
Earned

Participant workbook

Four days on leading through
other people

This book is for writing in. Roughly a third of it is blank on purpose, and nobody collects it.

NAME

COHORT

FACILITATOR

DATES

Start Here

This book is for writing in. Roughly a third of it is blank on purpose. What you write in it over four days is the only part of this program that follows you back to your team.

Nobody collects it. Not the facilitator, not your manager, not HR. Several exercises ask you to be honest about specific people and about things that have not gone well. That only works if you know the book stays with you, so it does.

What this program is about. You were almost certainly promoted because you were excellent at producing results yourself. This week is about a different job: producing results through other people. Those are not the same skill, and the second one is rarely taught.

How the four days fit together.

DAY	TITLE	THE QUESTION
1	Invert the Triangle	Who is my leadership actually for?
2	Build the Environment	What am I building for my people to work inside?
3	Lead With Your Ears	Am I hearing what my team is actually telling me?
4	Coach for Commitment	How do I turn compliance into commitment?

Day 1 works on you. Day 2 works on the conditions you create. Day 3 works on your primary instrument, which is conversation. Day 4 puts it together into something repeatable. Each day assumes the one before it.

How the room works.

- What is said about a named person stays in this room
- Bring the real example, not the safe one
- Disagree out loud. Silent disagreement costs everyone the insight.
- No laptops during practice. Nobody's forecast changes because you refreshed it.

A word on the mixed room. Some people here are two months into their first leadership role. Some are fifteen years in. That is deliberate. If you are new, nothing this week is a verdict on you — several exercises are mirrors, and mirrors are only useful if they are accurate. If you are experienced, the most valuable thing you can offer this room is not what you know. It is what you got wrong, and what it cost you.

Your Pre-Work

Bring these four things. If you have not done them yet, do them before Day 1 rather than during it.

- 1 Three names.** Someone on your team who is thriving. Someone who is stuck. Someone you have been avoiding a hard conversation with. Initials are fine.
- 2 Your calendar, last four weeks.** Do not tidy it up first.
- 3 One sentence, sealed.** *If my team were asked what I expect of them, what would they say?* Write it, seal it, do not revise it. You will open it on Day 2.
- 4 One decision you have been sitting on** for more than 30 days.

My three names: _____

The decision I have been sitting on:

DAY 1

Invert The Triangle

By the end of today you will be able to:

- Describe the difference between leadership organized around yourself and leadership organized around your people
- Identify which one you default to under pressure — which is the one that counts
- Name the small number of activities where your leadership actually creates value

The opening question. Write your honest answer before the discussion starts.

When your team hits their number, how much of that is you?

Key ideas — Day 1

Management is appointed. Leadership is earned. A title arrives by requisition. Influence accrues, or it does not, based on what people experience of you over time.

Independence to interdependence. The traits that got you promoted — self-reliance, speed, personal ownership, the instinct to take the wheel — are the traits of an excellent individual producer. They are genuinely valuable and they are precisely what caps you now. Interdependence is producing results through the combined effort of people who do not report their inner lives to you.

Three signals you are still operating independently:

- 1 You take the pen — in reviews you rewrite the strategy rather than improving theirs
- 2 You are the escalation path for everything
- 3 Your team's performance is bimodal — the people you spend time with are strong, the rest drift

The triangle. Drawn point-up, the org chart implies that everything good flows down from the top and the organization exists to serve the person at the apex. Inverted, the leader's function is to hold up the people doing the work.

SUPERIORITY ORIENTATION	SUPPORTIVE ORIENTATION
Tells rather than asks	Asks more than tells
Needs to be in every decision	Pushes decisions to those closest to the work
Runs on control; delegation feels like risk	Runs on trust; delegation feels like leverage
Oriented to problems	Oriented to solutions and opportunities
Holds information closely	Shares context generously, including bad context
Must be right	Can be wrong out loud

Supportive is not soft. It is not consensus, not the absence of standards, and not the absence of decisions. What changes is who the structure is organized to serve. A team focused on what the boss wants is focused inward. A supported team is free to focus outward — on customers. In GTM, that difference shows up in the forecast.

It is contagious in both directions. A VP who barks at directors produces directors who bark at managers. The last people in that chain are talking to customers.

Nobody drifts toward Supportive under pressure. It has to be built deliberately enough to survive a bad quarter.

Two distortions of the leader's role.

The Ivory Tower. Information is filtered at every hop by people reasonably managing their own risk. Four levels up you are working from a picture that is directionally optimistic and quietly incomplete. Dashboards feel like ground truth; what you actually know is what someone with an incentive typed into a field.

The Hero Trap. The leader who personally saves every deal builds an organization that cannot save one without them. It sets expectations nobody else can meet, creates dependency, hollows out the layer below, and requires an unbroken run of magic. The test for both distortions: what happens when you are out for three weeks?

Focus. Your core scarcity is not budget or headcount. It is attention — and its value is wildly unevenly distributed. For most GTM leaders the high-return activities cluster in four places: coaching individuals, deal strategy at genuine inflection points, removing obstacles the team cannot remove, and developing the next layer of leaders. The test for any activity is *what would have happened if I had not been there?*

Notes

1

WORKSHEET

The Independence Audit

Score each statement 0 (never) to 5 (almost always). Answer for how you actually behaved in the last 60 days, not how you intend to behave.

#	STATEMENT	SCORE
1	In deal or account reviews, I end up rewriting the strategy rather than improving theirs	
2	Deals above a certain size don't move without me in the room	
3	I do things for my team because it's faster than having them do it	
4	I'm the escalation path for problems my team could resolve	
5	When something is urgent, my instinct is to take it myself	
6	I know the details of my team's accounts better than they'd expect me to	
7	I find it hard to watch someone do something less well than I would	
8	My team checks with me before making decisions I'd be fine with them making	
9	If I were out for three weeks, meaningful things would stall	
10	I measure my own week partly by what I personally produced	

Total: _____ / 50

Below 15 — you have largely made the transition. 15–29 — you are in the middle of it, which is where most leaders live. 30+ — your independence is still doing the work, and it is capping your team.

The two items I scored highest:

What each of those costs my team:

2 WORKSHEET Orientation Audit

For each pair, mark where you sit. **Score twice:** a circle for a normal week, a square for your worst week this year.

SUPERIORITY ORIENTATION	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5	SUPPORTIVE ORIENTATION
I tell people what to do		I ask people what they think first
I make the decisions		I push decisions to those closest to the work
I need to know everything happening		I trust people with things I don't see
I look for what's broken		I look for what's possible
I share information when needed		I share context generously, including bad news
I need to be right		I can be wrong out loud
My team waits for my direction		My team acts and tells me after
Delegation feels like risk		Delegation feels like leverage
I'm in most meetings that matter		My team runs meetings without me
I critique performance		I coach performance
I set the standard and enforce it		I set the standard with them and hold it
I know my team's numbers		I know what's in my team's way

Normal-week total: _____ Worst-week total: _____ Delta: _____

The item with the biggest delta:

What triggers that shift:

What my team would score me, honestly:

3

WORKSHEET

Listening Post Design

What information reaches me last?

Who has it right now?

My listening post — a specific, recurring mechanism for getting unfiltered front-line information:

FIELD	ANSWER
What it is	
How often	
Who is involved	
The one question I will ask	
First date on the calendar	
What I will NOT do with what I hear	

That last row matters. If you debrief the rep after a ride-along, you have converted an information-gathering exercise into a performance review, and next time you will get a performance.

The thing I'm afraid I'll find out:

4

WORKSHEET

High-Return Activities and the Stop List

Calendar audit, last four weeks:

CATEGORY	HOURS	% OF TOTAL
Coaching and development		
Deal / account strategy		
Obstacle removal		
Everything else		
Total		

My high-return activities. Three to five maximum. For each, the test is: *what would have happened if I hadn't been there?*

#	ACTIVITY	WHAT CHANGES BECAUSE IT'S ME	HRS/WEEK
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

My stop list. This must not be empty, and the hours must be greater than or equal to the hours above.

#	WHAT I'M STOPPING	WHO I NEED TO TELL	HRS FREED
1			
2			
3			
4			

What will make me abandon this within three weeks:

Day 1 Commitment

FIELD	MY ANSWER
One behavior I am changing, as an observable action	
The person on my team who will notice first	
The specific day next week it happens	

Your partner's only job is to ask: "How will I know you did it?" Keep rewriting until the answer is concrete.

DAY 2

Build The Environment

By the end of today you will be able to:

- Describe the conditions that produce high performance in a GTM team
- Audit the gap between what you think you expect and what your people think you expect
- Name the full cost of a mismatch you have been avoiding
- Position a change so that it lands

Today's premise: performance is not primarily a function of talent. It is a function of the conditions talent operates inside — and those conditions are a leadership output, not an accident.

Key ideas — Day 2

What people consistently want. Not primarily money. Money has to be fair, and unfairness is corrosive, but past a threshold it is a weak driver of discretionary effort.

- 1 **Inclusion, not exclusion.** Asked before the decision, not told after it. The opposite of inclusion is not hostility; it is being informed.
- 2 **Appreciation, not being taken for granted.** Specific and timely. The opposite of appreciation is not criticism; it is silence.
- 3 **Accountability — theirs and their colleagues'.** High performers want to be held to a standard and want their peers held to the same one. Under-accountability reads as *nobody cares* — and if nobody cares, why should I?

Almost nothing on that list costs money. It costs attention, which is why it is so often absent.

Only one version of a high-performance environment matters: theirs. The people who know what conditions would let them do their best work are the people doing the work. Implementing what worked at your last company is guessing.

Shared expectations — all three steps are required.

- 1 **State it.** Face to face, out loud, specifically.
- 2 **Clarify it.** What does good look like? What does failing look like? Vague expectations are worse than none, because both parties believe they have an agreement.
- 3 **Confirm and commit.** Both people say it back and agree, explicitly.

It runs both ways — the conversation is incomplete if you have stated expectations and not asked for them. And it is not the annual review; formalizing it into a twice-yearly event signals that this is the only time the conversation is permitted.

Coaching situation or genuine mismatch? Not everyone struggling is a mismatch, and most are not. A gap that responds to clarity, coaching, or a change in conditions is a coaching situation. A mismatch is a genuine misfit between a person and a role, where the gap persists *after* expectations were made clear and real coaching was applied. Leaders err in both directions — writing people off who needed clarity, and coaching for years past the point where coaching was the answer. The more common error is waiting far too long.

The costs of not acting, which nobody adds up: the work redistributes to your strongest people, who notice; your standard becomes visibly negotiable; peers who are delivering conclude that delivery is optional; your attention is consumed by one person; and that person loses years in a role where they cannot succeed. Frequently they already know.

Two guardrails. Everything here is downstream of having done the work — clear expectations, real coaching, honest feedback in time to be useful. Acting fast on someone who was never told what was expected is not decisiveness. And this is never a solo decision; it runs through your HRBP and the established performance process.

Change: three things that decide whether it lands.

- 1 **People don't resist change nearly as much as they resist being changed.** The resistance is usually about exclusion from the decision, not the substance.
- 2 **Everyone asks one question first: how does this affect me?** Lead with market logic and you have answered the wrong question — then spend three weeks relitigating it in one-on-ones.
- 3 **Change draws down a trust balance you must already have built.** Every kept commitment is a deposit; every surprise is a withdrawal. A change is a large withdrawal. This is why the same reorg succeeds under one leader and fails under another.

Timing is a real variable — the right change at the wrong time behaves like the wrong change. And a leader who announces a change while visibly ambivalent has authorized ambivalence.

Notes

5 WORKSHEET Environment Audit

If I asked my team "what would have to be true here for this to be the best job you've had?" — what would the top ten be, in their order?

#	WHAT THEY'D SAY	HOW DO I KNOW? (TOLD ME / OBSERVED / INFERRED)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

How many were inferred rather than evidenced? ____ / 10

Confidence that my top three are actually their top three (0–10): ____

The conversation I'm scheduling:

FIELD	ANSWER
Date	
Who's in the room	
My opening question, word for word	
What I'll do with the list within two weeks	

You are not committing to deliver everything. You are committing to respond to everything — which means telling them plainly what you will do, what you won't, and why. Environments are degraded by unanswered requests, not by declined ones.

What I'm afraid they'll say — and what I'll do if they say it:

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WORKSHEET

Shared Expectations Grid

Choose one person on your team. Be specific — "ownership" is a word, not an expectation.

Items in box 1 that do not appear in box 2 — this is the gap, and it is where your friction is coming from:

What this gap has already cost:

Now open your sealed pre-work sentence and compare it to box 2. What changed?

The conversation: Who _____ When _____

My opening line:

7 WORKSHEET

The Cost Ledger

The situation I have been avoiding (initials only): _____

First, the honest diagnostic:

QUESTION	
Have I clearly stated what I expect, out loud, specifically?	Y / N
Have I given real, timely, specific feedback?	Y / N
Have I genuinely coached this — not just mentioned it?	Y / N
Has the environment or role changed in a way that explains it?	Y / N

If you answered N to any of the above, that is your next step — not theirs.

The cost so far:

COST AREA	WHAT IT HAS COST	ESTIMATE
My time		hrs/week
Work redistributed to others		who, how much
Effect on peers / the standard		
Effect on customers		
Effect on this person's career		
Elapsed time since I first knew		months

What am I actually protecting by not acting?

What have I genuinely tried, and when?

The smallest honest next step. For most people this is a conversation that has never been had, or a call to an HRBP — not a termination.

FIELD	ANSWER
Next step	
Date	
Who I need to involve	

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WORKSHEET

Change Positioning Canvas

The change:

Is now the right time? What else is this team absorbing?

PERSON	HOW THIS AFFECTS THEM, IN THEIR WORDS (INCLUDING THE BAD PARTS)	TRUST 0–10	HEARS IT WHEN, HOW

Anyone below 5 needs a conversation before the announcement. Who:

Who helps shape this before it's final (include at least one skeptic):

Where does this break? (your partner's answer):

My opening sentence at the announcement. What changes for them comes first; the rationale comes second.

Day 2 Commitments

COMMITMENT	NAME	DATE
The environment conversation I will run with my team		
The expectations conversation I will have		
The avoided situation I will move on — and the specific next step		

DAY 3

Lead With Your Ears

By the end of today you will be able to:

- Name your own listening failure modes and interrupt them
- Adapt your communication to someone whose style differs from yours
- Use five language practices that change how your team thinks and works
- Articulate a vision that connects a person's daily work to something worth doing

Key ideas — Day 3

The core argument. If you are talking, you are repeating something you already know. If you are listening, you might learn something you don't. Your central problem as a leader is that you decide on incomplete information. Talking cannot fix that.

It also does a second job at the same time. Being genuinely heard is one of the strongest signals of inclusion and appreciation a person can get — the two things Day 2 said people most want. Listening is not a technique that happens to be polite. It is the delivery mechanism for the environment you decided yesterday to build.

Four listening failure modes, and what to do instead.

FAILURE MODE	WHAT IT IS	COUNTERMEASURE
The compulsion to talk	Spikes when challenged, annoyed, enthusiastic, asked something you know, or facing silence	Recognize the trigger and stop. If that isn't enough, bite your tongue — literally. It works.
Lock-on / lock-out	Something grabs you and you stop hearing everything after it	Write the thought down. Two words parks it and frees your attention.
Answering too fast	Often under a second between question and response. Nobody thought in that gap.	Three seconds of silence twice — after you ask, and after they finish
Listening to respond	Queue management: holding your answer, waiting for an opening	Before responding, be able to state their position well enough that they'd agree with your summary

Enthusiasm is the sneaky one. It feels like engagement and it is the same behavior.

The second pause is the valuable one. Waiting three seconds after someone finishes reliably produces a second, better answer they would not otherwise have given. It feels endless to you and is invisible to them.

Dominating is not controlling. The person talking most is dominating the conversation. The person listening — choosing what to ask, deciding where it goes, holding the information — is in control. You control a conversation by listening to it.

Three conversations are always running: the one you can hear, the one in their head, and the one in yours. The most valuable one to you is the one you cannot hear. Short of telepathy there is one way in — ask, then be quiet. *"Tell me what you're thinking." "How does that land for you?" "What am I missing?"* Working rule: never talk more than two minutes without giving them a way in.

Versatility. Leading everyone in the style natural to you means you are effective with the portion of your team that shares your wiring and working against yourself with the rest. Two observable dimensions: **responsiveness** (how much emotion someone shows) and **assertiveness** (how much they push).

	LOWER ASSERTIVENESS	HIGHER ASSERTIVENESS
Higher responsiveness	Amiable — relationship first, avoids risk, decides slowly, values appreciation	Expressive — big picture, fast, dislikes detail, needs recognition
Lower responsiveness	Analytical — detail, evidence, process, needs to be right	Driver — results, speed, wants options not recommendations

There is no best style and no leadership style. The point is not classification, it is versatility — noticing when someone is uncomfortable and adjusting so they stay receptive. Nobody evaluates an idea on its merits while uncomfortable, and if they find something wrong with you they will find something wrong with your message.

Watch your diagonal. The style diagonal from yours wants the opposite of what you want. That relationship is where your unexplained friction lives.

Under stress the patterns sharpen: Expressives attack, Amiables go along, Analyticals avoid, Drivers become autocratic.

Practical adjustments:

- **Analytical** — slow down, bring the data, be thorough, reduce their risk, stay businesslike
- **Driver** — lead with the outcome, offer options rather than a recommendation, respect their time, don't narrate your reasoning unless asked
- **Amiable** — allow time, be personal before transactional, provide reassurance, don't force an immediate decision
- **Expressive** — move fast, stay on the big picture, give recognition, and put the details in writing afterward

The language of success — five practices. Culture is not made of values statements. It is made of repeated conversational practice, and you control that more than almost anything else.

- 1 **Move background conversations to the foreground.** Unspoken disagreements are expensive precisely because they are invisible. *"What's the conversation we're not having?"* Then be able to hear the answer without punishing it — you get one chance at that.
- 2 **Shift from discussion to dialogue.** Discussion asks which view is right. Dialogue asks what is actually true and what each of us is assuming. Most stuck meetings are discussions that needed to be dialogues.
- 3 **Get alignment before agreement.** Alignment is *what* we're doing; agreement is *how*. Commitment to the how is theater without commitment to the what. Slipped deadlines are usually an alignment failure papered over with an agreement.
- 4 **Ask "what's missing?" not "who's wrong?"** One points at the past and produces blame; one points forward and produces contribution. In a loss review, "why did we lose this" gets a defensive narrative. "What was missing that would have won it" gets something usable.
- 5 **Replace either/or with and/also.** Some tensions are real trade-offs. Many are habits: grow the base or hunt new logos, hold people accountable or support them, hit this quarter or build for next year. Some paradoxes do not need resolving. They need managing.

Vision — three properties.

- **It is about the future, and only you are reliably looking there.** Everyone else is legitimately consumed by this quarter.
- **It is shared, not announced.** Test: ask three people separately and see whether you get the same answer.
- **It connects to the individual.** If it does not answer *what does this mean for my Tuesday*, it is decoration.

A vision without goals is a mood. Goals without dates are dreams.

Notes

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WORKSHEET

Listening Observation Sheet

Use this when you are the observer in a triad.

MEASURE	ROUND 1	ROUND 2	ROUND 3
Questions asked by listener			
Suggestions offered (should be 0)			
Longest silence held (seconds)			
Times listener interrupted			
Approx. talk ratio (listener : speaker)			

The moment the speaker said something they clearly hadn't articulated before — what preceded it?

One thing the listener should change:

When I was the speaker — what did I say that I hadn't said before?

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WORKSHEET

Versatility Plan

Where I sit:

Responsiveness: Low 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 High

Assertiveness: Low 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 High

My pattern: Amiable / Expressive / Analytical / Driver

My team:

NAME	PATTERN	EVIDENCE — AN OBSERVED BEHAVIOR, NOT A FEELING

My diagonal — the person who wants the opposite of what I want:

The last friction with that person. What it was about on the surface:

What it may actually have been about:

A message I need to deliver in the next two weeks:

VERSION	TEXT
As I would naturally write it	
Adapted for them	

The smallest adaptation that would make the biggest difference:

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WORKSHEET
Language Practices

PRACTICE	SCORE 0–10	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN IT'S ABSENT
Background conversations get surfaced		Parking-lot meetings; the real view never said in the room
Dialogue, not just discussion		Everything is a debate to be won
Alignment before agreement		Slipping deadlines; soft execution
"What's missing?" not "who's wrong?"		Defensive loss reviews; blame
And/also, not either/or		Energy spent collapsing a real paradox

The practice with the most upside for my team:

Where I'll introduce it:

FIELD	ANSWER
Meeting or conversation	
Date	
My opening line, word for word	

Do I know what my team's background conversation is? Y / N

The honest answer I'm most afraid of hearing — and what I'll do if I hear it:

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WORKSHEET

Vision to Reality

My team's vision. Three sentences maximum.

1 What will be true in 18 months that isn't true now:

2 Why that matters to a customer:

3 Why that matters to the person doing the work:

Two tests:

Would a member of my team repeat this without laughing? Y / N

What does this change about someone's Tuesday?

Goals:

#	GOAL	OWNER	DATE
1			
2			
3			

Building it with them rather than presenting it to them:

FIELD	ANSWER
Who helps shape it	
When	
The question I open with	

Day 3 Commitments

COMMITMENT	MY ANSWER
The listening behavior I'm changing, and where I'll use it	
The person I'll adapt my style for, and how	
The language practice I'm introducing, and the opening line	
The three people who will help shape my team's vision	

DAY 4

Coach For Commitment

By the end of today you will be able to:

- Distinguish compliance from commitment and explain why the difference sets your ceiling
- Run a structured coaching conversation using a repeatable model
- Leave with a written 90-day plan and a first conversation on the calendar

Two questions to answer before we start.

How many times in your career has someone genuinely coached you? _____

How many times were you taught how to do it for someone else? _____

Key ideas — Day 4

The traditional model:

people → power, authority, control → conformity and compliance → resentment → poor attitudes → struggling or mediocre results

It is not evil. It works, in the narrow sense that it produces compliance. **The problem is its ceiling.** Authority reaches a person's hands and their calendar. It does not reach their judgment, their creativity, or their willingness to do the thing nobody asked for — which in GTM is exactly where outlier results come from.

The alternative:

People → coaching → commitment → superior results

Note the capital P. And note what sits at the centre of coaching: conversation. That is the whole tool.

The engagement ladder. Place each of your people privately.

LEVEL	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
Committed	Owens the outcome; will make personal sacrifices for it
Engaged	Brings energy and initiative
Cooperative	Helps when asked
Compliant	Does what is required, nothing more
Resistant	Actively works against it

Two markers of a committed person. They are focused — they can state their priorities without looking anything up. And they will make personal sacrifices for the team's outcome. Nobody does the second without inclusion, appreciation, and accountability. Where people are unclear on priorities, commitment is structurally impossible, and it looks like an attitude problem.

Coaching is not:

- A performance review — periodic, documented, backward-looking
- Feedback — something you deliver
- A check-in — "how's it going" is a greeting
- Telling someone what to do

That last one is the hardest, because you are usually good at the job and can see the answer in ninety seconds. Give the answer and you get compliance with your answer. Help them reach it and you get commitment to theirs.

Seven characteristics of an effective coaching conversation:

- 1 **One to one**
- 2 **Performance related** — anchored to something observable, not a personality trait
- 3 **Timely** — hours or days, not the annual review
- 4 **Specific** — "you joined Monday's 9:00 call at 9:14 and six people waited," not "you're always late." *Always* invites them to remember the one time they weren't, and they will.
- 5 **Managed** — you plan and steer it, but they fill it. Roughly 90% of the time should be them talking.
- 6 **Relationship preserving** — a positive working relationship, which is required; not a friendship, which is not.
- 7 **Future focused** — the past is evidence, not the subject

Notes

The CUS Model

Confront · Understand · Strategize

The name is deliberately ironic. This is the opposite of what cussing someone out looks like — which is also why it sticks.

STEP 1 — CONFRONT (ABOUT 10%)

Put the issue on the table cleanly enough that they know exactly what you're talking about, without triggering defensiveness.

- **Be specific.** One clear, concise statement. Observable facts.
- **One issue only.** The most common failure. Someone who has been avoiding a conversation arrives with a backlog and unloads six things. Nobody can act on six; they hear an indictment and defend rather than engage.
- **Point forward, not backward.** Express what needs to change. Don't demand an explanation for the failure — "why did you" puts them into justification mode, and justification is not coaching.

Sounds like: "I want to talk about Monday's call with Halvorsen. You moved to the demo about four minutes in, before we knew what their close process looked like. I want to talk about how we handle that next time."

STEP 2 — UNDERSTAND (ABOUT 70%)

Genuinely understand what is going on. This is the step people skip, and skipping it is why most coaching fails.

- **Drop your agenda.** You arrived with a theory. It is frequently wrong and always incomplete.
- **Focus on their concerns, not yours.** What do they see? What is in their way?
- **Seek first to understand.** This is where all of Day 3 gets used — the pauses, the broad questions, the tolerance for silence.
- **Agree on the issue and its causes** before going anywhere near a solution.

Questions that work: "Walk me through how you saw that call." "What were you working with that I might not know about?" "What made that feel like the right move?" "What's getting in the way here?"

STEP 3 — STRATEGIZE (ABOUT 20%)

They own the solution, and you both know what happens next.

- **They generate the solution.** Ask what they think should happen. Then wait. Then wait more. If you supply it they comply with it; if they supply it they commit to it. That gap is the entire reason this model exists.
- **Agree on follow-up.** Specific and dated. Without it, the conversation was a chat.
- **Close positively and honestly.** Name the impact of the change and your genuine belief that they can make it. Not flattery — a real statement about their potential.

FIVE RULES FOR RUNNING IT

- 1 People are best convinced by reasons they discover themselves
- 2 Coaching is letting go, not controlling. Jumping in and fixing it is faster today and costs you every time after.
- 3 If you are talking more than 20% of the time, something has gone wrong
- 4 Patience. Give them a moment to think before demanding a response.
- 5 This runs on Day 3. Without the pauses, the questions, and the versatility, CUS is just a three-part lecture.

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WORKSHEET

Coaching Conversation Planner

FIELD	ANSWER
Person (initials)	
The single issue — observable, specific	
What I want to achieve	
What a good outcome looks like for them	

My opening statement, word for word. Specific, single-issue, forward-pointing:

Three questions for the Understand step. Broad, genuinely open, no predetermined destination:

1.
2.
3.

What response might I get? What if they get defensive?

What am I assuming about the cause that I might be wrong about?

Follow-up: What _____ When _____

Conversation scheduled for: _____

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WORKSHEET

CUS Observation Sheet

Use this when you are the observer. One per round.

MEASURE	ROUND 1	ROUND 2	ROUND 3
Minutes in CONFRONT			
Minutes in UNDERSTAND			
Minutes in STRATEGIZE			
Coach talk time % — target 20%			
Questions asked			
Statements / suggestions made			
Longest silence allowed (sec)			
More than one issue raised?	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Who produced the solution?	C / Ce	C / Ce	C / Ce

The moment the coachee said something the coach didn't expect — did the coach follow it, or return to their agenda?

One thing for the next round:

When I was the coach — what would I do differently?

15 WORKSHEET

Credibility and Mindset

Four characteristics people consistently require of leaders they will follow. Score yourself as your team would score you.

CHARACTERISTIC	0–10	EVIDENCE THEY'D POINT TO
Honest		
Forward-looking		
Inspiring		
Competent		

The underlying law: **if people do not believe the messenger, they will not believe the message.**
Everything else in this program is downstream of credibility.

My lowest. Two specific actions:

- 1.
- 2.

Where have I spent credibility without noticing?

Mindset — mark where you actually sit on each row:

SAFETY	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	DISCOVERY
Fights change		Uses change
Holds onto what worked		Reaches for what's next
Controls others		Trusts others and learns from them
Either / or		And / also
Independent		Interdependent
Plays not to lose		Plays to win

Playing not to lose is driven by avoiding the pain of being wrong. It produces the sandbagged forecast, the deal not pursued, the conversation not had. Every shot not taken converts at zero.

The row where the gap costs me most:

The one weekly commitment I could keep for a year:

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WORKSHEET

90-Day Leadership Charter

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The one sentence. The kind of leader I am choosing to be — written so that someone on my team would recognize it as true if I lived it.

2. Three behaviors I am changing. Observable. Someone else could tell whether I did it.

#	BEHAVIOR	WHO NOTICES FIRST	STARTING WHEN
1			
2			
3			

3. My stop list. What comes off the calendar to make room. This must not be empty.

#	STOPPING	TOLD WHO	BY WHEN
1			
2			

4. My first coaching conversation. Within ten days.

Person _____ Issue _____ Date _____

5. My weekly commitment. One thing, every week, for 90 days, without fail.

6. Accountability.

FIELD	ANSWER
Sending this charter to	
By when	
Sharing with my own manager on	
30-day check-in partner	
30 / 60 / 90 self-review blocks booked	Y / N

Signed: _____

Job Aids

These four pages are the ones worth keeping on your desk. Everything else in this book is yours; these are the parts you will actually use again.

Before a coaching conversation

Plan in ten minutes:

- What am I trying to achieve?
- What specifically will I open with?
- What response might I get?
- What does a good outcome look like for *them*, not just for me?

Then run it:

STEP	SHARE	DO
Confront	~10%	One issue. Specific and observable. Point forward.
Understand	~70%	Drop your agenda. Ask, pause, listen. Agree on the issue before any solution.
Strategize	~20%	They generate the solution. Dated follow-up. Close honestly.

Four ways it goes wrong:

- 1 Advice at ninety seconds
- 2 More than one issue in the confront
- 3 Filling your own silence
- 4 Interrogation — questions you already know the answer to

Before a difficult conversation of any kind

- Is this specific enough to be unarguable?
- Is it about the future rather than the failure?
- Have I asked what I'm assuming about the cause — and am I sure?
- Do I have the trust balance for what I'm about to ask?
- Am I prepared to hear an answer I don't want?

Before announcing a change

- Who is materially affected, and how does this land for each of them, in their words?
- Have I answered *how does this affect me* before I explain the rationale?
- Who has helped shape this — including at least one skeptic?
- Whose trust balance is under 5? They hear it individually, first.
- Is now actually the right time? What else is this team absorbing?

In any conversation

Three seconds, twice. After you ask. After they finish.

Never talk more than two minutes without giving them a way in.

When you feel the compulsion to talk, check which trigger it is: challenged, annoyed, enthusiastic, know the answer, or silence.

When something grabs your attention, write two words down instead of holding it.

Questions that beat mental telepathy: *"Tell me what you're thinking."* *"How does that land for you?"*
"What am I missing?" *"What's the conversation we're not having?"*

Five language practices

- 1 Move background conversations to the foreground
- 2 Dialogue, not just discussion
- 3 Alignment (*what*) before agreement (*how*)
- 4 "What's missing?" not "who's wrong?"
- 5 And/also, not either/or

After This Week

What happens next:

WHEN	WHAT
Within 10 days	Your first coaching conversation
Within 2 weeks	Walk your charter through with your own manager
Day 30	Self-review block. Which of your three behaviors is actually happening?
Day 30	Check-in with your cohort partner
Day 45	Virtual cohort reconvene
Day 60, Day 90	Self-review blocks

Your cohort partner:

Name _____ Contact _____ Check-in date _____

Three questions for your 30-day review:

- 1 Which of my three behaviors is actually happening, and which one hasn't started?
- 2 What came off my calendar? (The stop list is where these plans usually fail. Almost everyone adds; almost nobody subtracts.)
- 3 Who was my first coaching conversation with, and what surprised me?

One thing to expect. Your first coaching conversation will feel awkward, and you will probably conclude you are bad at this. You are not. Everyone's first one is awkward. The leaders who get good at it are the ones who did it badly forty times and kept going.

And one thing to watch for. The most common way a plan like this dies is quietly, in about week three, when a bad quarter arrives and the old habits are right there. Nothing you wrote this week is hard to understand. Almost none of it is common practice. That gap is the entire opportunity.

Your title was appointed. Everything after that is earned.

