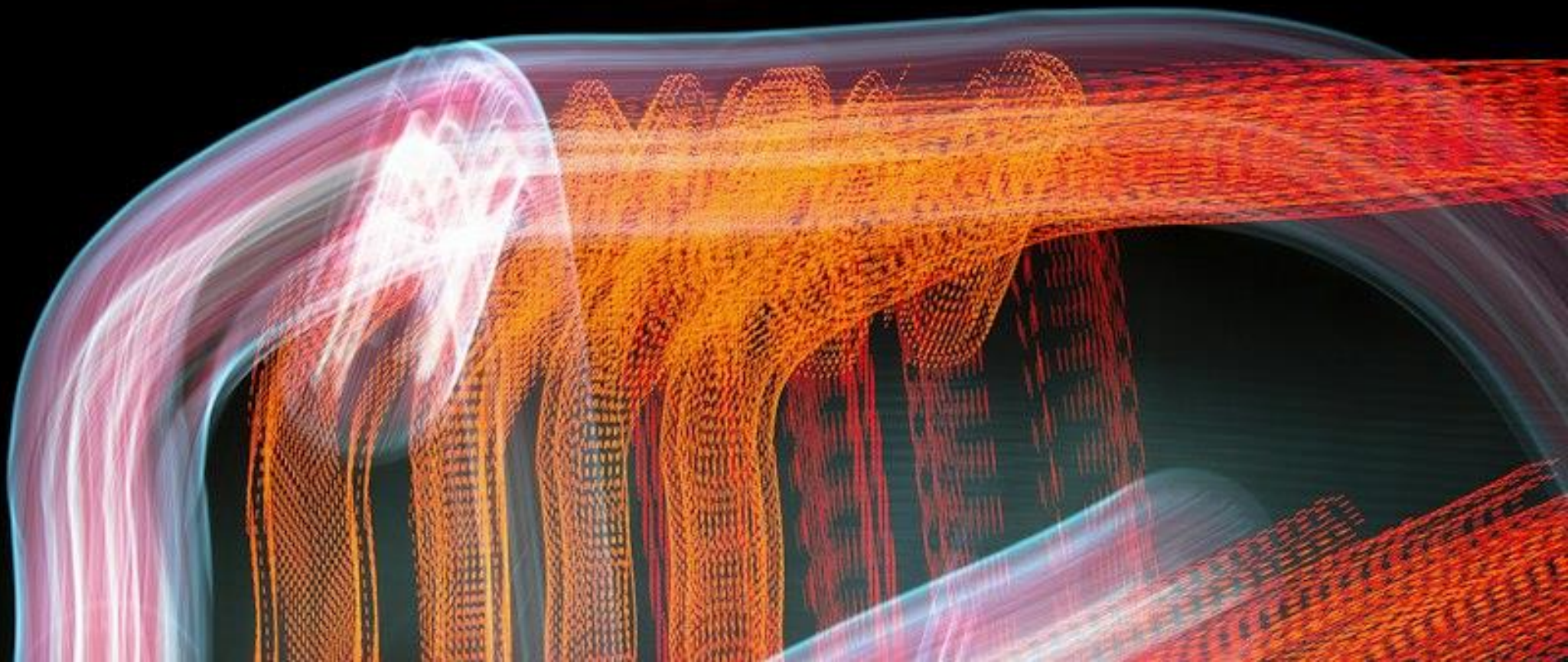


Necessarily Different

Coulter:Partners

A continuous global study of the work styles and leadership impact of digital health CEOs and Founders conducted by Coulter Partners



Digital health CEOs and Founders are Different

Coulter Partners is fortunate enough to have over **250,000 leadership conversations** each year across health, science and technology globally. During these conversations, working with the most **innovative digital health*** companies in the world, we noticed that those who choose to create and lead these companies, seem different to your average leader. It turns out they are – **significantly different**.

These leaders are at the forefront and in the thick of changing **complex, often entrenched systems**, whether that be health services, payers and providers, or large corporate pharmaceutical and medical device companies. They face **unique challenges** in a highly risk averse, regulated and costly environment, where change is slow and paths to success are not well trodden. Yet, these leaders are up for the challenge – and, as a result, they can improve the **quality of life** of millions of people.

At Coulter Partners, we are all scientists at heart, so we wanted to **collect data** to explore this somewhat unusual cohort statistically. During 2023 – and to be utilized throughout 2024 and 2025 – Coulter Partners developed an ongoing, freely available, global **assessment and feedback project** for any CEO and/or Founder of a digital health company.

We are now excited to share the results from the first cohort of **50 CEO and Founders** of early-stage digital health companies – and the **results** are **fascinating!** We find that this sector demands a certain type of leader, a ‘necessary’ profile, to drive **change, innovation and technology enablement** in an industry that has potential to change the health of the world.

“

...those who choose to create and lead these companies, seem different to your average leader. It turns out they are – **significantly different.**

”

*We define digital health as technology at the intersection of the patient and the healthcare system. Examples of these include digital therapeutics, healthcare services transformation, on demand health services, digitally enabled diagnostics, patient data and clinical trials platforms, drug and digital combinations, health and wellness platforms, ‘mini MedTech’ and wearables, virtual clinics, at-home technology enabled care, and patient data capture. This is an indicative rather than exhaustive list.

“
Innovative,
Autonomous,
Disruptive, Daring &
Unpredictable
Not Natural Team
Builders,
Risk Taking

”

How different?

To understand just how this group is unique, we asked **50 CEOs and Founders** to complete the Saville Wave Assessment. The assessment delivers three comprehensive reports at an aggregate level that look at this group's *Leadership Impact*, *Work Style* and *Leadership Risk*.

We then compared this group to a global benchmark of C-suite leaders to examine both **similarities and differences**.

When we analysed this first cohort, there were four standout work styles and two significant risks which characterise them.

Perhaps unsurprising is that this cohort sit in the 95th percentile when it comes to *Organisational Transformation*, and the 90th percentile when it comes to *New Products and Markets*.

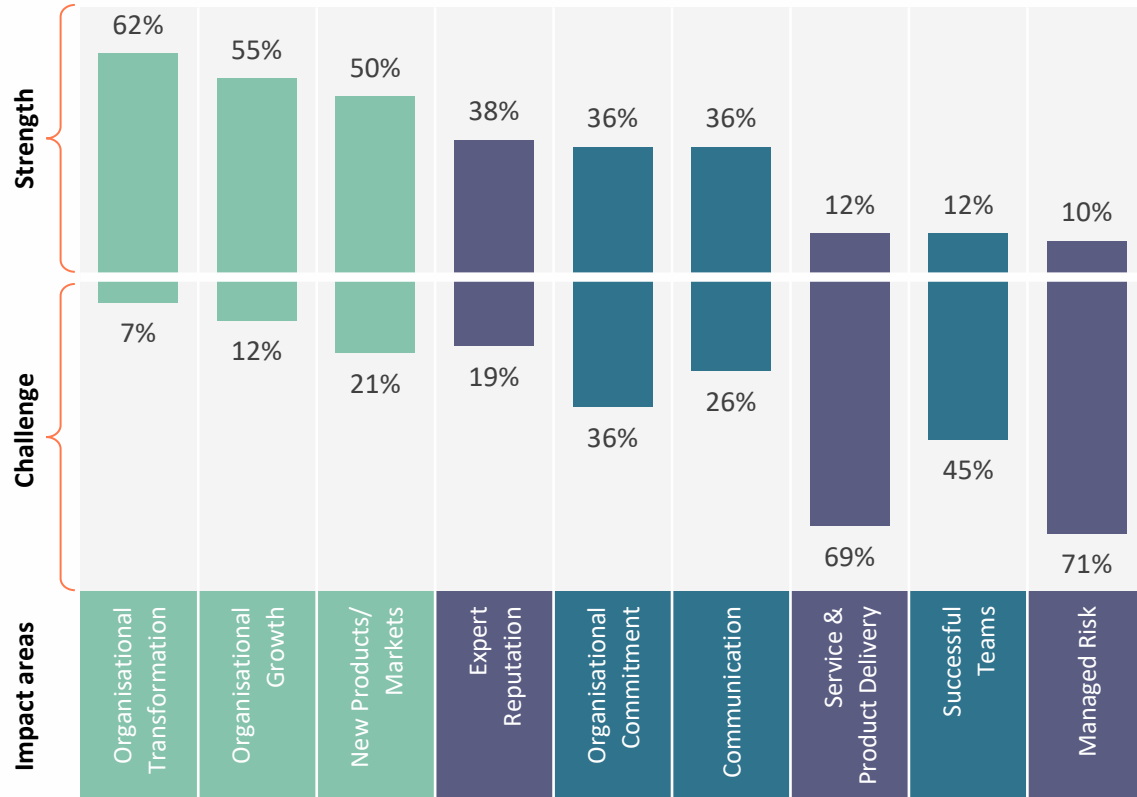
They are innovators by nature. How they innovate is where this cohort become both interesting and challenging. This is where we find they also score highly on *Pioneering Risk*.

A risk combination of *Autonomous*, *Daring* and *Unpredictable* is very prevalent in this group. While individually these leadership attributes are typically found to have positive impacts, the three in combination is unusual, and has the potential to be a 'disruptive' profile.

Coupled with that, this cohort are not natural team builders, preferring instead to be **pioneers who generate followers**, as opposed to utilising a more measured approach to communication and team building.

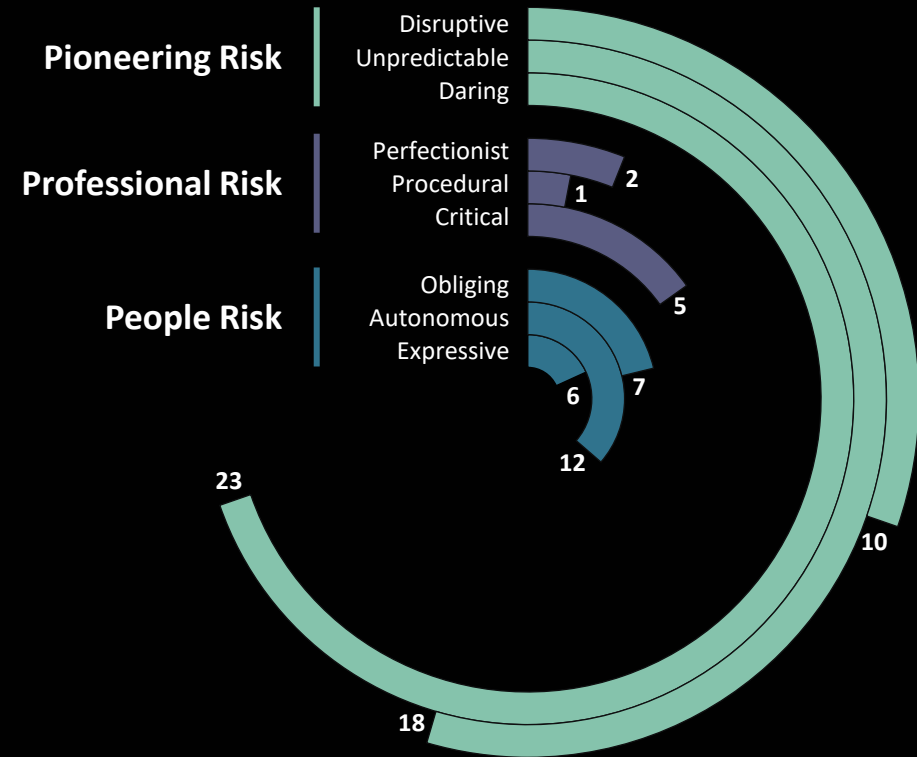
The final data point from our initial cohort which characterises these leaders is their approach to managing risk. They are **highly risk tolerant**. Their natural style is not to focus on areas including *actively controlling risk*, *championing effective corporate governance* and *ensuring compliance with policies*, and *procedures and legal requirements*.

Leadership Impact



The graph above is the aggregated data across the first cohort of CEOs and Founders Leadership Impact. The percentages indicate the people above or under the comparison group. The innovative nature of this cohort is clear, alongside their approach to risk, which is likely necessary given the environment.

Leadership Risk



The risk profile of this cohort highlights three main Pioneering Risks and one People Risk. This group are Unpredictable, Disruptive and Daring, coupled with being Autonomous. This combination can lead to a somewhat chaotic leadership style that often needs to be complemented with a balancing team.

Cohort 1 – The First 50

As we hold a mirror up to the first cohort of CEOs and Founders of digital health companies, we have what appears to be an interesting paradox – a chaotic leadership profile, driving change in a highly regulated and heavily governed industry.

Driving change in the complex multi-stakeholder environment of pharmaceutical and device companies, country health systems and payers, healthcare professionals and smarter patients, requires these kind of disruptive leaders.

We have also focused on one, very instrumental individual in these organisations – the CEO/Founder. On initial inspection, the data suggests that this cohort are not natural team builders; however, when we look one level deeper, we find that whilst they are less strong on the *Collaborator* work style, these leaders score highly on the *Inspirer* impact scale. This means that their teams are led through passion and drive but may be lacking in structure and collaboration.

However, we believe this is a necessary different profile, a unique profile needed to drive change in an industry that can often slower, and hard to change due to regulation, cost and the need for safety and compliance.

The study will remain open to all digital health CEOs and Founders for 2024 and 2025, with the aim of building a valid, representative dataset of over 200 participants.

All results will be anonymous and aggregated before sharing with our digital health network.

To be part of the study, please contact [Ian Coyne](#), Client Partner at Coulter Partners.

...we have what appears to be, an interesting mismatch – a chaotic leadership profile, driving change in a highly regulated and heavily governed industry.

However, we believe this is a **necessarily different** profile, a unique profile needed to drive change...

**Building teams
that change the world**

Coulter:Partners

We are **executive search** and
leadership development specialists
working to build a better future.

As advisors and consultants to companies
at the cutting edge of **Life Sciences,**
Health and Technology, we are united
by our mission to build teams that
change the world.

Europe

UK

83 Clerkenwell Rd
London
EC1R 5AR
t: +44 20 3167 0000
f: +44 20 3167 0001

Denmark

Lyngby Hovedgade 10
2800 Kgs. Lyngby
t: +45 88 93 47 10

Germany

Kaiserstrasse 79
60329 Frankfurt am Main
t: +49 69 5660 89231

Switzerland

Gartenstrasse 97
CH-4052 Basel
t: +41 61 271 0112

Seefeldstrasse 60
8008 Zurich
t: +41 79 431 29 94

France

54 Avenue Hoche
Paris 75008
t: +33 6 63 65 80 51

Belgium

Brussels Airport Diegem
Pegasuslaan 5
1831 Brussels
t: +32 2 897 47 05

Italy

Via Broletto, 46
20121 Milano MI
t: +39 02 3056 6980

USA

Massachusetts

222 Third Street
Suite 2244
Cambridge, MA 02142
t: +1 617 444 8430

New Jersey

51 JFK Parkway
First Floor West
Short Hills, NJ 07078
t: +1 973 538 0444

California

6080 Center Drive
6th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90045
t: +1 424 257 6677

Pennsylvania

6425 Living Place
2nd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
t: +1 412 939 7451

Australia

Level 19
180 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne
Victoria
VIC 3000
t: +61 2 8069 6060

Singapore

18 Robinson Road,
#15-01,
Singapore 048547
t: +65 3 157 0719

General enquiries

enquiries@coulterpartners.com
www.coulterpartners.com

Coulter:Partners