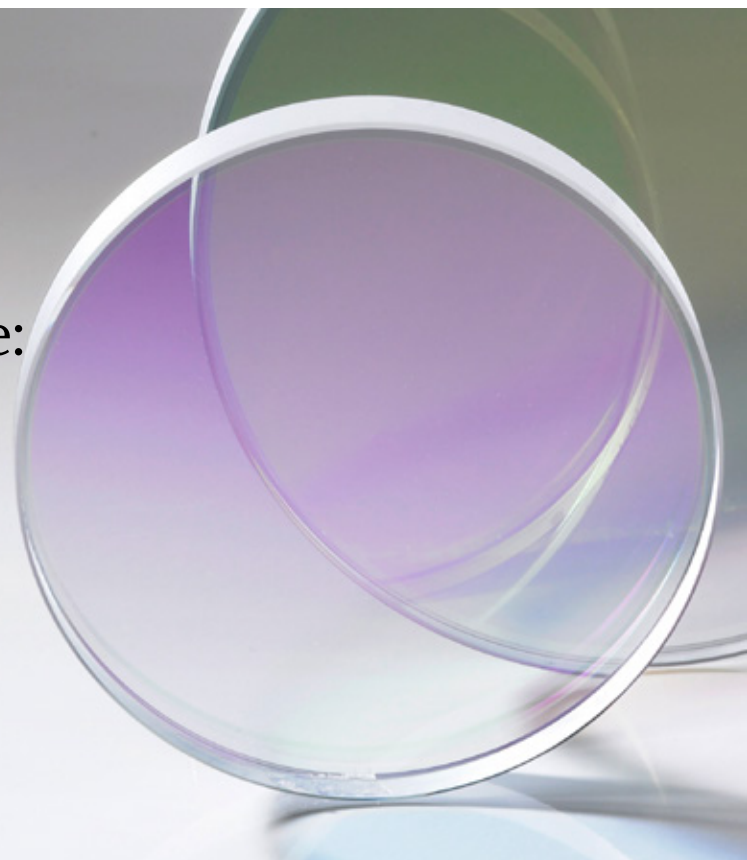


Seeing What Employees See: Actions for Team Leaders

How to address the slow drain on
motivation, contribution and performance



Leaders closest to the work carry the context for decisions made higher up, even when they can't share every tradeoff or constraint. When that context doesn't travel, employees rely on cues such as credibility, transparency and fairness to make sense of direction. Our data from 148 organizations and 400,000 employees show that when leaders are viewed as lacking credibility and transparency, a slow drain on motivation and contribution sets in, undermining collaboration, psychological safety and business performance. **This practical guide is for team, regional or enterprise leaders who set direction day-to-day, and want to consistently to strengthen their team culture and business results.**

ACTION: Verify messages land, don't assume

Even strong messages can miss. When context is unclear, people fill in the gaps and go quiet. That's how rework, slower execution and strained collaboration take hold. You'll know it's working when questions come early. That's a good sign. You'll see fewer late surprises and tighter alignment. Teams describe priorities the same way, without correction.

What To Do (Examples):	What You May Say:	What To Watch Out For:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Check how decisions land. Go beyond your usual voices. Ask a few others to summarize what they think is changing and why. » Use silence on purpose. After sharing priorities or asking for input, pause longer than feels comfortable. It signals that input is expected and safe. » Treat confusion as data. If something didn't land, resist correcting or defending. Stay open long enough to understand what was missed. 	<p><i>"I want to make sure I explained this clearly. In your own words, what do you think changes for the team? What stays the same?"</i></p> <p><i>"I don't want to assume this landed the way I meant. What is clear? What is missing?"</i></p> <p><i>"Looking ahead, how could this message create confusion. Where might that confusion show up?"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Relying only on "Any questions?" or "My door is open" instead of actively checking how the message was understood. » Only checking with people you trust or feel comfortable with, while missing where misinterpretation is most likely to show up.

ACTION: Make decision logic visible in day-to-day direction setting

People don't need to agree with every decision. They need to understand decisions. When the reasoning isn't clear, people guess. That guessing slows execution and drains effort. You'll know your communication is more effective when the noise drops and people have what they need to do their jobs. Fewer assumptions are made. Over time, confidence in leadership and perceptions of fairness grow because the logic behind decisions is clear.

What To Do (Examples):	What You May Say:	What To Watch Out For:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » When sharing a major decision, include a short "why" using a simple, repeatable format people can scan: criteria, options and tradeoffs. » Articulate what employee input was considered and how it influenced the decision. » If you can't share everything, say so. Be clear about what you can share now and what will come later. 	<p><i>"Here's how we made this call. We considered resources, customer impact and workload risk. We chose option B because it offers most opportunity to meet customer needs under our current constraints."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Over-explaining with long narratives. » Sharing the decision without the tradeoffs. Tradeoffs are where fairness is judged. » Avoiding hard or unpopular decisions without explaining constraints.

ACTION: Make room for disagreement early to problems later

It's more efficient to surface concerns early than to fix problems later. When leaders make it safe to question assumptions, teams catch risks sooner and make better decisions. Done right, this doesn't slow execution. It prevents surprises down the line. You'll know this is working when more truth travels upward. Risks surface earlier, conversations are more candid, and leaders earn credibility by addressing issues sooner rather than later.

What To Do (Examples):	What You May Say:	What To Watch Out For:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Invite challenge early, before plans harden. Use practices like asking, "What could go wrong?" or "What are three alternative views?" while there's still time to adjust. » Create a clear moment for dissent. Make it explicit when and where concerns are welcome, so people don't have to take personal risk to raise them. » Close the loop on what you heard. Say which risks changed your thinking and what you adjusted as a result. 	<p><i>"Let's pause. I want to make sure we're pressure-testing this. What concerns or risks haven't we talked about yet? What would change our thinking?"</i></p> <p><i>"Are you nodding because you agree or is there something else? What else should I consider to make sure we are fully aligned? What am I missing."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Treating dissent as a threat to efficiency or speed. The cost usually shows up later, not in the moment. » Letting only confident, familiar or likeable voices dominate the conversation. » Asking for input after decisions are already made. People can tell when the window has closed.



