



A PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP GUIDE

SAME STANDARDS. DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP.

How to bring out the best in different employees
without lowering expectations

ONE STANDARD. FOUR CONVERSATIONS.

Adapt communication. Keep accountability. Develop capability.

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A practical path through the guide

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How to use this guide

Read with one real employee in mind. Notice the strength beneath the behavior, the point where that strength becomes unbalanced, and the leadership conversation that could help turn it into productive performance.

You explain an important change to your team and then...

- One employee immediately asks: “What result do you need?”
- Another wants to talk through the idea and how it will affect everyone.
- Someone else says very little, agrees with you - but a week later is still working in the old way.
- And another starts asking detailed questions before they are prepared to move forward.

Same leader. Same message. Same business objective. Four very different responses.

So what do you do? You explain it again... add more detail... become more direct... remind them of the procedure... Or eventually, you conclude that some people are simply more committed, capable or proactive than others.

Sometimes, of course, there is a genuine performance issue that needs addressing. But there is another possibility worth considering:

The problem may not be the standard you are setting. It may be that you are trying to lead different people in exactly the same way.

And that gap can have a significant impact on the performance of your team.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Same standards. Different communication.

Many business owners are proud to say: “I treat everyone the same.”

And the intention is usually a good one. You want to be fair and no one is given preferential treatment. You don't want different rules for different employees; on the contrary, You want everyone to understand what is expected of them and to take responsibility for fulfilling it.

That is exactly how it should be.

But there is an important distinction between maintaining consistent standards and using identical leadership.

Imagine introducing a new procedure.

- One employee wants to know the result you are trying to achieve.
- Another wants to understand how it will affect the team.
- Another is concerned about the disruption created by the change.
- And another wants detailed instructions and criteria before getting started.

They are all listening to the same announcement but they are not necessarily processing it in the same way.

Give twenty minutes of detail and your analytical employee may feel confident to proceed, while your fast-moving employee has already lost interest.

Give only the headline and desired result, and the fast-moving employee may be ready to act while somebody else is left with unanswered questions.

That does not mean creating different standards for different people.

- The objective does not change.
- The procedure does not change.
- Their responsibility does not change.

What can change is the way you communicate those expectations so different people can understand them, engage with them and take responsibility for delivering them. That is the principle behind this guide:

Same standards. Different communication.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Why your employees respond differently

Every team contains behavioral differences. You may have people of different ages, cultures, levels of experience and professional backgrounds.

Some are confident and decisive.

Others are sociable and enthusiastic.

Some are calm, patient and supportive.

Others are methodical and highly focused on accuracy.

And most people will show a combination of these tendencies rather than fitting neatly into one category.

This is why behavioral profiles should never become labels. They don't tell you whether someone is intelligent, experienced, honest or capable, and they certainly don't excuse poor performance.

Their value is much more practical.

They can help you understand how different people tend to respond to problems, people, pace and rules - and how your leadership can help turn those differences into productive behavior.

Let's look at four common tendencies.

BEHAVIOURAL TENDENCY

1. The Decisive Employee

Think about the person who tends to move quickly.

- They speak directly.
- They make decisions.
- They focus on results.

When a problem appears, they may be the first person prepared to step forward and deal with it. That can be enormously valuable to a business.

Their potential strengths include decisiveness, courage, independence and a strong orientation towards results.

But strengths can become limitations when they are not balanced.

Decisiveness can become impatience.

Directness can become poor listening.

Independence can become resistance to procedures they consider unnecessary.

The leadership mistake is to try to suppress the strength because you dislike its unbalanced expression. Instead, the aim is to retain the drive for results while developing the behaviors needed to use it effectively.

Leading someone with a strong D/Dominance tendency isn't simply about "giving them freedom because they're naturally decisive." It means setting clear objectives and being able to measure them, talking in terms of results and efficiency, communicating in a direct, concise and straightforward way, maintaining clear boundaries while providing a level of autonomy and decision-making authority that is appropriate to their role.

A USEFUL PRINCIPLE TO REMEMBER IS:

Result. Responsibility. Boundaries.

BEHAVIOURAL TENDENCY

2. The Influential Employee

Now think about the person who brings energy into the room.

- They connect easily with customers.
- They talk.
- They generate ideas.

They may naturally influence the atmosphere around them.

Their potential strengths include communication, optimism, creativity and the ability to connect with other people.

But again, strengths can become limitations.

Enthusiasm can become distraction.

Creativity can create too many unfinished ideas.

Confidence can turn into overpromising.

And a love of interaction can make follow-through less appealing.

If you only focus on the lack of organization, you risk missing the talent underneath it.

But if you only celebrate the enthusiasm, you risk accepting inconsistent performance.

Neither develops the employee.

Instead, recognize the contribution and then direct it towards a clear result.

THE PRINCIPLE:

Recognition. Involvement. Specific action.

BEHAVIOURAL TENDENCY

3. The Supportive Employee

This may be the person everybody likes working with.

- They listen.
- They help.
- They value cooperation.

They may bring patience, reliability, empathy and consistency to the team.

These are significant strengths.

But the same desire for stability and cooperation can sometimes make conflict and change more difficult.

They may agree when they have concerns.

They may avoid a conversation that needs to happen.

They may protect colleagues rather than challenge inappropriate behavior.

Or they may appear to accept a change and then quietly continue doing things the old way.

Because they are cooperative, it is easy to interpret: “Yes, that's fine...” as commitment but agreement is not always commitment.

When introducing change, this person may benefit from understanding the context, what will remain stable and having an appropriate opportunity to voice concerns.

THE PRINCIPLE:

Reassurance. Participation. Action.

BEHAVIOURAL TENDENCY

4. The Conscientious Employee

Finally, think about the person who notices the detail.

- They ask questions.
- They check.
- They want to understand the correct way to complete something.
- They may spot an error everybody else has missed.

Their potential strengths include precision, planning, quality control and high professional standards.

Very useful qualities.

Until the search for accuracy makes progress difficult.

Analysis can become overanalysis.

High standards can become perfectionism.

Caution can make decisions unnecessarily slow.

And repeated questions can frustrate a business owner who thinks:

“Why can't they just get on with it?”

You may interpret those questions as resistance. They may be trying to reduce uncertainty and understand the expected standard. That does not mean allowing analysis to continue indefinitely. Give them the relevant information, define what good looks like and make the deadline clear..

THE PRINCIPLE:

Information. Quality criteria. Deadline.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

One standard. Four conversations.

Now we can see what adapted leadership looks like in practice. Imagine an important end-of-day procedure is not being completed consistently. The requirement is identical for everyone:

It must be completed before the end of every shift.

With a decisive employee, you might emphasize ownership and results:

“I need you to take ownership of completing this procedure because it directly affects how smoothly the next shift starts.”

With an influential employee, you might connect it to their impact on others:

“When this information is recorded properly, the next team can serve customers with the same confidence and energy you bring to your shift.”

With a supportive employee, you might connect it to stability for their colleagues:

“Completing this consistently prevents your colleagues from starting their shift with missing information or unnecessary pressure.”

And with a conscientious employee, you might emphasize the standard:

“This procedure ensures that the information is complete, accurate and available for the next shift.”

WHAT CHANGED?

- Not the procedure.
- Not the deadline.
- Not the expected performance.
- Not the employee's responsibility.

You changed the way you connected that responsibility to the person in front of you.

That is adapted communication.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

But there is a trap

Once business owners discover behavioral profiles, it is easy to go too far and think:

“They're naturally influential, so organization isn't their strength.”

“They're supportive, so I don't want to put them under pressure.”

“They're very analytical, so deadlines are always going to be difficult.”

Or, “They're decisive. That's just the way they speak.”

But a profile can help explain a behavioral tendency; it does not excuse behavior that prevents somebody from meeting the requirements of their role. The purpose of understanding profiles is not to accommodate every preference, but to identify the strengths you can use and the behaviors you need to develop.

You don't need to remove somebody's decisiveness; you may need to help them develop their listening. You don't need to reduce somebody's enthusiasm; you may need to strengthen their follow-through. A supportive nature can remain a valuable strength while the person develops greater assertiveness, just as attention to detail can be preserved while someone learns to make decisions with sufficient - rather than perfect - information.

This is the difference between managing around people's weaknesses and developing people's capability. And that difference matters to your business.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Because this isn't just about communication

Better conversations are useful but they are not the final objective. The objective is what those conversations help your people become capable of doing.

Think about how much of your working week is currently spent answering questions, correcting misunderstandings, chasing actions, checking work or solving problems that have travelled all the way back to you.

Now imagine the alternative.

- An employee understands the result their role is responsible for.
- They know the standards that cannot be compromised.
- They know what they can decide.
- They can analyze an appropriate problem before bringing it to you.
- They contribute ideas.
- They understand where they need to develop.

And when you have a conversation, it creates an agreement that is actually followed up. That is where adapted communication begins to affect business performance. Because a committed employee who still needs you to make every decision is not yet autonomous.

An autonomous employee doesn't simply complete tasks alone. They become increasingly capable of generating results within a clear framework of responsibility.

And this is why knowing the four profiles is useful - but not enough.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Communication needs somewhere to lead

Imagine that you become excellent at adapting your communication. You know exactly how much context one employee needs, you understand when another needs more directness and also recognize when somebody needs an opportunity to contribute before they commit, but...

- nobody knows exactly what results their role owns.
- Decision-making authority is unclear.
- Procedures exist but are inconsistently applied.
- Meetings end without clear agreements.
- And every significant problem still comes back to you.

You may have improved communication but you haven't created autonomy. For that, communication has to sit inside a wider leadership system.

People need to understand the results they are responsible for, the standards they are expected to meet and the decisions they have the authority to make. They also need conversations that help them analyze situations rather than simply giving them answers, supported by clear agreements and consistent follow-up that turn intention into performance.

The system creates consistency. Leadership activates commitment. Management turns that commitment into results.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

And something else changes too

There is another consequence of this kind of leadership that is easy to underestimate: the working environment changes. A healthy workplace does not mean removing standards, avoiding difficult feedback or saying yes to every request. And it certainly does not mean using someone's behavioral profile to justify poor performance.

A healthy workplace can still have demanding objectives. What makes the difference is how those objectives are led. People know what is expected of them, understand how their role contributes to the wider business and have appropriate opportunities to participate, raise concerns and contribute ideas.

Their strengths are recognized and used deliberately, while their development areas can be addressed without turning them into personal defects. There are clear boundaries, accountability and space to improve.

Healthy and high-performing are not opposites. Good leadership should help you build both.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Before you finish this guide, think of one person

Not your whole team. One person. Choose an employee whose behavior you sometimes find difficult to understand.

NOW ASK YOURSELF THREE QUESTIONS:

- What strength might sit underneath the behavior that frustrates me?
- Where could that strength be becoming unbalanced?
- What behavior does this person need to develop to achieve the result their role requires?

THEN ASK ONE MORE:

Am I communicating in the way that comes most naturally to me - or in the way that helps this person understand and take responsibility?

You don't need to diagnose their personality from one conversation. And you don't need to change the objective to suit them.

- Keep the standard.
- Keep the accountability.
- But begin paying attention to how your leadership can help different people reach that standard because the goal isn't to create four sets of rules for four types of employees. The goal is to become capable of leading different people towards the results your business needs.

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Same standards. Better leadership.

If there is one idea to take from this guide, make it this:

Same standards. Different communication.

Treating people fairly does not require you to lead them identically and adapting your leadership does not mean becoming softer, lowering expectations or accepting poor performance. It means recognizing the talent in front of you, developing the behaviors that limit it and connecting that person's contribution to clear business results.

But this is only one part of building a team that can perform without depending constantly on you. Behavioral profiles can help you understand people, but they don't define objectives, create decision-making authority or establish standards. And they don't automatically turn conversations into responsibility, agreements and results. That requires a leadership system.

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

The Impact Leadership System on Substack is where we continue this conversation. We explore how to build teams that are more autonomous, accountable and capable of contributing to business growth, while creating a healthy working environment and reducing the owner's operational dependence.

You'll find practical insights on leadership, communication, behavioral profiles, accountability and continuous improvement, all connected to the realities of running a business with a team.

Join The Impact Leadership System membership
<https://theimpactleadershipsystem.substack.com/>

Because the aim isn't to become better at solving problems for your employees. It's to become better at developing people who can solve more of the right problems without you.