

# ENGINE PROFILE

THE PART THAT DOESN'T FIT · WIRING SERIES

Your Engine Diagnostic

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## YOUR ENGINE PROFILE

The four categories of your assessment, scored side by side. The loudest one — the category where the data clusters highest — is highlighted.



Each category is scored from 0 to 30, with 30 being loudest. Total possible: 120.

## YOUR PROFILE

Three of your four categories sit at 10 out of 30. The fourth — Variability Cost — sits at 25. That asymmetry is the whole story of this profile. Your total is 55 out of 120, a moderate intensity, but the average flattens what is actually a sharp spike. Your engine itself runs reasonably well. What is costing you is not how you start, how hard you go, or how you recover — it is what people build out of the unevenness.

Activation Triggers, Initiation Threshold, and Intensity & Depletion at 10 each tell me your relationship to your own work is mostly manageable. You can find your way into tasks. The gap between deciding and starting is not crushing you. When you go all in, you come back without a multi-day crater. Those are real strengths and you should not underrate them.

Variability Cost at 25 is where the weight lands. This is the category that measures what the inconsistency costs you professionally — not the inconsistency itself, but the narrative other people assemble from it. Your output is probably good. Sometimes it is exceptional. But the swing between your floor and your ceiling is wide enough that people have started to predict you, and the prediction is not flattering.

What this means day to day is that you are likely doing better work than your reputation reflects. The gap between what you produce and what people expect from you is not a quality gap. It is a consistency-perception gap. You feel the strain of being read as less reliable than you are, and that strain is the loudest thing in your professional life right now.

## YOUR LOUDEST PATTERN: VARIABILITY COST

At 25 out of 30, Variability Cost is not a quiet background hum — it is the dominant pattern in your professional life. This is the cost of being uneven in a system that rewards predictability. Chapter 4, All In or Gone, describes the swing: when you are engaged, you produce at a level most people cannot match, and when you are not, the output drops to a floor that does not look like the same person made it. The work is good. The variance is what people remember.

Chapter 13, The Gap Between What You Are and What They See, is the second half of this. The cost is not just that you swing — it is that other people resolve the swing by building a story. They average your high and your low and call the average 'inconsistent.' That label sticks more than any single piece of strong work, because human beings track variance more closely than they track peaks. You are being read by your range, not your best.

With your other three categories at 10, this pattern is not compounded by a hard-to-start engine or a brutal recovery cycle. That is actually important. It means the variability people see is not coming from you failing to function — it is coming from real differences in how engaged you are across tasks, and from the fact that you have not managed the visible signal of your consistency.

You have probably tried to fix this by working harder during the low stretches, or by promising yourself you will be more even. Those fixes did not hold because they aimed at your output when the problem lives in perception management. The work was never the issue. The signal was.

## WHERE THE COST CONCENTRATES

Your loudest pattern and your most expensive pattern are the same one. There is no buffer between them. The thing showing up most often is also the thing taking the most from your professional standing — which means this cost is not occasional or situational. It is structural to how you are currently operating.

It shows up in specific places. In performance reviews, where someone references 'consistency' as a development area even though your best work outperformed the room. In the moment a high-visibility project gets assigned and goes to a peer whose ceiling is lower than yours but whose floor is more predictable. In the meeting where your strong stretches get quietly discounted because someone is waiting for the dip. Chapter 4 and Chapter 13 both name this: the cost is not in any single deliverable, it is in the pattern people have decided you are.

Over time this compounds in a way that is hard to see until it has already happened. Each instance of being read as inconsistent makes the next instance more likely to be interpreted the same way, because people fit new data to the story they already hold. The longer it runs unmanaged, the more your reputation lags behind your actual capability — and the wider that lag, the more energy you spend trying to prove a point that should not need proving.

## WHAT OTHERS SEE

From the outside, people see a range. They see the version of you that delivers something sharp and complete, and they see the version that delivers something that meets the bar but not more. Because your activation and recovery patterns are moderate — not extreme — the dips do not look like a crisis. They look like a choice. That is the most dangerous read available, because it lets people conclude you could be consistent and simply are not.

What they do not see is that your engagement is not evenly available across every task, and that you are likely doing real internal work to keep the floor from dropping further. They do not see that your strong stretches cost you something to produce, or that the work you find less activating still gets done — just without the lift that makes the rest of your output stand out. The management work is invisible. The label is not.

The gap between what you show and what you experience is widest precisely in the Variability Cost category, because that is the one category where the external story and your internal reality have come apart. Your engine is fine. What people have built around the unevenness is the thing carrying weight you did not agree to carry.

## WHAT TO DO WITH THIS

These are tied to your specific scores, not to a general template. Three of your categories are stable enough to maintain with light attention — the fourth needs direct, deliberate work this month. Each move connects to the chapter that describes the underlying pattern.

### ACTIVATION TRIGGERS — CH 1: THE ENGINE THAT WON'T START

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At 10, your activation is workable but not automatic. This week, notice which two or three tasks pulled you in without effort and which required force — write them down at day's end. The point is not to fix anything; it is to learn what reliably fires your engine so you can schedule the harder-to-start work near it.

### INITIATION THRESHOLD — CH 1: THE ENGINE THAT WON'T START

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Your gap between knowing and starting is moderate, which means small structure goes a long way. This week, pick one task you have been circling and commit to working on it for ten minutes only, at a fixed time. Notice whether starting was the hard part or staying was — that distinction tells you where to put structure later.

### INTENSITY & DEPLETION — CH 4: ALL IN OR GONE

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At 10, your recovery cycle is not punishing you, but your all-in stretches still draw down something. This week, after any session where you went full intensity, note how long until you felt ready for the next demanding task. You are building a map of your actual recovery time so you stop scheduling against it.

### VARIABILITY COST — CH 4: ALL IN OR GONE

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This is the one that needs real work. This week, pick one ongoing project and create a visible signal of progress — a short status update sent on a fixed day, whether or not there is news. You are not changing your output; you are managing the consistency perception by making your steady work visible during the stretches it currently goes quiet.

## THE FIRST 30 DAYS

### WEEK 1

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Do not change anything this week. You are watching the pattern, not fixing it. Your loudest signal is Variability Cost, so watch most closely for the moments where your visible output dips and what happens in the room afterward.

- Track every time this week your work output noticeably rose or dropped in visibility to others. Note what task it was, how engaged you were, and whether anyone commented or reacted. You are looking for the shape of your own variance.
- Notice each task you started this week and how long the gap was between deciding to do it and actually beginning. Write down whether the delay was real or whether starting was easy. Most of these will be easy — confirm that.
- After any high-intensity work session, write down how depleted you felt and how long before you could take on the next demanding thing. Track whether the recovery was quick or whether it stretched into the next day.
- Each evening, estimate what percentage of your energy went to actual work versus managing how your work was perceived — explaining, justifying, smoothing over a slow stretch. Write the number down without judging it.

At week's end, lay the five days side by side. Look at how often the visibility of your output swung, and how much of your energy went to perception management versus the work itself. The variance and the management cost are the two numbers that matter.

### WEEKS 2–3

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Now you make small, sustainable moves — one per pattern, none large enough to disrupt your week. The heaviest lift goes to Variability Cost, because that is where your data showed the most strain.

- Pick your two most visible projects and send a fixed-day status note on each, whether or not there is real news. Keep it to three lines. You are creating a steady signal so your quieter stretches stop reading as absence.
- Take the two tasks you found hardest to activate in Week 1 and schedule them directly after a task that fires your engine easily. Notice whether the momentum carried you in. This is using your moderate activation deliberately instead of leaving it to chance.
- Block one recovery window after your most intense work session each week. Protect it from new demanding tasks. You are testing whether honoring your actual recovery time keeps your floor higher across the following days.
- On the days you produce strong work, name it briefly to one person who tracks your performance. Not bragging — a one-line factual note. You are closing the gap between your real output and the story being built about your consistency.

Compare these two weeks against Week 1. Did the perception-management percentage drop once you added visible signals? Did anyone reference your consistency differently? Those two shifts are your early evidence.

## WEEK 4

This week you review what moved and decide what becomes permanent. Most of your categories were already stable — the question is whether the Variability Cost moves changed the story people tell.

— Review the status-note habit. Did your quieter stretches stop reading as drops? Look for any change in how people referenced your reliability, even small. Decide whether the fixed-day signal stays as a permanent default.

— Look back at the perception-management cost you tracked in Week 1 versus this week. If the number dropped, that energy is now available for actual work. Name exactly where it went and whether you want to protect that.

— Compare your energy distribution this week against Week 1. The work-versus-management split is the cleanest measure of whether the variability moves are paying off. Write down the two numbers and the difference between them.

— Decide what locks in. The visible-signal habit and the recovery window are likely keepers. The activation pairing may need redesign. Choose two practices to make default and one to rebuild differently next month.

The question for Week 4 is not whether your variability is gone — it will not be, and it does not need to be. Measure whether the story people tell about your consistency has started to move, and whether you are spending less energy defending work that should speak for itself.

## THE MIRROR

*Your best work outperforms most of the room, yet the word that follows you is 'inconsistent.' What would change if you stopped trying to raise your floor and started making your steady work visible instead?*

*There is a gap between the quality you produce and the reputation you carry. How much of your energy goes to closing that gap by working harder, when the gap is not about your work at all?*

*You feel the strain of being read as less reliable than you are. What does carrying that misread cost you over a full year — not in output, but in how you feel walking into the rooms that judge you?*

*If the story people built about your unevenness simply did not exist, what work would you take on that you currently hold back from because you are managing perception?*

*When you picture the next high-visibility project going to someone steadier than you, how much of that fear is built on something a colleague actually said — and how much is the story you have started telling about yourself?*

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This assessment describes what is present in your professional experience — a strong engine carrying a perception cost it did not earn. It does not describe what is wrong with you, because nothing here is wrong. The real question is whether you keep spending energy proving a consistency point that should not need proving, or whether you put that energy back into the work. If this touches something deeper than strategies can reach, a coach or therapist can help you get to what the plan cannot.

— Don

This assessment describes patterns. It does not diagnose conditions.