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LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS IN PHYSICALLY INTENSIVE MOBILE WORK TEAMS: A BEHAVIORAL TAXONOMY FOR CREW LEADERS IN MOVING SERVICES

Summary. *Leadership research has produced detailed models for office managers, military officers, surgical team leads, and cockpit captains. Crew leaders in the moving and relocation industry share none of those working conditions yet carry comparable responsibility for team output, safety, and client satisfaction. They lift furniture alongside their crews, manage shifting job demands across unfamiliar buildings, and serve as the sole point of contact between the company and the client, all within a single shift. No published taxonomy captures the specific leadership behaviors that this combination of physical labor, operational management, and client interaction demands. This study develops the Field Leadership Behavior Inventory (FLBI), a 12-item observational instrument organized into three categories: task-oriented, relational, and adaptive behaviors. Trained observers coded 120 shifts at a mid-size carrier in the northeastern United States across two six-month periods. Shifts led by crew leaders who scored in the top quartile on relational and adaptive behaviors recorded on-time completion rates 14 percentage*

points higher, damage incident rates 47% lower, and client satisfaction scores 0.8 points higher on a 5-point scale than shifts led by bottom-quartile scorers. Task-oriented behaviors showed weaker differentiation; how a crew leader relates to the team and responds to changing conditions appears to matter more than procedural control alone.

Key words: *crew leadership, team dynamics, physically demanding work, leadership behaviors, moving services, field team management.*

Introduction. A crew leader in the moving industry wakes up at 5 a.m., checks a dispatch sheet listing two or three jobs, and meets a team that may include workers they have never supervised before. By 8 a.m. they are carrying a dresser down a fourth-floor stairwell. By 10 a.m. they are explaining to a client why the antique bookshelf needs custom wrapping that was not quoted in the original estimate. By noon they are deciding whether the team can handle a second job across town or whether fatigue has made the afternoon schedule unrealistic. Few of these tasks appear in the leadership literature reviewed below.

Leadership theory has built its evidence base in settings where the leader is not physically engaged in the team task. Transformational leadership was validated through questionnaire studies of managers, military officers, and educators who lead from desks, briefing rooms, or podiums [2]. Functional leadership theory identified 15 leadership functions organized around transition and action phases of team performance, drawing data from manufacturing plants and R&D laboratories where the team leader oversees work but does not perform it [10]. Research on leadership in extreme contexts accounts for threat, time pressure, and complexity, but the settings studied are military and emergency operations where the leader coordinates without sharing the physical workload [6]. What connects all these frameworks is an unspoken premise: leading is a cognitive activity performed by someone whose

body is free. A moving crew leader hauls the same weight as every other team member, and that effort depletes the cognitive resources that leadership depends on.

Team process models reinforce this blind spot. Marks et al. proposed a taxonomy of team processes organized into transition, action, and interpersonal categories, a framework that has shaped more than two decades of team research [9]. Transition processes (mission analysis, goal specification, strategy formulation) happen before task execution; action processes (monitoring, coordination, backup) happen during it. In moving, both happen simultaneously and the person leading the transition process is also performing the action. When a crew leader stops to reformulate the loading sequence after discovering an extra bedroom, the reformulation happens mid-task, not at a planning table. A review of team effectiveness research covering hundreds of studies noted that the physical context of teamwork remains an understudied moderator of team processes. Nearly two decades later, the gap persists [7].

Shared leadership offers a partial answer. Pearce and Sims found that distributing leadership across team members was a stronger predictor of effectiveness in change management teams than vertical leadership from a single appointed leader [11]. In moving, informal task sharing happens naturally: an experienced mover may take charge of wrapping fragile items while the crew leader manages the truck loading sequence. In practice, however, an external accountability structure constrains this distribution: the client expects one person to own the conversation, and the company holds one person responsible for the shift outcome. Psychological safety, the belief that speaking up will not be punished, predicts learning behavior and error reporting in work teams [5]. For a moving crew assembled that morning and unlikely to work together again tomorrow, building that climate in the first fifteen minutes of a shift is a leadership task rarely examined in the literature on stable teams.

One variable that leadership models have largely ignored is the leader's own physical state. Barling and Cloutier reviewed how leader mental health shapes leadership quality and found that depleted leaders fall back on passive and transactional behaviors even when the situation calls for something more active [1]. Physical fatigue works the same way. Four hours into a stairwell carry, a crew leader simply has less cognitive capacity for motivating people or rethinking the plan than that same person had at 8 a.m. Burke et al. tested which leadership behaviors are functional in team settings and found that task-focused and person-focused behaviors both predicted performance, but that the relative weight shifted depending on task demands [3]. Moving amplifies this effect because task demands stay high throughout the shift, change without warning, and fall on the leader's shoulders just as heavily as on anyone else's.

Against this background, the present article proposes the Field Leadership Behavior Inventory (FLBI), a 12-item structured observation tool that classifies crew leader behaviors into three categories: task-oriented (sequencing, equipment oversight, pace setting, quality checks), relational (encouragement, physical co-participation, conflict de-escalation, break management), and adaptive (scope communication, role reassignment, expectation management, tempo adjustment under fatigue). FLBI was applied to 120 observed shifts at a mid-size carrier in the northeastern United States to test which behavior categories and individual behaviors are associated with better shift-level outcomes in on-time completion, damage incidence, and client satisfaction. Where earlier interventions at this company addressed crew allocation and field decision protocols, the present analysis shifts the unit of observation from the job or the deviation event to the crew leader as an individual actor whose behavioral choices shape the shift from start to finish.

Literature Review. Bass and Avolio's Full Range Leadership Model organizes leader behavior along a spectrum from passive avoidance through

transactional exchange to transformational influence [2]. Transformational leadership in this model has four components. Idealized influence involves modeling behaviors that followers respect. Inspirational motivation means articulating a vision that energizes the group. Intellectual stimulation encourages people to try new approaches, and individualized consideration requires attending to what each follower needs to develop. Podsakoff et al. showed that transformational behaviors explained variance in followers' trust and citizenship behaviors that transactional rewards alone could not account for [12]. Later studies found a similar pattern in military, educational, healthcare, and corporate samples. A practical problem arises, however, with the model's measurement instrument. Followers fill out the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire after weeks or months of working under the same leader. A moving crew leader works with a given team for one shift, sometimes for a single three-hour job. There is no accumulated impression to rate; what matters is observable behavior within that window.

Functional leadership theory shifts attention from who the leader is to what the leader does for the team. Zaccaro et al. defined team leadership as identifying and satisfying whatever a team needs to function [15]. Morgeson et al. built on that idea by sorting leadership functions into two temporal phases. Before the task begins (transition phase), leaders compose the team, define the mission, set expectations, plan, train, make sense of the situation, and give feedback [10]. During the task (action phase), they monitor progress, manage boundaries, challenge the team, perform the task themselves, solve problems, supply resources, encourage self-management, and support a positive social climate. Burke et al. tested several of these functions and found that both task-focused acts (structuring, monitoring) and person-focused acts (supporting, developing) contributed to performance, though the balance between them shifted with the type of task [3]. For moving crews, this functional lens works better than trait or style models because it points to concrete,

observable acts rather than abstract tendencies. Where it falls short is a blind spot shared with every framework in Table 1: none of the listed functions considers what happens when the leader is physically performing the team task and running low on the cognitive energy that leadership demands.

Table 1

Leadership frameworks and their applicability to physically intensive mobile work teams

Framework	Key Construct	Studied Contexts	Applicability to Moving	Limitation for Moving
Full Range Leadership [2]	Transformational vs transactional behaviors	Office, military, education	Inspirational motivation and individualized consideration relevant to crew morale	Requires ongoing leader-follower relationship; crews rotate daily
Functional Leadership [10; 15]	Leadership functions across transition and action phases	Manufacturing, R&D, project teams	Transition/action distinction maps onto pre-job briefing and during-job execution	Does not model leader performing physical task alongside team
Team Processes [9]	Transition, action, interpersonal process categories	Laboratory and project teams	Process categories applicable to crew coordination and conflict management	No fatigue or physical workload dimension; assumes phase separation
Shared Leadership [11]	Distributed influence across team members	Knowledge work, change management	Informal task sharing occurs naturally among experienced movers	Single point of client accountability limits distribution
Psychological Safety [5]	Voice behavior, error reporting, learning	Healthcare, technology teams	Error reporting relevant to damage prevention and safety	Climate builds over repeated interaction; crews may meet once
Extreme Context Leadership [6]	Threat, complexity, time urgency	Military, emergency response	Physical risk, time pressure, unpredictable conditions present	Leader coordinates but does not share physical workload

Source: compiled by the author from published literature

Two additional research streams inform the design of FLBI. First, team development and adaptation research raises the question of how quickly a group can become functional. Tuckman described four stages that small groups move through: forming, storming, norming, and performing. Groups in his studies interacted over weeks or longer [13]. Moving crews do not have that luxury; someone who announces role assignments in the first five minutes of a shift is compressing what Tuckman observed as an organic process into a deliberate act. LePine looked at what happens when task demands change unexpectedly and found two things: teams with strong goal commitment adapted faster, and individual cognitive ability mattered for adaptation speed regardless of group composition [8]. For moving, this means that putting the right person on the right task after an on-site surprise is not just a logistical convenience but a leadership act with measurable performance consequences. DeChurch and Mesmer-Magnus extended this line of work by meta-analyzing the relationship between shared mental models and team performance [4]. Shared cognition predicted both team process quality and outcomes, especially when mental models were task-focused rather than team-focused. In moving, the person who announces the loading sequence before the first box is carried creates a task-focused mental model that substitutes for the team familiarity built over weeks in other work settings.

Second, research on leader interventions in self-managing teams addresses the tension between directing and empowering. Wageman examined 43 self-managing teams at Xerox and found that leaders who provided clear direction at the start and coaching during execution produced better outcomes than leaders who either micromanaged throughout or withdrew entirely [14]. Effective intervention was about timing, not volume: brief, well-placed coaching moments outperformed continuous oversight. Moving crew leaders face an amplified version of this dynamic because the physical pace of the work does not allow for extended

conversation. Coaching must fit into the brief pause between one carry and the next. This constraint makes behavioral specificity essential: a crew leader who says "slow down on the stairs, the banister is loose" is performing a person-focused leadership function compressed into a format that no existing leadership instrument captures [3].

Across these six frameworks and two additional research streams, a pattern emerges: each body of work illuminates one or two dimensions of the moving crew leader's role while leaving others unaddressed. Transformational leadership captures the motivational dimension but not the physical one. Functional leadership captures the behavioral dimension but assumes the leader stands apart from the task. Team process models capture coordination but not fatigue. FLBI was designed to integrate these partial views into a single observation instrument calibrated for the specific conditions of physically intensive, client-facing, single-shift mobile teamwork.

Materials and Methods. Data were collected at a USDOT-registered household goods carrier operating in a major metropolitan area in the northeastern United States. Unlike prior analyses of dispatch-level and deviation-level records at the same company, the present study operates at a different unit: the individual crew leader observed across an entire shift. A trained observer, an office staff member with four years of operational experience but no active crew role during the study period, accompanied crews on 120 shifts between March 2024 and February 2025. On a typical move, the crew leader assigns functional roles (lead mover controlling the sequence, a stabilizer managing balance on heavy items, and a spotter clearing the path), and FLBI codes how the leader manages these assignments across the shift. Observer presence may have influenced crew leader behavior; this reactivity concern is addressed in the limitations discussion in Section 4. Sixty shifts fell in Period A (March through August 2024, before the introduction of structured protocols at the company) and sixty in Period B (September 2024 through February

2025, after protocol adoption). Shifts were selected to cover all days of the week, both peak and off-peak seasons, and a range of job types (local apartment moves, office relocations, long-distance loads). Fourteen crew leaders were included in the study, with each leader appearing in five to twelve shifts depending on scheduling availability. Given the small number of crew leaders, quartile boundaries used in the analysis are approximate, and results should be interpreted as indicative patterns rather than definitive effects. Crew composition varied across shifts; the observer recorded which team members were present but coded only the crew leader's behavior.

FLBI classifies crew leader behaviors into three categories of four items each. Task-oriented behaviors capture how the leader organizes and controls the physical work: workload sequencing (announcing which rooms or items to load first and in what order), equipment staging oversight (verifying that dollies, blankets, straps, and specialty tools are positioned before carrying begins), pace setting (adjusting speed verbally or through personal example to match job demands), and quality checkpoints (pausing to inspect wrapping, stacking, or truck loading before proceeding to the next stage). Relational behaviors address team energy and cohesion. Verbal encouragement covers any instance where the leader acknowledges effort by name or gives brief positive feedback during a carry. Physical co-participation means the leader works alongside the crew on heavy or awkward items instead of directing from the truck. Conflict de-escalation involves stepping in when disagreements over task allocation or pace arise between team members. Break timing captures whether the leader initiates rest periods based on workload and weather conditions or waits for crew members to ask. Adaptive behaviors cover responses to changing conditions. Scope communication means informing the team promptly when job parameters shift. Role reassignment involves moving crew members between tasks as needs emerge or fatigue becomes visible. Client

expectation management refers to reframing timelines or costs when on-site conditions force a departure from the original quote. Tempo adjustment captures moments when the leader reduces pace or changes the task sequence because cumulative fatigue shows up in slower movement, longer pauses, or a rising error count.

For each shift, the observer carried a printed coding sheet divided into 30-minute blocks. Within each block, the observer recorded whether each of the 12 behaviors was exhibited at least once (binary: observed / not observed). Binary coding was chosen over frequency counts to reduce observer judgment load during physically active shifts where precise tallying would be impractical. At shift end, the observer summed the block-level codes to produce a shift-level score for each behavior (ranging from 0 to the number of blocks in that shift, typically 4 to 8 depending on shift length) and a category score (sum of the four behaviors within each category). To assess inter-rater consistency, a second trained observer accompanied the primary observer on 15 of the 120 shifts (12.5%). Agreement on individual behavior codes reached 87% across the 15 dual-coded shifts; Cohen's kappa was not computed due to the small dual-coding sample, so this figure should be interpreted as a descriptive indicator of consistency rather than a formal reliability coefficient. Disagreements concentrated in the relational category, where the boundary between verbal encouragement and routine conversation required the most judgment.

Three shift-level outcome measures were recorded independently of FLBI coding. On-time completion was coded as a binary variable: whether the crew finished the job within the time window quoted to the client, with a 15-minute grace period. Damage incidence counted the number of items reported as scratched, dented, or broken on the post-job inspection form completed by the crew leader and countersigned by the client. Client satisfaction was measured through a single-item

five-point rating scale ("How satisfied are you with the crew's performance today?" anchored at 1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied), administered by phone within 48 hours of the move by an office staff member who had no knowledge of the FLBI scores for that shift. Outcome data were matched to FLBI scores by shift date and crew leader identity. Analysis compared outcome means across FLBI quartiles (top 25% vs bottom 25% of crew leaders on each behavior category), with differences assessed using Mann-Whitney U tests given the non-normal distribution and small number of crew leaders per quartile. Individual behaviors within each category were examined separately to identify which specific acts carried the strongest association with shift outcomes.

Table 2

FLBI behavior observation rates (% of 30-minute blocks, mean across 120 shifts)

Category	Behavior	Observation Rate
Task-oriented	Workload sequencing	81%
	Equipment staging oversight	64%
	Pace setting	84%
	Quality checkpoints	54%
	Category mean	*70.8%*
Relational	Verbal encouragement	61%
	Physical co-participation	74%
	Conflict de-escalation	29%
	Break timing	48%
	Category mean	*53.0%*
Adaptive	Scope communication	44%
	Role reassignment	39%
	Expectation management	36%
	Tempo adjustment	31%
	Category mean	*37.5%*

Source: compiled by the author from observer coding sheets (120 shifts, 14 crew leaders)

Results and Discussion. Across all 120 observed shifts, task-oriented behaviors appeared in the highest proportion of 30-minute coding blocks, followed by relational and then adaptive behaviors. Table 2 reports observation rates for each of the 12 FLBI items.

Pace setting and workload sequencing appeared on almost every shift; crew leaders consistently set a rhythm and announced what to load first. Equipment staging showed up in about two-thirds of coding blocks, mostly at the start of each job and after the truck was repositioned. Quality checkpoints were less common, appearing in just over half of blocks. Leaders, it seems, chose speed over inspection when the physical effort was sustained. Among relational behaviors, physical co-participation stood out at 74%, consistent with the expectation that most crew leaders spent the majority of each shift carrying alongside their teams, not supervising from a distance. Conflict de-escalation was the rarest behavior at 29%, which reflects the low base rate of visible interpersonal friction on any given shift, not leader avoidance. Adaptive behaviors clustered below 45% because they depend on triggering events (scope changes, emerging fatigue, client questions) that do not occur in every coding block.

Leaders were ranked by their mean category score across all observed shifts, then grouped into quartiles. Shifts led by the four highest-scoring crew leaders on the combined relational-adaptive dimension (n = 31 shifts) were compared with shifts led by the four lowest-scoring crew leaders (n = 28 shifts). Parallel comparison was conducted for the task-oriented dimension. Table 3 reports the results.

Table 3

Shift outcomes by FLBI category quartile (top 25% vs bottom 25% of crew leaders)

Category and Outcome	Top Quartile	Bottom Quartile	Difference	p (Mann - Whitney)
Relational + Adaptive	(n = 31 shifts)	(n = 28 shifts)		
On-time completion (%)	90.3	76.0	+14.3 pp	< 0.01
Damage incidents (per shift)	0.39	0.74	−47.3%	0.02
Client satisfaction (1–5)	4.6	3.8	+0.8	< 0.01
Task-oriented	(n = 32 shifts)	(n = 27 shifts)		
On-time completion (%)	84.6	80.2	+4.4 pp	0.31
Damage incidents (per shift)	0.53	0.62	−14.5%	0.44
Client satisfaction (1–5)	4.2	4.0	+0.2	0.38

Source: compiled by the author from FLBI coding and matched shift outcome records

Relational and adaptive behaviors separated high-performing from low-performing crew leaders far more sharply than task-oriented behaviors did. On-time completion differed by 14 percentage points across relational-adaptive quartiles but by only 4 points across task-oriented quartiles. Damage incidence nearly halved in the top relational-adaptive group (0.39 vs 0.74 per shift), while task-oriented quartile differences were marginal and statistically non-significant. Client satisfaction followed the same pattern: a gap of 0.8 points on a 5-point scale between relational-adaptive extremes, versus 0.2 points for task-oriented extremes.

Why did task-oriented behaviors, the most frequently recorded category, predict outcomes so weakly? One explanation is ceiling effects: because workload sequencing and pace setting appeared on nearly every shift regardless of leader

quality, they failed to differentiate strong leaders from weak ones. A behavior that everybody performs cannot predict who performs well. Morgeson et al. noted a similar pattern in their review: task-structuring functions are necessary for team functioning but rarely sufficient for team excellence, which depends more on interpersonal and adaptive functions [10]. Burke et al. arrived at the same conclusion from a different direction, finding that person-focused leadership behaviors gained predictive weight as task complexity increased [3]. Moving fits squarely into that logic. Carrying, wrapping, and loading furniture is physically hard but procedurally simple, so a baseline level of task management gets the job done. Where crew leaders diverge is in how they keep the team's energy up, handle friction when it surfaces, and pivot when something unexpected changes the plan.

When individual behaviors were examined, four stood out. Break timing had the tightest connection to on-time completion. Crew leaders who called breaks before anyone looked exhausted finished on schedule more often than those who waited for someone to ask. Late breaks created a recognizable cascade: the team pushed past its efficient output window, needed longer to recover, then rushed through the remaining work, which produced both delays and handling errors. Tempo adjustment was most closely linked to damage: leaders who slowed the pace after noticing fumbled grips or labored breathing saw roughly half the damage counts of shifts where the original speed held. Verbal encouragement tracked most closely with client satisfaction, likely because clients watched crew interactions throughout the day and read a positive, talkative team as a sign of professionalism. Scope communication, functionally close to the client disclosure protocol used at the same company, was linked to both satisfaction and punctuality; telling the client early about a scope change appears to head off the cascading delays that come with last-minute renegotiation.

Connecting these findings to the theoretical frameworks reviewed in Section 2 points to a consistent interpretation. Bass and Avolio's inspirational motivation and individualized consideration map onto verbal encouragement and break timing: the leader signals that effort is valued and that individual capacity is being monitored [2]. Marks et al.'s interpersonal process category, which includes conflict management and affect management, maps onto conflict de-escalation and tempo adjustment [9]. Wageman's finding that well-timed coaching outperforms continuous oversight aligns with the observation that break timing and tempo adjustment, both brief interventions delivered at specific moments, were associated with outcomes more strongly than persistent procedural behaviors like pace setting [14]. What FLBI adds to these established frameworks is an instrument that captures all three dimensions (task, relational, adaptive) simultaneously in a setting where the leader is physically embedded in the task, something that questionnaire-based or laboratory-based instruments cannot replicate.

Period B shifts (after protocol adoption) scored modestly higher on adaptive behaviors than Period A shifts (41.2% vs 33.8% mean block rate, $p = 0.04$, Mann-Whitney), while task-oriented and relational scores stayed flat. Crew leaders trained on a structured field decision protocol used scope communication and expectation management more often, probably because the protocol handed them a ready-made vocabulary for those conversations. Encouragement, co-participation, and break timing did not shift between periods, which makes sense: these are interpersonal habits, and a decision protocol does not touch them.

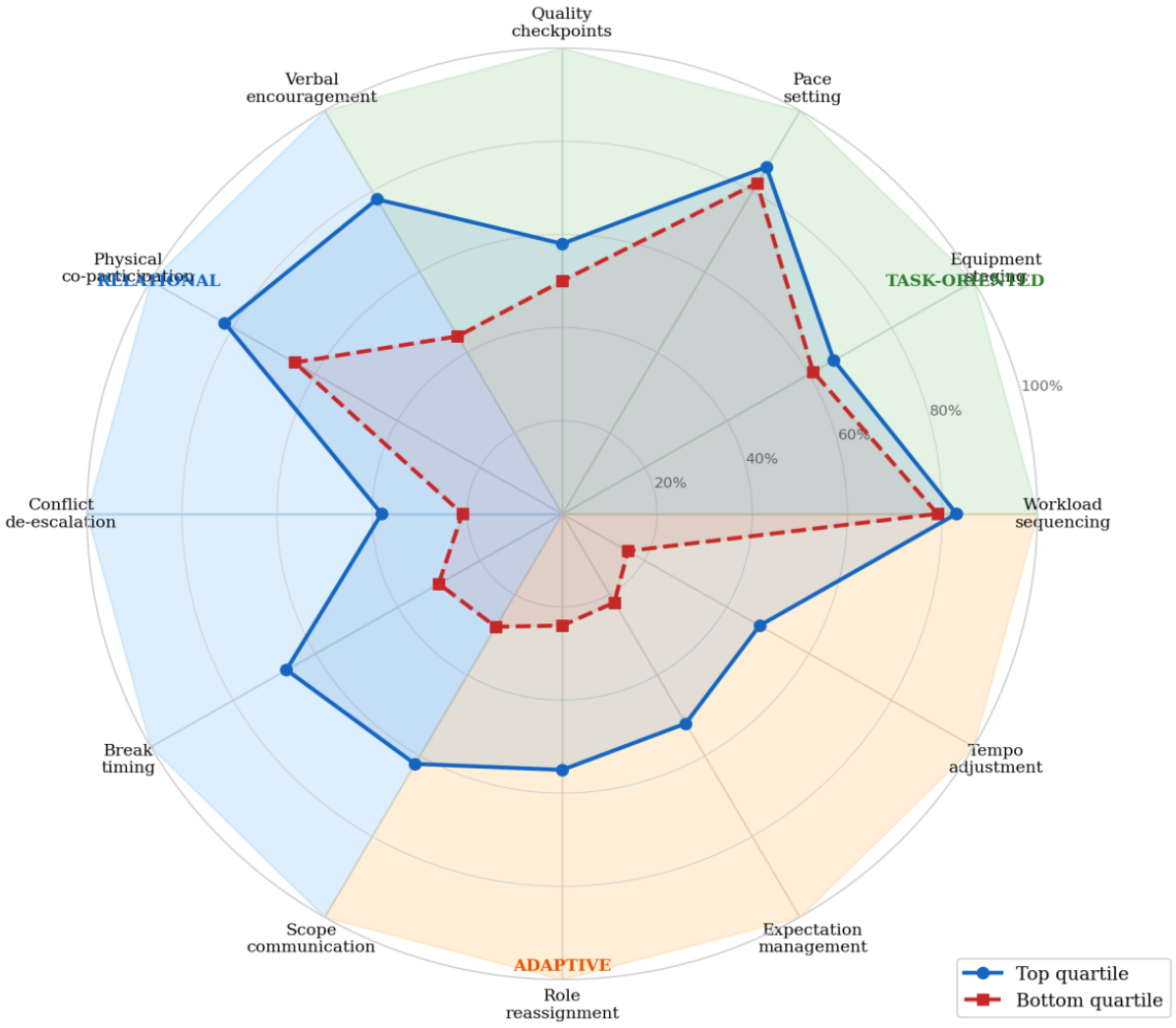

Fig. 1. FLBI behavior profiles: top-quartile vs bottom-quartile crew leaders (relational-adaptive ranking)

Source: author's development based on observer coding data

Several limitations require acknowledgment and qualify the strength of the conclusions drawn here. The study took place at a single company in one metropolitan market; carriers with different crew sizes, compensation models, or geographic conditions may produce different behavioral distributions. Fourteen crew leaders and 120 shifts constitute a small sample by quantitative standards, and with only four leaders per quartile, a single atypical individual can shift groups

substantially. Results should be read as suggestive patterns in need of replication, not as confirmed effects. Observer presence on the truck and at the job site is the most significant threat to internal validity. Crew leaders who knew they were being watched may have performed leadership behaviors they would otherwise skip, a classic reactivity effect. Because inflation would affect all leaders in roughly the same direction, the relative ranking used in quartile analysis is more trustworthy than absolute behavior rates, but even relative rankings may have shifted if some leaders were more reactive to observation than others. Binary block-level coding sacrifices granularity: a leader who encourages the team once in a 30-minute window receives the same score as one who does so ten times. A future version of FLBI could incorporate intensity or frequency scaling for behaviors that vary in dosage. Client satisfaction was measured with a single item; a multi-item scale covering communication quality, care with belongings, and punctuality would give a fuller picture. Finally, correlation is not causation. Crew leaders who score high on relational and adaptive behaviors may also be more experienced, more agreeable, or more motivated than low scorers, and any of those unmeasured differences could independently drive the outcome gap. Seasonal variation adds another layer of uncertainty: Period A fell during summer peak months and Period B during winter, and differences in job volume, daylight hours, or crew fatigue patterns between seasons may have influenced both leader behavior and shift outcomes independently of FLBI adoption. No control group of unobserved crew leaders was available, so the possibility that improvements reflect general organizational learning or other concurrent changes cannot be excluded.

Conclusions. FLBI started with a practical question: if a crew leader is lifting furniture, running the operation, and talking to the client all at the same time, which specific behaviors separate a good shift from a bad one? Observation of 120 shifts at a single moving company produced a clear pattern. Relational and adaptive

behaviors (encouragement, co-participation, break timing, scope communication, role reassignment, tempo adjustment) separated top-performing from bottom-performing crew leaders by margins that were both statistically significant and operationally meaningful. Task-oriented behaviors turned up on nearly every shift and told us little about who led well and who did not.

Three contributions emerge from this work. First, no comparable behavioral taxonomy for physically intensive mobile work teams appears in the reviewed literature; FLBI fills that gap. Existing instruments measure leadership through follower questionnaires administered after weeks of interaction or through post-hoc ratings of team functions. FLBI measures what the leader actually does, in real time, on a printed coding sheet carried by an observer walking alongside the crew. Second, the finding that relational and adaptive behaviors outweigh task-oriented behaviors in predicting shift outcomes adds field evidence to a theoretical proposition advanced from laboratory and survey data: person-focused leadership functions gain importance as task demands increase. Moving provides an extreme test of that proposition because task demands include the leader's own physical exhaustion. Third, FLBI's three-category structure (task, relational, adaptive) offers a practical diagnostic for crew managers. Someone who sequences work efficiently but neglects break timing or avoids scope conversations with clients can be coached on specific, named behaviors rather than receiving vague feedback about 'leadership style.'

Adoption requires minimal resources. FLBI coding sheets fit on a single page. Observer training at the study site took one four-hour session followed by five supervised ride-alongs before independent coding began. New crew leaders at the company typically need one to two months of supervised fieldwork before independent assignment, a timeline that targeted FLBI-based coaching could potentially compress. Companies without a dedicated observer could use periodic ride-alongs by operations managers or pair new crew leaders with experienced ones

for mutual observation, converting FLBI from a research instrument into a peer feedback tool.

Four directions would extend the evidence base. Replication across multiple carriers with larger crew leader samples would test whether the relational-adaptive advantage holds in companies with different crew sizes, compensation structures, and geographic markets. Following individual crew leaders over six to twelve months would show whether FLBI scores shift with experience and, if they do, which behaviors improve quickly and which prove stubborn. A peer-rated version of FLBI, where crew members score each other after each shift, would move the instrument out of the research setting and into daily operations.

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