

RETURN.

Can You Predict → Human Performance Before It Happens?

Why future human performance matters more than past performance — and how Psychonomics can help organisations make better people decisions.

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Executive → Summary

Most organisations make critical people decisions based on experience, capability and past performance. The problem is that none of these reliably predict how someone will perform in the future.

A leader can have an exceptional CV and still fail. A high-performing team can suddenly struggle during a transformation. An employee who thrives in one environment may underperform in another.

As the pace of change accelerates through AI, digital transformation and evolving operating models, understanding how people think, adapt and behave has become a competitive advantage.

RETURN. defines Psychonomics as the application of cognitive psychology, behavioural science and data to predict and improve performance in organisational contexts. It helps organisations identify who is likely to thrive, where performance may stall, what behaviours need to change, and where leadership risk exists.

Whether hiring leaders, assessing succession candidates, managing transformation or improving team performance, Psychonomics helps organisations move beyond assumptions and make better decisions when the stakes are high.

The organisations that understand human behaviour best will be the organisations that adapt fastest.





The world of work is changing faster than most organisations can adapt.



Why Understanding << Behaviour Has Become a Competitive Advantage

AI is reshaping jobs. Operating models continue to evolve. Businesses are being asked to deliver more with fewer resources while navigating increasing complexity and uncertainty.

Yet most people decisions are still made using methods that have changed very little in decades.

We continue to hire based on experience.
We continue to promote based on past performance.
We continue to assess capability while paying limited attention to how people actually behave under pressure.

The result?

Leadership appointments fail.
Transformation programmes stall.
High-potential employees plateau.
Teams underperform despite having capable people.

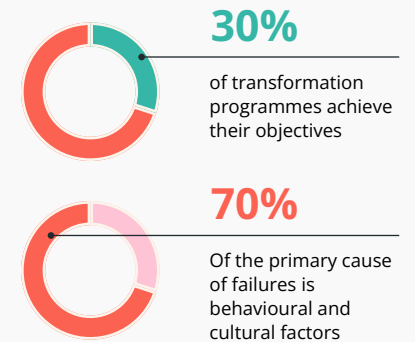
According to multiple leadership assessment studies:

→ **30% – 50%**

Of senior leadership appointments fail or significantly underperform within the first 18 months.



At the same time, McKinsey estimates that approximately 70% of transformation programmes fail to achieve their objectives, with behavioural and cultural factors among the primary causes.





➡ The challenge is rarely capability alone. More often, it is the interaction between behaviour, context and pressure. **This is where Psychonomics becomes valuable.**

→ The Problem with Traditional People Decisions



Most organisations are good at measuring what someone has done.

They are far less effective at understanding what someone is likely to do next.

Experience tells us where someone has been. Capability tells us what they can do. Neither fully explains how they will respond when priorities shift, pressure builds, stakeholders disagree and uncertainty increases.

Performance is not created by capability alone. Performance emerges from the interaction between:

- Behaviour
- Capability
- Context
- Pressure

Understanding those interactions is the foundation of Psychonomics.

Turning Behaviour into Better Decisions



Psychonomics is a branch of cognitive psychology focused on understanding how people think, perceive, decide, learn and behave.

When applied in a business context, it helps organisations understand not just what people know, but how they operate.



At its core, Psychonomics examines four interconnected lenses.

Psychonomics

Focused on **future performance**

Behavior

How someone thinks, decides, influences, collaborates, adapts, and leads under pressure.

Capability

What someone can do today, what they need to do tomorrow, and development gaps.

Context

The culture, complexity, stakeholder expectations, and strategic priorities that someone has to operate within.

Commercial Impact

The effect someone's decisions have on growth, execution, adoption, engagement, retention, and performance.

Provides insight into future performance and **reduces the risk of wrong decisions.**

When these dimensions are understood together, organisations gain a much clearer view of future performance and risk.



Most Transformation Efforts Fail → Because People Don't Change

Technology does not create transformation.

People do.

Recent Deloitte research found that access to AI tools has increased significantly across organisations, yet adoption continues to lag behind availability.

Many organisations are investing heavily in technology while struggling to change behaviours.

The challenge is not whether the technology works.

The challenge is whether people will change how they work.

Psychonomics helps leaders understand:

Who is ready to adapt?

Who may resist change?

Who can lead transformation?

What behaviours need to shift?

Where performance risk exists?

This allows organisations to focus interventions where they will have the greatest impact.

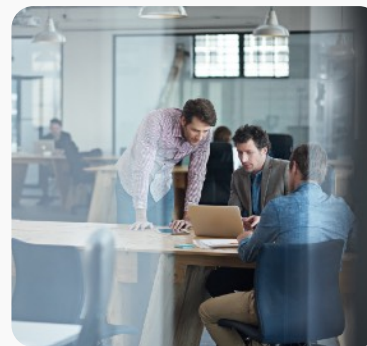


Where Psychonomics Creates the Greatest Value



Leadership Hiring

Most hiring decisions focus on capability, experience and interview performance. Psychonomics adds another dimension. It helps organisations understand how candidates are likely to perform within a specific environment, under a specific set of pressures and expectations. This reduces hiring risk and improves confidence in critical appointments.



Succession Planning

High performance today does not always translate into high performance tomorrow. Psychonomics helps distinguish current performance from future potential, providing a clearer view of readiness, growth capacity and leadership risk.



AI Adoption & Digital Transformation

Successful adoption depends on behavioural change. Psychonomics helps identify who is likely to embrace new ways of working and where barriers to adoption may exist.



Growth and Scaling

As organisations grow, leaders are often required to operate in more complex environments. Psychonomics helps identify who can scale with the business and what support will accelerate performance.



Mergers and Acquisitions

Many integrations fail because leadership behaviours, decision-making styles and cultural assumptions remain invisible until after the deal is completed. Psychonomics helps organisations identify and manage these risks before they become problems.



Team Performance

Performance issues rarely stem from a single cause. Psychonomics helps uncover the behavioural, contextual and leadership factors influencing performance and provides a framework for improvement.



The Future Of Performance Is → Behaviour

As organisations navigate increasing complexity, the ability to understand future performance will become one of the most valuable capabilities in business.

The companies that continue to rely solely on experience and intuition will face greater uncertainty and risk.

The companies that understand behaviour will make better hiring decisions, build stronger teams, adapt faster and create more value.

**Psychonomics is not
replacing judgement.**

It is strengthening it.

And in a world where performance matters more than ever, that may be one of the most important competitive advantages an organisation can build.

How RETURN. Applies Psychonomics



Traditional executive search is built on the assumption that pedigree predicts performance.

We don't believe that's enough.

Experience matters. Capability matters. But neither reliably predicts how someone will behave when expectations rise, pressure builds and complexity increases.

That's why RETURN. applies Psychonomics throughout our executive search, individual, and team assessment process.

We help organisations understand not just who a leader has been, but who they are likely to become in the environment they are entering.

By combining occupational psychology, behavioural assessment, technology and AI, we provide a deeper understanding of leadership performance, risk and fit.

Because the most important leadership decisions are not about who gets hired, fired, or promoted. **They are about what happens next.**

**Alastair Pascoe**

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Together, Alastair and Chris developed RETURN.'s Psychonomics approach — combining occupational psychology, behavioural science, technology and AI to better understand how leaders and teams perform in context.

This thinking underpins RETURN.'s executive search and organisational performance services, helping organisations make more confident people decisions and maximise performance beyond Day One.