

# LOAD PROFILE

THE PART THAT DOESN'T FIT · WIRING SERIES

Your Load Diagnostic

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## YOUR LOAD 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

At 55 out of 120, your profile sits in moderate territory overall — but that number flattens something important. Three of your four categories cluster around 10, steady and manageable. One category, Masking Cost, sits at 25 out of 30. That is not a profile spread evenly across four pressures. It is one loud, expensive pattern carrying almost half your total weight while everything else stays quiet.

What this tells me is that you have built a professional life with reasonable structure, manageable transitions, and decisions that do not drain you faster than you can refill. The systems around you mostly work. The toll you pay is not about chaos or task-switching or running out of decision budget by mid-afternoon. The toll is the performance itself — the work of managing how you come across.

Because your other three categories are low, there is no competing story here. Masking Cost is not one cost among many. It is the cost. That makes it both easier to name and harder to hide from, because you cannot blame the calendar or the workload or the meeting load. The energy is going somewhere specific.

What this means for how you experience professional life: you probably look composed, capable, and consistent to the people around you. And you are likely tired in a way that the visible work does not explain. The gap between what people see and what it takes to produce it — that gap is where your energy lives, and it is wider than almost anyone around you knows.

## YOUR LOUDEST PATTERN: MASKING COST

Masking Cost at 25 out of 30 is a very high reading, and it describes the performance nobody sees. Before you speak in a meeting, you are translating — rehearsing the phrasing, predicting the reaction, smoothing the delivery so it lands the way you intend. Before you send an email, you are reading it as the recipient would, then editing the tone, then editing again. The work people see is the output. The work you actually do is the production behind it.

This is what Chapter 6 calls the exhaustion gap — the distance between how hard the task looks and how hard it actually was for you. To a colleague, you ran a clean meeting. To you, that meeting required managing your facial expressions, monitoring your tone, calibrating how much to say, and tracking whether you were coming across as competent and measured. The meeting was the easy part. The performance around the meeting was the expense.

Because your other three patterns are low, the masking is not being driven by structure collapse or transition overload. It is more constant than that — it runs in the background of nearly every professional interaction, regardless of what else is happening. That is why it costs so much. It does not switch off when the workload eases.

Here is what you have probably tried. You have told yourself to relax, to stop overthinking, to just be yourself. Maybe you have tried caring less about how things land. None of it held, because those fixes treated the performance as a habit you could drop. It is not a habit. It is a calibration system that has been running so long it feels like the cost of being taken seriously. You cannot relax your way out of something that feels like the price of admission.

## WHERE THE COST CONCENTRATES

Your loudest pattern and your most expensive pattern are the same one. There is no buffer here, no second cost competing for attention that might give you somewhere else to look. The thing showing up most often is also the thing taking the most out of you. That alignment means the cost is not occasional — it is structural, built into how you move through your work.

It shows up in the specific places that fill a professional day. In meetings, where you are managing presence alongside content. In email, where a two-line reply gets read four times before it sends. In performance conversations, where you are tracking not just what to say but how you are being perceived as you say it. In the moments between — the hallway, the quick check-in, the call you did not prepare for — where the calibration has to happen in real time with no rehearsal.

The compounding is the part that matters most. A single masked interaction is survivable. Forty of them across a week, every week, draws down a reserve that the visible workload never accounts for. You end days tired in a way that does not match your task list, and over time that mismatch becomes the baseline. The performance does not get cheaper with repetition. It gets more automatic, which only hides how much it still costs.

## WHAT OTHERS SEE

From the outside, you read as steady and put-together. With your structure, transition, and decision patterns all low, you do not look scattered or reactive or paralyzed by choices. You show up on time, prepared, composed. In meetings you come across as measured. In email you sound clear and considered. In a performance review, the words used about you are probably some version of reliable and professional. That is the version of you the room receives.

What the room does not see is the production cost behind that steadiness. They do not see the rehearsal before you speak, the editing behind the clear email, the constant low-level monitoring of how you are landing. They see the finished performance and assume it came at the normal price. It did not. The gap between presentation and experience is widest exactly where you are strongest-looking — because the composure they read as natural is the thing costing you the most to produce.

This is the loneliness of a high Masking Cost with low everything else. The people around you have no reason to suspect a problem, because the output is good and the rest of your patterns are quiet. The cost is invisible by design — you have made it invisible. Which means no one will lighten the load for you, because no one can see it.

## WHAT TO DO WITH THIS

These are tied to your specific numbers, not general advice. Three of your categories are low, so the moves there are light maintenance. The real work is in Masking Cost, where the cost concentrates. Each strategy connects to the chapter that covers it.

### STRUCTURE DEPENDENCY — CH 5: BUCKETS OR BUST

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At 10 out of 30, your structure mostly serves you, so this week just confirm it. Notice one system you rely on — a list, a recurring block, a place you put things — and ask whether it is actually load-bearing or just familiar. Keep what holds you up; do not add more.

### MASKING COST — CH 6: THE PERFORMANCE NOBODY SEES

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This is the one. Pick one low-stakes interaction this week — a routine email to a trusted colleague, a check-in with someone safe — and send it without the second and third edit. Write it once, read it once, send it. Notice what actually happens versus what you predicted would happen.

### TRANSITION TOLL — CH 11: THE TOLL BETWEEN TASKS

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At 10 out of 30, transitions are not costing you much, so protect that. When you move between two tasks this week, notice whether you are carrying masking energy from one into the next — finishing a meeting still in performance mode as you sit down to focused work. Give yourself a two-minute break to set it down.

At 10 out of 30, decisions are not depleting you on their own. But watch for the place they intersect with masking — where a small choice gets heavy because you are calculating how it will be perceived. This week, name one of those and decide it on the merits, not the optics.

### THE FIRST 30 DAYS

#### WEEK 1

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This week you change nothing. You are only watching. The point is to see the performance you run so automatically that it has stopped feeling like effort. Watch especially for the moments where you are managing how you come across.

- Track every time you rehearse before speaking or edit an email more than once. Note what you were managing — tone, competence, how you would be perceived. Do not judge it. Just count it across the day and write down where it concentrated.
- Notice when small decisions get heavy because of how a choice will land with someone. Write down the decision and what you were actually weighing — the merits, or the optics. Keep it to a sentence each.
- At the end of three interactions a day, rate how the task looked from outside versus how hard it actually was for you. The gap between those two numbers is the cost. Write down the size of the gap.
- At day's end, estimate what percentage of your energy went to the actual work versus managing how you came across. Guess if you have to. The number itself matters less than watching it across five days.

Look at where the rehearsing and editing clustered — certain people, certain settings, certain stakes. Look at the gap ratings. If the exhaustion gap was widest in the interactions that looked easiest, that is the pattern, and you have just made it visible for the first time.

#### WEEKS 2–3

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Now you make small moves. Each one is a controlled experiment, low enough stakes to be safe, specific enough to produce real data about what happens when you perform less.

- Three times this week, send a routine message to a trusted person with one edit instead of three. Track what happened next — did anything go wrong, or did the catastrophe you rehearsed against simply not arrive?
- In one meeting this week, let one comment land without managing your delivery first. Say it plainly. Afterward, write down whether the response matched what your monitoring system predicted.
- Protect your reserve once a day with a deliberate two-minute reset between a high-performance interaction and your next task. Notice whether setting the mask down between tasks leaves more energy for the work itself.

— Find the one place masking and decision-weight overlap — a small choice that got heavy because of optics. Decide it on the merits this time. Note how much lighter it felt to choose without calculating perception.

Compare your energy estimates to Week 1. Look at the experiments where you edited less or performed less — did the feared outcome happen, or not? The data you are building is whether the performance is actually protecting you or just costing you.

## WEEK 4

This week you review and decide. Not everything moved, and that is fine. The point is to find the one or two changes that were both safe and cheaper, and make them permanent.

— Review the masking experiments. Where did sending without re-editing or speaking without rehearsing produce no negative consequence? Those are the places the performance was costing you for nothing. Mark them for keeping.

— Look at the exhaustion gap ratings from Week 1 against now. In the interactions where you performed less, did the gap shrink? Write down which settings let you drop the calibration without cost.

— Compare this week's energy-percentage estimates to Week 1. If more of your energy reached the actual work, name what specifically freed it up — fewer edits, fewer rehearsals, the resets between tasks.

— Decide what to lock in. Which interactions get the lighter approach as a default now? Which still need the full performance because the stakes are real? Make the distinction deliberate instead of automatic across the board.

The question is not whether you have stopped performing. You have not, and some of it is appropriate. The question is whether you have separated the masking that protects you from the masking that only drains you — and started spending the energy where it actually counts.

## THE MIRROR

*When you rehearse before you speak, what are you actually protecting against — and how often does the thing you are protecting against actually happen?*

*If a colleague could see the full production behind your composed exterior, what would surprise them most about what it takes for you to show up that way?*

*What does it cost you to monitor how you come across in nearly every interaction — and what would you do with that energy if it were not already spent?*

*If the calibration system went quiet for a week, what would you say, send, or decide differently — and what does it tell you that you can name those things so quickly?*

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*How much of the perception you manage so carefully is based on something someone actually said to you, and how much is based on what you assume they are thinking?*

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This assessment describes what is present in your professional experience. It does not describe what is wrong with you — the performance you run has likely served you well, which is exactly why it is so hard to set down. Your patterns are yours, and the only real question is whether you keep spending energy maintaining a performance no one asked for or start choosing where it actually matters. 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.