Leadership IN Practice

A LEADERSHIP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

THE CONFERENCE COMPANION

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A 12-Session Leadership Development Experience

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WELCOME

Welcome to Leadership in Practice

The Conference Companion was designed to help leaders turn learning into action before, during, and after a continuing education event. This guide extends that purpose into a facilitated conversation for book clubs, study clubs, and leadership teams.

The twelve sessions follow the field guide's journey: preparing before the event, learning during it, and following through after it. You can use this guide after a continuing education event, in a leadership circle, or as preparation for the next opportunity to learn.

> **A COMPLETE, INDEPENDENT RESOURCE**
>
> This guide can be used by professional book clubs, workplace leadership teams, study clubs, peer circles, or individuals. Participants should have their own copy of The Conference Companion. Its sister guide, Faith in Practice, follows the same twelve session titles for groups who would also like to explore each theme through Scripture. The two guides are written to complement one another, and neither is required to use the other.

A Suggested 55 to 60 Minute Gathering

- Opening Reflection and facilitator prompt: 5 minutes
- Part One, Conversation Starters: 10 minutes
- Part Two, Go Deeper: 20 minutes
- Part Three, Group Exercise: 15 minutes
- Part Four, From Insight to Action: 5 to 10 minutes

Facilitator Notes

- Invite examples without requiring disclosure of confidential workplace, client, or personal details.
- The field guide's many blank response pages are tools, not assigned reading. Encourage participants to engage the prompts that serve their context.
- Do not attempt every question. Choose the ones most relevant to your group.
- Close by naming a small, observable action and revisit it at the next gathering.

TWELVE SESSIONS

Session Map

#	SESSION	STAGE	READING	GROUP EXERCISE	OUR DATE
01	Leading With Intention	Before	pp. 5–9	Intention Audit	
02	From Information to Transformation	Framework	pp. 1–3, 13–15	The Three-Step Translation	
03	Learning to Listen for What Matters	During	pp. 13–33	Signal or Noise?	
04	The Conversations That Change Us	During	pp. 35–43	The Better Question	
05	Curiosity as a Leadership Strength	During	pp. 45–51	Problem Before Product	
06	Learning From the Experience of Others	During	pp. 53–55	Transfer With Context	
07	The Leadership Lessons Beyond the Stage	During	pp. 57–73	From Contact to Connection	
08	Recognizing Unexpected Opportunities	During	pp. 75–77	The Unexpected Signal	
09	Choosing What Deserves Action	After	pp. 79–83	The One-Idea Decision	
10	Turning Commitment Into Accountability	After	pp. 85–93	Commitment With Coordinates	
11	Protecting Momentum When Life Resumes	After	pp. 95–105	The First-Seven-Days Shield	
12	Becoming a Leader Who Follows Through	The Practice Continues	pp. 107–131	Evidence of Change	

> *Reading pages refer to the print edition of The Conference Companion. Bring your copy of the field guide and a pen to every session.*

LEADERSHIP IN PRACTICE

A Leadership Discussion Guide for Book Clubs and Study Clubs Reading The Conference Companion: A Leadership Field Guide for Turning Insight Into Action

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SESSION 01 / BEFORE THE EVENT

Leading With Intention

FROM THE BOOK

Before the Event · Read pages 5–9, including "My Intention."

SESSION PURPOSE

Examine the difference between attending a learning experience and preparing for one, and identify the leadership question worth bringing to the next opportunity to learn.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

What changes when we arrive with a question rather than an appetite for information?

Opening Reflection

Most leaders prepare for a continuing education event logistically. We book the travel, register for sessions, and clear the calendar. Far fewer prepare with intention. We arrive hoping something useful will find us, and we leave with a full notebook and a vague sense that it was worthwhile.

Intention changes the experience before it begins. When a leader names the problem they are trying to solve, every session, conversation, and break becomes an opportunity to gather what matters. The question does not limit learning. It gives learning somewhere to land.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *Think about the last continuing education event you attended. Did you arrive with a question, a hope, or simply a schedule?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Invite brief responses from several participants; there are no wrong answers here.

- What is the best learning experience you have ever attended, and what made it valuable?
- How do you usually choose which sessions to attend?
- What do you typically do with your notes afterward?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

A director registers for a major industry event. She has a packed agenda but has not identified a single leadership problem she wants to solve.

- What would change for the director if she arrived with one clear question?
- Why do leaders so often prepare for the logistics of an event but not for the learning?
- How does "My Intention" (pp. 7–9) shift the purpose of attending?
- What is the difference between being open to new ideas and being unfocused?
- How could a leader involve their team in shaping the questions they bring?
- What happens to a team when a leader returns with ideas no one asked for?
- What would make the investment in a learning event easier to justify afterward?
- What is one leadership problem you are carrying right now that deserves a better question?

Part Three | Group Exercise

INTENTION AUDIT · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Name a decision you have postponed. Then complete each column below. Finish by identifying the first decision you could make without attending another event.

THE QUESTION	TWO PERSPECTIVES	FIRST DECISION
What I need answered	*Who I should hear from*	*What I can decide now*

Discussion: What surprised you about how much of the answer may already be within reach?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Some participants may realize they have been waiting for permission or certainty rather than information. Gently name that pattern if it appears, without turning it into a critique.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to write the question they will bring to their next learning opportunity.

THE QUESTION I WILL BRING TO MY NEXT LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

ONE PERSON WHO SHOULD HELP SHAPE THAT QUESTION:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice when you consume information without naming a purpose for it.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Before your next learning opportunity, write one question that would make it worthwhile.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Return to "My Intention" (pp. 7–9) and identify the question you most want to pursue.

CLOSING QUESTION

If I could only bring home one answer from my next learning experience, what would I want it to be?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 2: FROM INFORMATION TO TRANSFORMATION

Next time, we will explore why so many good ideas never become changed behavior. As you move through the week, notice the difference between being impressed and being changed.

SESSION 02 / THE FRAMEWORK

From Information to Transformation

FROM THE BOOK

Welcome and The Insight → Reflection → Action Framework · Read pages 1–3 and the opening prompts of Capture the Insight on pages 13–15.

SESSION PURPOSE

Understand the movement from insight through reflection into action, and practice translating one recent idea into a specific, owned, and dated behavior.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

How can a compelling idea become a changed behavior instead of another page of notes?

Opening Reflection

Inspiration is easy to mistake for progress. A powerful speaker, a fresh framework, or a memorable story can leave us energized and convinced that something has shifted. But energy fades quickly when ordinary responsibilities return. Within weeks, the notebook sits on a shelf and the work looks exactly as it did before.

The field guide's framework names the missing middle. Insight is what we notice. Reflection is where we decide what it means for our context. Action is what others can observe. Most learning stalls between the first and second step, because reflection feels optional when we are busy.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *What is one idea you heard at a past event that you still think about but never acted on?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Keep this round light and encourage honest, even humorous, examples.

- How many notebooks from past learning events do you still have?
- What is one idea from a past event that actually changed how you work?
- What made that idea stick when others did not?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

A manager returns from training with twelve pages of notes. A month later, no one on the team can identify a changed practice.

- Where does learning most often stall for you: insight, reflection, or action?
- Why does reflection feel optional when it is actually essential?
- What is the difference between being impressed and being changed?
- How might the manager's twelve pages of notes actually make action less likely?
- What would it look like to share one insight with your team instead of all of them?
- How do you decide whether an idea fits your context or only sounded good in the room?
- Who on your team is affected when you return with a new idea, and when do they hear about it?
- What would the manager need to do in the first week back to change the outcome?

Part Three | Group Exercise

THE THREE-STEP TRANSLATION · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Choose one idea you have heard recently, from an event, a book, a podcast, or a colleague. Move it through the framework using the columns below.

INSIGHT	REFLECTION	ACTION
What I heard	*Why it matters in my context*	*What I will do, by whom, by when*

Discussion: Which column was hardest to complete? What does that reveal about where your learning usually stalls?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Encourage participants to make the action column specific enough that someone else could tell whether it happened.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Invite participants to share their action aloud with one other person.

ONE INSIGHT I WILL TRANSLATE INTO ACTION:

THE PERSON AFFECTED WHO SHOULD HEAR ABOUT IT:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice the difference between being impressed and being changed.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Translate one insight into a dated action and share it with someone affected.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Revisit the Insight → Reflection → Action framework (p. 2) and the first session prompts (pp. 14–15).

CLOSING QUESTION

How much of what I have learned is still waiting for me to decide what it means?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 3: LEARNING TO LISTEN FOR WHAT MATTERS

Next time, we will explore how to recognize which ideas deserve our attention. As you move through the week, notice which ideas linger after the excitement fades.

SESSION 03 / DURING THE EVENT

Learning to Listen for What Matters

FROM THE BOOK

Section One: Capture the Insight · Read pages 13–33, focusing on the application prompts rather than filling every page.

SESSION PURPOSE

Develop the discipline of selective attention, distinguish signal from noise in a crowded learning environment, and practice evaluating ideas for real-world fit.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

What deserves attention when every speaker and idea competes for it?

Opening Reflection

A full day of sessions can produce dozens of ideas, and nearly all of them sound useful in the moment. The challenge is not finding good ideas. It is recognizing which few deserve our limited time, energy, and leadership capital when we return. Listening for what matters is a skill. It requires holding our current challenges in mind while we listen, noticing what connects, and letting the rest go without guilt. A leader who brings home one well-chosen idea often accomplishes more than one who brings home twenty.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *How do you currently decide what to write down during a presentation?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Invite participants to describe their actual note-taking habits.

- Are you a "write everything down" person or a "write almost nothing" person?
- What kind of speaker holds your attention best?
- What is one idea you heard recently that you could not stop thinking about?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

Two colleagues attend the same session. One records everything; the other writes one question that changes how she will lead her next meeting.

- What did the second colleague understand that the first may have missed?
- How can you tell the difference between an idea that excites you and one that fits your situation?
- What makes it difficult to let good ideas go?
- How do the Capture the Insight prompts help separate application from information?
- What role does timing play in whether an idea deserves action now?
- How might your team's current capacity affect which ideas are worth bringing home?
- What would "Monday morning" look like if you applied one idea from your last event?
- How could you listen differently at your next learning event?

Part Three | Group Exercise

SIGNAL OR NOISE? · Suggested time: 15 minutes

List three recent ideas. Evaluate each against the four filters below. Select one and explain why the others can wait.

RELEVANCE	IMPACT	FEASIBILITY	TIMING
Does it fit my context?	*Would it matter?*	*Can we do it?*	*Is now the right time?*

Discussion: Which filter eliminated the most ideas? What does that suggest about how you usually choose?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Releasing an idea is not the same as rejecting it. Encourage participants to keep a "later" list so good ideas are parked rather than lost.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to name the one idea they chose and its first step.

THE ONE IDEA THAT DESERVES MY ATTENTION NOW:

WHAT IT WOULD MEAN FOR MONDAY MORNING:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice which ideas linger after the excitement fades.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Ask "What would this mean for Monday morning?" after your next learning experience.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Return to a speaker-session reflection (pp. 14–33), focusing on the application prompts rather than filling every page.

CLOSING QUESTION

Am I collecting ideas, or am I choosing them?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 4: THE CONVERSATIONS THAT CHANGE US

Next time, we will explore the learning that happens in honest conversation. As you move through the week, notice when you prepare your response instead of listening.

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SESSION 04 / DURING THE EVENT

The Conversations That Change Us

FROM THE BOOK

Section Two: Conversations Worth Remembering · Read pages 35–43.

SESSION PURPOSE

Recognize the value of honest peer conversation, practice asking better questions, and identify one colleague whose experience deserves a follow-up.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

What can another person's honest experience teach us that a formal presentation cannot?

Opening Reflection

Some of the most valuable learning at a continuing education event happens between sessions. A hallway conversation, a shared table, or a few minutes in line can reveal what no presentation slide would. Peers often share what actually happened, including what went wrong. Those conversations only become valuable when we are willing to listen well. Many leaders treat informal exchanges as networking opportunities, trading credentials and quick advice. A better conversation asks questions, stays curious about failure, and resists the urge to fix someone else's problem too quickly.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *Who is someone you met at an event whose story stayed with you longer than any speaker's?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Encourage participants to share real conversations they remember.

- What is your favorite question to ask someone you have just met professionally?
- Do you find informal conversations at events energizing or draining?
- What is one thing a peer told you that changed how you lead?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

At a break between sessions, one leader admits a change initiative failed. Another leader politely changes the subject rather than asking what happened.

- What might the second leader have learned by asking one more question?
- Why do leaders often avoid talking about what did not work?
- What makes a conversation feel safe enough for honesty?
- How do you tell the difference between listening and waiting to speak?
- What kinds of questions invite a peer to share what really happened?
- When is advice helpful, and when does it shut a conversation down?
- Which of the prompts on pages 37–43 would help you capture a conversation worth remembering?
- Whose experience from a past event deserves a follow-up conversation now?

Part Three | Group Exercise

THE BETTER QUESTION · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Practice in pairs. One person describes a current leadership challenge. The other asks three open questions before offering any advice. Switch roles, then debrief together.

QUESTION ONE	QUESTION TWO	QUESTION THREE
Understand the situation	*Explore what has been tried*	*Uncover what matters most*

Discussion: How did it feel to wait before offering advice? What did the questions reveal that advice would have missed?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Remind participants that challenges shared in pairs stay in the pair. Encourage hypothetical examples if a real situation involves confidential details.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to identify one conversation they will pursue before the next gathering.

ONE COLLEAGUE WHOSE EXPERIENCE I WANT TO LEARN FROM:

THE QUESTION I WILL ASK THEM:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice when you prepare your response instead of listening.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Ask a colleague what they learned from something that did not work.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Revisit the colleague-conversation prompts (pp. 37–43) and consider whose experience deserves a follow-up.

CLOSING QUESTION

When was the last time I asked a question I genuinely did not know the answer to?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 5: CURIOSITY AS A LEADERSHIP STRENGTH

Next time, we will explore how to evaluate new solutions with curiosity rather than enthusiasm alone. As you move through the week, notice when a polished pitch replaces a clear problem.

SESSION 05 / DURING THE EVENT

Curiosity as a Leadership Strength

FROM THE BOOK

Vendor Discovery · Read pages 45–51.

SESSION PURPOSE

Practice disciplined curiosity when evaluating new tools, services, or solutions, and learn to define the problem before falling in love with the product.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

How do we explore a proposed solution without confusing enthusiasm with evidence?

Opening Reflection

Exhibit halls and vendor demonstrations can be some of the most energizing parts of a learning event. New technology, new services, and new ways of working promise to solve problems we have struggled with for years. That promise is exciting, and it should be. But enthusiasm is not the same as evidence. Leaders who are curious ask more questions, not fewer. They define the problem first, consider who will be affected, and identify how success would be measured. Curiosity protects both the budget and the team's trust.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *Think of a tool or service you adopted after a demonstration. Did it deliver what you expected?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Invite participants to share both successes and regrets.

- What is the best purchase or new tool your team has adopted in recent years?
- What is one you wish you had evaluated more carefully?
- How do you usually feel walking through an exhibit hall?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

A persuasive vendor demonstrates a new platform. The team is excited, but nobody has defined the problem, cost, or success measure.

- What questions should the team have asked before getting excited?
- Why is it so easy to fall in love with a solution before defining the problem?
- Who on your team is most affected by a new tool, and are they part of the decision?
- How do the Vendor Discovery prompts on pages 45–51 slow the decision down in a helpful way?
- What is the difference between healthy curiosity and skepticism?
- How do you measure whether a new solution actually worked?
- What hidden costs, such as training, time, or disruption, are often overlooked?
- How could the team in the situation above turn its excitement into a sound evaluation?

Part Three | Group Exercise

PROBLEM BEFORE PRODUCT · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Choose a solution you or your team are currently considering. Complete each column below before discussing whether it is worth pursuing.

THE PROBLEM	THREE QUESTIONS	STAKEHOLDER	SUCCESS MEASURE
What we are trying to solve	*Due diligence to ask*	*Who is affected*	*How we will know*

Discussion: Did defining the problem change how attractive the solution seemed?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Avoid naming or criticizing specific vendors or products. Keep the focus on the evaluation process rather than the merits of any company.

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Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to name one question they will ask before their next purchasing decision.

THE PROBLEM I NEED TO DEFINE MORE CLEARLY:

ONE QUESTION I WILL ASK BEFORE ENDORSING A NEW SOLUTION:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice when a polished pitch substitutes for a clear problem definition.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Ask one additional question before endorsing a new tool or process.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Return to "Vendor Discovery" (pp. 45–51) and examine the questions about impact and unanswered concerns.

CLOSING QUESTION

Am I solving the problem my team actually has, or the one the presentation described?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 6: LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS

Next time, we will explore how to learn from other leaders without copying their circumstances. As you move through the week, notice when you compare outcomes without asking about context.

SESSION 06 / DURING THE EVENT

Learning From the Experience of Others

FROM THE BOOK

Section Three: Learning From Other Leaders · Read pages 53–55.

SESSION PURPOSE

Learn to draw useful lessons from other leaders' successes and mistakes while accounting for differences in context, culture, and resources.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

Are we willing to learn from another leader's mistakes without assuming their circumstances are ours?

Opening Reflection

Other leaders' experiences can save us years of trial and error. When a peer shares what worked, what failed, and what they would do differently, we gain insight we could not have gathered alone. That is one of the great gifts of learning in community. But every leadership story comes with a context. A model that thrived in one organization may struggle in another because of culture, size, resources, or timing. Wise leaders ask not only "What did they do?" but "Why did it work there, and what would need to change here?"

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *Have you ever borrowed an idea from another leader that did not work the way you expected? What was different?*

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Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Encourage examples from both inside and outside participants' industries.

- Who is a leader outside your organization you have learned a great deal from?
- What is one practice you adopted from someone else that worked well?
- Do you learn more from others' successes or their mistakes?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

A leader describes a successful staffing model. A peer copies it immediately, overlooking major differences in culture and resources.

- What questions should the peer have asked before adopting the model?
- Why is it tempting to copy a successful practice without examining its context?
- What parts of a leadership lesson usually transfer well, and what parts rarely do?
- How do the prompts in "Learning From Other Leaders" help you evaluate transferability?
- How can you learn from a leader whose style is very different from yours?
- What is lost when leaders only share their successes?
- How might you adapt rather than adopt an idea from another organization?
- What would a careful adaptation have looked like for the peer in the situation above?

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Part Three | Group Exercise

TRANSFER WITH CONTEXT · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Think of a lesson you have learned from another leader, or interview a peer in the group about one decision, one misstep, and one lesson. Sort what you learned into the columns below.

CAN TRANSFER	NEEDS ADAPTATION	CANNOT TRANSFER
Works in my context as is	*Useful with changes*	*Depends on their unique context*

Discussion: Which column held the most valuable insight? Why?

> **FACILITATOR NOTE**
>
> *If participants interview one another, remind them to honor confidentiality and avoid identifying details about other organizations.*

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to name one lesson they will adapt for their context.

ONE LESSON I WILL ADAPT FOR MY CONTEXT:

WHAT I WILL CHANGE TO MAKE IT FIT:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice when you compare outcomes without asking about context.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Seek one lesson from a leader who approaches work differently than you do.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Revisit "Learning From Other Leaders" (pp. 53–55), especially the prompts about results and transferability.

CLOSING QUESTION

What would I learn if I asked other leaders why something worked, not just what they did?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 7: THE LEADERSHIP LESSONS BEYOND THE STAGE

Next time, we will explore the insight that comes from candid, informal conversation. As you move through the week, notice where honest conversations produce your best ideas.

SESSION 07 / DURING THE EVENT

The Leadership Lessons Beyond the Stage

FROM THE BOOK

Section Four: Dinner Table Wisdom and Connection & Collaboration Insights · Read pages 57–73.

SESSION PURPOSE

Recognize the leadership value of candid, informal connection, and turn one promising contact into a meaningful professional relationship.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

What becomes possible when leaders stop performing competence and start speaking candidly?

Opening Reflection

At many learning events, the most honest conversations happen around a table after the formal sessions end. People relax, stories become more personal, and someone eventually admits what they are really struggling with. That is often when the most useful learning begins. Yet many leaders spend those moments performing competence. We share accomplishments, highlight what is going well, and avoid admitting uncertainty. Candor invites candor. When one leader speaks honestly, others usually follow, and the conversation becomes far more valuable for everyone at the table.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *Describe a meal or informal gathering where the conversation turned unexpectedly honest. What made it shift?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Invite stories; this session works best when it feels like a dinner table conversation.

- What is the most memorable conversation you have had over a meal with other leaders?
- Do you tend to share successes or struggles in professional settings?
- Who is one person you met at an event and kept in touch with?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

At dinner, everyone shares accomplishments until one person describes a difficult team decision. The conversation suddenly becomes useful.

- Why did the conversation become more useful when one person spoke candidly?
- What makes leaders reluctant to share struggles with peers?
- What is the difference between networking and connection?
- How do the "Dinner Table Wisdom" prompts help capture insights that might otherwise be forgotten?
- What kind of follow-up turns a pleasant conversation into an ongoing relationship?
- How could you create space for candid conversation within your own team?
- What collaboration opportunities have you missed because you did not follow up?
- What would you have contributed to the dinner conversation in the situation above?

Part Three | Group Exercise

FROM CONTACT TO CONNECTION · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Identify one professional relationship worth deepening. Draft a brief invitation using the elements below. Then share your draft with a partner for feedback.

THE PERSON	SHARED QUESTION	FOLLOW-UP
Who you want to connect with	*A leadership topic you both care about*	*A realistic next step*

Discussion: What made your invitation feel genuine rather than transactional?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Some participants may feel awkward about reaching out. Encourage small, low-pressure follow-ups such as a short message or a single question.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to commit to sending their invitation before the next gathering.

THE PERSON I WILL REACH OUT TO:

THE QUESTION I WILL INVITE THEM TO EXPLORE WITH ME:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice where honest, informal conversations produce insight.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Follow up with one person about a meaningful question, not a generic networking request.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Revisit "Dinner Table Wisdom" (pp. 57–73) and the collaboration prompts on page 73.

CLOSING QUESTION

What might I learn if I were the first person at the table to speak honestly?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 8: RECOGNIZING UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES

Next time, we will explore how to notice insights that were not on the agenda. As you move through the week, notice what surprises or unsettles your assumptions.

SESSION 08 / DURING THE EVENT

Recognizing Unexpected Opportunities

FROM THE BOOK

Section Five: Unexpected Insights · Read pages 75–77.

SESSION PURPOSE

Develop the ability to notice unplanned insights, evaluate whether they deserve attention, and test them responsibly without chasing every distraction.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

How can we stay open to an unplanned insight without chasing every distraction?

Opening Reflection

Some of the most important lessons at a learning event were never on the agenda. An offhand comment, a question from the audience, or a frustration shared during a break can expose a blind spot we had not seen. These moments are easy to miss because we are not looking for them. At the same time, not every surprise deserves action. Leaders need a way to capture unexpected insights, examine what they reveal, and test them before rearranging priorities. Openness and discipline work best together.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *What is one unexpected insight from a past event that turned out to matter more than the scheduled content?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Encourage participants to share surprises, large or small.

- What is the most surprising thing you have learned at a professional event?
- Where did it come from: a session, a conversation, or something else?
- Do you tend to welcome surprises or resist them?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

An offhand comment during a break exposes a blind spot in the team's onboarding process. The leader nearly dismisses it because it was not on the agenda.

- Why do leaders sometimes dismiss insights that arrive unexpectedly?
- How can you tell the difference between a meaningful signal and a distraction?
- What blind spots might exist in your own organization that an outsider could see quickly?
- How do the "Unexpected Insights" prompts help you capture what you might otherwise forget?
- What evidence would you want before acting on an unexpected insight?
- How could you test a new idea without disrupting everything else?
- Who on your team might notice blind spots you cannot see?
- What should the leader in the situation above do with the comment about onboarding?

Part Three | Group Exercise

THE UNEXPECTED SIGNAL · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Recall a surprising observation from work or a recent learning experience. Use the columns below to decide whether and how to explore it.

WHAT IT REVEALED	EVIDENCE NEEDED	LOW-RISK TEST
The blind spot or opportunity	*What would confirm it*	*A small way to explore it*

Discussion: What made your observation worth testing rather than ignoring or acting on immediately?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Encourage participants to keep tests small and reversible. The goal is learning, not reorganizing.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to name one test they will run before the next gathering.

ONE UNEXPECTED INSIGHT I WANT TO EXPLORE:

THE SMALL TEST I WILL RUN:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice what surprises or unsettles your assumptions.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Capture one unexpected insight and test it with a thoughtful question.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Return to "Unexpected Insights" (pp. 75–77) and select the observation that still stays with you.

CLOSING QUESTION

What might I be missing simply because it was not on my agenda?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 9: CHOOSING WHAT DESERVES ACTION

Next time, we will explore how to narrow many good ideas into one meaningful change. As you move through the week, notice when collecting options delays a decision.

SESSION 09 / AFTER THE EVENT

Choosing What Deserves Action

FROM THE BOOK

Section Six: Turning Ideas Into Action · Read pages 79–83, including "The One Idea That Will Matter Most."

SESSION PURPOSE

Narrow many good ideas to one meaningful priority, make an explicit decision about what will wait, and define a clear first step.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

What must we decline so that one meaningful change can actually happen?

Opening Reflection

Leaders often return from a learning event with more good ideas than they can possibly implement. The temptation is to try them all. But when every idea launches at once, none receives the attention, ownership, or follow-through it needs to succeed. Choosing one idea is not a lack of ambition. It is a recognition that focus is what turns ideas into results. The harder part is deciding what will wait, and saying so out loud, so the team knows where to put its energy.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *Think of a time your team tried to change too many things at once. What happened?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Encourage honest examples of overcommitment.

- How many improvement ideas are currently in motion on your team?
- Which of those ideas is actually making progress?
- How do you usually decide what gets your attention first?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

A team returns with six improvement ideas. All six launch at once, and none receives sufficient ownership or attention.

- Why is it so difficult to choose one idea when several seem worthwhile?
- What does a team experience when too many changes launch at once?
- How does "The One Idea That Will Matter Most" challenge the way you prioritize?
- What criteria should guide which idea deserves action first?
- What is the cost of delaying an idea, and what is the cost of launching it poorly?
- How can a leader communicate what will wait without discouraging the people who proposed it?
- What makes an idea "ready" for action?
- If you led the team in the situation above, which idea would you start with, and why?

Part Three | Group Exercise

THE ONE-IDEA DECISION · Suggested time: 15 minutes

List three possible changes you are considering. Rank each one using the columns below. Choose one, name what will wait, and state the first step.

IMPACT	READINESS	COST OF DELAY
How much would it matter?	*Are we prepared to start?*	*What happens if we wait?*

Discussion: Was the idea you chose the one you expected to choose? What changed your mind, if anything?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Participants may resist naming what will wait. Encourage them to frame it as "not now" rather than "never."

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to share the one idea they chose and one idea they will defer.

THE ONE IDEA I WILL ACT ON:

ONE IDEA I WILL INTENTIONALLY DEFER:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice when collecting options delays a decision.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Choose one priority and explicitly defer another.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Revisit "The One Idea That Will Matter Most" (pp. 80–83).

CLOSING QUESTION

What good idea am I willing to set aside so that the right one can succeed?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 10: TURNING COMMITMENT INTO ACCOUNTABILITY

Next time, we will explore how to turn good intentions into commitments others can see and trust. As you move through the week, notice commitments that lack a name, a date, or an observable result.

SESSION 10 / AFTER THE EVENT

Turning Commitment Into Accountability

FROM THE BOOK

Your 90-Day Leadership Plan and Final Reflection · Read pages 85–93.

SESSION PURPOSE

Turn a good intention into a specific, owned, and dated commitment, and build simple structures that help others see and support follow-through.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

When does a good intention become a commitment others can trust?

Opening Reflection

Most leaders do not lack good intentions. What they often lack is structure. An idea announced without an owner, a timeline, or a way to check progress tends to fade quietly. Within a few weeks, everyone assumes it was never really a priority. Accountability is not about pressure or blame. It is about making a commitment visible enough that others can support it. A clear outcome, a first step, a named owner, and a scheduled check-in turn a hopeful idea into something people can count on.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *Think of a commitment you made that quietly disappeared. What was missing?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Invite participants to share their own experiences with follow-through.

- What helps you follow through on commitments?
- Who in your life is good at holding you accountable?
- What is the difference between a goal and a commitment?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

A leader announces a new communication practice but sets no owner, timeline, or review date. After two weeks, everyone assumes the idea has faded.

- What signals tell a team that a new idea is not really a priority?
- Why do leaders sometimes avoid attaching dates and owners to commitments?
- How does the 90-Day Leadership Plan structure follow-through differently than a to-do list?
- What makes accountability feel supportive rather than punitive?
- Who should know about your commitment, and why?
- How often should progress be reviewed for a 90-day goal?
- What should happen when a commitment needs to change?
- How could the leader in the situation above relaunch the idea with credibility?

Part Three | Group Exercise

COMMITMENT WITH COORDINATES · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Draft a 90-day commitment using each of the coordinates below. Then share it with a partner who will tell you whether it is specific enough to track.

OUTCOME	FIRST ACTION	OWNER AND DATE	CHECK-IN PARTNER
What will be different	*Within two weeks*	*Who and when*	*Who will ask about it*

Discussion: What did your partner notice that would make your commitment easier to track?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Encourage participants to choose a check-in partner outside this group as well, ideally someone who will see the results of the commitment.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to schedule their first check-in before leaving.

MY 90-DAY COMMITMENT:

MY FIRST CHECK-IN DATE AND PARTNER:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice commitments that lack a name, a date, or an observable result.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Put one 15-minute progress check on the calendar.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Return to the four commitments (pp. 85–89) and the final reflection (pp. 91–93).

CLOSING QUESTION

If my team looked at my commitments today, which ones could they actually see me keeping?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 11: PROTECTING MOMENTUM WHEN LIFE RESUMES

Next time, we will explore how to protect new commitments when ordinary routines return. As you move through the week, notice the first moment routine begins to displace intention.

SESSION 11 / AFTER THE EVENT

Protecting Momentum When Life Resumes

FROM THE BOOK

The 7-Day Momentum Sequence · Read pages 95–105, especially the daily check-ins.

SESSION PURPOSE

Anticipate the pressures that erase momentum after a learning experience, and design a first-week plan that protects one important commitment.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

What protects an important decision when ordinary routines reclaim our attention?

Opening Reflection

The first week back from a learning event is often the most fragile. The inbox is full, urgent requests are waiting, and the team has been running without us. Within days, the energy we brought home can disappear beneath ordinary demands. Momentum rarely survives on motivation alone. It needs a plan for the first seven days: a small first action, a key conversation, protected time, and a moment to review progress. The field guide's 7-Day Momentum Sequence treats that first week as a critical bridge between learning and lasting change.

Facilitator opening prompt: *What does your first day back from a learning event usually look like?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Expect knowing laughter; most leaders recognize this pattern.

- How long does it usually take you to catch up after being away?
- What is the first thing you do when you return?
- Has a new idea ever survived your first week back? What helped?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

A participant returns inspired but faces a full inbox, urgent requests, and a team that has not heard the new idea. By Friday, momentum is gone.

- What usually displaces new commitments in your first week back?
- Why is the first week after a learning event so important?
- How does the 7-Day Momentum Sequence break the transition into manageable steps?
- What could you prepare before leaving so that your return is less overwhelming?
- When and how should your team hear about what you learned?
- What is the smallest action that would keep a commitment alive during a busy week?
- How can a leader protect time without ignoring real responsibilities?
- What would a better first week have looked like for the participant in the situation above?

Part Three | Group Exercise

THE FIRST-SEVEN-DAYS SHIELD · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Design a plan for the first seven days after your next learning experience. Fill in each element below, then identify the one most likely to be skipped.

FIRST ACTION	KEY CONVERSATION	PROTECTED TIME	REVIEW
Within 48 hours	*Who needs to hear it*	*When I will work on it*	*When I will check progress*

Discussion: Which element of your plan is most vulnerable? How will you protect it?

FACILITATOR NOTE

If participants are not attending an upcoming event, invite them to apply the sequence to any recent learning, including this study.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Ask participants to name the action they will take within 48 hours.

ONE ACTION I WILL PROTECT WITHIN THE NEXT 48 HOURS:

THE PERSON WHO NEEDS TO HEAR WHAT I LEARNED:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice the first moment routine begins to displace intention.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Protect one small action within the next 48 hours.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Revisit the 7-Day Momentum Sequence (pp. 95–105), especially the daily check-ins.

CLOSING QUESTION

What will I put in place now so that next week's inbox cannot erase this week's intention?

LOOKING AHEAD | SESSION 12: BECOMING A LEADER WHO FOLLOWS THROUGH

Next time, we will reflect on what has changed and how to keep the practice going. As you move through the week, notice where small changes have become visible to others.

SESSION 12 / THE PRACTICE CONTINUES

Becoming a Leader Who Follows Through

FROM THE BOOK

The 30-Day Check-In, 30-Day Reflection, Letter to My Future Self, and Closing · Read pages 107–131.

SESSION PURPOSE

Look for real evidence of change, reflect honestly on obstacles, and establish a rhythm for revisiting commitments at 30 and 90 days.

THE LEADERSHIP TENSION

What evidence would show that a learning experience changed how we lead?

Opening Reflection

The true measure of a learning experience is not how inspiring it felt. It is what changed afterward. Thirty days later, can we point to a different decision, a new conversation, or a habit others have noticed? If not, the experience may have been enjoyable but not transformational. Follow-through is a leadership skill that can be practiced. It requires honest review, small adjustments, and the willingness to keep returning to what we committed to. The field guide closes with check-ins and a letter to our future selves because lasting change is built over time, not in a single moment.

> **Facilitator opening prompt:** *Look back at the question you named in Session 1. What has changed since then?*

Part One | Conversation Starters

Suggested time: 10 minutes. Invite every participant to share at least one response if they are comfortable.

- What is one thing you are doing differently since this group began?
- Which session has stayed with you the most?
- What has someone else noticed about your leadership recently?

Part Two | Go Deeper

Suggested time: 20 minutes. Choose four to six questions according to group size and discussion flow.

A SITUATION TO CONSIDER

Thirty days after a continuing education event, a leader can recall several speakers but struggles to identify one decision, conversation, or habit that changed.

- What counts as real evidence that learning changed your leadership?
- Why is it easier to remember speakers than to remember what we changed?
- How do the 30-Day Check-In prompts help you measure progress honestly?
- What obstacles most often interrupt follow-through for you?
- How do you adjust a commitment without abandoning it?
- What would you want your future self to remember about this season of learning?
- How could this group continue supporting one another after the final session?
- What would help the leader in the situation above show evidence of change by day 90?

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Part Three | Group Exercise

EVIDENCE OF CHANGE · Suggested time: 15 minutes

Review one commitment you made during this study. Complete each column honestly, then write a brief message to your future self about what to continue.

OBSERVABLE RESULT	HONEST OBSTACLE	ADJUSTMENT	NOTE TO MY FUTURE SELF
What has changed	*What got in the way*	*What I will change*	*What to keep doing*

Discussion: What did reviewing your commitment reveal that you had not noticed before?

FACILITATOR NOTE

Consider inviting the group to schedule a brief follow-up gathering at 30 or 90 days to share progress and celebrate what has changed.

Part Four | From Insight to Action

Suggested time: 5–10 minutes. Close by inviting each participant to share one commitment they will continue.

THE COMMITMENT I WILL CONTINUE:

MY 30-DAY AND 90-DAY REVIEW DATES:

A Reflection to Carry Into Your Week

SOMETHING TO NOTICE

Notice where small changes have become visible to others.

SOMETHING TO PRACTICE

Schedule a 30-day review and a 90-day letter-to-self reminder.

SOMETHING TO REVISIT

Return to the 30-day check-ins (pp. 107–119), the letter to your future self (pp. 121–123), and the closing (p. 131).

CLOSING QUESTION

When I look back on this season, what will I be able to point to and say, "That changed because I followed through"?

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The Practice

CONTINUES

Revisit your commitments at 30 and 90 days, and bring a fresh copy of the field guide to your next continuing education event.

Consider gathering again in 30 days to share what has changed and celebrate the progress you have made together.

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