



The L.I.S.T.E.N. Leadership Framework

A Practical Guide to Transformational Leadership

L - LEVERAGE VULNERABILITY

The Principle

Great leaders don't pretend to have all the answers. They create psychological safety by being honest about their limitations and inviting their teams into the leadership process.

The Practice

Admit when you don't know something. Share your commitment to learning and growing alongside your team. This isn't weakness—it's the foundation of trust.

Your Action Step - Text or email ONE person on your team:

"I'm working on being a better leader. What's one thing I could do differently that would make your work life better?"

Then listen. Don't defend. Don't explain. Just absorb what they share.

I - INVITE INPUT BEFORE DECISIONS

The Principle

People support what they help create. When you make decisions in isolation, even smart ones, you rob your team of ownership and buy-in.

The Practice

Before finalizing important decisions, bring key stakeholders into your thinking process.

Ask the magic question: **"What am I missing?"**

This isn't "What do you think?" (too vague) or "Here's the decision" (too late). It's an invitation to make your thinking better.

Your Action Step

Before your next major announcement, meet with 2-3 key people. Share your current thinking. Ask what you're missing. Take notes. Adjust if needed. Give them credit when you announce the decision.

S - STOP THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW MODEL

The Principle

Annual performance reviews are broken. Waiting months to give feedback creates surprise, defensiveness, and missed opportunities for growth.

The Practice

Implement **radical real-time feedback** through two-minute check-ins. Walk the floor. Have quick, specific conversations about what's working and what could improve.

Example: "Hey Sarah, got two minutes? That presentation yesterday was excellent because of how you handled the tough questions. Keep doing that. Also, I noticed the opening felt rushed. Let's talk about prep strategies. Cool?"

Your Action Step

Identify TWO people on your team. Give them specific, behavioral feedback in the next 48 hours.

Use this format: "When you did [X], it resulted in [Y]. More of that."

T - TELL STORIES, NOT STRATEGIES

The Principle

Nobody remembers your Q4 strategic priorities. They remember the stories that illustrate your values and make the mission real.

The Practice

Start meetings with stories that bring your culture to life. Highlight team members who exemplified your values. Make them the heroes. Stories communicate "this is what matters here" more powerfully than any policy document ever could.

Your Action Step

In your next team meeting, start with a story that illustrates your values. Feature someone else as the hero. Watch how it shapes behavior and strengthens culture.

E - ESTABLISH RITUALS, NOT RULES

The Principle

Rules create compliance. Rituals create culture. Rules keep people in line. Rituals build connection and belonging.

The Practice

Replace unnecessary policies with meaningful rituals that bring your team together and reinforce what matters.

Examples:

- **Weekly:** Every Friday, share "wins of the week" everyone shares one success
- **Monthly:** Host a "failure celebration" where teams share what didn't work and lessons learned
- **Quarterly:** Have lunch with a random group of employees to stay connected across levels

Your Action Step

Create ONE new ritual for your team this week. It could be as simple as starting every meeting with "What's one good thing from your weekend?"

The key is consistency. Do it every time. Watch connection build.

N - NAME THEIR BRILLIANCE

The Principle

Most leaders point out problems. Great leaders point out potential. People need to be reminded of their strengths more than they need to be instructed on their weaknesses.

The Practice

Look for the unique talents of your team members, especially those who are struggling or disengaged. Name what you see specifically. Invite them to lean into their strengths.

Example: "I've been watching you. You have this ability to read room dynamics that I don't see in many people. Have you ever thought about taking on more of a people development role?"

Your Action Step

Identify ONE person on your team who's struggling or seems disengaged. Find their brilliance, the thing they do better than most. Name it specifically. Ask them how they could lean into it more.

Your Next Steps

Leadership transformation doesn't happen all at once. Pick ONE element of the L.I.S.T.E.N. framework to implement this week. Master it. Then add another.

The leaders who change everything aren't the ones with all the answers. They're the ones who create environments where everyone can contribute their best work.

Which action will you take first?

The L.I.S.T.E.N. framework is built on the principle that great leadership is about connection, not control. When you truly listen to your team, you unlock potential you never knew existed.