FRONTLINE LEADERSHIP

Fostering Effective Workplace Cultures

Participant Workbook

Experienced Leaders | October 22, 2026

Estevanny Jiménez Turns, MBA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP

Examine the gap between stated values and everyday experience, then choose a leadership action to help close it.

Use this workbook for case discussions, personal reflection, and action planning. Individual reflections are yours to keep; share only what you are comfortable discussing.

Contents

Click an activity or resource to jump to it. Use the Contents link beside each section to return.

Case Study 1: What Culture Do You See? — 3

Slide 3 | Read the case

Case Study 1 Discussion — 4

Slide 3 | Small-group discussion

Case Study 2: A Reputation for Results — 5

Slide 6 | Read the case

Case Study 2 Discussion — 6

Slide 6 | First observations

Apply the Three Lenses — 7

Slides 7–10 | Supplemental case discussion

When Ownership Has Consequences — 8

Slides 14–16 | Case extension and response

What Your Leadership Reinforces — 9

Slide 17 | Individual reflection

Explore a Real Culture Challenge — 10

Slide 19 | Pair share

Your Culture Gap and Leadership Action — 11

Slides 19–20 | Individual action plan

Evaluating Your Leadership Change — 12

Slide 20 | Plan now; revisit after the workshop

Self-Assessment and Commitment — 13

Slides 21–22 | Closing application

Examples of Gaps Between Values and Experience — 14

Reference | Use during reflection or after the workshop

Case Study 1: What Culture Do You See?

Slide 3 | Read the case| *Contents*

Imagine you have just joined an organization and are trying to understand how things really work.

During your first few weeks, you notice the following:

- The company's values are in different places throughout the organization. Collaboration, innovation, empowerment, and being people-centered are a few of the values on the walls, business cards, and mugs.
- Leaders regularly encourage employees to take ownership and make decisions. "Make the call" has become something of a rallying cry across the organization, and employees are frequently reminded that they are empowered to act.
- New employees consistently describe the organization as warm and welcoming. Coworkers help one another, celebrate milestones, and leaders often know employees by name.
- Leaders regularly ask for employee input through brainstorming sessions, surveys, and listening sessions.
- When something goes wrong, the focus is on who made the mistake, whether the correct process was followed, and why certain people were not consulted before a decision was made.
- The organization emphasizes employee well-being. It offers wellness activities, recognition events, and regular reminders to take time to recharge.
- Employees who are highly responsive and willing to "jump in" receive frequent praise. Employees who question priorities or ask whether work can be delayed are sometimes described as "not being flexible."
- Employees frequently talk with one another about feeling overwhelmed and frustrated that requests from senior leaders are generally treated as urgent, regardless of existing priorities. These concerns are commonly discussed privately but are rarely raised in team meetings.

Case Study 1 Discussion

Slide 3 | Small-group discussion| *Contents*

Discuss the questions with your group. Be prepared to share one observation supported by a detail from the case.

1. What patterns do you see?
   What seems to happen repeatedly across the organization?

2. What are employees learning from those patterns?
   What do people appear to learn about speaking up, making decisions, workload, and what gets rewarded?

3. If you worked here, how would you describe the culture?
   What evidence from the case most strongly supports your conclusion?

Remember your group number and be prepared to share one key observation grounded in the case.

Notes

Case Study 2: A Reputation for Results

Slide 6 | Read the case| Contents

Chris is an experienced, highly knowledgeable, and deeply committed leader who supervises a team of 10. Senior leaders regularly describe Chris as someone who “gets things done.”

The department shares that strong reputation. It consistently delivers high-quality work and meets demanding deadlines. Other departments consider the team a reliable partner.

Chris’s approach includes:

- Beginning each week by reviewing priorities with the team and assigning responsibility for key deliverables.
- Encouraging employees to use their judgment and bring forward anything that could affect a commitment. “You know your work best,” Chris often says. “Keep me informed so there are no surprises.”
- Making time for questions despite a full calendar. Employees frequently leave these conversations with a specific solution or a revised approach. Several say they appreciate how quickly Chris can work through a difficult issue.
- Reviewing major work before it goes out. Sometimes Chris makes edits personally; other times they ask the team to adjust the approach.

Chris attributes the team’s stellar results to everyone’s commitment. Chris routinely works extended hours, and team members often stay late alongside them. Chris always thanks the team for their efforts, and senior leadership regularly recognizes the department’s responsiveness.

Over the past year, staffing changes and an increasing workload have put pressure on the company, but the team’s results have remained strong. Senior leaders have begun inviting Chris into higher-level meetings. Chris is excited about the possibility of a promotion, although these opportunities take them away from the department more frequently.

During Chris’s recent absences, the team completed its scheduled work but held several decisions for their return. Several of those decisions now need Chris’s attention before the team can move forward, but Chris is preparing for another senior leadership meeting.

Case Study 2 Discussion

Slide 6 | First observations| *Contents*

1. How would you describe the culture of this department?
   What details support your interpretation? What should Chris preserve?

2. What values or priorities appear to be in tension?
   Where do you see that tension in the case?

3. Chris may not recognize how their leadership contributes to this pattern. What might make that difficult to see?
   How might expectations, pressures, or past success reinforce the approach?

4. Does this situation need to change or be addressed? Why or why not?
   What are the benefits and costs of continuing as things are?

Remember your group number and be prepared to discuss with the larger group.

Notes

Apply the Three Lenses

Slides 7–10 | Supplemental case discussion | *Contents*

Revisit the case using the three lenses.

Return to this section after the three lenses have been introduced. Separate what the case tells you from what you are assuming.

1. What factors may contribute to the gap?
   Identify examples through each lens. Consider how the factors might interact.

   - Individual: information, knowledge, skills, judgment, experience, and behavior.
   - Systems: processes, resources, incentives, workload, and expectations.
   - Leadership: modeling, communication, delegation, feedback, and accountability.

2. What can be done to address the concern while preserving what works?
   What would you want to understand before recommending a change?

3. Where could a leader act?
   Identify a possible response. What is within the leader's control, influence, or scope of responsibility? Who else might need to be involved?

Notes

When Ownership Has Consequences

Slides 14–16 | Case extension and response | Contents

Chris has been working on empowering their team members to take ownership over more decisions.

The team needed a quick decision and Chris was not available. Alex, the most senior member of Chris's team, changes a project handoff to meet a deadline.

The change impacts another department's workflow and delays the next stage.

Chris had assumed changes affecting another department would be discussed first. That boundary was never explicit.

Discuss

What does Alex remain responsible for, and what does Chris need to own?

What Your Leadership Reinforces

Slide 17 | Individual reflection | *Contents*

Consider a recurring situation in your team, function, or cross-functional work, especially when pressure is high. Examine what your actions reinforce and whether that aligns with the culture you intend to create.

Situation or pattern
The value or norm I want people to experience

For each prompt, note a specific example and the message people may take from it.

Model

What do people see me do about boundaries, disagreement, mistakes, and commitments?

Reward

Whom do I recognize, and for what? Do I praise last-minute rescue more than prevention?

Correct

Which concerns do I address promptly and consistently, including with strong performers?

Allow

What becomes acceptable when I overlook it or repeatedly make exceptions?

Choose one adjustment

Where is the clearest gap between my intent and what people experience?

What will I do differently in the next two weeks, within my authority or influence?

Whose perspective will I seek, and what will tell me the experience is changing?

Explore a Real Culture Challenge

Slide 19 | Pair share | Contents

Pair share | 15 minutes

Use a real workplace pain point to explore the gap between the culture you want and what people experience. Work with a partner to consider how the workshop tools could help you understand the situation and identify a leadership response.

1 Reflect individually 3 minutes

Choose a current, recurring situation that affects you, your team, or your results. Share only details you are comfortable discussing and avoid identifying individuals.

What is happening, whom does it affect, and what makes it difficult?

What would you want people to experience instead? What culture gap do you see?

2 Explore with a partner 5 minutes each

- Decide who will share first. Spend five minutes on that person's situation, then switch roles. Watch the time so both partners have an equal opportunity.
- When sharing: Describe the situation, its impact, what you have tried, and what remains difficult. Consider which workshop tools could help.
- When listening: Ask questions before offering suggestions. Choose two or three prompts below to help your partner examine the situation.
  - Three lenses: What might be contributing through systems, individual needs or capabilities, and leadership?
  - Leadership reinforcement: What might you be modeling, rewarding, correcting, or allowing?
  - Culture signals: What are people learning about how things actually work?
  - Leadership action: What is within your influence? What could you change, clarify, or discuss?

3 Capture a starting point 2 minutes

One thing I see differently now is…

One leadership action I want to explore is…

One question I still need to investigate is…

Bring these insights into your individual leadership action plan.

Your Culture Gap and Leadership Action

Slides 19–20 | Individual action plan | *Contents*

Choose one recurring culture gap. Plan a change within your authority or influence, including the benefit, trade-offs, and how you will assess its impact.

1 The gap

We say we value
People repeatedly experience

2 My contribution

What do I model, reward, correct, or allow? What individual or system factors contribute?

3 My behavioral change

What specific response or routine will I change? What should people experience instead?

4 The intended benefit

What should improve for people and results? Why is this change worth making?

5 The trade-offs

What time, effort, resources, or risk will it add? Who bears the costs and who benefits?

6 Support and first steps

Whom will I involve? What support is needed? What is my first step and when will I take it?

7 Evidence and review

How will I evaluate effectiveness? What results and employee feedback will I compare, and when?

8 My decision criteria

What would lead me to continue, add support, adjust, or stop this approach?

Partner check Is the action specific? Is the benefit worth the trade-offs? How will you distinguish adjustment difficulties from a change that is causing harm?

Evaluating Your Leadership Change

Slide 20 | Plan now; revisit after the workshop | Contents

Consistency is tested when change becomes inconvenient. Use this page while planning your action and again at your review date. Stay consistent with the value while evaluating whether the approach is helping.

1 Clarify the benefit

Which culture gap should the behavior close? Describe the improvement you expect in employee experience and results. Identify an early sign of progress.

2 Weigh the trade-offs

Consider immediate costs and longer-term benefits. Who gains, who carries extra work or risk, and what is the cost of keeping the current pattern? How could you reduce the burden?

3 Examine the friction

Is this a learning curve, missing support, or a warning sign? Ask affected people what is difficult. Identify any harm or unreasonable demand that requires prompt adjustment.

4 Check the impact

Compare with your starting point. What changed in outcomes and employee experience? What unintended consequences appeared? What else may explain the results?

5 Decide and review

Choose: continue, add support, adjust, or stop this approach. Explain why, communicate the decision to affected people, and set the next review date.

My decision	Next review date

Inconvenience alone does not mean the change is wrong. Good intentions alone do not mean it is working.

Self-Assessment and Commitment

Slides 21–22 | Closing application| Contents

Workshop Self-Assessment | Slide 21

Yes / Somewhat / Not yet

Awareness

Can I identify a gap between stated values and the experience my leadership helps create?

Response

Can I address a performance or behavior concern while examining contributing conditions and retaining accountability?

Application

Have I chosen a feasible change and a way to check whether people experience a difference?

What Will You Put Into Practice? | Slide 22

I will By:
I will check whether it helps by .

Culture becomes credible through what people repeatedly experience.

Notes

Examples of Gaps Between Values and Experience

Reference | Use during reflection or after the workshop | *Contents*

Use these examples to identify a pattern in your own leadership. The messages below are possible interpretations; seek employees' perspectives to understand their experience.

Stated value	Leadership behavior	Possible employee message
Empowerment	Requiring approval for routine decisions or repeatedly reversing delegated decisions.	"I should wait for the leader to decide."
Collaboration	Rewarding individual results while overlooking their effects on other teams.	"Protect my priorities; helping other teams is secondary."
Accountability	Excusing a high performer's harmful behavior because they deliver results.	"Strong results create exceptions to the standards."
Innovation	Inviting new ideas, then responding to unsuccessful attempts with blame or increased scrutiny.	"Taking a real risk can hurt me."
Employee voice	Seeking input after a decision is effectively made, or never explaining what happened to feedback.	"My participation is symbolic."
Trust and transparency	Withholding decision context, avoiding difficult questions, or sharing only favorable information.	"The real story happens behind closed doors."
Well-being	Praising overwork, treating everything as urgent, or adding priorities without removing any.	"Commitment means being constantly available."
Respect and inclusion	Interrupting, dismissing concerns, or consistently giving familiar voices more influence.	"Some people's perspectives matter more."
Learning and development	Taking over when someone struggles instead of providing feedback, support, and another opportunity.	"Mistakes reduce my opportunities to grow."
Constructive conflict	Avoiding difficult conversations or allowing disagreement to become personal.	"Stay quiet or work around the person."
Consistency and fairness	Making exceptions for favored employees or applying expectations unevenly across teams.	"Relationships matter more than expectations."
Quality and integrity	Insisting on targets while ignoring warnings about capacity, shortcuts, or consequences.	"Deliver the number; don't raise complications."

Consider what you model, reward, correct, and allow. A leader may demonstrate a value personally while still undermining it by tolerating contrary behavior from others.