

SEASON 1 · EPISODE 10 · FROM PEER TO LEADER

What I Wish Someone Told Me My First Month

Around 40% of managers with two years or less are struggling to support their team. Not on strategy — on a few ordinary conversations nobody taught them to have. Each one is really two conversations: the one inside you, and the one across from you.

SEE IT · SAY IT · LEAD

1 THE PERSON WHO WANTED YOUR JOB

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "If I bring it up, I'm rubbing it in." It's protecting you from feeling like the one who won — not protecting them.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"I didn't take this from them. I was handed it."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

Time does not do this work. Unnamed, it filters every interaction for a year, and over-correcting reads as guilt or favoritism to the whole team.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"I know you were interested in this role, and I don't want to pretend that doesn't change things between us. I'd like to hear your perspective and understand what you want next. I want to support your growth, and I also want us to be clear about how we'll work together."

2 THE MESS YOU INHERITED

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "I need them on my side." Joining in on the last manager is a bid for alliance — about your standing, not the mess.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"I don't have to judge the past to own what's next."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

Trust in immediate managers sits near 29%, down sharply in two years. They're learning what you'll say about them when they're not in the room.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"I wasn't part of the original decision, so I won't speculate about why it was made. I do want to understand how it's affecting the team. I'm responsible for what happens next. Here's what I'm changing now, what I'm still reviewing, and when I'll update you."

3 THE DAY YOU REALIZE SOMEONE IS SCARED OF YOU

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "That's not about me." It's defending your picture of yourself as the approachable one. Your title changed the room regardless.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"Their fear is real whether I earned it or not."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

Psychological safety was Google's strongest team factor; when opinions count, turnover can drop by about a fifth. Hidden problems come back bigger.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"I want you to hear this clearly: when something goes wrong, bring it to me early. I'll focus first on understanding and fixing the problem, and we'll be fair about what happens next. You will not be punished for raising the issue honestly and early."

TRY ONE THIS WEEK

1. Catch the sentence before you answer, then name the job competition out loud, privately, in the first two weeks.
2. Own one inherited mess: what's changing now, what's still under review, and when you'll update them.
3. When someone brings bad news early, thank them, ask questions before conclusions, and don't punish the raising.

Pick just one — small reps beat big plans. Want the five-day version? Grab a Challenge Sheet at theworkingleader.com/challenge-sheets.

LEAD

Every good manager had a clumsy first month. Nobody narrates it later. The order is see it, then the words, then the evidence — and the confidence shows up behind you. **The first person you lead is you.**

You can do this!
— Matt

REMEMBER THIS

"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now."

— TRADITIONAL PROVERB

Usually called Chinese, probably older than anyone can source. There's no version where you go back and start well.

GO DEEPER

Grab the free starter toolkit — checklists, scripts, and this week's challenge — at theworkingleader.com.

YOUR NOTES · THE SENTENCE YOU CAUGHT · THE ONE THING YOU'LL DO DIFFERENTLY