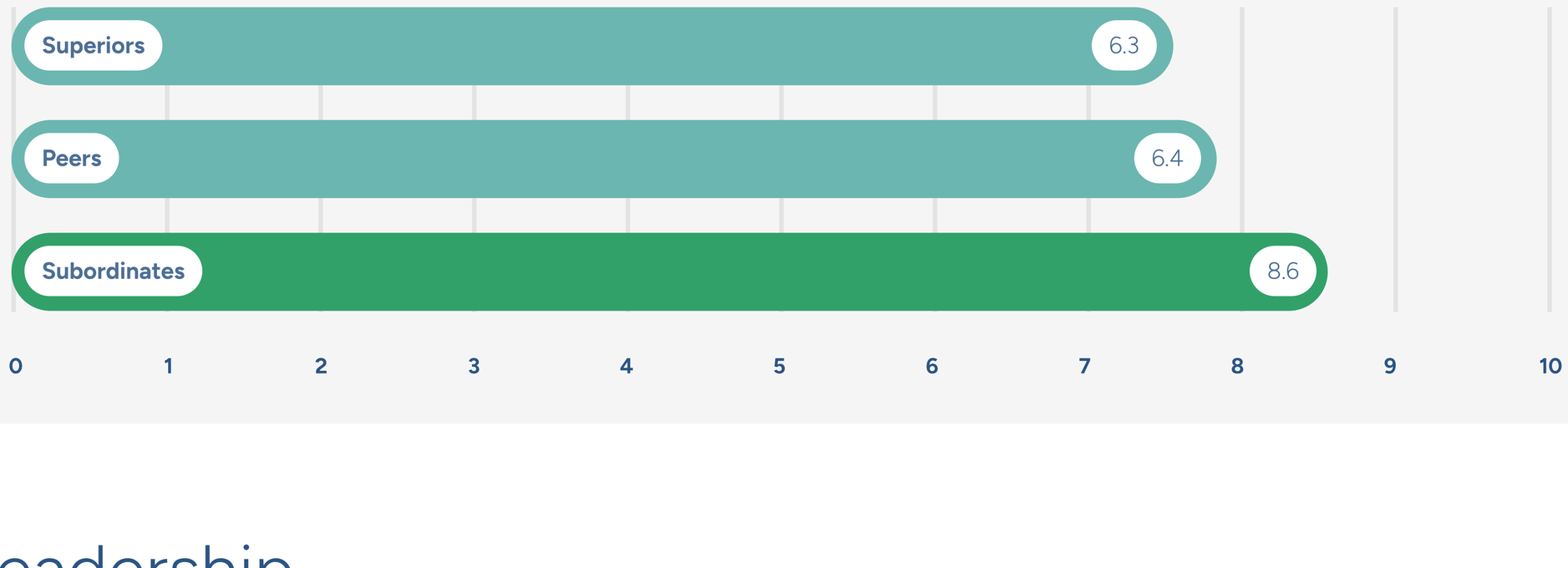
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Peers	9	5	6.4	5
Subordinates	10	6	8.2	6

Employee and Organization Development



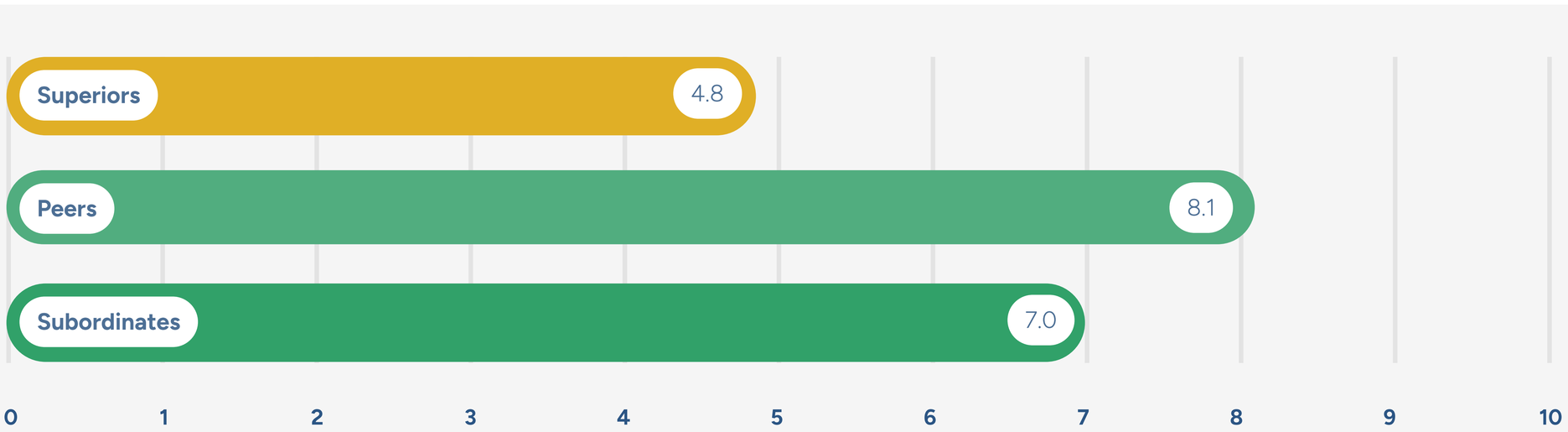
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Peers	9	4	7.3	5
Subordinates	10	7	8.1	6

Execution



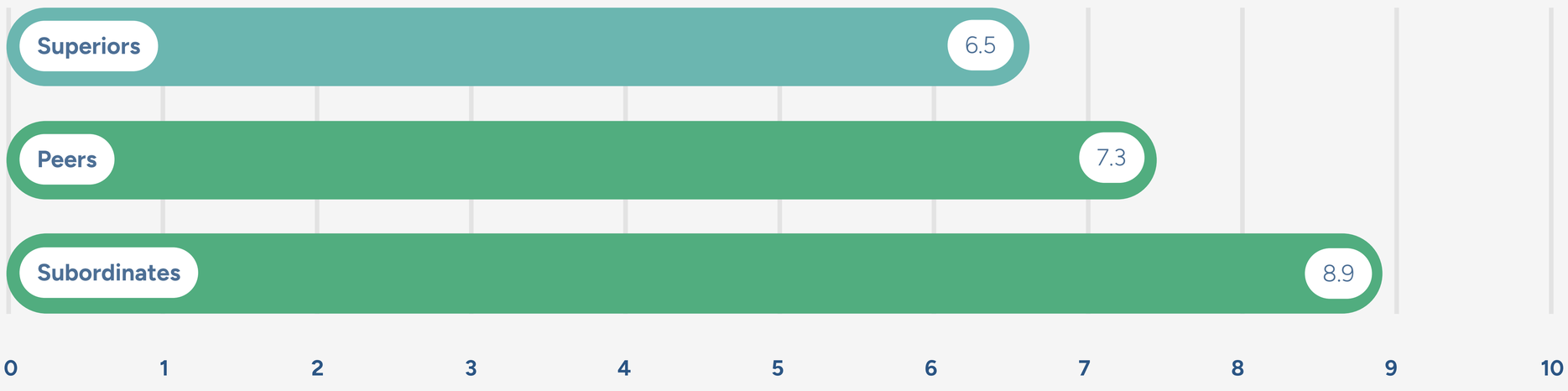
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Peers	8	6	6.4	5
Subordinates	10	5	8.6	6

Leadership



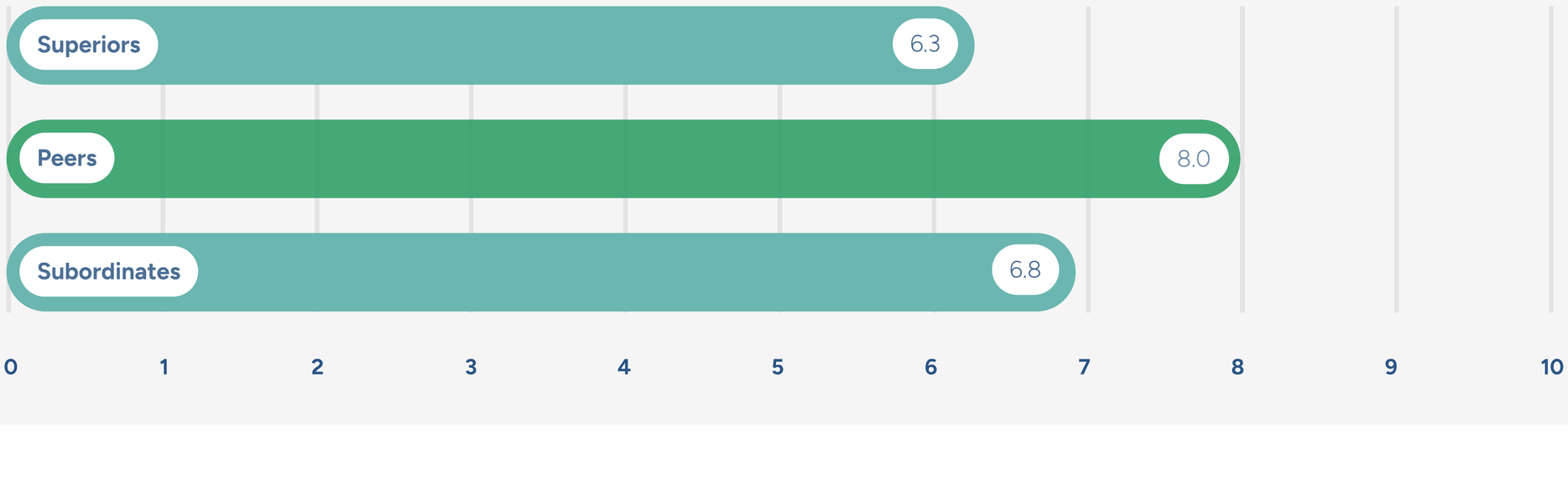
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Subordinates	9	5	7.0	6

Managing Up



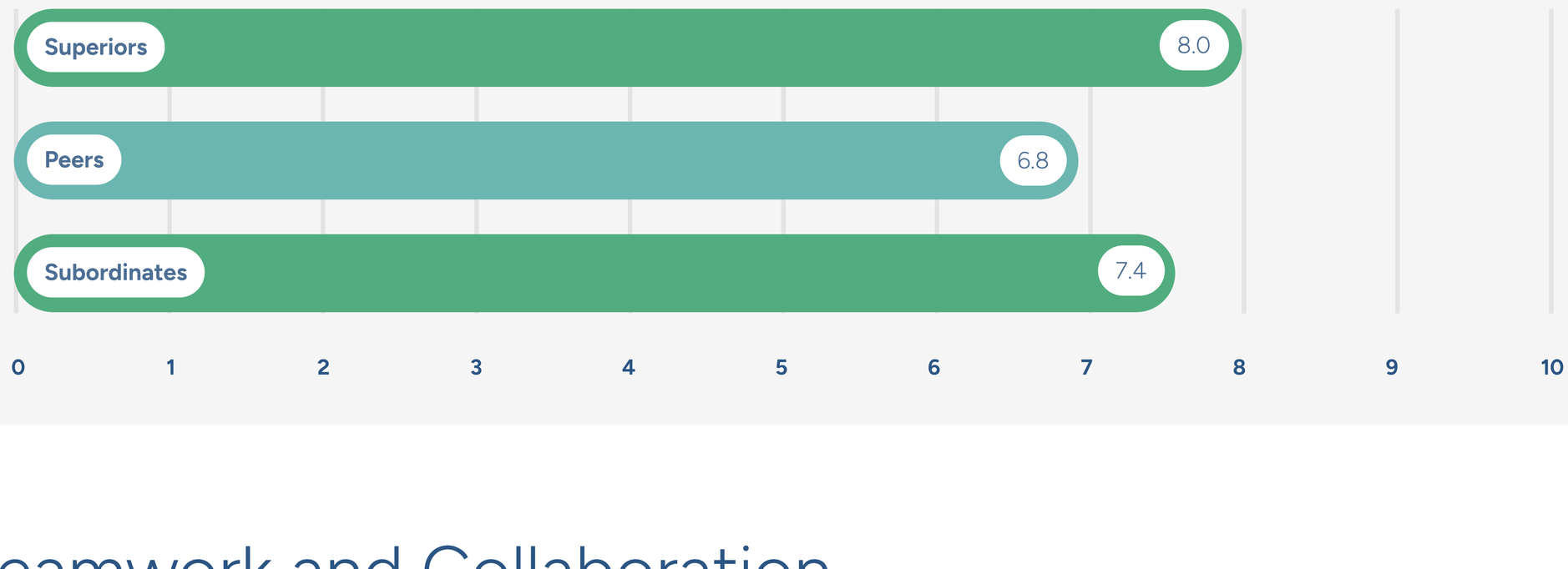
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Managing Workload



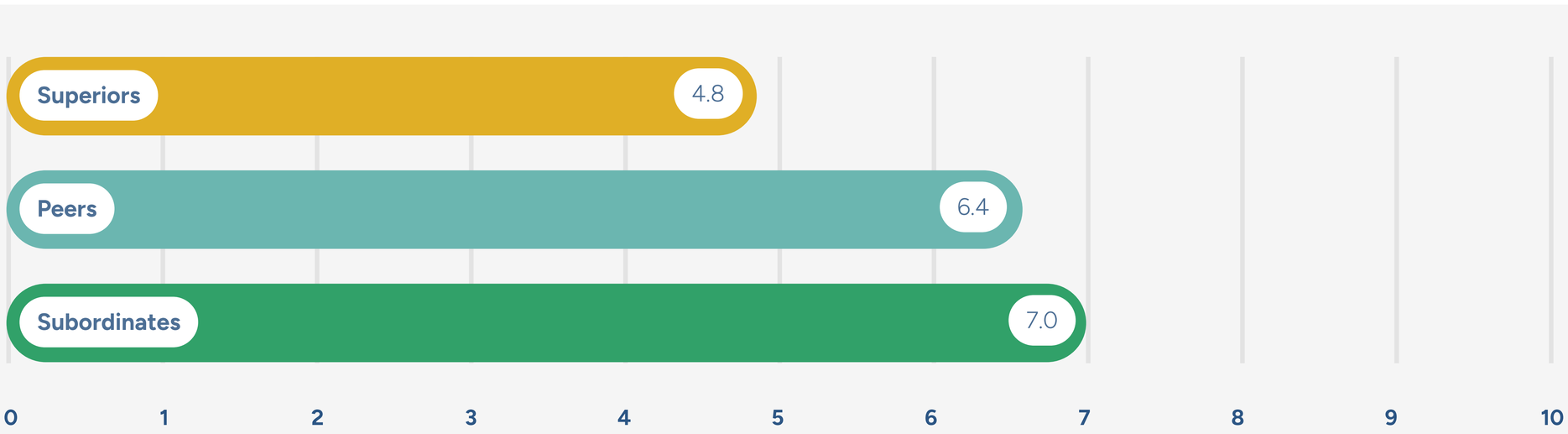
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7	6	6.8	6

Strategy and Long-term Thinking



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8	6	6.8	5
10	5	7.4	6

Teamwork and Collaboration



Hi	Lo	Avg	N
7	2	4.8	3
8	5	6.4	5
8	6	7.0	6

Introduction: Executive Summary

Susan Smith is viewed by her stakeholders as a highly capable and technically proficient product leader who has made significant contributions to the organization, yet faces critical challenges in transitioning from individual contributor excellence to strategic leadership effectiveness. Stakeholders consistently praise her technical depth, execution capabilities, and commitment to delivering quality products, with one describing her as "one of the rock stars at the company" and noting her transformation of a "completely dysfunctional" machine learning team into a well-functioning unit.

Her execution strengths are widely recognized across the organization. Stakeholders describe her as the "best executor among all product managers" with exceptional personal delivery capabilities and a "do whatever it takes" attitude. She demonstrates strong data-driven decision-making, thorough research capabilities, and reliable follow-through on commitments. Her technical knowledge enables effective collaboration with engineering teams, and she has successfully deployed technology across one-third of the customer base while maintaining high standards for product quality.

However, stakeholders identify a fundamental tension between Susan's operational excellence and the strategic thinking required at her level. Multiple interviews reveal concerns about her focus on immediate work completion rather than long-term organizational planning and process improvement. One stakeholder noted she tends to get "bogged down in immediate technical problems rather than taking a 3-5 year vision perspective," while another emphasized the need for her to be "6 months ahead of engineering team in terms of market and customer research" rather than her current 2 weeks to 1 month timeframe.

Communication presents a complex picture of strengths and development needs. While stakeholders praise her ability to communicate effectively with senior leadership and her strong writing skills, they identify significant inefficiencies in her written communications. Feedback indicates she produces lengthy, overly detailed documents when simple updates are requested, with one stakeholder noting "we really just needed a paragraph and you probably spent like, I don't know how long writing two pages." Additionally, there are concerns about her transparency across the organization, with limited visibility into her full scope of work and impact.

Leadership and collaboration feedback reveals mixed perceptions. Susan is recognized as having "solid leadership characteristics" and being "kind of a natural leader," with strong individual relationships within her immediate team. However, stakeholders express concerns about her ability to scale from managing individuals to leading groups of teams. Her collaborative approach varies significantly across different organizational levels, with some describing "significant relationship-building deficits with cross-functional teams" and noting that

she may be "completely closed off to collaboration" according to several senior-level colleagues.

Workload management emerges as a critical concern across multiple stakeholder interviews. Susan is consistently described as overextended, taking on "hero" behaviors and absorbing responsibilities across engineering tasks where her technical depth becomes both an asset and a liability. Stakeholders note her reluctance to delegate effectively, with one observing that during her vacation, the team successfully handled all responsibilities, yet upon her return, she resumed hands-on involvement despite being told it wasn't necessary. This pattern prevents her from operating at the strategic level required for her role.

In managing upward relationships, stakeholders identify several areas for improvement. Her approach to senior leadership can come across as defensive, with responses to suggestions appearing as "couched and defensive no" rather than collaborative exploration. She demonstrates reluctance to push back appropriately on resource constraints and additional responsibilities, instead choosing to "power through and muscle through" rather than addressing systemic issues. One stakeholder noted she created an "information vacuum" by failing to provide regular status updates to executive leadership.

Employee development capabilities show promise but require scaling. Stakeholders provide positive feedback on her coaching of her direct report, noting visible improvement and flourishing under her guidance. However, with only one direct report, there's limited evidence of her ability to develop multiple team members simultaneously. The consensus emphasizes her need to transition from directive to coaching-based leadership and focus on developing others to multiply her impact across the organization.

Looking forward, stakeholders view Susan as having significant potential but requiring fundamental shifts in approach. The upcoming organizational changes, including new product managers joining and other leaders transitioning out, present both opportunities and challenges. Stakeholders emphasize the need for her to move from reactive, hands-on execution to proactive strategic leadership, improve cross-functional relationships, and develop more efficient communication patterns. The investment in executive coaching signals organizational commitment to her development, with recognition that unlocking her next level of performance requires a paradigm shift from early-stage startup mentality to mature organizational leadership.

7.2 **Theme Summaries:** Communication

Stakeholders gave Susan Smith a rating of 7.2 in the area of Communication.

The stakeholder interviews reveal a complex picture of Susan Smith's communication capabilities. While she demonstrates strong verbal communication skills and excels at communicating with leadership, there are significant opportunities for improvement in written communication efficiency, cross-functional transparency, and adapting her communication style to diverse audiences.

Susan Smith's top strength lies in her ability to communicate effectively with senior leadership. She understands how to address executives with the appropriate style and demonstrates strong stakeholder management skills at the leadership level. Her recent company offsite presentations were well-received, with one stakeholder noting she was "well prepared, very well spoken, and very data driven."

Stakeholders consistently praise Susan Smith's directness and articulation. She provides clear feedback and doesn't leave people guessing about her perspective. Her verbal communication is described as strong, well-spoken, and structured, with stakeholders appreciating that she doesn't appear guarded or overly diplomatic.

Susan Smith demonstrates exceptional writing ability, with one stakeholder noting she "inspires me with her writing" and describing her as "very, very literate." She excels at articulating visions, strategies, and product requirements documentation in a highly structured manner.

A recurring theme across multiple stakeholders is Susan Smith's tendency toward verbose, overly detailed written communication. When asked for simple updates, she produces lengthy documents that require significant time investment but don't match the audience's needs. One stakeholder noted: "we really just needed a paragraph and you probably spent like, I don't know how long writing two pages and it's not super easy to follow."

While Susan Smith can deliver exceptional presentations, there's inconsistency in her performance. One presentation was described as "very wooden" and failed to engage the audience, with stakeholders "checking out" due to the lack of engagement. The feedback indicated it felt scripted rather than natural and practiced.

Multiple stakeholders identified a significant gap in understanding Susan Smith's full scope of work and impact. An engineering manager specifically noted: "I don't have visibility on how much conflict she deals with every single day involving my team." This lack of transparency makes it difficult for stakeholders to appreciate her contributions and creates missed opportunities for collaboration.

Susan Smith struggles to tailor her communication style to different audiences. She sometimes uses complex language or industry jargon that isn't accessible to non-native speakers or those outside her immediate domain. Additionally, she may over-prepare messages to the point where they feel inauthentic, particularly in sensitive conversations.

Several stakeholders noted that Susan Smith focuses heavily on internal team communication at the expense of broader stakeholder engagement. There's feedback that she needs to invest more time in communication with external stakeholders, customers, and cross-functional partners.

One stakeholder described instances where Susan Smith's well-prepared messages felt scripted and inauthentic, particularly during difficult conversations. The feedback highlighted a promotion discussion where she delivered nearly identical prepared remarks in two separate conversations, creating an uncomfortable dynamic.

When leadership requested more frequent updates and information flow, Susan Smith complied but demonstrated clear resistance. The time investment required seemed disproportionate to the output quality, suggesting inefficiency in her communication processes.

A non-native English speaker provided feedback that Susan Smith sometimes uses terminology that isn't accessible to the diverse engineering team, citing an example where she used the term "loosey-goosey" in a meeting, leaving multiple team members confused.

Susan Smith should focus on creating concise, targeted communications that match audience needs. This includes developing templates and frameworks for common communication types and practicing the skill of distilling complex information into key takeaways.

Implement regular communication channels that provide visibility into Susan Smith's broader impact and contributions. This could include brief weekly updates to key stakeholders highlighting her involvement in cross-functional issues and conflicts.

Develop skills in assessing audience needs and adapting communication style accordingly. This includes using simpler language for diverse teams, providing multiple levels of detail (executive summary plus deep dive options), and considering cultural and linguistic diversity.

While preparation is valuable, Susan Smith should work on maintaining authenticity in her delivery, particularly during difficult conversations. This might involve practicing more natural delivery styles and being more transparent about challenging situations rather than over-scripting responses.

Allocate more time and energy to upward and outward communication, recognizing this as a critical component of her senior role rather than a burden. This includes proactive stakeholder updates and customer-facing communication opportunities.

Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Develop Communication Efficiency Skills - Susan should focus on creating concise, targeted communications that match audience needs. This includes developing templates and frameworks for common communication types and practicing the skill of distilling complex information into key takeaways.
2. Increase Transparency and Visibility - Implement regular communication channels that provide visibility into Susan's broader impact and contributions. This could include brief weekly updates to key stakeholders highlighting her involvement in cross-functional issues and conflicts.
3. Practice Audience Adaptation - Develop skills in assessing audience needs and adapting communication style accordingly. This includes using simpler language for diverse teams, providing multiple levels of detail (executive summary plus deep dive options), and considering cultural and linguistic diversity.
4. Balance Preparation with Authenticity - While preparation is valuable, Susan should work on maintaining authenticity in her delivery, particularly during difficult conversations. This might involve practicing more natural delivery styles and being more transparent about challenging situations rather than over-scripting responses.
5. Prioritize Strategic Communication - Allocate more time and energy to upward and outward communication, recognizing this as a critical component of her senior role rather than a burden. This includes proactive stakeholder updates and customer-facing communication opportunities.

7.5 **Theme Summaries:** Employee And Organization Development

Stakeholders gave Susan Smith a rating of 7.5 in the area of Employee and Organization Development.

Senior leadership observed that Susan may not be providing sufficient coaching to her team members, noting alignment on work products but less focus on developing team execution capabilities. There was a suggestion to learn from seasoned engineering leaders who have strong people management experience.

Recommendations emerged for Susan to expand her professional network and connect with other product managers outside the organization, emphasizing the value of having a group of peers to bounce ideas off of beyond formal coaching relationships. Leadership offered to facilitate connections through their network.

Stakeholders noted Susan's limited depth of experience in certain areas, particularly product roadmap organization, and encouraged exploration of how other companies approach product management challenges. They recognized her strong ownership approach from early-stage startup background while acknowledging the need for different skills at current scale.

Discussion centered on upcoming organizational changes with new PMs joining, which will shift Susan's responsibilities. There was concern about role clarity as Susan transitions from hands-on execution to more strategic leadership, with questions about what her role will look like when key areas are managed by new PMs.

Active involvement in recruiting senior talent was noted, with particular emphasis on finding experienced candidates for critical roles. Recognition emerged that hiring quality people will be essential for Susan's ability to scale her impact, with concern about maintaining continuity during transitions.

Leadership encouraged Susan to take on more senior-level responsibilities, emphasizing the importance of product continuity at the executive level and viewing the current transition as a career growth opportunity.

Susan's development philosophy shows strong emphasis on asking questions rather than giving direct instructions. Recognition exists that this approach will become more challenging as the team grows and includes more experienced hires, with concern about managing team members who may have more expertise in specific areas.

Discussion focused on the need to adapt management approach for different experience levels, referencing managing people who may be more skilled than the manager in certain

areas. Emphasis was placed on challenging current approaches and encouraging growth through questioning.

Suggestions included implementing regular meetings focused on performance and job satisfaction rather than project updates, with reference to successful management training and tools including assessment frameworks. Emphasis was placed on creating a feedback culture where all levels welcome and listen to feedback.

Strong positive feedback emerged on Susan's development of her direct report, with observation that the team member has flourished and improved significantly as a product manager under Susan's coaching. Recognition was given to the close coaching relationship and visible improvement in team member performance.

Some anxiety was noted around helping team members manage self-perception and organizational level awareness, with the need to provide effective coaching while managing expectations. Recognition of Susan as a high-potential employee receiving executive coaching investment was acknowledged, along with discussion of past organizational challenges that may have created some jadedness.

Emphasis was placed on moving from past organizational dysfunction focus to future-oriented thinking. The need to adapt from early-stage startup mentality to more strategic leadership approach was recognized, with acknowledgment that paradigm shift in worldview will be key to unlocking next level of performance.

Limited observation opportunities were acknowledged due to Susan currently having only one direct report, with recognition that hiring additional team members will provide more development opportunities. Strong emphasis was placed on the need for Susan to focus on developing others to scale impact, with clear statement that the organization cannot just have one Susan but needs more of her.

Recommendation emerged for increased focus on people development as a key growth area, with recognition that scaling through people development is essential for organizational growth. Emphasis was placed on building capability in others to multiply Susan's impact.

Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Learn from seasoned engineering leaders who have strong people management experience to develop coaching capabilities and focus more on developing team execution capabilities rather than just aligning on work products
2. Expand professional network by connecting with other product managers outside the organization to have a group of peers to bounce ideas off of and explore how other companies approach product management challenges
3. Implement regular "How am I doing?" meetings focused on performance and job satisfaction rather than project updates, and utilize management training tools and frameworks to create a feedback culture where all levels welcome and listen to feedback
4. Adapt management approach for different experience levels, particularly learning how to manage team members who may have more expertise in specific areas while maintaining a questioning approach rather than giving direct instructions
5. Shift from past organizational dysfunction focus to future-oriented thinking and move from early-stage startup "roll up your sleeves" mentality to more strategic leadership approach as the paradigm shift in worldview will be key to unlocking next level of performance
6. Focus on developing others to scale impact through people development as hiring quality people and growing their capabilities will be essential for multiplying organizational impact beyond individual contribution
7. Provide effective coaching while managing team members' expectations and help them manage self-perception and organizational level awareness, particularly during the transition period with new team members joining

7.3 **Theme Summaries:** Execution

Stakeholders gave Susan Smith a rating of 7.3 in the area of Execution.

Susan Smith demonstrates exceptional technical depth as a product manager, successfully participating in and contributing to technical conversations with engineering teams despite lacking formal technical education background. She shows genuine commitment to building amazing products rather than focusing on political advancement and exhibits strong judgment in prioritizing the right initiatives within given timeframes.

She excels at traditional product management execution including product launches, go-to-market coordination, and customer engagement. Her highly data-driven approach consistently requests specific examples and data to support decisions, backed by eight years of industry experience in established product management processes.

Susan consistently delivers structured, researched, and data-driven work products with high reliability and willingness to roll up sleeves and complete work directly. She is highly action-driven and detail-oriented with excellent personal execution capabilities, showing strong follow-through on plans and commitments with careful attention to completion.

Her proven execution capabilities have contributed to career advancement, successfully deploying technology across one-third of the customer base while optimizing for impact rather than optics. She is rated as the best executor among all product managers, with capabilities considered superior even to her direct manager, demonstrating a "do whatever it takes" attitude for efficiency and speed.

However, Susan needs clearer pathways from idea to finished product implementation, as some inefficiencies and wasted time are observed in current execution processes. She could benefit from a more organized execution approach and better translation of high-level strategy into detailed implementation plans.

She is less experienced with ambiguous R&D execution and early-stage product development. Her current product development approach may be too robust and slow for competitive market demands, requiring a more "scrappy" startup mindset for key differentiating features. Concerns exist about lengthy development cycles versus market speed requirements and lack of alignment on delivery for committed customer deals creates execution risks.

The most critical development need is transitioning from personal execution to delegation and team enablement. Susan over-rotates toward personal execution rather than delegation, missing opportunities to better empower surrounding teams. She must release control and trust others to execute, accepting imperfect outcomes from team members, as excessive hands-on execution prevents focus on essential product management duties.

Additional challenges include needing more assertive pushing of team members in some situations, organizational challenges that impact execution effectiveness particularly with customer-facing teams, and lack of visibility about broader execution plans. Engineering team members don't have clear understanding of execution responsibilities, indicating need for better transparency in cross-functional coordination.

Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Transition from personal execution to delegation and team enablement - Susan needs to release control and trust others to execute, accepting imperfect outcomes from team members rather than doing work personally
2. Develop clearer pathways from idea to finished product implementation with more organized execution approach from a product management perspective
3. Adopt a more "scrappy" startup mindset for key differentiating features to reduce lengthy development cycles and meet competitive market speed requirements
4. Improve visibility and communication about broader execution plans and responsibilities to ensure cross-functional teams have clear understanding of execution coordination
5. Focus on core product management responsibilities rather than over-involvement in execution details that prevent attention to essential duties
6. Develop more assertive approach when pushing team members and navigating broader organizational challenges that impact execution effectiveness
7. Better empower and delegate to surrounding teams to enable others to execute rather than consistently completing work directly

6.9 **Theme Summaries:** Leadership

Stakeholders gave Susan Smith a rating of 6.9 in the area of Leadership.

Susan operates with high independence, which raises questions about the leadership guidance she provides to her team. There's uncertainty about whether she functions more as an independent operator versus a collaborative leader, with concerns about her ability to scale from managing individuals to organizing groups of teams.

A significant leadership opportunity exists with a colleague going on leave, creating a vacuum Susan could fill. However, stakeholders emphasize that even small teams require strong management, noting "when those people make mistakes, like we get screwed." There's an expectation that Susan needs to prepare for leading at a higher organizational level as the company grows.

Susan demonstrates strong performance under pressure, described as "pretty calm under pressure" and able to work through challenging situations effectively. However, she faces challenges with trusting engineering managers and delegation. Limited visibility exists into her direct report leadership capabilities, with concerns about her relationship with the delivery organization.

Two critical elements are missing from head-of-product leadership: cohesive strategy across all teams and team cohesion. While Susan is respected, there's uncertainty about her positioning within the broader organizational leadership structure.

Susan views challenges as her "burden to shield" rather than her "opportunity to prioritize." She's beginning to step up and be recognized as a leader across the organization, with recent examples showing "everybody walked away with this feeling of Susan knows what she's talking about." Her comments carry increasing weight within the organization, requiring more thoughtful communication.

Stakeholders recommend Susan lean into opportunities to share product vision company-wide and gather input from various teams. She needs to be more aware of her growing influence and the impact of her words on others.

Susan is described as "a lot of yes woman" who tries to please multiple stakeholders. She's effective at influencing but could improve at inspiring others. The feedback suggests she should focus on helping others reach conclusions independently and building more inspirational rather than just influential leadership capabilities.

Susan has "solid leadership characteristics" and is "kind of a natural leader" but tends to focus heavily on her immediate team "to the exclusion of other stakeholders." Described as

"extremely bright" and handling ambiguity well, she's "highly valued" and considered "one of the rock stars at the company." She successfully transformed the machine learning team from "completely dysfunctional" to well-functioning.

Susan needs to move beyond micromanagement requirements and focus on high-leverage tasks. There's a pattern of her "throwing her body in front of" challenges to shield her team, which may be excessive. The feedback emphasizes balancing team protection with allowing learning opportunities.

While demonstrating strong individual contributor performance, Susan needs to transition from IC to leader of PMs. She excels at conflict resolution and cross-team relationship management, with technical knowledge across company operations enabling effective problem-solving. However, concerns exist about scaling capabilities, with limited evidence of developing her direct report over the past year.

Susan shows over-involvement in day-to-day engineering decisions despite not being deeply technical. Stakeholders want her to delegate more IC work and focus on leadership, willing to accept temporary team performance dips to enable her growth. She should step back from detailed engineering decisions and focus on high-level product vision and goals.

A pattern exists where Susan continues trying to make underperforming managers work rather than finding alternative solutions or escalating effectively. She should leverage other resources or escalate issues rather than filling gaps herself.

Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Transition from micromanagement to high-leverage leadership tasks by delegating more individual contributor work and stepping back from detailed engineering decisions to focus on high-level product vision and goals
2. Develop team members independently rather than shielding them from challenges - move from viewing difficulties as "burden to shield" to "opportunity to prioritize" and allow learning opportunities instead of throwing her body in front of every challenge
3. Scale leadership capabilities from managing individuals to organizing groups of teams, preparing for higher organizational level leadership as the company grows beyond small team management
4. Improve inspirational leadership qualities by guiding people to discover answers independently rather than providing direct solutions, moving beyond just influencing to truly inspiring others
5. Expand focus beyond immediate team to engage proactively with other stakeholders and business areas, sharing product vision company-wide and gathering input from various teams
6. Develop more effective escalation and delegation strategies instead of continuing to make underperforming managers work - leverage other resources or escalate issues rather than filling gaps herself
7. Build stronger collaborative leadership approach rather than operating with high independence, focusing on team cohesion and cohesive strategy across all teams

7.8 **Theme Summaries:** Managing Up

Stakeholders gave Susan Smith a rating of 7.8 in the area of Managing Up.

Senior leadership values Susan Smith's transparency and appreciates that she doesn't try to hide problems or manage her manager by concealing issues. However, there's a significant concern regarding her approach to resource management and prioritization. Susan tends to take on excessive workload rather than appropriately pushing back or requesting additional resources. There's a pattern of her trying to power through and muscle through challenges instead of addressing systemic problems. She rarely voices concerns about inadequate processes or underperforming team members, instead choosing to absorb and deal with issues herself. With only a two-month runway before key personnel transition out, there's urgency around coaching Susan to shift from a reactive to a more strategic approach in managing up.

Peer leadership highlights concerns about Susan's communication regarding team dependencies and strategic alignment. Susan, along with the broader team, isn't effectively managing up on dependency issues, particularly around project allocation across multiple teams. A specific example involves uncertainty about whether one team should handle a project entirely or split it among three teams. Susan appears really nervous about managing up to the CEO, especially as the product team assumes increased responsibility for engineering management functions. There are questions about whether effective upward management to senior leadership is even feasible given current structural constraints.

Susan demonstrates defensive tendencies when managing up. During a recent offsite discussion involving the CEO and other leaders on a technical topic, Susan's responses to CEO suggestions consistently came across as couched and defensive rather than collaborative exploration of ideas. Even when receiving input from someone with extensive experience in their space, Susan's approach lacks openness to alternative perspectives. Regarding feedback-seeking behavior, Susan demonstrates good initiative in asking for input every two to three sessions, but could improve by making requests more specific and contextual rather than general. She should reference specific interactions or launches when seeking feedback rather than asking broad questions about improvement areas.

During compensation discussions, Susan's advocacy approach was lacking. When a direct report expressed dissatisfaction with a raise, Susan's response lacked the advocacy and support expected from a manager. Instead of committing to investigate and fight for the employee, Susan appeared to justify the decision, missing an opportunity to demonstrate managerial support. Fear of failure appears to be a significant barrier for Susan, and she would benefit from perspective-setting exercises like worst-case scenario planning. Her desire for visibility and project success appears driven by a need to please superiors and manage their

perception of her performance. There's also concern about team members feeling spread across multiple projects without adequate acknowledgment or expectation adjustment.

A critical gap exists in Susan's proactive communication with senior leadership. She struggled to determine appropriate weekly status updates for the CEO, ultimately resulting in no status updates being provided to leadership at all. This created an information vacuum requiring others to serve as a bridge between Susan and executive leadership. Susan should develop the capability to provide product area updates directly to the CEO without requiring intermediary involvement. Despite being given significant autonomy to operate for 3-6 months, she hasn't leveraged this with corresponding communication. Susan may have become jaded from past experiences, making her resistant to proactive status updates and leadership engagement. She should adopt a CEO perspective when considering what information to share upward, flipping from what she wants to tell him to what he might want to know, emphasizing the importance of empathizing with stakeholders and being more transparent about decision-making.

Susan holds strong positioning within the PM organization as the highest PM level below the VP of Products and has established visibility with VPs and the CEO through her three-plus years with the company. However, there's a critical weakness in her ability to say no, particularly to management requests. Susan consistently agrees to management requests rather than pushing back appropriately. She should develop and actively communicate a clear one-year product vision to leadership, shifting from reactive response to proactive strategic communication. This approach would help leadership gain confidence in her direction rather than making ad hoc requests when they encounter competitive intelligence or market pressures. By establishing and consistently updating leadership on her product vision, Susan can move from being a recipient of random requests to being a strategic partner who guides leadership thinking about product direction.

Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Develop proactive communication by establishing regular status updates to senior leadership and adopting a CEO perspective when determining what information to share upward, focusing on what leadership needs to know rather than what you want to tell them
2. Create and actively communicate a clear one-year product vision to leadership to shift from reactive response to proactive strategic communication, helping leadership gain confidence in your direction rather than receiving ad hoc requests
3. Practice appropriate pushback by requesting additional resources when needed and voicing concerns about inadequate processes or underperforming team members instead of trying to power through systemic problems alone
4. Improve openness during leadership discussions by replacing defensive responses with collaborative exploration of ideas, especially when receiving input from experienced leadership
5. Enhance advocacy skills by demonstrating stronger support for team members during compensation discussions and other situations requiring managerial backing
6. Make feedback requests more specific and contextual by referencing particular interactions or launches rather than asking broad questions about improvement areas
7. Address fear of failure through perspective-setting exercises like worst-case scenario planning to reduce anxiety around managing up to senior leadership

7.1 **Theme Summaries:** Managing Workload

Stakeholders gave Susan Smith a rating of 7.1 in the area of Managing Workload.

Multiple stakeholders consistently identified Susan Smith's tendency to take on excessive responsibilities, particularly in engineering tasks where her technical depth becomes both an asset and a liability. One stakeholder noted she's "being a bit too much of a hero picking up slack on the engineering team itself" and emphasized the need to "stop being the hero." This pattern appears to stem from both situational demands and potentially ingrained behavioral tendencies.

The organization acknowledges significant under-resourcing across Susan Smith's areas of responsibility. With 25 hours of meetings per week and being pulled into individual contributor work, Susan Smith is managing multiple product areas (ML product, omni-channel product) while also managing team members. Stakeholders recognize the team is "definitely not adequately resourced" even with planned hiring initiatives.

Several stakeholders observed Susan Smith's reluctance to delegate effectively, even when capable team members are available. One engineering manager reported that during Susan Smith's vacation, the team successfully handled all tickets and management tasks, yet upon her return, she resumed hands-on involvement despite being told it wasn't necessary. This suggests difficulty in trusting others to maintain standards and fear of accountability for deliverables managed by her reports.

Stakeholders noted Susan Smith's tendency to "absorb everything and spread her time across all different things somewhat equally rather than ruthless prioritization." The feedback emphasizes her need to distinguish between "glass balls" and "rubber balls" - determining which responsibilities are critical versus those that can be deprioritized or allowed to drop without significant consequence.

Multiple stakeholders expressed concern that Susan Smith's overwhelming workload prevents her from operating at the appropriate strategic level. One noted that "anytime she has to think at that 30,000 foot view is probably extra time she's putting in on nights and weekends" because there's no capacity during regular work hours. The recommendation is to "think six months ahead, not two weeks ahead."

Immediate actions include radically changing time allocation by dropping day-to-day engineering team involvement, establishing clear boundaries around reactive technical work that doesn't require director-level involvement, implementing "ruthless prioritization" with explicit trade-off conversations with leadership, and running experimental periods (2-4 weeks) of ideal time allocation to identify what actually breaks versus what doesn't.

Structural support involves leveraging incoming hires (ML product manager and omni-channel product manager) to remove entire areas from Susan Smith's plate, working with leadership to establish clearer accountability frameworks that allow delegation without personal liability, and developing better engineering management layer to reduce Susan Smith's need for hands-on technical involvement.

Behavioral changes include practicing saying no to additional responsibilities and requests, initiating proactive conversations with leadership about capacity constraints and trade-offs, focusing on 1-2 major initiatives rather than spreading attention across numerous concurrent projects, and accepting that some deliverables may be completed at 80% of Susan Smith's personal standard rather than 100%.

Stakeholders expressed significant concern about Susan Smith's current pace, noting she works "very long hours every single day" and appears "very easily overwhelmed." The consensus is that without intervention, this pattern will limit her effectiveness and career growth, as being underwater reduces her openness to feedback and strategic thinking capacity. The upcoming period when other product leaders will be on leave presents both an opportunity and a risk, depending on whether Susan Smith can successfully delegate and prioritize before taking on additional coverage responsibilities.

The overarching theme across all stakeholder feedback is that Susan Smith's current approach, while well-intentioned and driven by commitment to quality outcomes, is ultimately unsustainable and may hinder both her personal development and the organization's ability to scale effectively.

Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Radically change time allocation by dropping day-to-day engineering team involvement and establishing clear boundaries around reactive, technical work that doesn't require director-level involvement
2. Implement "ruthless prioritization" with explicit trade-off conversations with leadership, focusing on 1-2 major initiatives rather than spreading attention across numerous concurrent projects
3. Practice saying no to additional responsibilities and requests, while initiating proactive conversations with leadership about capacity constraints and trade-offs
4. Leverage incoming hires (ML product manager and omni-channel product manager) to remove entire areas from Susan Smith's plate and delegate more effectively to capable team members
5. Run experimental periods (2-4 weeks) of ideal time allocation to identify what actually breaks versus what doesn't, accepting that some deliverables may be completed at 80% rather than 100% of personal standards
6. Work with leadership to establish clearer accountability frameworks that allow delegation without personal liability and develop better engineering management layer to reduce need for hands-on technical involvement
7. Focus on strategic thinking with a six-month time horizon rather than two weeks ahead, distinguishing between "glass balls" and "rubber balls" to determine which responsibilities are critical versus those that can be deprioritized

7.3 **Theme Summaries:** Strategy And Long-Term Thinking

Stakeholders gave Susan Smith a rating of 7.3 in the area of Strategy and Long-term Thinking.

Stakeholders consistently identified a significant gap between Susan Smith's operational focus and the strategic thinking required for her role. Multiple interviews revealed that Susan concentrates heavily on immediate work completion rather than improving organizational processes and systems. She tends to get bogged down in day-to-day operational details and immediate technical problems, rather than engaging in the higher-level, longer-range thinking necessary for effective strategic leadership.

The feedback highlighted Susan's strong execution capabilities, particularly with product launches like the FAQ/Gen AI initiative, where she demonstrated excellent go-to-market approach and customer experimentation planning. However, stakeholders emphasized a critical distinction between execution strategy, which Susan excels at, and higher-level strategic thinking about whether projects should be undertaken at all. Her research strengths and thoroughness in competitive analysis were praised, but these capabilities haven't translated into forward-thinking product strategy.

A recurring theme across interviews was Susan's insufficient focus on long-term vision development. Stakeholders noted she needs to work backwards from a 3-5 year product vision to identify necessary interim steps, rather than her current approach of focusing primarily on immediate deliverables. One stakeholder specifically mentioned that Susan has been spending zero time on longer range vision strategy, which is detrimental to overall effectiveness at the director level.

The organizational maturity gap was identified as a significant concern, with Susan managing a smaller team but needing the same level of organizational sophistication as larger departments. Stakeholders emphasized the need for more organizational planning, process improvement, and systematic evaluation methods for prioritizing initiatives. The absence of transparent decision-making processes and clear communication about what projects are not being pursued was highlighted as a critical weakness.

Time allocation emerged as a fundamental issue affecting Susan's strategic effectiveness. Stakeholders noted that while Susan is busy developing great products, she lacks time for organizational structure development. Her tactical time constraints limit strategic thinking opportunities, and she's currently only 2 weeks to 1 month ahead of the engineering team in terms of market and customer research, when she should be 6 months ahead for effective product leadership.

Several stakeholders expressed concerns about Susan's tendency to default to established ways of doing things rather than challenging existing processes. They emphasized the need for more willingness to break the status quo, question current approaches, and be more comfortable with strategic risks and potential failures that could unlock future opportunities. This includes being more open to strategic experimentation and learning from uncertain outcomes.

The competitive strategy and market positioning aspects of Susan's role were identified as underdeveloped areas. While technical differentiation is clear, product-side competitive strategy needs significant development. Stakeholders noted concerns about pursuing projects without clear market validation and building products that won't differentiate the company from competitors.

Communication and leadership engagement were highlighted as areas requiring improvement. Susan needs to engage the leadership team more proactively with strategic options and direction-setting discussions. She should focus on developing and selling a clear vision rather than primarily gathering information, and take a stronger leadership position in driving go-to-market strategy and sales enablement.

The broader company context was acknowledged as challenging, with tension between delivering current solutions and conducting research for long-term positioning. This company-wide issue of balancing immediate customer needs with long-term innovation affects strategic planning across the organization, but stakeholders emphasized that Susan needs to navigate this challenge more effectively at her level.

Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Focus more on "how you're doing the work" rather than just completing the work itself, with greater emphasis on organizational planning and process improvement to build the necessary organizational sophistication for the scale of operations.
2. Develop transparent decision-making processes including systematic evaluation methods like RICE scoring for prioritizing initiatives, and clearly communicate what projects are NOT being pursued as part of strategic planning.
3. Work backwards from a 3-5 year product vision to identify necessary interim steps, rather than getting bogged down in immediate technical problems, and engage the leadership team more proactively with strategic options and direction-setting discussions.
4. Challenge the established way of doing things rather than defaulting to existing processes, and become more comfortable with strategic risks and potential failures that could unlock future opportunities through experimentation and learning.
5. Reallocate time to be 6 months ahead of the engineering team in terms of market and customer research instead of the current 2 weeks to 1 month, focusing on structured customer research and data-driven strategy development.
6. Develop and sell a clear 6-month to 1-year vision rather than primarily gathering information, and drive go-to-market strategy including sales enablement for new features to better connect engineering development with sales and marketing teams.
7. Strengthen competitive positioning and market differentiation strategy, taking a leadership position in creating educational materials for sales teams about product capabilities and competitive advantages beyond technical differentiation.

6.3 **Theme Summaries:** Teamwork And Collaboration

Stakeholders gave Susan Smith a rating of 6.3 in the area of Teamwork and Collaboration.

Susan Smith demonstrates strong commitment to team support and maintains a "roll up sleeves and get in there" mentality. She exhibits technical depth and expertise that benefits team dynamics, particularly within her immediate product team where she maintains positive collaborative relationships. She is described as even-keeled, doesn't get flustered, and maintains excellent collaborative relationships with many company stakeholders across the organization.

However, Susan may be overly accommodating, with feedback suggesting she should stop taking on excessive responsibility. There is limited visibility into her collaboration with senior leadership, with stakeholders noting uncertainty about whether she is being appropriately assertive given her experience level.

Significant relationship-building deficits exist with cross-functional teams, particularly delivery and engineering teams. Susan is described as overly data-driven and goal-oriented at the expense of people connections. Multiple team members have expressed relief about working with other product managers who are "actually going to collaborate and listen." She is characterized as "completely closed off to collaboration" by senior-level colleagues, and support organization leadership reports difficulty working with her due to closed-off communication style.

Susan seeks collaboration and input primarily at latter stages of processes rather than early stages and lacks proactive solicitation of input from executive team and cross-functional partners. Other teams have noted the contrast with a junior product manager who demonstrates superior cross-functional collaboration, asking more questions and joining more meetings.

She maintains too much professional distance and keeps a strong "work face" which may limit informal relationship building. There are concerns about perceived tendency to seek spotlight or prioritize own projects, with history of reallocating shared resources without proper communication. Instances of prioritizing own projects over collaborative efforts have created difficult situations for collaborative partners.

Susan experiences "organizational PTSD" around certain departments, particularly delivery teams, as part of broader organizational transition where product team members need to step back from engineering responsibilities they previously handled. She may be overly respectful of

boundaries to the point of organizational inefficiency, potentially leading to execution delays and organizational waste.

Development opportunities include gathering feedback and input earlier in processes, involving more people rather than just delivering outputs, adopting a more curiosity mindset when receiving feedback, and increasing systematic engagement with cross-functional teams. Enhanced communication with sales and marketing teams is identified as an opportunity for broader organizational collaboration.

Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Gather feedback and input earlier in processes rather than seeking collaboration primarily at latter stages, and involve more people in the process rather than just delivering outputs
2. Invest more time in relationship-building with cross-functional teams, particularly delivery and engineering teams, moving beyond transactional interactions to build trust and psychological safety
3. Adopt a more programmatic approach to client-facing collaboration and increase systematic engagement with cross-functional teams rather than relying on one-off interactions
4. Develop better balance between respecting others' roles and optimizing for higher-level organizational goals, avoiding being overly respectful of boundaries to the point of organizational inefficiency
5. Reduce professional distance and strong "work face" to facilitate informal relationship building, which helps collaboration effectiveness especially when needing help from engineers
6. Improve communication when making decisions that affect shared resources or collaborative partners, ensuring direct communication rather than having team members learn about changes secondhand
7. Transition from historical over-involvement in engineering execution to more appropriate collaborative boundaries, allowing proper organizational structure to function while stepping back from responsibilities previously handled out of necessity

Conclusion

List of Stakeholder Recommendations

1. Transition from personal execution to delegation and team enablement - stop being the "hero" who takes on excessive responsibilities and instead trust others to execute, accepting imperfect outcomes from team members
2. Radically change time allocation by dropping day-to-day engineering team involvement and establishing clear boundaries around reactive, technical work that doesn't require director-level involvement
3. Implement "ruthless prioritization" with explicit trade-off conversations with leadership, focusing on 1-2 major initiatives rather than spreading attention across numerous concurrent projects
4. Develop longer-term strategic thinking by working 6 months ahead of the engineering team in terms of market and customer research, instead of the current 2 weeks to 1 month timeframe
5. Improve upward communication by providing proactive stakeholder updates and regular status communications to leadership, shifting from reactive responses to strategic partnership
6. Practice saying no to additional responsibilities and requests, particularly from management, rather than defaulting to agreement and trying to accommodate all demands
7. Enhance cross-functional collaboration by seeking input earlier in processes rather than just at the end, and involving more people in development rather than delivering completed outputs
8. Develop more inspirational leadership capabilities beyond just influential skills, helping others reach conclusions independently rather than providing direct solutions
9. Create and communicate a clear 1-year product vision to guide decision-making and reduce ad hoc requests from leadership
10. Improve written communication efficiency by providing concise, targeted communications that match audience needs rather than lengthy, detailed documents
11. Adapt communication style to diverse audiences, using simpler language and avoiding jargon that isn't accessible to non-native speakers or those outside her immediate domain
12. Increase transparency and visibility into her broader impact and contributions through regular communication channels that highlight her cross-functional involvement
13. Focus on developing and coaching team members more systematically, leveraging this as a key growth area to scale her impact through others

14. Build stronger relationships with cross-functional teams, particularly delivery and engineering teams, by investing more time in relationship-building rather than being purely data-driven and goal-oriented
15. Challenge existing processes and status quo more effectively, being willing to take strategic risks and question established approaches rather than defaulting to current methods
16. Develop better organizational planning and process improvement skills, focusing on "how you're doing the work" rather than just the work itself
17. Create systematic evaluation methods for prioritizing initiatives and make decision-making processes more transparent, including communicating what projects are NOT being pursued
18. Expand professional network and connect with other product managers outside the organization to gain external perspectives and learning opportunities
19. Practice more natural delivery styles in presentations and difficult conversations, maintaining authenticity rather than over-scripted responses
20. Leverage incoming hires to remove entire areas from her plate and work with leadership to establish clearer accountability frameworks that allow delegation without personal liability

Concluding Summary

Susan Smith emerges from stakeholder feedback as a highly capable but complex executive whose strengths in execution and technical depth are counterbalanced by significant challenges in strategic leadership and collaboration. Stakeholders consistently recognize her as one of the organization's "rock stars," with exceptional personal execution capabilities that have driven substantial impact across the company. Her ability to deliver structured, data-driven work products and her willingness to "roll up sleeves" during critical periods has earned widespread respect, particularly from senior leadership who value her direct communication style and reliability.

However, a critical pattern emerges around Susan's struggle to transition from individual contributor excellence to strategic leadership. Multiple stakeholders express concern about her tendency to take on excessive responsibilities, particularly in engineering tasks where she becomes "too much of a hero picking up slack." This over-involvement prevents her from operating at the appropriate strategic level, with one stakeholder noting she spends "zero time on longer range vision strategy stuff" due to operational demands. The consensus is that Susan needs to delegate more effectively and trust others to execute, even if outcomes aren't perfect, to scale her impact and focus on director-level responsibilities.

Communication presents a nuanced challenge for Susan. While stakeholders praise her verbal communication skills with senior leadership and her exceptional writing ability, significant gaps exist in cross-functional transparency and efficiency. Her tendency toward verbose, overly detailed written communication creates inefficiency, with stakeholders requesting simple updates but receiving lengthy documents that don't match audience needs. Additionally, her use of complex terminology sometimes excludes non-native speakers and creates accessibility barriers for diverse teams. The feedback suggests Susan struggles to adapt her communication style to different audiences and contexts.

Relationship building and collaboration represent perhaps Susan's most critical development areas. Multiple stakeholders describe her as "completely closed off to collaboration" and "overly data-driven at the expense of people connections." Several senior colleagues have expressed relief about working with other product managers who "actually collaborate and listen," indicating significant trust and relationship deficits with cross-functional teams. While she maintains excellent relationships within her immediate product team, her professional distance and strong "work face" limit informal relationship building that facilitates smoother collaboration, particularly when needing support from engineering teams.

The feedback reveals concerning patterns in Susan's approach to managing up and stakeholder engagement. She consistently agrees to management requests rather than pushing back appropriately, leading to overextension and unsustainable workloads. When

receiving input from senior leadership, her responses often come across as "defensive" rather than collaborative, lacking openness to alternative perspectives. Stakeholders note her tendency to seek collaboration primarily at later stages of processes rather than early stages, missing opportunities for proactive engagement and input gathering.

Resource management and prioritization emerge as significant challenges, with stakeholders observing Susan's tendency to "absorb everything and spread time across all different things somewhat equally rather than ruthless prioritization." Her fear of saying no and desire to shield her team from challenges, while well-intentioned, creates unsustainable patterns that limit her strategic effectiveness. Multiple stakeholders emphasize the need for Susan to distinguish between critical and non-critical responsibilities, accepting that some deliverables may be completed at 80% rather than 100% of her personal standard.

Despite these challenges, stakeholders consistently recognize Susan's potential and the organization's investment in her development. Her technical depth, strong judgment in prioritizing initiatives, and genuine commitment to building exceptional products rather than focusing on political advancement are valued strengths. The upcoming organizational transitions present both opportunities and risks, with stakeholders noting the critical nature of Susan's ability to delegate and scale her impact through others rather than personal execution.

The overarching theme across stakeholder feedback is that Susan's current approach, while driven by commitment to quality outcomes, is ultimately unsustainable and may hinder both her personal development and the organization's ability to scale effectively. Stakeholders see significant potential in Susan's strategic capabilities but emphasize the urgent need for her to transition from reactive, execution-focused leadership to proactive, strategic leadership that develops others and builds stronger cross-functional relationships.