



# The Leader Checkup

Three–ten people · 25 minutes · upward feedback, said out loud

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Feedback flows down easily and rarely up. A leader who only hears what is filtered learns wrong.

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**What do you do  
that makes their job harder?**

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# Keep • block • ask

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- **Keep** — one thing that is landing well, said out loud so it does not get lost.
- **Block** — one thing that quietly costs the team, stated as behaviour plus impact: when you X, we Y.
- **Ask** — one request, not a grievance. The leader listens and does not defend.

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# How the 25 minutes run

| Time  | Phase          | The room does                                                                       |
|-------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0–7   | Write          | One keep, one block, one ask each; the leader writes too, including a self-critique |
| 7–15  | Speak & listen | Round robin. The team speaks; the leader listens — no defending, no explaining      |
| 15–20 | Reflect back   | The leader says what they actually heard and asks one clarifying question           |
| 20–25 | Commit         | One concrete change with a follow-up date; the team names what it will watch for    |
| —     | After          | The follow-up date opens the next checkup                                           |

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# Three rules protect the room

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- The leader does not defend or explain. The first defence teaches everyone to edit the truth from now on.
- A block is behaviour plus impact — "when decisions change late, we lose a day" — never character: "you are chaotic".
- One commitment. A list of ten is a performance, not a change.

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The leader listens,  
**the team speaks,**

one real change comes out the other side.

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# Three ways it stalls, three rescues

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- The leader starts defending → park explanations until after. Enforce it out loud.
- The team gives only "everything is fine" → the leader opens with a real self-critique: what do I do that makes your job harder?
- A block turns into a character attack → reframe to behaviour plus impact; the room stays open only if it stays about actions.

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# What leaves the room

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- A keep / block / ask set the leader genuinely heard, not a summary they braced for.
- One concrete leader commitment with a named follow-up date.
- The team's answer to a quieter question: is it safe enough here to say the next true thing?

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## **Three questions before you close**

**Leader: what did you hear that genuinely surprised you?**

**Team: did it feel safe to be honest — what made it safer, and what made it riskier?**

**Both: what exactly will be different, and how will we all know?**

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# What carries into real work

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- Run it quarterly; last time's follow-up date is the first item on the agenda.
- New leader, first month: run the keep-doing pass only, so what already works gets reinforced before anything is asked.
- Two leads can run it sideways — the listening rule is just as hard peer to peer.

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Listen without defending · commit to one · set the date

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Buying honesty costs the leader going first.

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