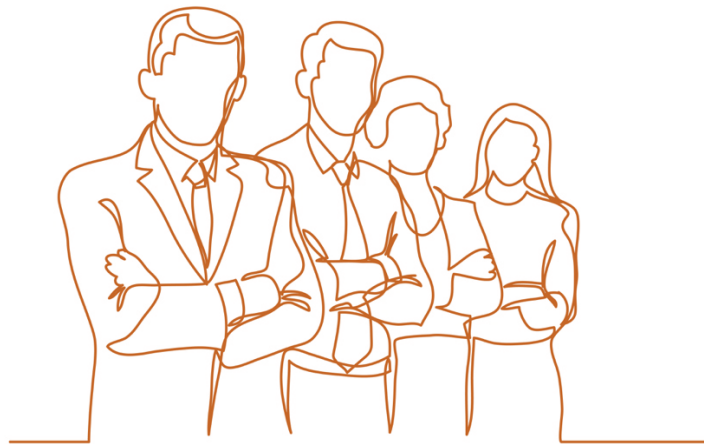


How to Build a G.R.E.A.T. Team Culture in Your First 90 Days

A Playbook for Managers, Team Leaders, and Founders

For in the room, remote, and hybrid teams

By Sean Glaze



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A Note From Sean

Your first 90 days will set your team's culture, whether you plan it or not.

That is not a scare tactic. It is just how people work. From week one, your team is quietly deciding whether their voice matters, whether you see them as a person or a position, and whether this team is worth their best effort.

I learned how much that matters the hard way. In twenty years of coaching basketball, the most talented team I ever coached lost in the first round. We had one of the best players in the state and real depth. What we did not have was chemistry. Our players did not communicate. They did not trust each other. All that talent could not survive the absence of culture.

Talent and strategy are essential, but never sufficient...

Culture is what allows talent to execute strategy with enthusiasm and commitment.

Here is the tough part for new leaders.

You probably got the job because you were great on your own, whether you were promoted or you built the company. Now your job is to make other people great, and nobody handed you a playbook for that.

So I built one. It takes the tools I teach at companies like Cisco, John Deere, and the CDC and lays them out across your first 90 days. It shows you **how** to do it, in small moves, most of them fifteen minutes or less. And it works whether your team sits in one room, in four time zones, or both.

One promise, leader to leader: you will not do everything in here.

Steal what fits your team and skip the rest.

Sean Glaze,

Great Results Teambuilding

If You Only Have Time for Five Things

1. Get clarity from your own boss in week one.
2. Have a ten minute personal conversation with every person on your team.
3. Set the values yourself. Build the standards **with** the team, not **for** them.
4. Have the hard conversation the first time it shows up.
5. Recognize specific behavior every single week.

These five are the load bearing walls. Everything else is depth.

How to use this playbook

- Read it once, start to finish. It takes less time than a long lunch.
- Do **Week 0** before your first day. Then work it week by week with the 90 Day Calendar.
- Every Move uses the same six parts: **Why, Time needed, Do this, Say this, Hybrid swap, and Done when.** If you can check off the Done when line, you did it right.
- Every Friday, answer the five questions in the Weekly Five Minute Check.
- Founder? Your 90 days can start at a funding round, a hiring wave, or a reset. Look for the Founder Lens boxes, and use the New Hire Onboarding Checklist in the Toolkit...



Week 0: Before Day One

The leaders who do well in week one usually did something in week zero. This takes about two hours, and most of it is blocking time on your calendar. If you were promoted from within, use the Promoted from Within page instead.

WEEK 0: GET READY	
Why	If it is not on your calendar, it will not happen once the real work shows up.
Time needed	About 2 hours total: 60 minutes to read, 30 minutes to block your calendar, 15 minutes to send the note.
Do this	1. Read this playbook once, start to finish. 2. Block your calendar for the whole 90 days using the 90 Day Calendar: a 45 minute meeting with your boss in week 1, ten minute slots for every person, two 90 minute sessions (weeks 3 and 5), and a 5 minute block every Friday. 3. Write your own answers to the four Operating Instructions sentence starters (Move 4) so you can go first. 4. Send the introduction note to your team the day before you start, or the morning of.
Say this	<i>"Hi team. I'm [name], and I'm excited to start as your manager on [date]. My first few weeks are about listening and learning, so I'll be asking each of you for ten minutes. It is not about your work. I just want to know you. See you [day]."</i>
Hybrid swap	Send the note in the channel your team actually reads, not only email. Ask your boss for each remote person's time zone and working hours, then book their ten minute slots at a time that works for them, not just for you.
Done when	Your calendar holds every block through week 13, and the introduction note is sent.

Why Your First 90 Days Matter

Your first 90 days are the cheapest time you will ever have to build trust.

After that, every change costs more.

Promotions usually reward individual performance. You hit your numbers, solved the hard problems, and became the person everyone relied on. That is exactly why you got the job.

Leading flips the scoreboard. You now win when the people around you win. Your expertise matters less than your humility, your curiosity, and your willingness to listen.

The number to remember: Gallup research finds managers account for roughly **70 percent** of the variance in team engagement. That is you. Research is in the Notes at the back.

Notice what the best research on teams has in common. It is rarely about talent. It is about clarity, trust, and safety. All three are things you can build on purpose, starting this week.

Key takeaway: Your job is no longer to be the best player. Your job is to build a team where everyone plays better.



What Culture Actually Is

Culture is the sum of the behaviors a group allows and repeats.

Not the attitudes it holds. Not the mission statement on the wall.

So if you want to change a culture, stop asking how to get people to believe something new. Start asking how to get the whole team to do something new, together, often enough that it becomes what this group simply does.

The Culture Awareness Loop...

EXPERIENCE	AWARENESS	BELIEF	BEHAVIOR	REPEAT
The whole team goes through something together. Not a memo. A real shared moment.	What did we notice about what is possible and what is tolerated here?	What are we telling ourselves now? This is where a team decides what is worth repeating.	What do we do differently because of it? The only stage anyone outside the room can see.	Do we do it again, until it stops being a decision and becomes a habit? Then it is the culture.

It is a loop, not a line. Every repeated behavior becomes the next shared experience. A good experience builds confidence that compounds. A broken promise, or a leader who says one thing and rewards another, builds cynicism that compounds just as reliably. You are already running this loop. The only question is which direction it is spinning.

Belief and behavior influence each other both ways, but the lesson holds: give the team the experience first.

How this playbook runs the loop

The Values Session (Move 3) is the shared experience. The bright spots round in Move 6 builds awareness. The breach rehearsal and the signing are the first behavior, tried in the room. The Friday check and the Win Log keep it repeating.

Key takeaway: Do not announce a culture. Build the shared experience, let the team reach the conclusion out loud, and ask for the first attempt before they leave the room.

How Culture Turns Strategy Into Behavior

A strategy on a slide changes nothing until it changes what people do on a Tuesday. Culture is the bridge. It works in four steps, and your job is to connect each one to the next.

STEP	WHAT IT IS	EXAMPLE (ILLUSTRATIVE)
Strategy	The result the organization is after this year.	We win by being the fastest to help our customers.
Value	What matters on the way. Set by you.	Own it.
Standard	What it looks like in behavior. Built by the team.	Every customer message gets a reply or a named owner within four business hours.
Weekly habit	The routine that keeps it visible.	Every Friday, each person shares one customer win and names the teammate who made it possible.

What it means for your role

Managers: Take your department's goal and ask your team what it looks like in daily behavior. Let them write the standards.

Senior leaders: Check that the values at every level point at the same strategy. Mixed signals cost teams more than missing values.

Founders: Your strategy will change faster than a large company's. Recheck the link every quarter and after every hiring wave, and tell the team what changed and why.

Key takeaway: If your team cannot explain how their Tuesday connects to the strategy, the strategy has not become a culture yet.

The G.R.E.A.T. Culture Model

There are five areas every leader can directly influence to build a great culture. I call it the G.R.E.A.T. Culture Model, and this entire playbook is organized around it.

	Pillar	What it means for a new leader
G	Goals	People rarely fail because they are lazy. They fail because they are uncertain what winning looks like.
R	Relationships	People feel seen before they feel committed. Connection makes every other pillar work.
E	Expectations	Values come from the leader. Standards built together and revisited often hold weight. Standards handed down once quietly disappear.
A	Accountability	Done well, it feels like investment, not punishment.
T	Thanks	Specific recognition is what makes people keep showing up long after the paycheck stops being the only reason.



Your 90-day roadmap

When	Phase	G.R.E.A.T. focus	Your big move
Days 1 to 30 (Weeks 1 to 4)	Listen and learn	Goals, Relationships	Get clarity from your boss. Have a real conversation with every person on your team. Share your three values.
Days 31 to 60 (Weeks 5 to 8)	Build Together	Expectations	Bring your values to life with standards the team creates. Make it safe to speak up.
Days 61 to 90 (Weeks 9 to 13)	Hold and Honor	Accountability, Thanks	Have hard conversations early. Recognize specific behavior every week.

Front load the relationship work.

The instinct is to save it for later and get to the real work.

That instinct is backwards.

The trust you build in the quiet weeks is the reserve you spend when things get hard. You cannot build a foundation during the earthquake.

Values and Standards: Know the Difference

People use these two words as if they mean the same thing. They do not, and mixing them up is one of the fastest ways to lose a team. Here is the simple version.

Values tell your team what matters. Standards show what that looks like here, on a Tuesday.

	VALUES	STANDARDS
Who decides	You, with your boss and your organization.	The team that will hold itself to them, in a session you lead.
What it is	What we stand for. A few words that explain why we do what we do.	The specific, observable behaviors that bring a value to life.
How many	Three. Five at the very most.	A handful per value. Short enough that everyone can say them from memory.
Can it change	Rarely. Values are not up for a vote.	Yes. Revisit one every month and update them each quarter.
The test	Could two good people read it differently? Then it is a value.	Could a camera record it? Could a teammate say, that missed the standard? Then it is a standard.
Example	Respect for each other's time.	We start and end meetings on time. We put phones away in meetings. We tell the team early when we are running late.
Who holds it	You model it first, and you explain the why.	Everyone, including you. The team holds each other to it.

How the two work together

Picture a basketball program built on unselfishness. The coach decides that. It is a value.

The players decide what unselfishness looks like in their gym: the extra pass, the first one up to celebrate a teammate's bucket, owning a turnover before anyone points at it. Those are standards. Players follow a standard they wrote far more faithfully than a value on a wall.

The signed agreement that holds both is your team covenant: your values on top, the team's standards below them, the agreed breach responses, and everyone's signature, yours first.

Four ground rules for leaders

- 1. Values come from you.** Choose them before you meet with your team. If your organization already has stated values, start there. Your job is to translate them for your team, not replace them.
- 2. Always explain the why.** A value without a story gets nods and then gets ignored. Share where it came from and a moment in your own career that shows it.
- 3. Standards come from the team.** Never write them alone. People hold themselves to what they helped build.
- 4. You keep one veto.** A standard cannot contradict a value. If the team writes one that does, say so, explain why, and ask them to rework it. That is the only time you overrule them.

Key takeaway: Leaders set the values. Teams set the standards. The values stay put. What they look like on this team is decided together.



Remote and Hybrid Ground Rules

Most teams are some mix of in the room and on a screen. Every Move in this playbook has a **Hybrid swap** line, but these six rules sit underneath all of them.

Ground rule	What it looks like in practice
1. Fight proximity bias	The people you pass in the hallway get more of your attention, more stretch assignments, and more credit. It happens without anyone deciding it. Each Friday, ask: Who did I talk to the least this week? Then book that person first next week.
2. Set camera norms together	Decide as a team. A workable default: cameras on for one on ones and sessions where connection is the point, optional for working sessions. Say out loud that nobody is judged by the camera, and never read a dark screen as disengagement without asking.
3. Remote people speak first	In a hybrid meeting, ask the people on the screen before the room warms up. Once the room starts talking, online voices get squeezed out. Make it a habit and your remote people will notice by week three.
4. Run the meeting as if everyone is remote	If even one person is online, use the shared document and the chat for everyone, including the people in the room. Nobody should get information the others cannot see.
5. Put it in writing the same day	Anything decided in the room or on a call gets posted in the team channel that day: the decision, the owner, the date. Remote people should never learn about a decision from a hallway rumor.
6. Make connection on purpose	Protect the first five minutes of team meetings for non work talk. Rotate meeting times if you have more than one time zone, so the same people are not always taking the early or late call.

Key takeaway: Remote people do not need special treatment. They need the same access, the same attention, and the first word.

Special Situation: You Were Promoted From Within

This is the most common first time manager situation, and it is the hardest to talk about.

Yesterday you were a peer. Today you are the boss of people who know your habits, your friends, and maybe your complaints about the last boss.

Do not pretend nothing changed, and do not overcorrect by acting like a stranger.



PROMOTED FROM WITHIN: NAME THE CHANGE

Why	Your team is already deciding what this means for them. Naming it first takes away the guessing.
Time needed	10 minutes at a team meeting, plus 5 minutes with each friend or rival.
Do this	1. Open your first team meeting by acknowledging the change. 2. Run the Ten Minute Conversations (Move 2) with everyone, including people you know well. Ask what they need from you now. 3. Talk privately and early with anyone who also wanted the job. Do not wait for them to bring it up. 4. Tell your closest friends on the team how the friendship will work: you can still be friends, and you cannot share some things. 5. Do not trade favors, and do not vent about the company or about other peers. Your old role of safe complainer is over. 6. Hold the standard with your friends first. The whole team is watching to see if the rules changed for them.
Say this	<i>To the team: “You know me, and I know you. This is a little strange for all of us, and I would rather say that out loud than pretend it is not. Some things will not change, like how much I respect the work you do. Some things will, like I’ll be making calls you may not love. I’m going to ask you for ten minutes each to hear what you need from me now.”</i>
Hybrid swap	If some of your former peers are remote, do these conversations on video, not in chat. A text that says “congrats on the promotion” followed by silence is easy to misread. Reach out to the remote peers first, so they do not hear about the change secondhand.
Done when	You have named the change to the whole team, talked one on one with every former peer, and had a direct conversation with anyone who also wanted your job.

Days 1 to 30: Listen and Learn

Do not show up as the new sheriff. New leaders feel pressure to prove they deserve the job, so they change things fast. Resist that urge. The leader who listens first earns the right to change things later.

This phase focuses on two pillars: **Goals** and **Relationships**.



Move 1: Get clarity on the goals (Weeks 1 to 2)

You cannot coach what you cannot define.

Before you say much to your team, sit down with your own boss and get specific.

Ask your boss:

- What does winning look like for this team over the next 12 months?
- Who set our goals, and how did they decide on them?
- Are we on track right now?
- Who is responsible for what?
- How do our goals connect to the bigger goals of the company?
- What should I leave alone until I understand it better?

Then bring the same curiosity to your team, one person at a time:

How do you know when you are on track?

How clear are you on your goals?

What is the one thing that slows you down most?

RUN THIS: THE PRIORITY CHECK

Why	Clarity has to start with the person above you.
Time needed	45 minutes with your boss in week 1, 10 minutes to write one sentence, 15 minutes at a team meeting in week 2.
Do this	1. Book 45 minutes with your boss in week one and send the six questions ahead of time. 2. Write the team's top priority in one sentence. 3. Share it at your next team meeting and explain why it matters. 4. Ask each person to say it back in their own words. 5. Fix any gaps you hear. Confirm understanding. Do not assume it.
Say this	<i>To your boss: "I want to be sure I'm pointed at the right target before I change anything. Can I ask you a few questions about what winning looks like? And what should I leave alone until I understand it better?"</i> <i>To your team: "Here is our top priority in one sentence: [priority]. Here is why it matters: [why]. I want to be sure I explained it well, so tell me in your own words what you heard."</i>
Hybrid swap	Send your boss the questions by message first so the meeting can be short. After the team meeting, pin the one sentence priority in the team channel. Ask remote people to say it back first, out loud or in chat.
Done when	You can write the team's top priority in one sentence, your boss agrees with it, and every person has said it back to you.

Key takeaway: Clarity is a gift you give your team, not a constraint you place on them.

Founder lens: Your boss may be your board or your lead investor. Ask them for the one to three results they most want over the next two quarters, and write them down. That becomes the goal you translate for your team.

Move 2: Have a ten minute conversation with every person (Weeks 1 to 3)

Learn one real thing about each person that has nothing to do with their job.

That is not soft. It is the foundation that makes accountability possible later, because people get far less defensive when they already know you care.

In *What Effective Leaders DO*, I describe trust as a three legged stool: your **competence**, your **concern for others**, and the **commitments you keep**.

You cannot prove competence overnight as a new leader. But you can show concern for others on day one.

Keep a simple Relationship Notes sheet (there is a printable in the Toolkit).

A dog's name, a favorite restaurant, a kid's team.

Small, specific details are how people know you remember them.

If there is time, add four learning questions:

Why did you join this team, and what keeps you here?

What do you want to learn this year?

Where do you want to grow?

What would make your day better?

RUN THIS: THE TEN MINUTE CONVERSATION

Why	People give extra effort to leaders who see them as people first.
Time needed	10 minutes per person, plus 5 minutes of notes. A team of 8 is about two hours across weeks 1 to 3.
Do this	1. Ask for ten minutes. Say up front it is not about their work. 2. Ask about life outside the job: something they are proud of, something they enjoy, something that is tough right now. 3. Do not coach. Do not correct. Just listen. 4. Write down two or three details in your Relationship Notes right after. 5. Mention one of those details later in the week. That is how people know you were really listening.
Say this	<i>“Do you have ten minutes this week? Nothing to prepare, and it is not about your work. I just want to know you better.”</i> <i>Opening question: “Tell me about something outside of work you are proud of.”</i>
Hybrid swap	Make it a camera on video call, or a walking phone call for people who think better on their feet. Start with your remote people so they do not wait longest. Same ten minutes, same notes, same follow up.
Done when	You have had a conversation with every person, written down two or three details for each, and mentioned one back to them.

Key takeaway: People feel seen before they feel committed.

Move 3: Set your values and build a shared identity (Week 3)

Think of it as the team jersey. A shared identity gives people a real sense of belonging. They stop working near each other and start working with each other.

If you are joining an existing team, start by learning what already unites them.

If the team is new, you lead the conversation.

Here is the line to hold: **you set the values, and the team builds the standards.**

Your values come from you and your organization, and they are not up for a vote.

What the team builds in Move 6 is what those values look like in daily behavior.

Today you share the values and the why, and you listen for what they mean to your people.

RUN THIS: THE THREE VALUES SESSION

Why	Values you explain with a real story get understood. Values you just announce get nods.
Time needed	90 minutes for the session, plus 45 minutes of prep to choose your values and write your why.
Do this	1. Before the meeting, choose your three values. Ask your boss whether the organization already has stated values. If it does, start there and translate them for your team. If not, pick the three you are willing to hold the line on, and test them with your boss. 2. For each value, write one sentence on why it matters and one real story from your own career that shows it. 3. Open the session by sharing the three values, the why, and your story. Say plainly that the values are not up for a vote, and that you want questions and honest reactions. 4. Ask the team: What is our mission? What is our role in the company? What do we have in common in our goals? 5. For each value, ask: What would it look like on a great day here? What would it look like when we miss it? Capture their examples on a board. Do not turn them into standards yet. That is Move 6. 6. Post the three values where everyone sees them daily. Close by tying them back to results. Teams that live these usually win more, and we chase them either way.
Say this	<i>"Today I want to share what I believe this team should stand for, and why. These three values are set. I am not asking you to vote on them. I am asking you to tell me what they look like in real life here, and to push back if something does not make sense. In a few weeks we will turn what you tell me into standards, and those will be yours to write."</i>

Hybrid swap	Run it as two 45 minute video sessions on different days, with a shared whiteboard or shared document open for both. Session one: your three values, the why, and questions. Session two: what each value looks like on a great day and on a bad one, plus mission and role. Then post the values in the team channel and on the office wall.
Done when	You have shared your three values and the why for each, every person can say in their own words what each one means and give an example of it, and the values are posted where everyone sees them.

Founder lens: You probably carry your values in your head. Write them down before your next hire starts, with one story for each. New people cannot read your mind, and you will not be in every room.

Move 4: Learn how everyone is wired (Week 4)

Conflict on a team usually is not about character. It is about wiring. When people understand why a teammate communicates differently, empathy replaces frustration. I use four animal styles, based on the DISC model, to make this simple and memorable.

Animal	DISC	Style	How to work with them
Lion	D	Direct, decisive, results driven	Give them the bottom line fast.
Otter	I	Enthusiastic, social, creative	Make room for connection and recognition.
Retriever	S	Steady, loyal, supportive	Explain changes early and protect harmony.
Beaver	C	Analytical, detail oriented	Give them accuracy, details, and a clear plan.

None of these is better. A great team needs all four.
 Ask yourself which animal you are, and which person on your team is most different from you.
 That person is where you will need to adjust the most.

RUN THIS: OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS (AND YOUR “I’M NEW” INTRO)	
Why	When people know how each other work, nothing about you or them is a surprise.
Time needed	10 minutes to write your own answers, 45 minutes for the team session.
Do this	1. A few days before the meeting, send everyone four sentence starters: I am at my best when. I am at my worst when. You can count on me to. What I need from you is. For a fuller version, use the Operating Instructions Worksheet in the Toolkit. 2. Go first yourself, with your intro. Your openness sets the tone. 3. Each person shares their answers out loud. 4. Watch for the quiet teammate whose “what I need from you” answer surprises everyone. Those are the moments that build real understanding. 5. In your next one on one with each person, add how you give feedback and what they can expect from you.
Say this	<i>Your intro: “I’m new, and I want you to know how I work so nothing about me is a surprise. I like [to get the bottom line first / a heads up before big changes]. I am at my best when []. I am at my worst when []. You can count on me to []. What I need from you is []. I’ll give you a lot of feedback, and I want plenty back. Now, what should I know about you?”</i>
Hybrid swap	Collect the four answers in a shared document ahead of time, so nobody is surprised on camera. In the session, let remote people read theirs first and give everyone the same two minutes. Add a line to your own: “Here is how I like to be reached, and when I will answer.”
Done when	Everyone, including you, has shared all four answers, and you can say in one sentence how each person likes to be communicated with.

Move 5: Map what your team wants to learn (Week 4)

Growth is one of the biggest reasons people stay. Take what you heard in your conversations and map your team's learning needs: Where do we need to build a skill or strength? Who is eager to take on new challenges? Where might we need outside help? What do I need to learn as the leader?

RUN THIS: THE LEARNING MAP

Why	People stay where they are growing, and you will rarely know in the moment which investment changes someone's path.
Time needed	20 minutes alone at your desk, then 15 minutes with one person.
Do this	1. Reread your Relationship Notes and the answers to the four learning questions. 2. Write one line per person: what they want to learn and where they want to grow. 3. Mark the two or three biggest skill gaps for the team as a whole. 4. Choose one person this week and invest in their growth on purpose: a stretch assignment, a coaching conversation, or a door to open. 5. Put a follow up date for that person on your calendar.
Say this	<i>"In our first conversation you told me you want to learn [skill]. I'd like to give you [stretch assignment]. It will be uncomfortable at first, and I'll help. Does that sound like something you would want?"</i>
Hybrid swap	Remote people are the easiest to forget for stretch assignments, because nobody sees them waiting. Check your list: are remote people on it? Offer the opportunity in a scheduled call, not a passing chat message.
Done when	You have a one page learning map for the team, and one person has a specific growth opportunity with a date on it.

IF IT GOES SIDEWAYS: DAYS 1 TO 30

Someone gives one word answers in the ten minute conversation	Do not fill the silence with work talk. Try a smaller question: “What’s something you are looking forward to this weekend?” or “Tell me about the last time you felt proud of something here.” If they stay guarded, that is information, not failure. End warmly at ten minutes, remember one detail, and try again in two weeks. Trust gets built by repetition.
Your boss cannot answer the clarity questions	Write down your best guess at the goals and bring it back: “Here is what I am hearing. Am I close?” Ask who else can answer, such as your boss’s boss or a peer manager. Then tell your team the truth: “Here is what I know. Here is what I am still finding out.”
You inherited a Culture Killer on day one	Do not act in week one. Spend two or three weeks watching and listening, and write down specific behaviors you saw, not impressions. Check the Culture Killers table in the Toolkit. If the behavior is hurting others, move Move 9 up. Before you decide anything, remember the story of Jason in this playbook.
You were promoted from within	Read the Promoted From Within page before you do anything else. The short version: name the change out loud, and have the awkward conversations first.
Someone argues with one of your values	Listen first, and ask what the value would look like if it were true here. Explain your why again. You can clarify what a value means, but you do not trade it away. If the concern shows your explanation was weak, fix the explanation, not the value. Then talk one on one afterward.

Days 31 to 60: Build Together

Unspoken expectations are premeditated resentments. The biggest source of conflict on any team is not talent or effort. It is people filling in the blanks with their own assumptions about what good looks like.

This phase focuses on **Expectations**. You are replacing assumptions with clarity before the first big setback tests everything you have built. Your values are already set. Now the team decides what they look like.



Move 6: Build the team's standards together (Week 5)

A list of standards you write alone gets nods and then gets ignored.

The standards that actually govern behavior are the ones the team built and agreed to out loud, including what happens when someone breaks one.

Give this session real time. Bring your three values back into the room.

Your team is not deciding what matters.

They are deciding what it looks like here.

RUN THIS: THE STANDARDS SESSION

Why	Your values say what matters. Standards the team builds govern behavior. Standards you hand down quietly disappear.
Time needed	100 minutes for the session, plus 30 minutes of prep and 15 minutes to post the result.
Do this	1. Start with stories, not rules. Ask: Who is the best teammate you ever had, and what did they actually do? Collect behaviors, not adjectives. “Always the first to share what she learned” beats “collaborative.” 2. Cluster the behaviors under your three values on a board. Watch their own words turn into a model. Park anything that does not fit under a value. It may be a preference, not a standard. 3. Force the trade off. If our standard is to respond within a day, what does that mean on your busiest week? Standards without sacrifice are just slogans. 4. Decide the breach response now, while it is calm. For each standard, ask: what should happen when someone breaks this? Most teams skip this step. It is what makes peer accountability possible later. 5. Test every standard against the values. Ask: Does this bring one of our values to life? If one contradicts a value, say so plainly, explain why, and ask the team to rework it. This is the only veto you use. 6. Start with bright spots, then make a storm plan. Ask each person to name a moment when a teammate lived a standard. Then ask: it is week ten and we are behind. What does our best version do, and which standard will we need most? 7. Narrow it down. Pick a handful of specific, observable standards. Put your three values at the top, add the breach responses, and call it your team covenant. Have everyone sign, starting with you. Post it where the team sees it every day.

Say this	<i>Your opening: “Today we are going to write the standards we actually live by. The three values are set: [value], [value], and [value]. What we decide today is what they look like here, in behavior we can see. Not a poster, and not HR language. I’m going to start by asking about the best teammate you ever had. We’ll turn what you tell me into a handful of standards, and we’ll decide together what happens when one gets broken, while it is calm. I’ll go first.”</i> <i>Then tell your own best teammate story in under two minutes.</i>
Hybrid swap	Run two 60 minute video sessions on different days with a shared whiteboard. Session one: stories and clustering. Session two: trade offs, breach responses, the values check, and sign off. Use chat first, then talk, so remote voices land before the room does. Sign by typing names into a shared document, then pin it in the channel and post it in the office.
Done when	The team has a handful of specific, observable standards, each one ties to a value, each has an agreed breach response, and every person has signed the team covenant.

Founder lens: Short on time? Run a two hour version. Ask each person for one best teammate story, cluster the answers, pick three to five standards, and agree on breach responses. Run the bright spots check four weeks later in a 30 minute meeting.

Move 7: Clarify every role (Week 6)

People check out when nobody tells them their role matters. When someone does not know what success looks like for them, they invent a version. It is usually wrong and often resentful.

RUN THIS: THE ROLE CLARITY CONVERSATION

Why	Nobody does their best work while guessing what a good job looks like.
Time needed	30 minutes per person, plus 10 minutes to write a follow up note. A team of 8 is about five hours across the week.
Do this	1. Meet individually with every person, starting with those who work behind the scenes or in support roles. 2. Tell each one exactly how they help the team win, even when it does not show up in a report. 3. Ask them how they see their role and where it does not match yours. 4. Give them a standard to own, such as the person everyone trusts for accurate numbers. 5. Say the line and mean it: even when your effort is not visible, your effort is still valuable. Then prove you see it by naming it when it happens.
Say this	<i>Your opening: “I want to be sure you know exactly how what you do helps this team win. Here is how I see your role: []. Where does that match how you see it, and where does it not?”</i> <i>Then: “One standard I would like you to own is []. Even when your effort is not visible, it is still valuable, and I will name it when I see it.”</i>
Hybrid swap	Hold it on video with the camera on, and send a one sentence summary in writing afterward. Remote people often wonder if their work is visible, so say it directly: “I see what you do, even from a distance.”
Done when	Every person can say in one sentence how they help the team win and what standard they own, and you have sent it to them in writing.

Founder lens: In an early team, people wear several hats. Write down each person's one main job and their two or three extra hats, and decide who owns what when two hats collide. Update it every quarter and after every round of hiring.

Move 8: Make it safe to speak up (Weeks 7 to 8)

Psychological safety is the feeling that you will not be punished or humiliated for sharing ideas, concerns, or mistakes. A lack of it sounds like crickets in your meetings, and **crickets on video are worse than crickets in a room**. In a room you can see a raised eyebrow or a half open mouth. On a screen you get a grid of faces that could mean agreement, confusion, or a muted person eating lunch. If there is an elephant in the room, you want your people to **name it so together you can tame it**.

Three ways to build it

Focus	What it looks like
Normalize mistakes	Share your own mistakes first. Set aside meeting time to talk about lessons learned. Treat errors as feedback about the process, not proof of a bad employee.
Invite different views	Ask “What are we missing?” and “Does anyone see this differently?” When someone speaks up, respond with thanks and curiosity, even if the feedback stings.
Set clear norms	Agree together on how feedback is given and received and how you handle disagreements. Revisit the norms as needed...

Five hybrid tools that get people talking

- **Chat first, then talk.** Ask the question, give two minutes for everyone to type an answer, then read some out loud and invite voices.
- **Anonymous input.** Before a big decision, send a short anonymous form: “What are we missing?” Share the themes at the next meeting and name what you will do about them.
- **Remote first round robin.** Go around the screen before the room.
- **Count to seven.** After you ask a question, wait. Silence on video feels twice as long, so most leaders jump in too soon.
- **Private follow up within a day.** If someone was quiet or off camera, message them: “I noticed you were quiet. Was there something you wanted to say that is easier to type?”

RUN THIS: SET THE FEEDBACK DEAL AND THE NORMS

Why	People will not tell you what they really think until they believe it is safe
Time needed	20 minutes in a team meeting to set norms, 5 extra minutes in every meeting after, plus 15 minutes to read anonymous input.
Do this	1. Say the feedback deal out loud: you will give a lot of feedback, and you want plenty in return. It should feel like an extra pair of eyes, not a grade. 2. Agree on three team norms for giving feedback and handling disagreement. Write them in the shared document. 3. Share a mistake of your own first, and what you learned from it. 4. Use chat first, then talk, in at least three meetings. 5. Send one anonymous “What are we missing?” input and report back what you heard.
Say this	<i>“I am going to give you a lot of feedback, and I want a lot back. Feedback is an extra pair of eyes spotting things we might miss. It is okay to disagree with me, and if I get defensive, tell me. Here is a mistake I made this month: []. Here is what I learned.”</i>
Hybrid swap	This whole Move is built for hybrid. On a fully in person team, swap chat for index cards, and the anonymous form for a box on the table.
Done when	The team has written norms for feedback and disagreement, you have used chat first, then talk, in at least three meetings, and at least one person has told you something that was hard to say.

Key takeaway: Feedback is information and encouragement to improve. It is not punishment.

IF IT GOES SIDEWAYS: DAYS 31 TO 60

Nobody speaks in the Standards Session	Go smaller. Split into pairs or breakout rooms for five minutes, or use chat first. Ask for stories, not rules. Go first with your own best teammate story. A long silence is information about trust, so do not rescue the room too fast.
Someone pushes back on a standard or will not sign	Do not force it. Ask: “What would need to change for you to sign this?” Often the objection is a better standard. If it is more than that, talk one on one afterward, privately.
A veteran says “we tried this before”	Thank them and ask what happened. Then say: “This time the team is building it, and I am staying on it.” Then do.

Days 61 to 90: Hold and Honor

This is where cultures quietly fall apart. The newness wears off. Someone drops the ball. Holding the standard starts to feel like too much work.

This phase focuses on **Accountability** and **Thanks**. You need both.

Push without appreciation burns people out.

Appreciation without standards lets the team drift.



Move 9: Have the hard conversation early with POINT (Weeks 9 to 10)

The surest way to lose great employees is to consistently tolerate bad behavior.
Avoidance does not shrink the problem.

It tells the whole team the standard was never real. What you permit, you promote. Think of accountability as one simple question: are we doing what we said we would do? The POINT model gives you a structure for the answer.

	Step	What it sounds like
P	Permission and Purpose	"If you are open to it, I would like to share something that I think will help you."
O	Objectively describe	"This week you arrived late to two of our team meetings."
I	Identify the impact	"When you arrive late, it sends the message that you do not value other people's time."
N	Negotiate next steps	"What do you think we can do to make sure that does not happen again?"
T	Track progress	"For two weeks now you have been early and prepared. I really appreciate it."

POINT works for positive feedback too.

Use it when someone does something great, and you will build the habit of noticing.

RUN THIS: YOUR FIRST POINT CONVERSATION

Why	What you permit, you promote, and the first time is the cheapest time to address it.
Time needed	10 minutes to prepare, 15 to 20 minutes for the conversation, 5 minutes to follow up.
Do this	1. Prepare two sentences: the one observable behavior, and the impact it had. 2. Ask permission and state your purpose. 3. Describe the behavior objectively, then the impact. No guessing at motives. 4. Ask them what they think the next step should be. 5. Put a follow up date on your calendar, and thank them when you see the change.
Say this	In person or on video: <i>“Do you have a few minutes? If you are open to it, I would like to share something I think will help you. This week you arrived late to two of our team meetings. When that happens, it tells the team that we do not value each other's time, and that is one of the standards we set together. What do you think we can do to make sure it does not happen again? Great. I'll check in Friday and we'll see how it is going.”</i> For a remote employee (schedule first, then talk): <i>Your message: “Hi [name]. Do you have 15 minutes tomorrow for a video call? Nothing urgent. I would like to talk through something I think will help you. No prep needed.”</i> <i>On the call: “Thanks for making time. This week your project updates were late on Tuesday and Thursday, and I had to chase them. When updates are late, the people who depend on them cannot plan and they start working around you. It is one of the standards we built together. What do you think would make it easier to get them to us on time? I'll look for them Monday morning and tell you how it is going.”</i>

Hybrid swap	Never deliver hard feedback in chat or email. Schedule a video call with a calm message, never “can we talk?”, which sets off alarm bells. Keep the camera on, and send a short written summary afterward so the conversation is not just a memory.
Done when	You have had at least one POINT conversation, with a follow up date on the calendar. If no one has missed a standard yet, practice it on positive feedback instead.



Move 10: Ask better questions (Week 10)

Being a leader does not mean doing all the talking.

Your most useful tool is a good question. Google's Project Oxygen ranked being a good coach as the number one behavior of the most effective managers it studied.

Questions that start with “Why” tend to make people defensive.

Try “What” and “How” instead.

Instead of	Try
Why did you do that?	Walk me through what you did first.
Why did this go wrong?	What happened, and what did you learn?
Do you understand?	How would you explain the plan back to me?
Why didn't you tell me?	What would make it easier to bring me problems early?

RUN THIS: WHAT, HOW, AND PARAPHRASE

Why	Every problem you stop solving for your people becomes a person who grew.
Time needed	No extra meetings. 5 minutes of prep before each one on one.
Do this	1. Before each one on one, pick two “What” or “How” questions from the table. 2. Paraphrase before you respond: “What I hear you saying is...” 3. Ask one question before you give one answer: “What do you think we should do?” 4. After each one on one, note how much of the time you talked. 5. Catch yourself starting a sentence with “Why.” Rephrase it.
Say this	<i>“What do you think we should do?” “What I hear you saying is []. Did I get that right?” “What would make it easier to bring me problems early?”</i>
Hybrid swap	Silence on video feels longer, so count to seven before you speak. Paraphrase out loud so remote people know they were heard. In chat, a bare “What happened?” can read as blunt, so add one warm line first.
Done when	In every one on one this week you asked What and How questions, paraphrased before responding, and let the other person answer first at least once.

Move 11: Revisit one standard for the team (Week 11)

A standard set once and never mentioned again becomes a poster nobody reads. Pick one agreement from your Standards Session and bring it back up. Then help your team own it. A culture that depends only on the boss enforcing it is fragile.

RUN THIS: HAND IT TO THE TEAM

Why	A standard the team enforces on itself is the only kind that lasts.
Time needed	15 minutes in a team meeting, plus 10 minutes with your most respected team members.
Do this	1. Pick one standard from your Standards Session. 2. Bring it up in a team meeting: “We agreed to this. How is it going? Does it still work?” 3. Give people respectful language to hold a teammate to it, such as “We do not do that here.” 4. Publicly back anyone who holds the line. 5. Ask your most respected team members which standard is slipping and how they plan to address it.
Say this	<i>“Back in week five we agreed to [standard]. How is it going? Is it still the right one? If you see someone live it, say so. If you see it slip, say that too.”</i>
Hybrid swap	Ask in chat first and give remote people the first word. Check whether the standard still works for people who are not in the room. A rule like “reply within an hour” may not work across time zones.
Done when	The team has talked about one standard, at least one person other than you has spoken up about it, and you have backed someone publicly.

Move 12: Say thanks in a memorable way (Weeks 11 to 12)

Vague praise creates a nice feeling for a day.

Specific praise creates culture, because it shows everyone watching which behaviors get repeated around here.

Name the person.

Name the exact behavior.

Explain why it mattered.

That is three sentences, and it will outlast almost anything else you say that week.

Example: “Priya, the way you let that frustrated customer finish before you offered a fix, and then walked her through it yourself, is exactly how we keep a bad moment from becoming a lost customer. That is our standard.”

RUN THIS: RECOGNIZE THE UNSEEN

Why	The people who do the unseen work are the ones most likely to quit, and the ones most likely to be missed.
Time needed	5 minutes per recognition, about 15 minutes a week, plus 30 seconds per Win Log entry.
Do this	1. Find the person who does the dirty work, supports the group, and rarely gets noticed. 2. Tell them privately and specifically what you see and why it matters. 3. Start a weekly team ritual: one person names a teammate who did unseen work that week. 4. Keep a Win Log (printable in the Toolkit). Every time someone finishes a project or does something great, add a date and a note. Start it in week 8 if you can. 5. In week 12, review the Win Log and share the wins with your own boss. You will not rely on memory, and you can advocate for your team with proof.
Say this	<i>“[Name], when you [exact behavior], [what happened because of it]. That is exactly the standard we set, and I wanted you to know I saw it.”</i> <i>Remote example: “Marcus, when you posted your notes in the channel before the call, three people who could not attend were still able to weigh in. That is exactly the kind of teammate we said we wanted.”</i>
Hybrid swap	Remote work is the most invisible work. Recognize it in the public channel, not only in private messages. Start a recurring “unseen work” thread and post in it yourself first. A short handwritten note sent by mail still lands.
Done when	You have recognized specific behavior every week for the last two weeks, the unseen work ritual is running, and your Win Log has entries you have shared with your boss.

Move 13: Run a 90 day pulse check (Week 13)

Before you plan any changes, ask. Even an anonymous survey works. Three questions: Do you feel like your voice matters here? Is there a teammate you still do not really know? What is one thing we could do differently that would most improve how we work together?

RUN THIS: THE 90 DAY PULSE CHECK

Why	You have earned the right to propose changes, and the best change is the one your team asked for.
Time needed	15 minutes to send, 30 minutes to read every answer, 20 minutes to report back.
Do this	1. Send the Week 13 message from the Toolkit, then the three questions. 2. Make the survey anonymous. 3. Read every answer, then read them again the next day. 4. Act visibly on one thing this week. 5. Tell the team what you heard and what you are changing. That is how people learn that speaking up is safe.
Say this	<i>Report back: "Here is what I heard. Three things came up again and again: []. Here is the one thing we are changing starting Monday: []. And here is what I am going to work on myself: []."</i>
Hybrid swap	An anonymous form is essential for remote teams, since people cannot read the room before they answer. Share the results in a live meeting with remote people first, then post the summary in writing.
Done when	You have read every response, told the team what you heard, made one visible change, and chosen your focus for the next 90 days (see the next page).

Now you have earned the right to propose changes. Involve the team. Telling people to do it your way is a great way to create quiet quitters.

IF IT GOES SIDeways: DAYS 61 TO 90

A POINT conversation gets defensive or emotional	Slow down. "I can see this is landing hard. I am not questioning you as a person. Let's take a break and pick it up tomorrow." Do not argue the facts. Return to the standard you built together. Follow up within a day with something warm.
The pulse check comes back harsh	Read it twice, then wait a day before you react. Look for patterns, not a single stinging comment. Thank the team publicly for being honest. Feedback is information, not punishment, and that goes for you too.
You realize you have tolerated something for weeks	Own it. "I should have talked to you about this sooner. That is on me." Then use POINT. Late is better than never, and the team will respect that you said it.



Day 91: What Happens Next

The pulse check is not the finish line. It is the handoff to your next 90 days. Here is how to turn what you heard into a plan, in about an hour.

1. **Sort the answers.** Put each comment under one of the five pillars: Goals, Relationships, Expectations, Accountability, Thanks.
2. **Find the weakest pillar.** The one with the most comments, or the most worried ones, is your focus for the next 90 days.
3. **Pick one team sized change** and one personal change. Say both out loud to the team.
4. **Keep the habits that built the culture.** Keep the Friday Five Minute Check. Revisit one standard every month. Recognize specific behavior every week. Run the pulse check again at about day 180.
5. **Debrief with your boss.** Bring your Win Log, your scorecard, and the pulse check themes. Ask: “What would you like to see more of from me in the next 90 days?”
6. **Get a second set of eyes.** Pick a mentor outside your reporting line, or schedule a coaching conversation. The leaders who keep growing are the ones who ask for help early.

Your next 90 days	A lighter rhythm
Every week	Friday Five Minute Check. Recognize one specific behavior. Ten minutes of real conversation with the person you know least.
Every month	Revisit one standard. Read your Win Log. Ask: who is more capable this month than last?
Every quarter	Run the pulse check. Reread your values with your boss. Update the standards with the team and make sure each one still ties to a value. Share the results.
Key takeaway: Culture is not something you finish. It is something you keep.	

The One Thing to Avoid at All Costs: Making Assumptions

Do not assume you know why people do what they do.

Of everything I could warn a new leader about, this is the big one.

Early in my coaching career, I took over a program that had won three games in two seasons. I wanted a more demanding culture, and showing up on time was not optional.

One player, whom I will call Jason, was late to a third straight morning practice. I had already run him for it twice. This time I let him have it in front of the whole team. I questioned his commitment. I told him he had the talent to start but obviously did not care enough to get there on time.

After practice, one of his teammates knocked on my office door and told me what I had never bothered to ask. Jason's grandmother could only drop him off after he helped care for his little brother, who had serious medical issues, every single morning.

Jason was not late because he did not care. He was carrying more before 6 a.m. than most of his teammates carried all day.

I felt sick. I had punished a kid for a story I made up in my own head, because I never took five minutes to learn the real one. That was the turning point. I started sitting down with our players one at a time and asking about their lives before I coached them. Our relationships got stronger, and so did our record.

How to avoid it

- **Ask before you decide.** Get curious before you get critical.
- **Hold your changes.** Do not recommend changes until you understand how things work now and why. If you have not built trust, people may resist what you propose.
- **Treat everyone as having real potential.** Your job at the start is to understand their perspective, not impose your own.

On a remote team, assumptions grow faster. A person who is quiet on video, slow in chat, or off camera is easy to misread. Ask before you decide what it means.

Key takeaway: Get curious before you get critical.

Take Care of the Leader (You!)

You cannot give what you do not have. Your first 90 days will be hard, and there will be times you need help. Plan for it now.

Stay coachable

In *Staying Coachable*, I describe four ceilings that stop growth: **contentment, ignoring reality, pride, and knowing without doing**. The one that traps new leaders most often is pride.

After every tough day, ask yourself the two questions I want my teams asking: **How did I do? How could I have done better?** And once a month, run your own four questions:

1. What do I want?
2. Where am I now?
3. What is the gap?
4. What is my next step?

Build your support network

- Find an experienced leader **outside your reporting line** for candid conversations.
- Stay in touch with a former boss or mentor. Even a quarterly coffee helps.
- Say “I am new to this” out loud to people you trust.
- Surround yourself with people who are better than you in the areas where you are weakest.
- Ask often: **What are you seeing that I do not?**

Be human, and fill your own cup first

Leadership starts with leading yourself. If you need the afternoon off, say so. It gives your team permission to take care of themselves too. Also stretch your view. Follow voices different from yours, read authors you have not read, and ask people who see things differently what you are missing.

Key takeaway: Treat yourself the way you want your team to treat themselves.

The Toolkit

Everything you print, fill in, copy, and paste

The Moves tell you what to do. The Toolkit is what you keep on your desk.

Print the pages you want, or copy the tables into a notes app or spreadsheet.

1. [The 90 Day Calendar](#)
2. [Your 90 Day Scorecard](#)
3. [The Weekly Five Minute Check](#)
4. [Relationship Notes](#)
5. [Win Log](#)
6. [Culture Killers: What to Watch For](#)
7. [Copy and Paste Messages](#)
8. [New Hire Onboarding Checklist](#)
9. [Team Member Operating Instructions Worksheet](#)
10. [Your Reflection Questions](#)



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Your 90 Day Calendar

Use this as your week by week guide. Block each item on your calendar the way you would block a client meeting. If it is not scheduled, it will not happen. **No week has more than two tasks, plus your Friday check.** Click a Move name to jump to it.

Week	Pillar	Your move	Date blocked	Done
0	Get ready	Read this playbook. Block your calendar. Send the introduction note (Week 0 page).		☐
1	Goals	Meet your boss and ask the clarity questions (Move 1). Send the “open the door” note.		☐
2	Relationships	Share the Priority Check (Move 1). Start the ten minute conversations and your Relationship Notes (Move 2).		☐
3	Goals	Finish the ten minute conversations (Move 2). Run the Values Session (Move 3).		☐
4	Relationships	Run Operating Instructions and your “I’m new” intro (Move 4). Map learning needs and invest in one person, solo, 35 minutes (Move 5).		☐
5	Expectations	Run the Standards Session. Decide the breach response together. Sign and post your team covenant (Move 6).		☐
6	Expectations	Hold a Role Clarity Conversation with each person (Move 7).		☐

Week	Pillar	Your move	Date blocked	Done
7	Expectations	Set the feedback deal. Agree on team norms for feedback and disagreement (Move 8).		☐
8	Expectations and Thanks	Use chat first, then talk, and send the anonymous “What are we missing?” (Move 8). Start your Win Log (Move 12).		☐
9	Accountability	Prepare, and hold your first POINT conversation if one is needed (Move 9).		☐
10	Accountability	Practice What and How questions and paraphrasing in every one on one (Move 10). Follow up on your POINT conversations.		☐
11	Accountability and Thanks	Revisit one standard and back the people who hold it (Move 11). Start the Recognize the Unseen ritual (Move 12).		☐
12	Thanks	Review your Win Log. Share the wins with your own boss. Thank one person privately (Move 12).		☐
13	All five	Run the pulse check. Share what you heard (Move 13). Plan your next 90 days (Day 91 page).		☐

Your 90 Day Scorecard

One line for each Move, in the same order as the Calendar. Check it off when you can say you hit the **Done when** line.

#	Milestone	Where	Done
1	I met with my boss, got clear on the goals, and shared the Priority Check	Move 1	☐
2	I had a personal conversation with every person on my team	Move 2	☐
3	I shared my three values and the why with my team	Move 3	☐
4	I shared how I work and heard how they work	Move 4	☐
5	I mapped learning needs and invested in one person	Move 5	☐
6	We built, signed, and posted our team covenant	Move 6	☐
7	I had a role clarity conversation with each person	Move 7	☐
8	I made it safe to speak up: feedback, norms, and chat first	Move 8	☐
9	I had at least one POINT conversation	Move 9	☐
10	I used What and How questions and paraphrased	Move 10	☐
11	I revisited one standard and handed it to the team	Move 11	☐
12	I recognized specific behavior weekly and kept a Win Log	Move 12	☐
13	I ran the 90 day pulse check and shared the results	Move 13	☐

The Weekly Five Minute Check

You do not need a library on a busy week. You need a shortlist. Run these five questions every Friday before you leave. One question per pillar, five minutes, answered truthfully.

Pillar	Your Friday question
Goals	Could every person on my team tell me what winning looks like this week?
Relationships	Who did I connect with this week, and who is going quiet? Who did I talk to the least, remote or in the room?
Expectations	Did I make our values and standards clear, or did I assume they knew?
Accountability	What did I tolerate this week that I should have addressed?
Thanks	Who did unseen work this week that I have not recognized yet?

Check what you skip.

The pattern will tell you more about your blind spots than any performance review.

Printable tracker: check the box when you answered it honestly

Pillar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accountability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thanks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My biggest pattern this quarter:

If you want to go deeper with this weekly habit, my *Sticky 11 Checklist* is a five minute Friday ritual built on eleven leadership habits. You can download a free printable copy at **Sticky11.com**.

Relationship Notes

Two or three small, specific details per person. Write them right after the conversation. Look at this page before every one on one.

Name	Animal style	Personal details (family, pets, interests)	What they want to learn	10 min done	Time zone

Win Log

Thirty seconds per entry. When you meet with your own boss, you will not rely on memory, and you can advocate for your team with proof.

Date	Who	What they did and why it mattered	Link or note	Told my boss
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐
				☐

Culture Killers: What to Watch For

Great talent and strategy are essential, but never enough. Toxic behavior eventually sabotages even a gifted team. These five quietly rot a team. Catch them early.

Culture killer	How it shows up	Your move
The Exempt Star	Your top performer is allowed to break the standard everyone else keeps. The team notices immediately.	Hold your best performer to the standard first and most visibly. Use POINT in private.
The Checked Out Veteran	A long time team member who has quietly stopped investing. They are not loud, but their disengagement gives everyone permission to coast.	Reconnect them to a role that matters and to their legacy. If that fails, address effort directly with POINT.
The Silo	Groups stop mixing. Each develops its own norms, and the team stops being one team. On a hybrid team, it often splits into “the room” and “the screen.”	Mix groups on projects. Give shared goals no single group can reach alone. Name the silo, warmly but directly.
The Rearview Critic	Someone who only looks back and complains about what already happened.	Shift the question from whose fault it is to what happens next. Teach “next play.”
The Quiet Withdrawal	A person who used to speak up stops. They are easy to miss because they are not a problem. On video, they simply turn the camera off.	Check in privately and early. Ask how they are doing before you ask how the work is going.

Culture killers do not announce themselves.

Your job is to see them early and address them with grace before they spread.

Copy and Paste Messages

Culture is not only built in meetings. It is kept alive in the small touches between them. Drop these into email, Slack, Teams, or text. Change the names and details so they sound like you. A message in your own voice always beats a perfect one that sounds like a form letter. The scripts for the Standards Session, Role Clarity Conversation, your “I’m new” intro, and the POINT conversation (including the remote version) are inside their Moves.

Week 0: Introduce yourself

When to send: The day before you start, or the morning of.

Hi team. I am [name], and I am excited to start as your manager on [date]. My first few weeks are about listening and learning, so I will be asking each of you for ten minutes. It is not about your work. I just want to know you. See you [day].

Week 1: Open the door

When to send: The day you start, or the day before your first team meeting.

Hi team. I am excited to be here and to work with you. My first few weeks are about listening and learning, so I will be grabbing ten minutes with each of you. It is not about your work. I just want to know you better. No agenda. Looking forward to it.

Week 3: Set up the values session

When to send: The day before your values session.

Tomorrow I will share the three values I believe this team should stand for, and why. Come ready to react, and to tell me what they look like in real life here. Bring one example of a teammate who lived values like these.

Week 5: Reinforce the standards

When to send: The same day as your Standards Session, while it is fresh.

Proud of the covenant we signed today. It shows what our values look like in real life. That list is ours now, not mine. This week, catch a teammate living one of those standards and tell them you saw it.

Week 11: Model specific recognition

When to send: Sunday night or Monday morning, to set up the week.

Shoutout to [name] for [specific behavior]. That is exactly the standard we set. Your turn: who did something right this week that nobody noticed? Reply and tell me.

Week 13: Invite the truth

When to send: Right before you send your pulse check.

We have been together about 90 days. I want to hear what is working, what is not, and what I should do differently. Three quick questions are coming. Be as direct as you like. I will share what I hear and what we are going to change.



New Hire Onboarding Checklist

Use this for every person who joins, whether you manage one new hire or are a founder hiring ten. Print one per person. Each item points back to a Move in this playbook.

WHEN	WHAT TO DO	DONE
Before day one	Send a welcome note with the start time, who they will meet, and what week one looks like. Set up their accounts, equipment, and access. Tell the team who is joining and why you chose them.	☐
Day 1	Welcome them personally. Share your three values and the why (Move 3). Introduce a buddy. Give them one small, real task they can finish today.	☐
Week 1	Hold a ten minute personal conversation (Move 2). Have them complete the Operating Instructions Worksheet and share it (Move 4). Explain their role and what a great first 90 days looks like (Move 7). Walk through the team standards and ask for questions (Move 6).	☐
Day 30	Hold a one on one. Ask what is working, what is confusing, and what they need. Ask for one thing to change about onboarding. Recognize something specific they did (Move 12).	☐
Day 60	Review role clarity and progress against the agreed goals. Ask how it feels to speak up on this team (Move 8). Pair them with a teammate on a real project.	☐
Day 90	Run the pulse check (Move 13). Ask what you should keep, start, and stop. Set goals for the next quarter together.	☐

Founder lens: Build this checklist before your next hire starts, then revisit it after every hiring wave. The way you onboard person ten shows the team what the culture really is.

Team Member Operating Instructions Worksheet

Each person completes this on their own, then shares their answers with the team or in a one on one. Start with the four sentence starters in Move 4. Go first yourself.

Name: _____ **Animal style:** _____

QUESTION
1. What are two or three of your strengths as a team member?
2. When do you prefer to communicate with the team?
3. What is the best way to reach you during the day?
4. What is the most effective way to give you feedback?
5. How do you like to be recognized for doing great work?
6. What is something about you that past coworkers sometimes misunderstood?
7. What do you need that you are not getting enough of?
8. What do you struggle with at times?
9. What is a pet peeve the team should know about?
10. What could someone do to make your day better?
11. What is your favorite snack?
12. Why are you excited to be part of this team?

Your Reflection Questions

Pick two or three each week. Write the answers down. Your future self will thank you.

A quick reminder: The four ceilings from *Staying Coachable* are **contentment** (good enough is good enough), **ignoring reality** (avoiding what is true), **pride** (I already know), and **knowing without doing** (understanding it but not acting on it).

- What do I want this team to become by the end of the year, in one sentence?
- Which person on my team do I know the least, and what will I do about it this week?
- Who have I talked to the least this month, remote or in the room?
- What assumptions have I made that I have not checked?
- Which of the four ceilings is limiting me right now: contentment, ignoring reality, pride, or knowing without doing?
- What conversation am I avoiding, and what is it costing the team while I wait?
- Who is holding this team together off the stat sheet, and have I told them?
- Where do I need help, and who will I ask?
- When did I last admit a mistake to my team?
- Who on my team is more capable this month than last month because of something I did?
- What is one thing I should start doing, and one thing I should stop doing?

A Final Word

Great leaders build the foundation for culture early, when it is quiet and there is no pressure to. The trust you bank in your first 90 days is what carries your team through everything the next year throws at it.

Do the culture work before you need it, so your people can play free, believe fully, and compete for each other when it matters most.

If this helps you, I would love to hear how it goes.

Sean Glaze

Bring This to Your Whole Team

Reading this playbook will make you a better leader. Working through it with your team, and with the other new managers around you, is what makes it stick. If you would like a guide in the room, here are three ways I can help.

If you are	What I can do
A new manager	A 90 day debrief coaching call. Bring your scorecard, your Win Log, and your pulse check themes. We will look at what worked, what went sideways, and plan your next 90 days together.
Leading a team	A team workshop. A keynote plus a facilitated session, in person or virtual, where you share your values and your team builds the standards that bring them to life, with a neutral guide in the room.
L&D or HR leader	A facilitator version for a cohort of new managers. If you are buying for 20 new managers, you need a rollout, not only a self study guide. See below.

Notes on the Research

Here is where the research in this playbook comes from, so you can check the work.

Gallup manager research: managers account for roughly 70 percent of the variance in team engagement.

- **Gallup Q12 meta analysis, 11th edition, 2024:** 46 percent of employees strongly agree they know what is expected of them at work, down from 56 percent in 2020.
- **Google Project Aristotle**, building on the work of Amy Edmondson of Harvard: psychological safety was the strongest predictor of team performance across 180 teams studied over two years.
- **Google Project Oxygen:** being a good coach ranked as the number one behavior of the most effective managers studied.

This playbook is my own synthesis, built on my books and my work with teams. No study has tested this exact playbook. What the research supports are the individual ideas inside it.

A few practices here, including keeping a running record of team wins and finding a mentor outside your reporting line, were also highlighted in the People Managing People guide *4 Things You Absolutely Must Do in Your First 90 Days as a New Manager* by Rosanna Campbell. It is a worthwhile companion read.

About Sean



Sean Glaze is an author, leadership speaker, and team building facilitator who has worked with clients like Cisco, John Deere, the CDC, and Emory University to increase collaboration, boost productivity, and build exceptional workplace cultures.

After more than twenty years as a basketball coach and educator, he now brings those winning team lessons to conferences, retreats, and team events across the country.



Contact Sean!

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