



Solution-Focused Team Leadership: Simple Tools to Strengthen Your Team

Empowering Teams Through Strengths, Clarity, and Action



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Strengths, Clarity, and Action

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Workshop Objectives

- Explore solution-focused leadership and its benefits
- Practice reframing and accountability tools to use for yourself and with others
- Move forward strengthening working relationships
- Walk away with practical strategies



Why This Matters Now: Trust, Safety and Wellbeing

- 86% of employees cite poor communication as a primary reason for failure (Pumble, 2025)
- Chief Human Resource Officers (CHRO) rank leadership effectiveness & team engagement as top 2025 priorities (Gartner)
- Psychological safety drives performance and innovation (Edmondson and Kerrissey)
- Inclusive leadership improves psychological safety (Edmonson)
- Team Members must communicate with empathy, especially during change (Antin, 2025)
- Trust starts with frequent, authentic communication



CHROs' Priorities Emphasize Team Enablement

- 75% of HR leaders say managers lack tools to support team dynamics
- 2025 HR strategies focus on cross-functional collaboration and communication
- Gartner recommends enabling team-led solutions over top-down control



Solution-Focused Team Leadership

- **Shifts the focus** from analyzing problems to identifying possibilities and desired outcomes.
- **Engages team members** in co-creating solutions, fostering ownership and empowerment.
- **Uses strengths and successes** as the foundation for change and growth.
- **Encourages incremental progress** (“small steps lead to big change”), making goals feel achievable.
- **Builds psychological safety and trust** by valuing each person’s input and perspective.



Why Solution-Focused Team Leadership is Easier, Not Harder

- Focuses on strengths and possibilities—saves time spent on blame and rehashing problems
- Small, intentional actions create momentum without overhauling processes
- Encourages shared responsibility so leaders aren't carrying the entire load
- Builds trust and clarity, reducing misunderstandings and follow-up work
- Integrates into daily conversations—no extra meetings or paperwork needed



Psychological Safety Fuels Team Communication

- Open expression encourages knowledge-sharing and problem-solving
- Team members feel heard and respected—reduces conflict
- Safety increases participation in group tasks and dialogue

High safety = High voice + contribution



Safety Reduces Burnout and Conflict

- Clear norms reduce misunderstanding and silence
- Psychological safety helps teams navigate high-stress tasks without breakdown
- Studies link higher safety with up to 43% less absenteeism

Shared safety → shared resilience



Balancing Safety with Shared Accountability

- Too much comfort can lead to complacency
- Effective teams balance openness with honest feedback
- Co-create ground rules: respectful challenge, peer feedback, shared ownership

Safety + standards = high-performing team



How Teams Build Safety (8 Practical Habits)

- Encourage speaking up
 - Normalize learning from missteps
 - Rotate facilitation
 - Use check-ins
 - Create shared norms
 - Value curiosity
 - Give peer feedback
 - Debrief after conflict

Team safety is built in the everyday moments



Micro-Moments of Kindness Strengthen Trust

- Kindness builds safety faster than policies.
- Helping a peer, check-ins, inviting input = connection.
- Don't judge: Meet people where they are at.
- Even a thank-you reinforces respect and belonging.
- How do we keep team relationships human while still moving fast?
- You don't have to like the behavior, but you do need to care about what happens to people.

Kindness is a communication strategy



What is Calibration?



- The act of checking-in with peers to close any gaps of information.
- Borrowed from science and music—calibration means 'tuning' to a shared standard.
- In business, it ensures consistency in how performance, goals, and behaviors are assessed.
- It reduces individual bias by aligning the team to one benchmark.
- Calibration conversations are about fairness, clarity, and confidence in decisions.

Calibration: Why Teams Need It

- Creates Alignment – Everyone applies the same standards and goals.
- Builds Trust – Shared benchmarks reduce perceptions of bias or favoritism.
- Prevents Miscommunication – Clarifies gray areas before they become conflicts.
- Strengthens Results – Ensures fairness, accuracy, and accountability.
- Encourages Transparency – Normalizes differences in judgment, leading to stronger decisions.



Think of Teams Like an Orchestra

- Every musician can play their part, but without tuning, the sound is off.
- Calibration ensures the whole team is 'in tune' before performing.
- When aligned, the results are harmonious, powerful, and consistent.





Good Calibration Starters

- Can we pause and make sure we're seeing this situation the same way?
- I think we might be working from different assumptions—can we clarify what's expected?
- Let's check our understanding of the process so we're all moving in the same direction.
- I may be missing something—how are you interpreting the standard or goal?
- It sounds like we have different perspectives—what would fairness look like for all of us here?
- Let's identify where we see things differently and talk about how to close the gap.

Poor Calibration Starters (to Avoid)

- You're not understanding this right.
- We already went over this—why are we still talking about it?
- That's not my problem, that's yours.
- If you'd just follow the process, we wouldn't be here.
- I don't see why this is such a big deal.
- We'll never agree on this, so let's just move on.
- You're making this harder than it needs to be.
- This is how I see it, and that's the end of it.
- We've tried your way and it doesn't work.
- It's obvious who dropped the ball here.



10 Shared & Strength-Based Leadership Tools

- Move from problem-focused to possibility-focused.
- Use shared decision-making and recognize strengths.
- Builds ownership, motivation, and innovation.



If You're Not a Formal Leader...

- You can still model solution-focused thinking in your conversations.
- Ask reframing and possibility questions to shift team discussions.
- Offer strengths-based feedback to peers.
- Use tools like 15% Solutions to take initiative in your own sphere.
- Support psychological safety by encouraging and respecting all voices.



Tool 1: Reframing Team Challenges

- Ask: What's working?
- What's possible?
- What strengths can we use?
- What's the smallest next step?





Group Activity: Reframing Exercise

How would you rewrite this negative problem statement into a strength-and solution-focused one?

“Management doesn’t care about our workload, they just keep piling on more.”

“Our team is so burned out and short-staffed that we’ll never catch up.”

Tool 2: Solution-Focused Questions

- What's going well?
- What have we already tried?
- What do we want instead?
- What's the smallest next step?



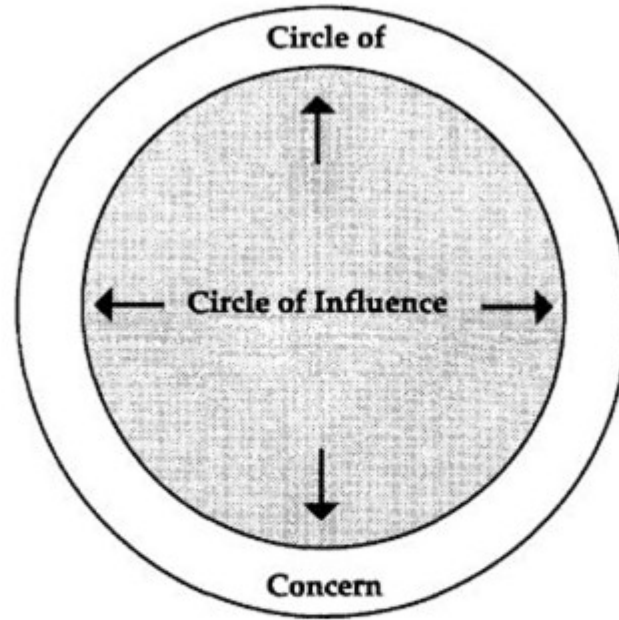
Tool 3: Motivating Accountability

- Replace control with clarity, calibration, and collaboration.
- Co-create next steps.
- Ask: What will you commit to?
- How will I support you?
- Who does What by When?



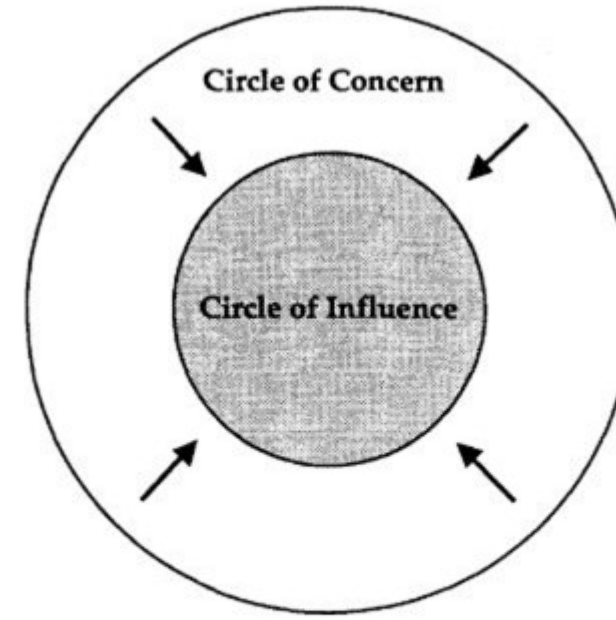


Tool 4: Steven Covey's Circle of Influence



PROACTIVE FOCUS

Positive energy enlarges the Circle of Influence



REACTIVE FOCUS

Negative energy reduces the Circle of Influence

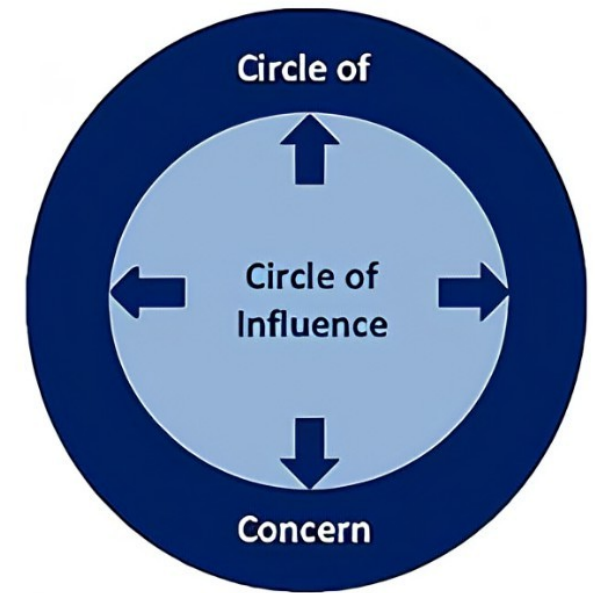




Circle of Concern: What you cannot control (e.g., economy)

Circle of Control: What you can change (e.g., your schedule)

Circle of Influence: What you can impact (e.g., team morale) if you can't change



Proactive Focus

Positive energy enlarges Circle of Influence

Tool 5: RAPID Check-In

- R = Results: What are we trying to achieve?
- A = Activities: What's already in motion?
- P = Points of tension: Where might we get stuck?
- I = Inputs needed: What support do we need?
- D = Decisions: What calls must be made?



Tool 6: Stoplight Feedback

The Stoplight tool uses the **red, yellow, and green colors** of a traffic light to guide feedback in a clear, simple way.

- □ Red = I'm stuck or frustrated
- □ Yellow = I'm unsure or cautious
- □ Green = I'm clear and ready to move forward





Explaining Stoplight Feedback

•Green = Keep Going

“What’s working well? What should we continue?”

Examples: “The way you start meetings with a check-in is really helpful. Please keep doing that.”

•Yellow = Caution / Adjust

“What could be improved, fine-tuned, or adjusted?”

Examples: “Sometimes we get off topic — maybe we could tighten up the agenda to stay on track.”

•Red = Stop

“What should we stop doing because it isn’t helping, or it’s getting in the way?”

Examples: “We should stop sending duplicate update emails — it’s overwhelming.”



Tool 7: Assume Positive Intent

Ask yourself:

- What else could be true?
- How might they be feeling?
- What do I want to protect: my ego or our relationship?
- What do I want for myself, the other person, and my organization?
- What stories am I telling myself about what's occurring?

Tool 8: 15% Solutions

Definition:

- A Liberating Structures tool that focuses on identifying the portion of a challenge or opportunity you can act on immediately—without extra authority, resources, or approval.
- Shifts the focus from limitations to possibilities.



Source: Liberating Structures - 15% Solutions
<https://www.liberatingstructures.com/7-15-solutions/>



Why It's Beneficial

- Encourages action instead of waiting.
- Empowers everyone to contribute.
- Builds momentum through small wins.
- Shifts mindset to 'We can start by...'



How to Use 15% Solutions

1. I will provide you a challenge or opportunity.
2. Ask yourself: 'What's my 15% I can do now without waiting?'
3. Reflect individually and write down ideas.
4. Share in pairs/small groups and refine.
5. Debrief as a whole group and identify next steps.



15% Solution Activity Sheet

The 15% Solutions approach focuses on identifying the portion of a challenge or opportunity that you can act on immediately—without requiring additional authority, resources, or permission.

Instructions

1. Review the challenge, problem, or opportunity at hand.
2. Ask yourself: 'What is my 15%—the part I can do now without waiting for more resources or approval—that will move this forward?'
3. Write down your ideas below.
4. Share your ideas in pairs or small groups.
5. Refine your ideas with feedback and identify your next step.³³



Practice Scenarios: 15% Solutions

1. A team member interrupts or dismisses others in meetings, creating frustration. What is your 15% to foster respectful collaboration?
2. Reports are often submitted late, causing delays. What is your 15% to reduce delays or improve information flow?
3. Team members hesitate to share ideas with leadership for fear of dismissal of their thoughts. What is your 15% to encourage idea-sharing and boost confidence?

Small Immediate Actions

Scenario 1

- Paraphrase and affirm others' ideas.

- Invite quieter members to share.

- Thank interrupter privately when positive.

- Suggest simple ground rules.

Scenario 2

- Send friendly reminders.

- Clarify what's needed and when.

- Provide a simple template.

- Adjust workflow for buffer time.

Scenario 3

- Suggest practice sharing sessions.

- Volunteer to present one idea.

- Propose submitting written ideas.

- Encourage contributions openly.



15% Solution Activity Responses



Scenario 1 Examples of Interpersonal Decision Making

A team member interrupts or dismisses others.

“Thanks for sharing. Let’s give everyone a chance to weigh in before moving forward.”

“I really valued the way you let others finish earlier — that made the discussion smoother.”

Scenario 2 - Problem Solving

Reports often come in late, delaying your work.

“Just a quick reminder — I’ll need your section by 2:00 tomorrow so I can get the report out on time.”

“I created a simple template to make this easier — would you mind trying it this time?”

Scenario 3 - Options for Success

Team hesitates to share ideas with leadership.

“Let’s practice together — why don’t you try presenting your idea to me first, and I’ll give feedback?”



Tool 9: “1-2-4-All”

A method for inclusive idea generation and discussion.

- Ensures every voice is heard.
- Builds ideas from individual → pair → group → whole.
- Encourages equal participation.
- Improves idea quality through refinement.





How 1-2-4-All Works

1 – Individual reflection (1 min).

2 – Share with a partner (2 min).

4 – Join another pair and refine (4 min).

All – Share highlights with the whole group (5 min).



Tool 10: Shift “Blame-to-Claim”

Reframing

-  *They didn't communicate clearly.*
✓ *We weren't aligned – how can we sync now?*
-  *Management never gives us enough direction.*
✓ *I need more clarity—can we define the next steps together?*
-  *This process is broken.*
✓ *Here's a part of the process I can help improve right now.*
-  *That's their responsibility, not mine.*
✓ *Here's what I can take ownership of—who else do we need to involve?*
-  *No one listens to my ideas.*
✓ *I'd like to share an idea—when is a good time to bring it up?*



Commitment & Debrief

- What's one thing you'll try this week?
- What conversation needs a solution-focus?
- Share in one word: What are you taking away?





Questions?

Thank You for Attending Today's Workshop!

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