



A WORKSHEET FOR LEADERS

The Meeting After the Meeting

A worksheet on the human system underneath the work



The meeting ends in agreement. Then the real meeting starts in the parking lot, in the side chat, in the hallway. Two stories now: the one that got said, and the one that's actually running the team.

You've built the operating systems: the processes, the tools, the way the work flows. Every one of them runs on people: on what they assume, what they trust, and what they say or don't say to each other. That's *the human system underneath the work*, and it's the one most companies never actually build.

This worksheet is for one recurring problem that keeps coming back no matter how many times you "solve" it. We're going to read what it's actually telling you.

01 Pick the problem that won't stay fixed

Not a one-off. The pattern. The thing you've addressed before and watched return.

The recurring problem

How many times we've "handled" it already _____

*If a smart team keeps colliding on the same thing, effort isn't the missing piece.
Something underneath is outlasting every fix.*

02 Separate the surface story from the real one

The behavior is real. It just isn't the whole story. Underneath most friction, each person is protecting something: being seen as competent, staying in control, avoiding blame, keeping the peace, or not being left out.

The surface story (what it looks like it's about)

What each person might actually be protecting

Person / role _____ → protecting _____

Person / role _____ → protecting _____

Person / role _____ → protecting _____

You don't have to be right about this yet. You just have to stop assuming everyone is working from the same thing you are.

03 Listen for the parking-lot version

The most honest information about a team usually shows up after the meeting ends.

What got said, quietly, after the last meeting that didn't get said in it

What that tells me people didn't feel safe enough to say out loud

04 Give the feedback in a form they can receive

Here's where most good managers lose the thread. You said it clearly. They heard something else. The problem usually isn't the message. It's that the same message lands completely differently depending on the person.

One person needs the whole plan before they can move. One needs room to find their own way there. One needs to know it's not a criticism of them. One needs you to be direct or they won't take it seriously. One needs to know where the risk is. One needs to feel like a partner, not a project.

The one person I most need to reach on this

What they seem to need before they can actually take something in

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ☐ Clarity and specifics | ☐ Autonomy and room | ☐ Encouragement first |
| ☐ Direct challenge | ☐ The full picture | ☐ Respected, not managed |

So the version of the feedback they could actually receive sounds more like

When people feel understood accurately, they stop protecting and start participating. That's when feedback becomes something they can use instead of something they defend against.

05 Change one thing this week

Not a whole new system. One adjustment, in a real conversation, with a real person.

This week I'm going to

I'll know it's working when I notice



When the pattern is bigger than one worksheet

Sometimes naming the human system underneath a problem is enough to shift it. Sometimes the same knot shows up across the whole team, and it helps to have someone from the outside who can see what everyone inside has learned to work around.

That's the work I do with teams. I help you build the human system underneath the work, so people understand each other, adjust faster, and the work gets easier everywhere at once.

Bring This to Your Team →