

SEASON 1 · EPISODE 2 · FROM PEER TO LEADER

The Promotion That Changes Everything

You're the same person. Your words aren't. Six in ten employees already hesitate to speak up, and you can't personality your way out of a structural change. Every hard moment now is two conversations — the one inside you, and the one across from you.

SEE IT · SAY IT · LEAD

1 THE OFFHAND COMMENT THAT BECAME AN ORDER

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "I'm just talking. Same as always." It's protecting the old you — the peer who could riff without it becoming the route.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"They didn't hear a thought. They heard the route."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

Thinking out loud got reclassified as instruction. Linda Hill calls the shift a profound psychological adjustment, not a skills gap.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"I'm thinking out loud, not making a decision. I want your input before I decide. When I make the decision, I'll say so and be clear about the next step."

2 THE BAD NEWS THAT STOPPED REACHING YOU

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "Why didn't anybody tell me?" It's a verdict, not a question — protecting your pride from the answer: the timecard.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"The silence isn't about me. It's about the risk."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

The information didn't disappear, it rerouted. Nearly half of executives say one of their biggest worries is honest feedback never reaching them.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"What's one thing that's not working right now that you think I don't know about?" Then, after they answer: "Thank you for telling me. Let me make sure I understand, and I'll follow up with you by [specific time]."

3 THE PROMISE YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU MADE

SEE IT — INSIDE YOU

The sentence that fires: "I want to be the boss who gives good news." It's protecting you from the awkward, honest version.

SAY IT — TO YOURSELF

"Praise the past for free. The future costs."

SEE IT — ACROSS FROM YOU

Praise for what someone did is free. Praise for what they'll get is a check against an account you might not control.

SAY IT — OUT LOUD

"I can't promise a promotion or a timeline. What I can give you is an honest view of where you stand today. One important next step is leading a project end to end without me. Let's identify an opportunity to build that experience, and I'll update you by [specific date]."

TRY ONE THIS WEEK

1. Catch the sentence before you answer — then label your next half-formed idea out loud, before somebody rebuilds a process around it.
2. Ask one person the one-thing question, then thank them and name a follow-up time. Don't defend, explain, or fix.
3. Trade one warm sentence about someone's future for an honest view, a next step and a date.

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

LEAD

It changed in both directions: what you say lands heavier, what reaches you is thinner. Be explicit, not careful. See the sentence, say the words anyway, and let the evidence stack up. **The first person you lead is you.**

You can do this!
— Matt

REMEMBER THIS

"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said."

— PETER DRUCKER

After a promotion, that's most of it: the question nobody asks, the problem that stops arriving, the disagreement that happens once you've left.

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