

# Daily, Weekly Reflections Exercise for Leaders

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## Daily Reflection

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Spend 15 minutes every day in reflection—true reflection, in a quiet space, with your inbox closed.

Take this time (ideally in the evening) to review the events of the day and make plans for tomorrow. Write down your observations. Reference your calendar to reflect on the day's interactions and prepare for tomorrow's. Whatever will ground you in the ritual.

At the end of every week, run the same exercise for an hour, only this time reflect on the past week and considering the challenges and opportunities of the week ahead.

## Reviewing the Day

Use these questions revisit your day/week –

**It** – Did you execute your work—the emails you wanted to write, the strategy document you owed your boss—the stuff you had on your list at the start of the day? Did you do the things that were important and not just urgent?

**We** – Did you add value to the lives of the people you interacted with? Did they walk away with more knowledge, energy, goodwill, help, a better understanding? Did you communicate clearly in a way that added value for the people around you and met goals for you?

**I** – How did you manage your own energy and mood? Self-care measures like working out, eating well, and sleeping enough are just as important as anything you do in the office. Remember “I” is the foundation of leadership; you can't help others if you deplete yourself.

## Setting Intentions for Tomorrow

After you've reflected on the day, use It-We-I to set your intentions for tomorrow.

**It** – Establish the tasks you intend to accomplish during the day and realistically acknowledge the ones that you won't be able to complete. Do you have meetings during the day? If so, do you know what they're each for? Do you know what you're trying to accomplish during them? Do you have your agenda for reaching those goals?

**We** – Do you anticipate having challenging interactions? For example, do you have any meetings with a colleague whom you know is frustrated with you or the company? Think about how you want to show up. Consider what s/he might say that will trigger you to react badly. Mentally rehearse how you'd like to respond instead. Write it down, internalize it. Make that your intention.

**I** – What biases do you bring with you? How can you see through them? How can you set yourself up to make good choices throughout the day (i.e. keeping energy high, your body fueled, etc.)? What might cause you to step off track? What is the right course of action?

Source: Chris Holmberg, Middle Path Consulting

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## How high-performing teams transform conflict into a competitive edge



### How to take the 'con' out of conflict

By Russ Powell

Many business leaders know how challenging it can be to build a high-performing team. Egos clash, tensions flare, and once-promising upstarts find themselves burning out in spectacular fashion. But what if I told you your team can do more than just survive conflicts—they can harness them and turn them into a competitive advantage?

High-performing teams (HPTs) are not conflict-free utopias. They can be arenas where unproductive conflicts become healthy disagreements, and then get channeled into creative fuel for innovation and growth. It's how they stay several steps ahead of the pack, delivering top-notch results that have customers happily pledging their loyalty. Moreover, HPTs have significantly lower turnover rates compared to other similar teams, as their ability to manage conflicts and disagreements leads to a more engaging and satisfying work environment.

So, how do they achieve this? They think systemically. They use a comprehensive approach to managing conflict that looks through three specific lenses:

#### The 'It' Lens – Examining Structural Elements

The "It" involves taking a critical look at the structural elements shaping your team—strategy, goals, roles, processes, and whether they're aligned and working effectively. Are roles and responsibilities unclear, potentially leading to territoriality and power struggles? Are goals misaligned, possibly sparking heated disagreements over priorities? HPTs often start by laying a foundation in which they optimize these environmental factors.

In a North Bay organization I worked with, we reduced infighting by defining team norms and processes. Regarding conflicts and disagreements, they agreed what they would and would not do—"we *will* ask questions that lead to data-rich conversations," and "we *will not* dominate conversations or state opinions as facts."

In another case, I helped mid-level managers minimize conflict on the frontlines by respectfully and yet firmly requesting more strategic guidance from the executive suite. These managers had been through my foundational leadership workshop and in a follow-up practice session they defined what they wanted out of these conversations and practiced speaking with their bosses.

#### The 'We' Lens – Building Trust and Alignment

A *Harvard Business Review* article, "The High Cost of Low Trust," by Tony Simons, points to an interesting finding. Organizations whose managers follow through on promises and demonstrate the values they preach are substantially more profitable than those whose managers are incongruent. This link was so strong that even a slight improvement in an organization's "trust score" could be expected to increase their profitability. No other single aspect of manager behavior had a greater impact on profits. It's no surprise that HPTs work hard to strengthen and maintain relationships.

When trust runs high, teammates feel empowered to take risks, freely admitting mistakes and proposing bold ideas. They expect positive intent during disagreements and stay focused on productive resolutions. When trust is low, conflicts can devolve into ego-driven power struggles.

Team-building exercises, sharing personal stories, connecting around aspirations beyond just the day-to-day work (for instance, "tell us about three people you admire and why") are tools to develop trust and alignment. This fortifies a team against conflicts splintering into dysfunction and helps them retain their talent.

#### The 'I' Lens – Understanding Individual Perspectives

High emotional intelligence is a superpower for HPTs. While they don't ignore problematic behaviors, their focus during conflict includes recognition of each individual's perspectives, motivations, and biases.

Recognizing and understanding these human factors can help teams defuse conflict before it erupts. A careful look through the "I" lens—at ourselves and others—makes it easier for any given team member to shift their mindset from "that person's a jerk" to "that person's in pain—and could use some compassion." With greater self-awareness, HPTs transform breakdowns into breakthroughs.

#### Embracing the Paradox

HPTs do not tend to treat conflict as the enemy. Rather, they embrace an inherent paradox—that creation and innovation is often impossible without some friction. Lively debates, healthy tensions, productive disagreements—these are sparks that can refine cool, intellectual ideas into hot competitive advantages.

The true enemy is unacknowledged conflict running rampant over teams in toxic and unproductive ways. HPTs recognize this and train themselves to think systemically—they turn conflicts into disagreements and harness them by looking through the "It," "We," and "I" lenses.

By embracing this paradox, they not only deliver higher quality products faster and with minimal turnover, they future-proof their organizations for long-term high performance. In today's world of endless pivots and disruptions, that's a powerful secret weapon. 🌱

What questions do you have about developing leaders and teams? Send them to me and I'll do my best to answer them for you.

*Russ Powell is a leadership and team development expert who works with growing startups. He helps new and emerging managers develop skills in systems thinking and collaborative problem-solving. To learn more, visit [russpowell.com](http://russpowell.com) or call 707-324-3122.*