



Authoring Your Leadership: Finding Your Through Line

What would it mean for your leadership if you finally knew – without question – what you stand for?

Authoring Your Leadership

Finding Your Through Line

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Early in my work with leaders, I noticed something. The ones who felt most stuck — most frustrated, most invisible, most like they were performing a version of leadership that didn't quite fit — weren't lacking in skill or intelligence or commitment. They were leading without a through line. They were making decisions, navigating relationships, and showing up every day without ever having asked themselves the most fundamental question an author can ask: what does this story stand for?

Your values are your answer to that question. They are the through line of your leadership — the thread that runs through every decision you make, every boundary you set, every relationship you invest in, and every stand you take. When your values are honored, your leadership feels coherent, energizing, and distinctly yours. When they are violated, by your environment, by others, or by your own choices, something inside you knows. You feel it as frustration, disengagement, or that quiet sense that something isn't right.

Most leaders have never named their values deliberately. They operate from them unconsciously, which means they can't protect them, can't lead from them intentionally, and can't recognize when a conflict between values is what's really driving their struggle.

This tool changes that. It will help you discover what truly matters to you, identify your non-negotiables, understand how your values shape your leadership, and see where conflict between values may be costing you more than you realize.

This is where your authorship finds its through line.

STEP ONE

Discover — Select What Resonates

Read through the values below. Circle or check every one that resonates with you. Don't overthink it — go with your first instinct. You can always refine later.

CHARACTER

Authenticity · Courage · Honesty · Humility · Integrity · Accountability · Consistency · Transparency · Reliability · Trustworthiness

RELATIONSHIPS

Belonging · Collaboration · Compassion · Empathy · Equity · Inclusion · Kindness · Loyalty · Respect · Trust

PURPOSE & MISSION

Calling · Commitment · Dedication · Impact · Justice · Legacy · Meaning · Mission · Purpose · Service

LEADERSHIP & INFLUENCE

Advocacy · Boundaries · Decisiveness · Empowerment · Excellence · Influence · Initiative · Stewardship · Vision · Voice

GROWTH & LEARNING

Adaptability · Creativity · Curiosity · Growth · Innovation · Learning · Open-mindedness · Reflection · Resilience · Wisdom

WELLBEING & SUSTAINABILITY

Balance · Community · Spirituality · Family · Gratitude · Joy · Peace · Rest · Self-care · Simplicity

STEP TWO

Clarify — Your Top 10

From everything you selected, narrow down to your top 10. These are the values that feel most essential to who you are and how you want to lead. Write them below.

01

02

03

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STEP THREE

Commit — Your Non-Negotiables

From your top 10, identify your three to five non-negotiables — the values that, when violated, make you feel most out of alignment with yourself as a leader. These are the ones you cannot lead without.

01

02

03

04

05

STEP FOUR

Reflect — Leading from Your Through Line

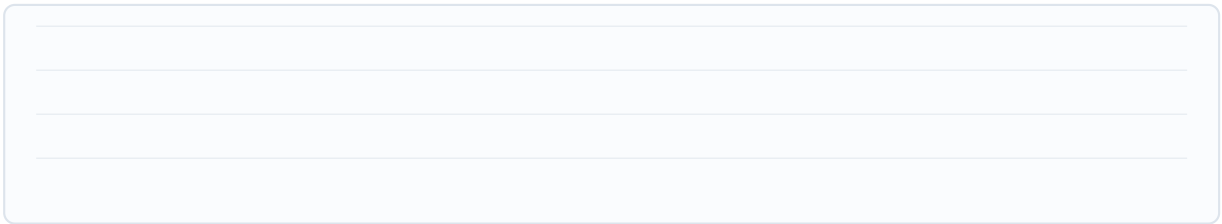
With your non-negotiables in mind, work through each question honestly. These reflections are designed to help you see how your values have been shaping your leadership, and how they can guide it more deliberately going forward.

CLAIMING — WHO YOU ARE

QUESTION 01

Looking at your top three to five non-negotiables, what do they tell you about the kind of leader you are at your core and the kind you want to be?

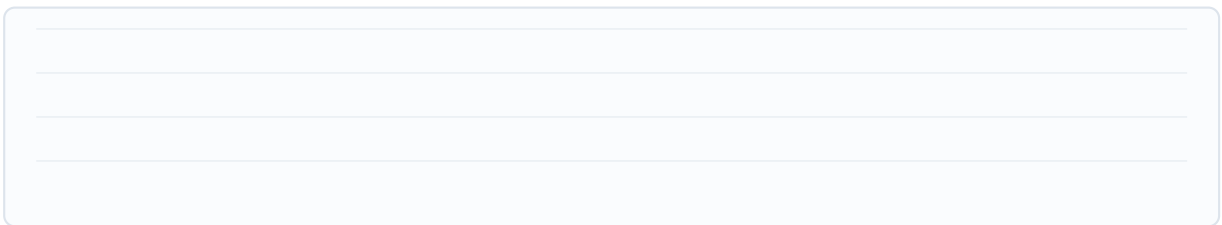
YOUR REFLECTION

A light blue rounded rectangular box containing four horizontal lines for writing a reflection.

QUESTION 02

Which of your non-negotiable values surprises you most, and what does that surprise reveal?

YOUR REFLECTION

A light blue rounded rectangular box containing four horizontal lines for writing a reflection.

QUESTION 03

Where do you already see your non-negotiable values showing up in how you lead, even if you have never named them until now?

YOUR REFLECTION

QUESTION 04

Think of a leadership decision you felt genuinely good about. Which of your values were honored in that moment?

YOUR REFLECTION

QUESTION 05

Where do you feel tension between your values and the culture, expectations, or decisions of your organization? What does that tension cost you?

YOUR REFLECTION

QUESTION 06

Whose expectations, whether a supervisor, your team, or your community, sometimes pull you away from leading in alignment with your values? What happens when they do?

YOUR REFLECTION

QUESTION 07

Look honestly at your top values. Where are you professing one thing and living or leading another? What is driving that gap?

YOUR REFLECTION

AUTHORSHIP — LEADING FROM YOUR THROUGH LINE

QUESTION 08

What would it look like to lead more deliberately from your non-negotiable values, even within the constraints of your current environment?

YOUR REFLECTION

QUESTION 09

Which value have you been protecting the least, and what is one specific way you will honor it more intentionally going forward?

YOUR REFLECTION

Four horizontal lines for writing a reflection.

QUESTION 10

If your leadership were a story told entirely through your values, what would the reader see, and what would you want them to see?

YOUR REFLECTION

Four horizontal lines for writing a reflection.

A WORD FROM YOUR COACH

What you just did takes a particular kind of honesty. Not everyone is willing to look at the gap between what they say they stand for and how they're actually showing up. You did.

Here's what I want you to hold onto: values conflicts aren't a sign that something is wrong with you. They're a sign that you're human, leading in complex environments, navigating competing demands, and trying to stay true to yourself in spaces that don't always make that easy.

But here's what changes now. You've named your through line. You know what this story stands for. And that changes everything, because you can't lead intentionally from values you've never named.

Every decision you make from here carries a question underneath it: is this aligned with what truly matters to me? That question is your authorship at work.

You don't have to get it perfect. You just have to keep coming back to the through line. That's what authors do. They return to what the story is about, again and again, until it's told the way it was meant to be told.

Your values are not a destination. They're the thread you follow home.