

PAID SUBSCRIBER RESOURCE - OBSERVER GUIDE

Low-Friction Leadership

An Observer Guide for those who work closely with a leader

You have been asked to complete this guide by someone who leads - or is developing as a leader. That is a meaningful act of trust. It also places a specific responsibility on you.

This is not a performance review. It is a calibration tool. The leader completing the self-evaluation version will place your ratings alongside their own. The gaps between the two sets of ratings - where they rated themselves higher or lower than you did - are the diagnostic data that matters. Not the scores themselves, but the distance between them.

For that data to be useful, your ratings need to reflect what you actually observe, not what you think the leader would want to see. A rating softened to protect the relationship produces nothing of value for either of you. Where you are uncertain whether the relationship can hold an honest rating, note that as important information in itself.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Rate what you observe, not what you believe the leader intends. Intention and impact are not the same thing, and the gap between them is precisely what this guide is designed to surface. If you do not have enough direct observation to rate a question honestly, leave it blank rather than estimate.

Use the scale below for each question.

RATING SCALE

1 - This is a consistent gap in how I observe this leader 2 - I observe this sometimes but not reliably 3 - I observe this more often than not 4 - This is a genuine strength I observe consistently

COMMUNICATION

This leader communicates at the level of detail the team needs - not more, not less.	1 2 3 4
After meetings and messages from this leader, the team knows what was decided and what is expected of them.	1 2 3 4
When this leader is uncertain or does not have an answer, they say so explicitly rather than letting ambiguity stand.	1 2 3 4

CONSISTENCY OF STANDARD

This leader's threshold for acceptable work is the same regardless of how pressured they are.	1 2 3 4
What this leader says they value and what they actually reward are the same thing.	1 2 3 4
When this leader's view or standard changes, they explain why - they do not just operate differently and expect others to adapt.	1 2 3 4

EMOTIONAL STEADINESS

Under pressure, the team can predict how this leader will respond.	1 2 3 4
The team does not need to manage this leader's emotional state before bringing a problem forward.	1 2 3 4
This leader's response to a setback is proportionate to its actual significance, not to how they happen to feel that day.	1 2 3 4

MOMENTUM

This leader makes decisions at the level they belong to - they do not over-involve themselves or abdicate on decisions that are theirs.	1 2 3 4
This leader closes loops. Things raised with them get a response or a clear next step.	1 2 3 4
This leader can deprioritise something without making the person who raised it feel dismissed.	1 2 3 4

RELATIONAL GROUNDEDNESS

The way this leader interacts one-to-one is recognisably the same person in a group setting.	1 2 3 4
People bring this leader problems before they become crises.	1 2 3 4
This leader does not manage impressions - they are consistent whether or not they appear to think they are being observed.	1 2 3 4

Before you share your ratings

Look at any question where you rated 1 or 2. Consider whether you can point to a specific example - a meeting, a conversation, a decision - that illustrates what you observed. Concrete examples make the calibration conversation more useful and less abstract.

Look at any question where you are uncertain. Uncertainty is data. If you cannot rate a question because you have not seen the leader in that situation, that absence is worth naming.

The areas most likely to produce significant gaps between self-rating and observer rating are Consistency of Standard and Emotional Steadiness. Leaders often believe they are more consistent than they appear under pressure. If your ratings in these areas differ substantially from what you expect the leader's own ratings to be, that is the conversation worth having.

ON THE CONVERSATION THAT FOLLOWS

The gap between self-rating and observer rating is not a verdict on the leader's character. It is information about where their operating system and its observable impact have diverged. The most productive use of this data is a specific, evidence-based conversation about one or two areas - not a comprehensive review of everything at once. Start with the gap that matters most to how you work together.

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