

Language of Leadership

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Worksheet, Examples of Exercises

In these exercises, it may help to do some role playing. Groups of three or four would help you have at least one person who is carefully listening to the word choices. You can do as much or as little as you want based on your small groups preferences.

Ladder of Intent

A role play is a good suggestion. Pick something you would like to improve. For example, perhaps you have a direct report who comes to you with problems and rarely any path forward.

Role play that out using the words on the ladder to guide you. Your primary goal is to, over time, get the employee to climb the ladder by doing more thinking, preparing and proposing; and hopefully then they will have a well baked plan and be able to say "I intend to..."

Liability Language

Have some fun. Pick a topic and have everyone in your group engage in liability language. At the end talk about how you felt and what you wanted to do next.

OR

Think back to some recent meeting where you needed to enroll support to tackle a challenge. Write down (or pull up on your phone) what you said. We all slip into liability language. What are your favorite phrases and what replacements might you imagine.

OR

Stage a role-play. Have some fun and take turns using a heavy amount of liability language. Take a stand to promote possibility language. Make choices to redirect the language away from liability to positivity.

OR

Discuss whether you need a liability language log, or ground rules about language at your organization.

OR

Catastrophize something.

Red Work and Blue Work

It can be hard to remember that all jobs have —and in fact—need red and blue work. Pick two jobs you can easily discuss in your group. Prepare to discuss them by first making some note. You can use the tool provided. Then in your group, share your notes and what this change might mean in mean in your organization.

Ladder of Intent: Tool and Worksheet

Step on Ladder	Worker	Leader
7	I've been doing	What have you been doing
6	I've done	What have you done
5	I intend to	What do you intend to do
4	I would like to	What would you like to do
3	I recommend	What do you recommend
2	I think/I see	What do you see/what do you think
1	Tell me what to do	Do this

1. Dig into the spot on the ladder where the person does well today, and what language can you use to help them climb up.

2. What is the challenge with this employee?

3. What do you need them to do? Practice making it so.

Liability-Possibility Language

Examples of each

Liability language

- I am overwhelmed.
- I have too many priorities
- Morale is terrible

Possibility language

- Let's see what we can do
- What is another way to think about that
- How can we get a better handle on that

Examples from my team:

Who	Likes to say what?

Phrases and alternatives:

Liability	Possibility

Idea to try back at your office:

Liability Language Log

Date	Liability Language	Contents when it occurred	Replaced it with Possibility language	Reflections

How to Catastrophize

1. Pick a problem.
2. Have each person write down their worst case scenario.
3. Ask one person to start by reporting their scenario.
4. Have the rest of the group add to the first person by using their notes.
5. Keep going...whine, complain, and make the problem a wild catastrophe. Get details...and then what, and then what...etc.
6. Then when the humor occurs (and it will if you encourage wild ideas), stop and look at the elements of doom. Take each one and ask:
 - a. Is this really likely to happen?
 - b. If it could, what might mitigate that issue?

Red versus Blue Work

Word sample

RED Work: Doing	BLUE Work: Thinking
Do it the same way on predictable basis	Embraces variability
Do it correctly (prove it)	Improve
Usually the work of an individual	Usually needs a team
Performance	Plan
Compliance	Creative
Steep Hierarchy	Flat hierarchy
Narrow focus	Broad focus

Job Title: _____

RED WORK	BLUE WORK

Job Title: _____

RED WORK	BLUE WORK

Job Title: _____

RED WORK	BLUE WORK

Job Title: _____

RED WORK	BLUE WORK