CRUCIAL **INSIGHTS** FOR FIRST-LEVEL LEADERS

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First-level leaders are the **PERFORMANCE LINCHPIN OF ORGANIZATIONS**, but they're often thrown into leadership without resources or support.

These insights and exercises will make the biggest **TRANSITION** of your career and **DEVELOP YOUR PEOPLE** into a high-performing team.

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CHANGE YOUR **MINDSET** AS A LEADER

As a first-level leader, you're supposed to know the strengths and weaknesses of your team members, appear to have all the answers, and transition from focusing on your own results to achieving the team's results. You have to make sound decisions under ambiguous conditions, hold people accountable, and hit goals you may have had nothing to do with setting.

In this guide we've gathered six crucial insights for first-level leaders to help you develop your people into a high-performing team. You can use the included insight exercises to put these learnings into practice.

1 You need to change your mindset when you become a leader.

When you were an individual contributor, your results were the work you did. Now you're a first-level leader, so you own the results of everybody on your team. Your role is now to get results with and through others. You're still responsible for personal benchmarks but they take a back seat to ensuring that your direct reports hit their benchmarks, while they grow, learn, and even become leaders themselves. In other words: your people are your results.

INSIGHT EXERCISE

Identify the paradigms that made you successful as an individual contributor and compare them to those of a leader. For example:

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR'S MINDSET

- My own work is my number-one priority.
- I should always have the right answer.
- My validation comes from the recognition of my performance.

LEADER'S MINDSET

- My number-one priority is to get results through my team.
- My role is to help my team find answers to problems.
- My validation comes from the performance of my team and the growth of my people.

Pick one or two each week to consider and reframe.

PEOPLE SKILLS account for 80% of your success as a first-level **LEADER**.

TECHNICAL SKILLS account for 80% of your success as an **INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR**.

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How do I become a highly **EFFECTIVE** leader?

To answer that question, let's climb out of the crevices of the "day-to-day" and **CHALLENGE** the **MINDSET** that is bringing us the results of today so we may get superb results tomorrow.

STEPHEN R. COVEY

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THE **REAL** PURPOSE OF 1-ON-1s

2 The purpose of a 1-on-1 is not to check progress.

A common mindset is that leaders hold 1-on-1 meetings to monitor people's progress. But if our main interaction with our team members is to check that they've hit benchmarks, we drain their energy, zap their creativity, and drive them to do the minimum.

When done properly, 1-on-1s can be one of your most powerful levers to engage your people. In regular 1-on-1s, you can draw out issues, head off problems, test new ideas, celebrate successes, and encourage growth.

Talented employees **NEED GREAT** managers...how long an employee stays and is **PRODUCTIVE** is determined by the **RELATIONSHIP** with the immediate supervisor.

MARCUS BUCKINGHAM

INSIGHT EXERCISE

Although we recommend holding 1-on-1s weekly, your cadence will be based on your day job, your number of direct reports, your other commitments, and how demanding your manager is. With simple thoughtfulness, you can determine the best approach for you and your team.

Answer the questions below to determine what will work for you.

- How often can you realistically hold 1-on-1s with your team members? Weekly, biweekly, or monthly?
- What challenges will you face in honoring the time commitment? How can you prevent or overcome those challenges?
- When is the best time for 1-on-1s for you and your team members, given your schedules, existing commitments, and energy levels?

Now put those 1-on-1 meetings on your calendars.

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PLAN GOALS **WITH**, NOT FOR, THE TEAM

3 If you want your team's commitment, plan goals with them rather than for them.

When it comes to setting up their teams to get results, the common mindset of many leaders is, "I tell team members what to do and how to do it." But when we have this mindset, communication is tactical and directive, and we focus on controlling people rather than empowering them. These behaviors limit our results.

The effective mindset is, "I help team members get clear about the 'why' behind the 'what' and support them in the 'how.'" Leaders help their teams become invested in decisions, take ownership, and know exactly how their work contributes to the overall mission of the team, division, and organization.

You're measured by the results you achieve **THROUGH OTHERS**, not just the results you achieve on your own.

INSIGHT EXERCISE

You can achieve only a few goals with excellence. The more goals you have, the less chance you have of achieving any of them.

- Meet with your team to brainstorm your priorities. You might come to the meeting with two or three proposed goals you believe should be considered.
- After you've narrowed your focus to two or three initiatives as a team, formulate the goals in terms of desired results, using the following formula:

  "[Verb] [What you want to make progress on] From X to Y by When."

Examples:

- *Increase customer-satisfaction scores from 88% to 90% by January 31.*
- *Reduce project timelines from 48 to 38 days by the end of the fiscal year.*
- *Cut costs from $1.4 to $1.2 million by the end of the quarter.*

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FEEDBACK **ISN'T** ABOUT FIXING

4 There is more to people than problems.

Plenty of managers think their job is to point out all the ways their team gets things wrong. They think of themselves as "the fixer," which can result in a suffocating atmosphere of criticism. On the other extreme, some managers are so hesitant to conduct these sensitive conversations that they avoid feedback entirely. Problems persist, and their team is deprived of the opportunity to grow and learn.

Effective feedback is about unleashing potential. The intent is to help develop skills and address blind spots in a high-trust atmosphere. Great leaders create this culture through modeling: they continually seek feedback to build on strengths and correct weaknesses. A culture of feedback begins with the leader.

INSIGHT EXERCISE

Identify a team member who can give you feedback on a specific issue. Plan your conversation with the following framework:

1. DECLARE YOUR INTENT
   Let the person know why you want the feedback, typically to learn, develop, and get better as a leader. *"I've noticed that I could work on my communication skills, so I'm asking a few team members to help me identify ways to improve."*
2. ASK FOR SPECIFIC FEEDBACK
   General questions won't yield many insights, so be clear. "*In our next meeting, could you jot down what you notice about how I could better lead the conversation?"*
3. LISTEN EMPATHICALLY
   Feeling defensive about feedback is natural, but counterproductive. Seek to understand, not to explain yourself. "*So what you've noticed is…"*
4. ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEEDBACK
   "Thanks for the feedback. Let me think about how I can apply it."
5. EVALUATE THE FEEDBACK
   Use good judgment to determine what to do with the feedback.
6. COMMIT TO ACTION
   Make commitments carefully and keep them.

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Feedback lets team members know **WHAT YOU** value.

Frequent positive feedback reinforces the very best work **THEY DO**.

CATHERINE NELSON

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HELP YOUR TEAM **NAVIGATE** CHANGE

5 You must help your team navigate the disruptive aspects of change.

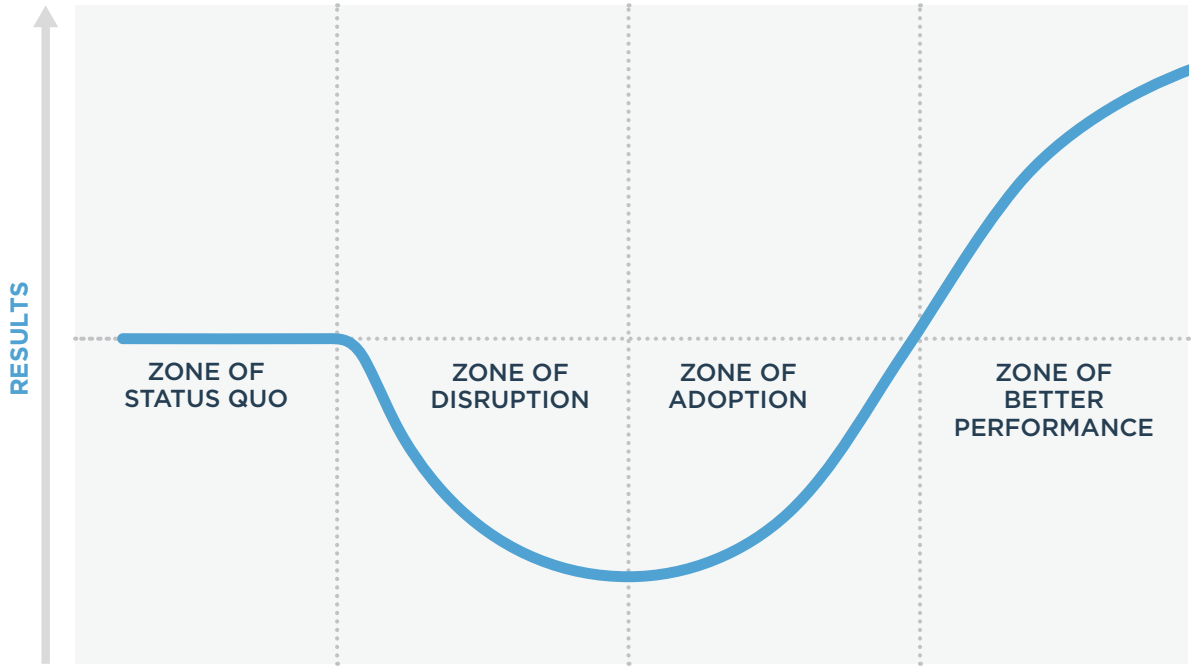
We all face change in the workplace: mergers, acquisitions, layoffs, office moves, new products, or updated technology. As a leader, you play a critical role in keeping your team productive during upheaval.

You can use the FranklinCovey Change Model to address the emotional aspects of change and lead your team through disruption to better performance.

INSIGHT EXERCISE

Identify the zone your team is in currently. If things are calm right now, you're in Zone 1. Perhaps a change was recently announced, and your team is reeling—you're in Zone 2. Answer the following questions about your current state:

- How do people feel in this zone?
- What actions do you need to take as a leader?
- What's the key takeaway for this zone?
- How can you prepare for the next zone? (If you're currently in Zone 4 after a recent change, get ready to begin the cycle of change again!)



ZONE 1: ZONE OF STATUS QUO

You and your team are doing business as usual before the change occurs, and everyone is relatively comfortable. Then change is announced.

ZONE 2: ZONE OF DISRUPTION

Emotions run high and results suffer as everyone reacts to the news and its implications. It's a time of high stress and uncertainty.

ZONE 3: ZONE OF ADOPTION

Resistance turns to acceptance. You and your team identify ways you can adapt to the change and learn new ways of doing things.

ZONE 4: ZONE OF BETTER PERFORMANCE

The change initiative has largely been implemented, and ideally you and your team are getting better results.

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DON'T NEGLECT **YOUR** WELLNESS

6 As a leader, you can't help your team if you don't help yourself.

The previous five insights focus on how you can help your team. This last one is all about you. The common mindset of leaders around managing their energy and time is, "I am too busy to take time for myself." That's a recipe for burnout.

Instead, effective leaders invest in themselves. They organize their time, prioritize, and keep commitments. They also make time for relationships, fitness, sleep, and rest. As a result, they thrive personally, model time and energy management for the team, and get better results.

INSIGHT EXERCISE

THE 5 ENERGY DRIVERS

Rate yourself in the following areas, on a scale from 0 as "never" to 10 as "always." Where you energy comes up short, commit to improve. You owe it to yourself and your team.

SLEEP

1. I sleep the same amount each night (and don't use weekends to catch up on sleep): _____
2. I get good quality sleep each night: _____

One change I will make to improve:

_____

RELAX

3. I have effective coping strategies to deal with stress: _____
4. My lifestyle supports my ability to manage stress: _____

One change I will make to improve:

_____

CONNECT

5. I connect regularly with important people in my life: _____
6. I have relationships at work that I value: _____

One change I will make to improve:

_____

MOVE

7. I get up and move throughout the workday: _____
8. I have a consistent exercise program: _____

One change I will make to improve:

_____

EAT

9. I eat nutritious food at every meal: _____
10. The way I eat provides sustained energy throughout the day: _____

One change I will make to improve:

_____

SCORE PER INDIVIDUAL AREA

(TWO QUESTIONS PER AREA)

0 – 6	Problem Area
7 – 15	Average
16 – 20	Doing Great

Which driver had the lowest score? Brainstorm one thing you can start, stop, and continue doing this week to improve that driver.

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For additional information about how we can help first-level leaders in your organization, email us at service@franklincovey.com.tw or visit franklincovey.com.tw.

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