

Developmental Weight Index

A practitioner tool for identifying which tasks build human intelligence — and which are safe to hand to AI

***Note:** The Developmental Weight Index draws from established research in cognitive science, moral psychology, organisational theory, and expertise development. It is a practitioner diagnostic tool designed for use in organisational settings. It has not been psychometrically validated as a measurement instrument. Results should inform professional judgment, not replace it.*

What is the DWI?

The Developmental Weight Index is an 8-question Yes/No instrument that identifies whether a task in any role carries hidden developmental weight — whether doing the task builds the kind of human intelligence that AI cannot replicate. It is designed to be administered before a task is automated, so that organisations can make informed decisions about what to protect, what to scaffold, and what to safely hand off.

The DWI measures developmental exposure across seven tenets of distinctively human intelligence: contextual judgment, sensemaking, relational intelligence, ethical reasoning, risk-taking and courage, metacognition, and identity-driven purpose. Each question maps to a specific tenet, producing both a total Developmental Weight Score (whether to protect) and a tenet-level profile per task (which capabilities the task builds). This dual output enables personalised development paths when cross-referenced with an individual baseline.

Who administers it?

The DWI is designed for L&D; practitioners, HR business partners, or capability leads. The administrator identifies the tasks in a role that are candidates for AI automation, then asks 2–3 experienced practitioners to answer the 8 questions for each task. No special training is required — the questions are behavioural and self-explanatory.

How to use it

Step 1: Pre-filter	List all tasks in the role. Identify which are candidates for AI automation in the next 12–18 months. Only these tasks need to go through the full questionnaire.
Step 2: Administer	For each candidate task, ask 2–3 experienced practitioners to answer the 8 questions independently (Yes or No). Approximate time: 30–40 minutes per expert for 15–20 tasks.
Step 3: Score	For each question, take the majority response across experts (2 of 3 say Yes = Yes = 1 point). Sum across all 8 questions for a Developmental Weight Score (0–8).
Step 4: Read the map	Read across rows for total score and verdict. Read down columns to see where each tenet lives in the role — and where it is most vulnerable to displacement.

The 8 Questions

Ask these questions of 2–3 experienced practitioners for each task being evaluated. The respondent does not need to know the underlying tenets — the mapping is in the scoring key, not in the question.

Q1 “Have you ever handled this task differently depending on who was involved, what else was happening in the organisation, or the political dynamics at the time?”

Tenet: Contextual Judgment Under Ambiguity

Q2 “When doing this task, have you ever had to form your own interpretation of what was going on before a clear or complete picture was available?”

Tenet: Sensemaking and Narrative Construction

Q3 “Does this task put you in situations where the outcome depends on how well you read and respond to another person’s unstated concerns, resistance, or motivations?”

Tenet: Relational Intelligence and Trust-Building

Q4 “Has this task ever put you in a position where the easiest or most expected course of action wasn’t the one you believed was right?”

Tenet: Ethical and Moral Reasoning

Q5 “Has this task ever required you to take a position, raise a concern, or make a call that carried personal or professional risk?”

Tenet: Adaptive Risk-Taking and Courage

Q6 “When doing this task, have you ever caught yourself operating on an assumption you hadn’t tested — and had to revise your thinking?”

Tenet: Metacognition and Calibrated Self-Awareness

Q7 “Has doing this task repeatedly given you a ‘feel’ for something — a pattern, a risk, a dynamic — that you’d struggle to explain to someone who hasn’t done it?”

Tenet: Tacit Knowledge and Developmental Transfer

Q8 “Does this task connect you to the real human, operational, or societal impact of your function — in ways you can see, not just read about?”

Tenet: Identity-Driven Purpose and Meaning

Scoring and Interpretation

Scoring method

For each question on each task, take the majority response across 2–3 experts. If the majority answers Yes, score 1. If No, score 0. Sum across all 8 questions for the Developmental Weight Score.

Scoring bands

Score	Band	Recommendation
5 – 8	Protect	This task is on the developmental pathway. Do not automate without designing an alternative. First preference: keep the human on the task. Second: structured immersion. Third: tailored simulation.
3 – 4	Partial	This task has developmental sub-components. Use the tenet-level breakdown to identify which parts carry weight and protect those. The remaining components may be safely automated.
0 – 2	Automate	This task is primarily production. Automating it is an efficiency gain with low developmental cost.

Reading the grid

Read across a row to see the total score (whether to protect) and which tenets a task builds. **Read down a column** to see where a specific tenet lives in the role — and where it is most vulnerable if those tasks are automated. This column-level view turns the DWI from a task-ranking tool into a map of where the 70 per cent lives in any given function.

Expert disagreement

When experts diverge significantly on a task, the disagreement itself is diagnostic. It typically means the task is performed very differently by different practitioners, or that one expert has found developmental value the other has not. Flag these tasks for a follow-up conversation.

Theoretical grounding

The seven tenets draw on: Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1986) on expertise; Rest (1986) on moral development; Weick (1995) on sensemaking; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman (1995) on trust; Schilpzand, Hekman & Mitchell (2015) on workplace courage; Flavell (1979) on metacognition; Frankl (1946) on meaning. The developmental transfer mechanism draws on Polanyi (1966), Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995), Bjork (1994), and Ericsson (1993).

Scoring Grid

Function: _____ Role: _____ Expert: _____ of _____ Date: _____

Task	Q1 Ctx	Q2 Sns	Q3 Rel	Q4 Eth	Q5 Crg	Q6 Met	Q7 Tac	Q8 Pur	Score /8	Verdict
	<i>Contextual Judgment</i>	<i>Sense- making</i>	<i>Relational Intelligence</i>	<i>Ethical Reasoning</i>	<i>Risk & Courage</i>	<i>Meta- cognition</i>	<i>Tacit Knowledge</i>	<i>Identity & Purpose</i>		
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										
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8.										
9.										
10.										
11.										
12.										

Quick Reference: ■ 5–8 Protect ■ 3–4 Partial ■ 0–2 Automate Mark Y (Yes) or leave blank (No). Sum Y responses for Score. Read across for task verdict. Read down for tenet vulnerability.

Question Reference

Q1	Have you ever handled this task differently depending on who was involved, what else was happening in the organisation, or the political dynamics at the time?	<i>Contextual Judgment Under Ambiguity</i>
Q2	When doing this task, have you ever had to form your own interpretation of what was going on before a clear or complete picture was available?	<i>Sensemaking and Narrative Construction</i>
Q3	Does this task put you in situations where the outcome depends on how well you read and respond to another person's unstated concerns, resistance, or motivations?	<i>Relational Intelligence and Trust-Building</i>
Q4	Has this task ever put you in a position where the easiest or most expected course of action wasn't the one you believed was right?	<i>Ethical and Moral Reasoning</i>
Q5	Has this task ever required you to take a position, raise a concern, or make a call that carried personal or professional risk?	<i>Adaptive Risk-Taking and Courage</i>
Q6	When doing this task, have you ever caught yourself operating on an assumption you hadn't tested — and had to revise your thinking?	<i>Metacognition and Calibrated Self-Awareness</i>
Q7	Has doing this task repeatedly given you a 'feel' for something — a pattern, a risk, a dynamic — that you'd struggle to explain to someone who hasn't done it?	<i>Tacit Knowledge and Developmental Transfer</i>
Q8	Does this task connect you to the real human, operational, or societal impact of your function — in ways you can see, not just read about?	<i>Identity-Driven Purpose and Meaning</i>

Using the DWI for personalised development

Step	Action	Output
1. Diagnose the role	Run DWI on all AI-automatable tasks	Task Protection Map + tenet profile per task
2. Baseline the person	SJT or simulation (e.g. The Crossroads)	Individual tenet profile: strengths and gaps
3. Cross-reference	Match individual gaps to task tenet columns	Priority tasks for this person's development
4. Intervene	Protect task > Structured immersion > Simulation	Personalised 70% development plan

Tip: Print one scoring grid per expert. For roles with more than 12 automatable tasks, print additional scoring grid pages. The DWI questions also double as a structured debrief protocol after significant work experiences, immersion sessions, or simulations.