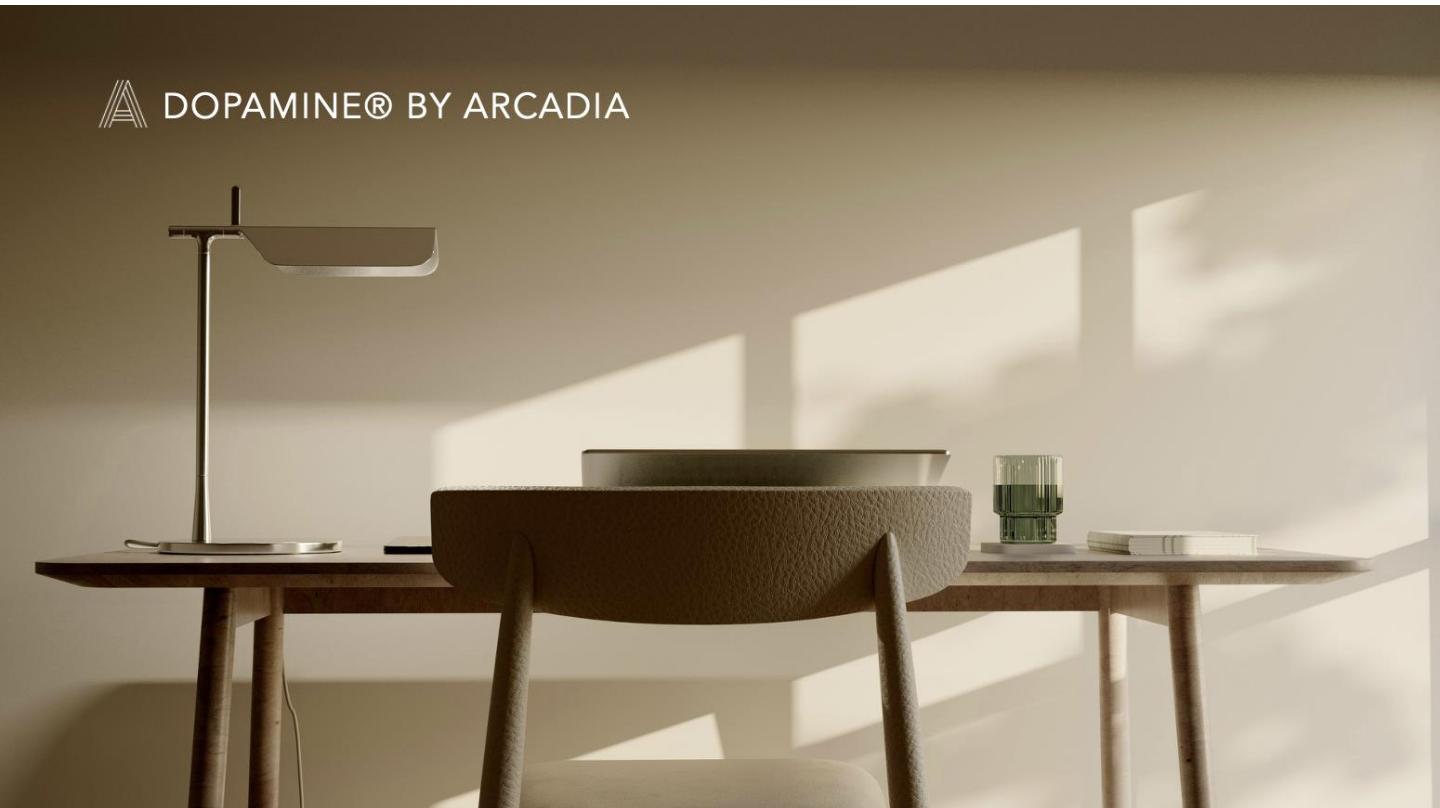




The 2026 Leadership Reset Roadmap by Arcadia Coaching

A neuroscience-backed clarity reset
for those shaping the future

 DOPAMINE® BY ARCADIA





How To Use This Roadmap

- Set aside at least 10 minutes each day for focused reflection.
- Print this handout or keep it open on your device - visibility supports consistency (brain science proves that visible cues deliver higher follow-through).
- Each week, complete the actions and prompts. There will be deeper prompts, examples of the tools in use and practical suggestions in the weekly emails that follow through December – you can sign up for those on our [Substack](#) page.
- Use the “Open Loops” concept to capture tasks, ideas, or worries and remove them from your immediate thoughts.
- Optional: This is a general guide for a December reset to support our network in preparing for a successful 2026. For more targeted and personalised coaching, please contact us on hello@arcadiacoaching.co





Week One: Clarity & Vision

SET YOUR TRUE PRIORITIES & CLEAR YOUR MENTAL DESK

Find a quiet space without distraction. Have one pad for this work, and another for “open loops” where you can throw down anything else that flies into your brain to distract you from this task. Put anything external there to deal with it later.

This time is for your goal setting. Now, let's focus on your top priority for 2026 - being honest, not aspirational.

Goal-Setting in Practice:

For your goal: Be specific and measurable - state exactly what you want to achieve and set a clear deadline.

Clarify your motivation: Identify the deeper “why” behind your goal to strengthen commitment.

Decide your investment: Determine what you're willing to give, change, or prioritise to reach this goal.

Write your goal statement: Combine your goal, your “why,” your investment, and your deadline into one concise, empowering statement.

Make it visible and repeat: Write your statement by hand, place it somewhere you'll see daily, and read it aloud morning and night to reinforce focus and drive. A visible, repeated goal statement becomes your mission, keeping your brain attuned to opportunities and helping you sustain momentum - especially when distractions or setbacks arise.

Neuroscience Takeout:

Working memory can only hold around seven items at a time (Miller, 1956), which means that trying to juggle too many goals, tasks, or worries in your head leads to cognitive overload and stress (Levitin, 2014), ultimately burn out.

By externalising - writing down your priorities, open loops, and a clear, concise goal statement - you free up mental bandwidth, activate your brain's filtering system (the reticular activating system), and reinforce your focus through daily repetition.

Modern neuroscience confirms what many high performers have practiced for decades: making goals visible and externalising mental clutter directly improves clarity and execution. Leaders who make their goals and open loops visible are more strategic, more in control of their response mechanisms, and therefore better equipped to handle the inevitable unknowns of leadership. This practice builds clarity, resilience, and the mental space required for high-level decision-making.

Prompt: What's one open loop you can close, delegate, or let go of this week?



Week Two: Positioning & Boundaries

ALIGN COMMITMENTS & PROTECT YOUR FOCUS

Find a quiet moment to reflect on your current commitments, responsibilities, and the open loops you identified last week. The aim is to align your daily actions and obligations with your true priorities, so your time and energy are invested where they matter most.

Start by reviewing your “Open Loops” list and your top priorities for 2026. Next, audit your calendar, meetings, and recurring tasks. For each item, ask: Does this serve my main goals, or is it a legacy obligation, distraction, or energy drain?

For any misaligned item, decide whether to let it go, delegate it to someone else, or renegotiate its terms. This may mean saying “no” to a meeting, stepping back from a committee, or limiting how often you check email or messages.

Finally, set one new boundary this week - something practical and visible. This could be blocking out a daily “focus hour,” declining a meeting that doesn’t serve your goals, or creating a rule for when you will (and won’t) check your inbox. Communicate this boundary clearly to others if needed and honour it yourself.

Goal-Setting in Practice:

Clarify alignment: For each major commitment, ask: Does this move me closer to my top priorities?

Audit and act: List your main recurring obligations. For each one, choose: keep, delegate, renegotiate, or drop.

Set a boundary: Identify one area where your time or energy leaks away. Decide on a new boundary and write it down.

Communicate: If your new boundary affects others, communicate it simply and assertively.

Reinforce: Place a visual cue (calendar block, sticky note, or digital reminder) to help you maintain your boundary.

Neuroscience Takeout:

Boundaries are not just about time management - they protect your brain’s executive function, which is responsible for planning, focus, and self-control. When you set and maintain boundaries, you reduce decision fatigue, conserve cognitive resources, and create space for deep work (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011). Practicing saying “no” actually strengthens neural pathways associated with self-regulation and resilience. Leaders with clear boundaries are less likely to burn out, whilst being more productive, and better able to respond strategically rather than reactively when new demands arise.

Prompt:

Where do you need to say no, delegate, or renegotiate this week to protect your best energy?



Week Three: Energy & Momentum

OPTIMISE YOUR ENERGY & TEST NEW ROUTINES

This week, as the pace of work naturally slows for the Christmas break, it's the perfect opportunity to observe your natural energy patterns outside the usual routines. Instead of "pushing through," give yourself permission to notice when you feel most at ease, creative, or restored - and when you feel drained or restless - even if your days are less structured.

For three days, keep a log: jot down moments when you feel most present, focused, or energised, and times when your energy dips. This might be after a walk, during a quiet coffee, or while connecting with family. Look for patterns - does rest spark ideas, or do certain activities leave you feeling flat?

Choose one small experiment to test: perhaps a mindful walk after lunch, a digital detox block, a new morning ritual, or simply saying "no" to a draining tradition. The goal isn't productivity for its own sake, but to notice what genuinely helps you recharge and what depletes you. It is possible to establish boundaries whilst being authentic and kind, and this is something we'll touch on in this week's email.

At the end of the week, reflect on your log and your experiment. What supported your energy or mood? What would you like to carry forward - into January and beyond - as a new micro-ritual or boundary? Whether you're wrapping up projects or already easing into a slower pace, this is the perfect week to pay attention to your natural energy patterns and experiment with small changes that support your wellbeing.

Energy Experiments in Practice:

- **Track your rhythms:** For three days, jot down when you feel most present or restored, and when your energy dips.
- **Identify patterns:** Notice what activities, environments, or people lift or drain you - even during downtime.
- **Choose a micro-experiment:** Try a mindful walk, a tech-free hour, or a new way to start or end your day.
- **Reflect and adjust:** At week's end, note what worked and how you might bring that energy into your regular routine.
- **Commit:** Decide on one small habit or boundary to carry into the new year.

Neuroscience Takeout:

Even during downtime, your brain and body follow ultradian rhythms - natural cycles of focus and rest. Honouring these cycles (even in a less structured week) helps you recover, build resilience, and return to work with greater creativity and clarity. Micro-experiments during the holidays can reveal what truly nourishes you, making it easier to embed positive habits when regular routines resume (Kleitman, 1960s; Duhigg, 2012). Leaders who use downtime to observe and reset become more adaptable and effective over the long term.

Prompt:

What small shift or micro-ritual could help you protect or restore your energy this holiday week - and beyond?



Week Four: Holiday Reflection & Quiet Reset

RESTORE, NOTICE & PREPARE FOR RENEWAL

As the pace of work slows for the Christmas break, this week is an invitation to pause, reflect, and quietly reset - without pressure or expectation. Give yourself permission to step back from productivity and simply notice what brings you peace, joy, or restoration during this time.

Set aside a few quiet moments each day to reflect on the year behind you: What are you grateful for? What challenges have you overcome? Which habits, relationships, or worries do you want to release before the new year begins?

This is the time to let go of lingering open loops that no longer serve you, and to create space - mentally and emotionally - for what's next.

Consider introducing a quiet holiday ritual: a gratitude list, a mindful walk, a digital detox afternoon, or a simple act of kindness for yourself or someone else. These small, intentional acts help you reset and reconnect with what matters most.

At the end of the week, ask yourself: What would you like to leave behind, and what do you want to carry forward into the new year? Honour your need for rest and restoration - you're laying the foundation for clarity and momentum in January.

Holiday Reflection in Practice:

- **Gratitude check-in:** Each day, write down three things you're grateful for from the past year.
- **Release open loops:** Identify any lingering tasks, worries, or obligations you can let go of before year-end.
- **Quiet ritual:** Choose a restorative practice - a walk, digital break, or act of kindness.
- **Reflect:** What brought you peace or joy this week? What do you want to release?
- **Set an intention:** Decide on one word or theme to guide you into the new year.

Neuroscience Takeout:

Periods of rest and reflection activate the brain's default mode network, which supports creativity, emotional processing, and resilience. Letting go of unresolved mental clutter reduces stress and primes your brain for renewal. Leaders who intentionally pause and restore during transitions return with greater clarity, adaptability, and capacity for high-level decision-making (Andrews-Hanna, 2012; Immordino-Yang, 2016).

Prompt:

What can you release or let go of this week, and what quiet ritual will help you reset for the new year?



Week Five: Pipeline & 2026 Vision

SET INTENTIONS, RECONNECT AND PREPARE FOR A STRONG START

As the year turns and the world pauses for New Year's, this is your window to quietly reconnect with your ambitions and lay the groundwork for a purposeful 2026. As we don't need to rush into action this week, use the time to reflect on your network, opportunities, and the routines that will shape your momentum when work resumes.

Begin by reviewing your key stakeholders - clients, partners, colleagues, and mentors who will be central to your growth in the months ahead. Identify a few top opportunities or relationships you'd like to nurture or revisit as the new year begins.

Choose one small step to signal your presence and intention for the year ahead: draft a thoughtful note, schedule a January catch-up, or simply set aside time to outline your priorities. The goal isn't to "do it all now," but to create clarity and a sense of readiness.

Establish a quiet weekly ritual for yourself - perhaps a Friday pipeline review, a Monday morning check-in, or a simple reflection on your top priorities. Make this routine visible and easy to return to as the pace picks up.

At week's end, reflect on what you want to carry forward. The intention is to start January with focus, confidence, and a sense of agency.

Pipeline & New Year's Reset in Practice:

- **Map your network:** List key stakeholders and a few top opportunities for 2026.
- **Reconnect:** Choose one relationship or opportunity to nurture in early January. Draft a message or plan a meeting.
- **Set a ritual:** Block out a regular time for pipeline review or priority setting - even if you don't act on it until work resumes.
- **Reflect:** What intentions or habits do you want to bring into the new year?
- **Refine:** Adjust your plan as needed, so you're ready to move when business restarts.

Neuroscience Takeout:

Periods of reflection and intention-setting prime the brain for action and habit formation. Even quiet planning activates your brain's reward pathways and increases follow-through (Lieberman, 2013). Leaders who use the New Year's pause to reconnect with their purpose and routines return with greater clarity, resilience, and momentum.

Prompt:

What intention, connection, or quiet ritual will help you start January with clarity and confidence?



Your Reset, Your 2026

SET INTENTIONS, RECONNECT AND PREPARE FOR A STRONG START

This roadmap is a template to give a flavour of how we can close the year mindfully whilst preparing the best path forward for ourselves, at work and in our personal lives. This is not a script, it is a tool for you to adapt the prompts, rename sections, and make it fit your style. The only rule for success: keep it simple, visible, and actionable.

The “Open Loops” Technique:

Keep your Open Loops list visible. Rename it! We have heard of some ingenious names for our clients Open Loops pots. If it lives on your desk, on a pinboard on your wall, or a digital dashboard, it's a tool for you and you'll love it and use it if it has a name that resonates. Add to it whenever a new task, idea, or worry pops up, and review it weekly - clearing or moving forward anything that's actionable. Neuroscience tells us that visible cues and regular review increase task completion. Don't hide your to-dos and loops - make them visible and actionable!

What is the first open loop you can set aside for more bandwidth right now?

"Penny's coaching was a turning point for me as a senior communications leader. She helped me cut through the noise, regain clarity, and reconnect with my own strengths and ambitions. What stands out is her ability to combine strategic insight with genuine empathy - every session left me more focused, confident, and ready to move forward. The impact on my leadership and self-belief has been profound."

Communications Director, November 2025

Deepen Your Leadership Reset

For deeper resources, leadership insights, and practical tools:

- Follow Arcadia Search on [LinkedIn](#).
- Follow Dopamine® by Arcadia Coaching on [Substack](#).
- Contact us on hello@arcadiacoaching.co to arrange a confidential phone call to discuss your executive coaching needs.
- Not sure what executive coaching is and isn't? Find out more on our FAQs [here](#).
- As globally accredited executive coaching service, confidentiality is paramount. As such, our testimonials on our website are anonymous and can be found [here](#).
- Substack subscribers (its free!) will receive the deeper dive for each week of December on the leadership Reset - receive expert guidance, neuroscience-backed strategies, and practical tools delivered straight to their inboxes.