

Learning to Lead

Influential Communication Skills for Safety Leadership

SAFESTART®



Kevin Nix

MSP, CSM

What Makes a Good Leader?



What We're Talking About Today

1

Leadership and Human Factors

- Leadership definitions
- Guiding people in a positive way
- Human factors, risk and organizations

2

Control vs. Influence

- The dangers of control
- The benefits of influence

3

Influential Communication

- Clear and concise communication
- Active listening
- Interest over judgment

4

Storytelling

- Building trust with stories
- The formula for effective stories

5

Leadership Through Habit

- Learning to take initiative through habit building

Leadership and Human Factors

How it works and
why it matters.



What is Leadership?

When an individual's accountabilities include:

- Delegation
- Motivation
- Guiding others

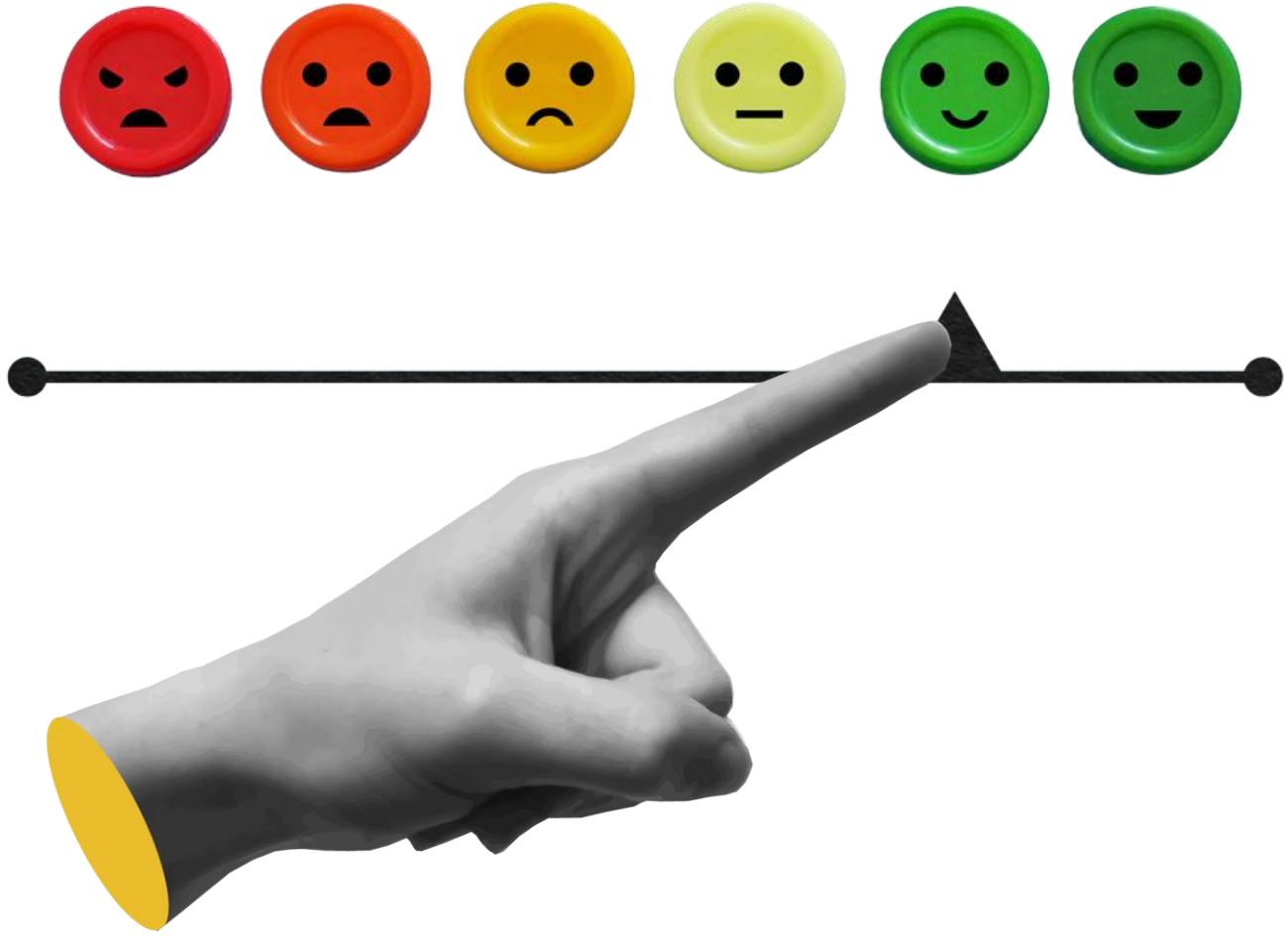


Leadership in Action

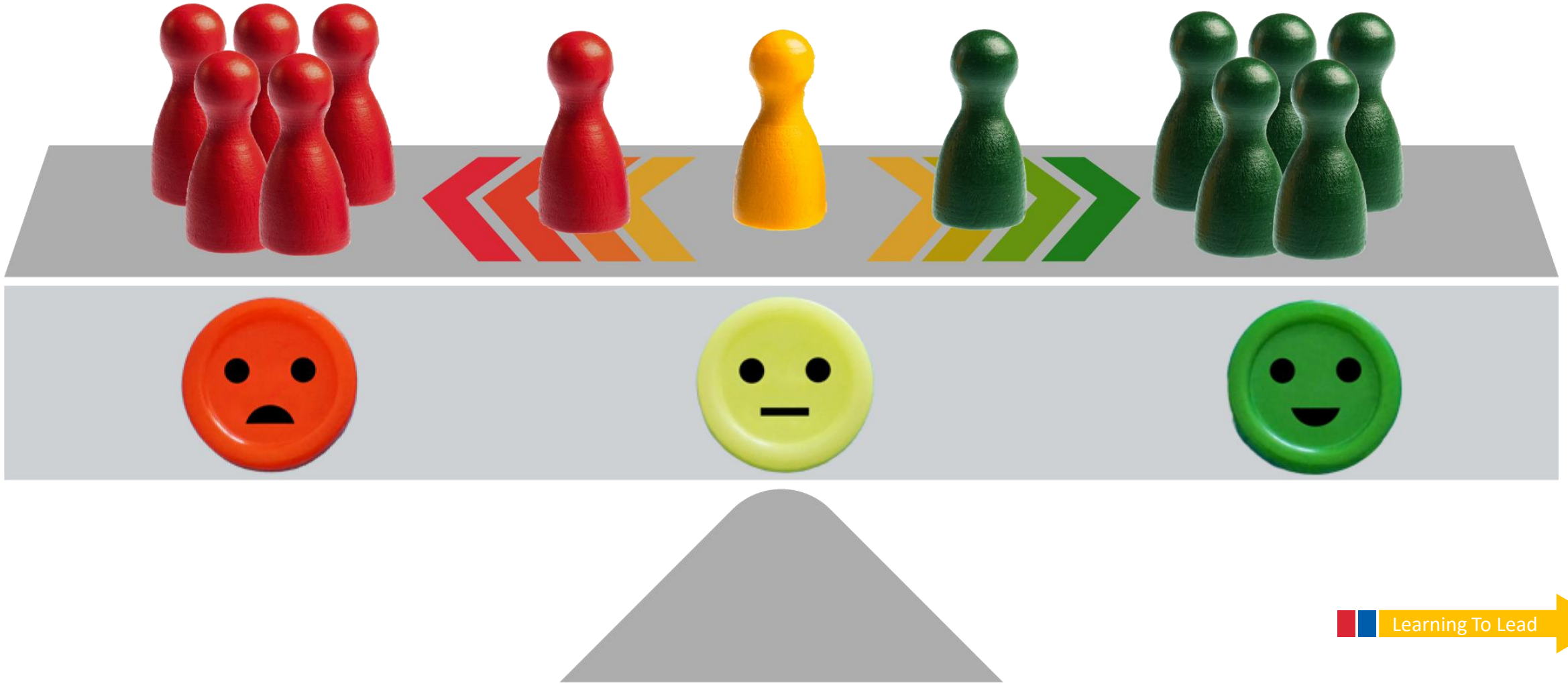
Executives, Directors and Managers	EHS Professionals	HR Folks
Supervisors	Team Leaders	Mentors/Coaches

The Goal of Leadership

Question: How do you measure success?



The Leadership Spectrum



Understanding how people move numbers.

What Are Human Factors?



Rushing



Frustration



Fatigue



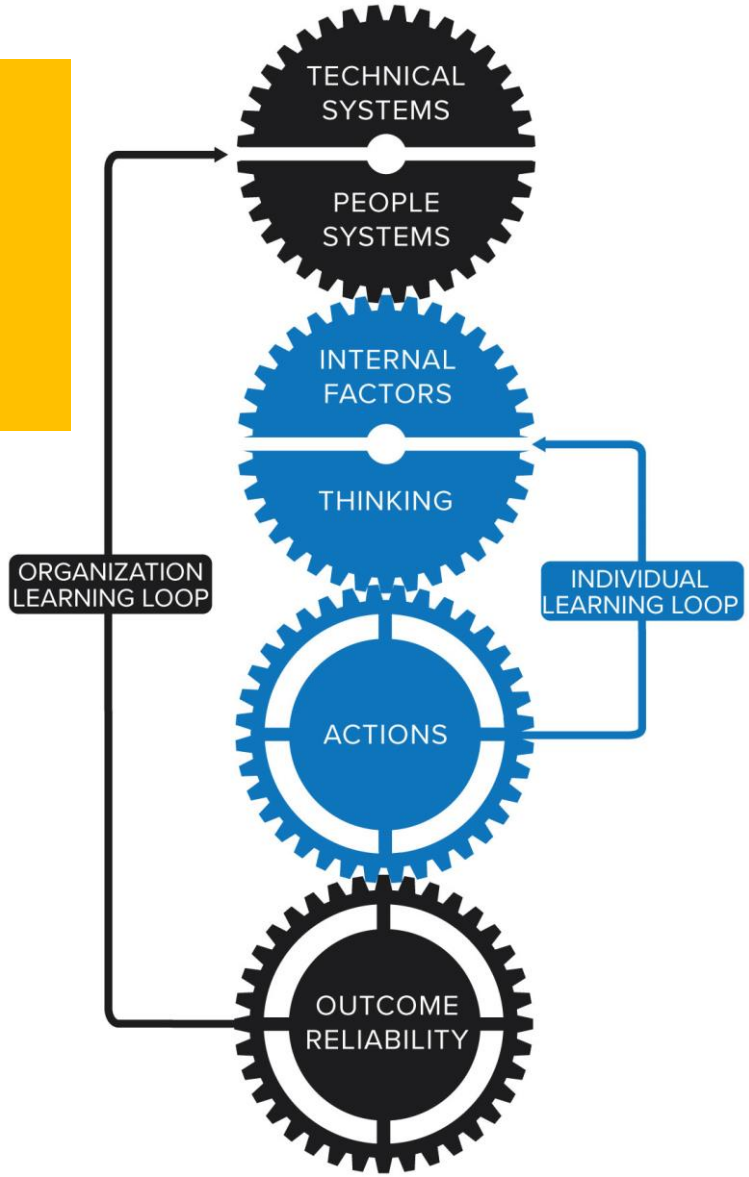
Complacency

Numbers don’t move people… people move numbers!



The Human Factors Framework

Human factors are the people elements of systems and conditions that influence performance and reliability.



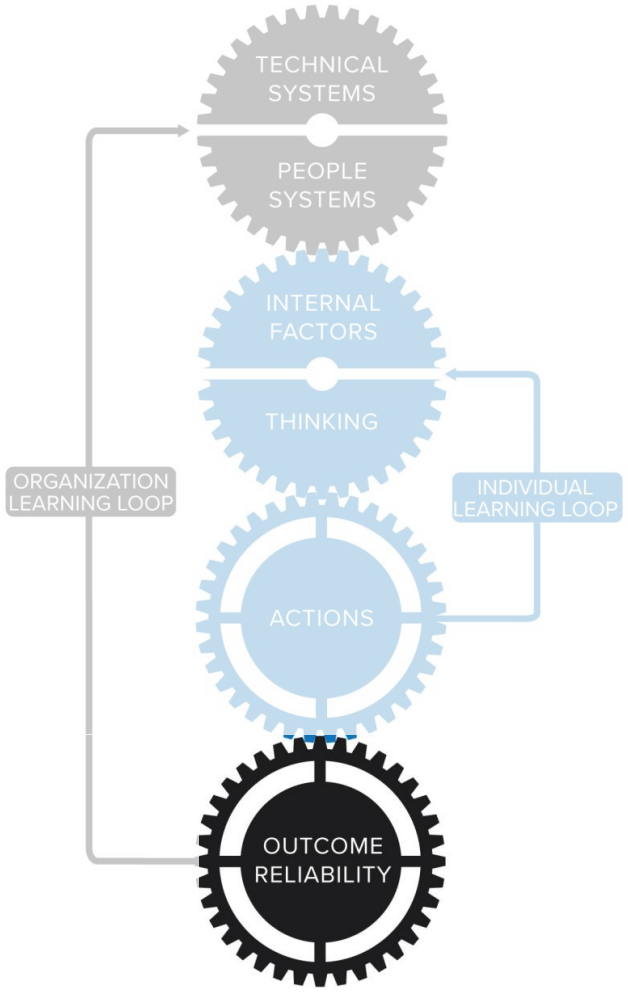
Systems
How work gets done in this organization

Internal factors
How individuals feel and think

Actions
What people do

Outcome Reliability
Safety, quality, culture, performance

Leadership and Outcomes

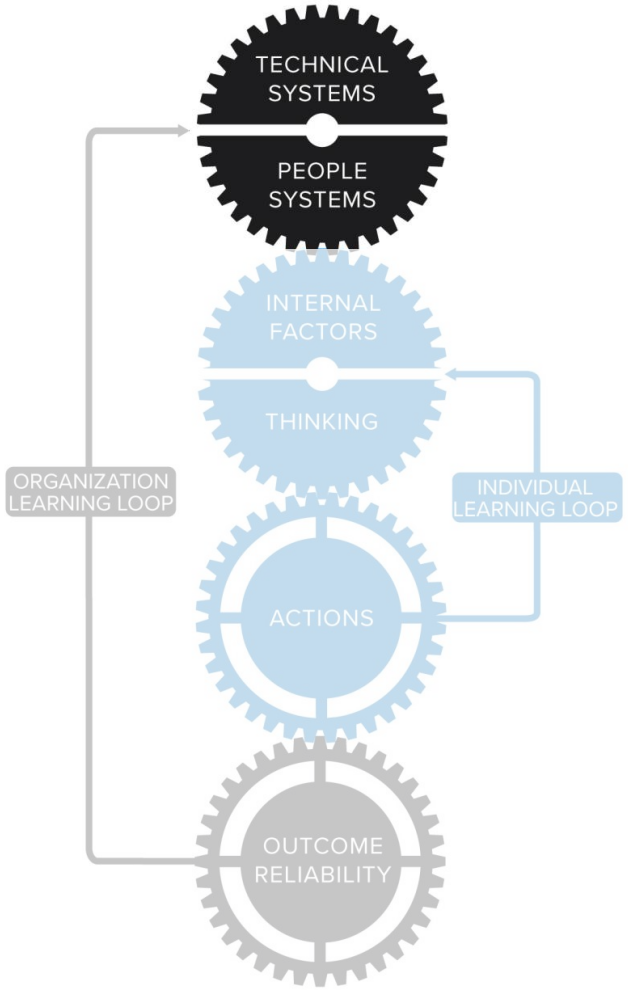


Outcome Reliability
Safety, quality, culture, performance

Leaders bear the greatest responsibility in a team setting:

- Leaders are rewarded for good outcomes.
- Leaders are on the hook for bad outcomes.

Leadership and Systems

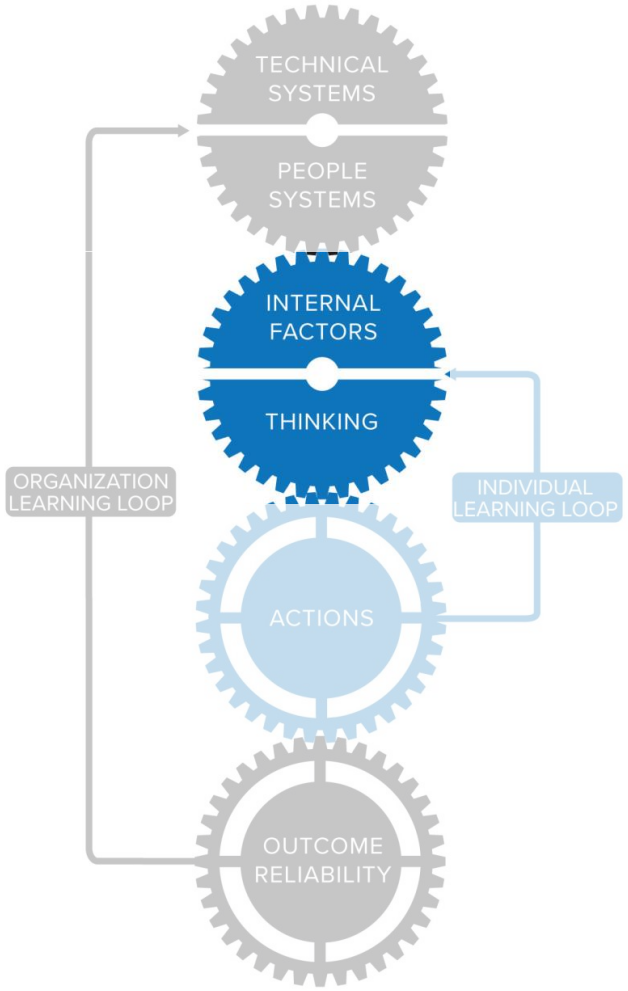


Systems
How work gets done in this organization

Leaders are responsible for adjusting or implementing technical and people systems:

- Setting a workflow or quota
- Scheduling workers
- Managing a budget
- Tracking equipment maintenance

Leading the Individual: Internal Factors and Thinking

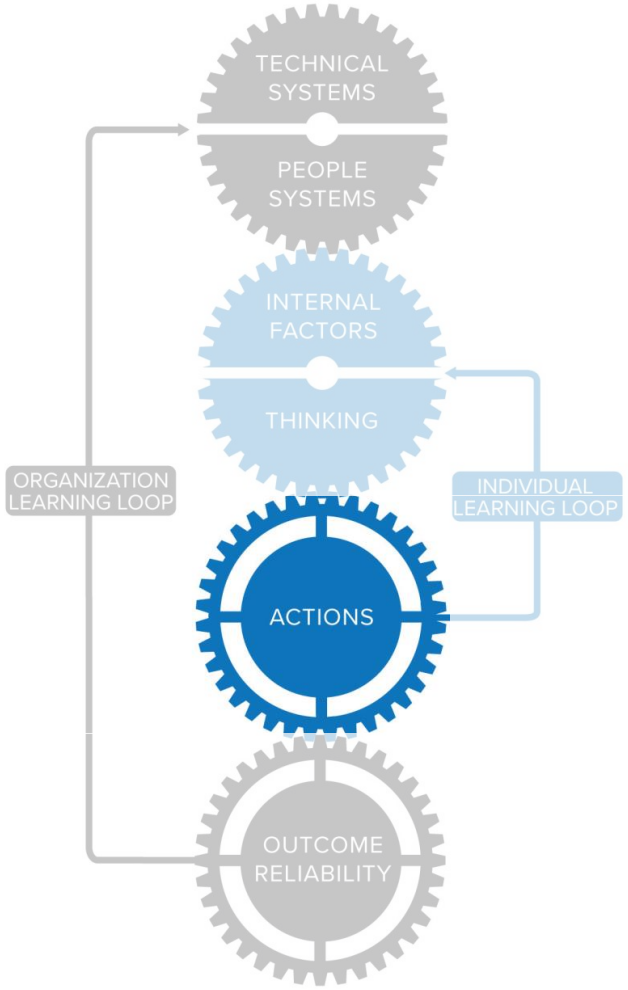


Internal factors
How individuals feel and think

Leaders' actions can create internal factors in **workers**, which affects:

- How much a worker trusts a leader
- How much a worker listens to a leader
- How much a worker follows a leader

Leading the Individual: Actions and Feedback



Actions

What people do

Leaders provide guidance and feedback for actions through:

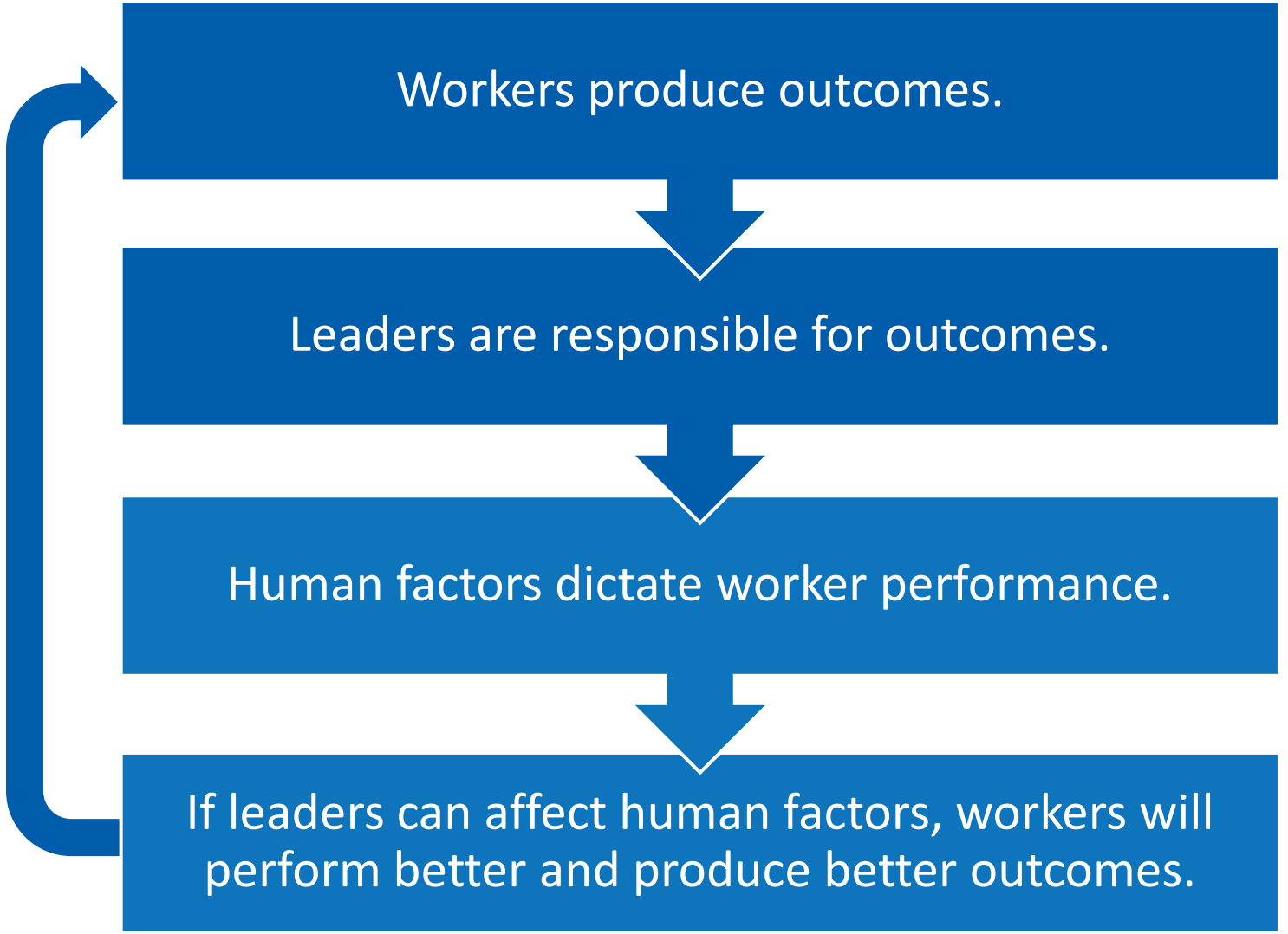
- Mentorship
- Instruction
- Praise
- Difficult conversations

Human Factors, Errors and Risk

States



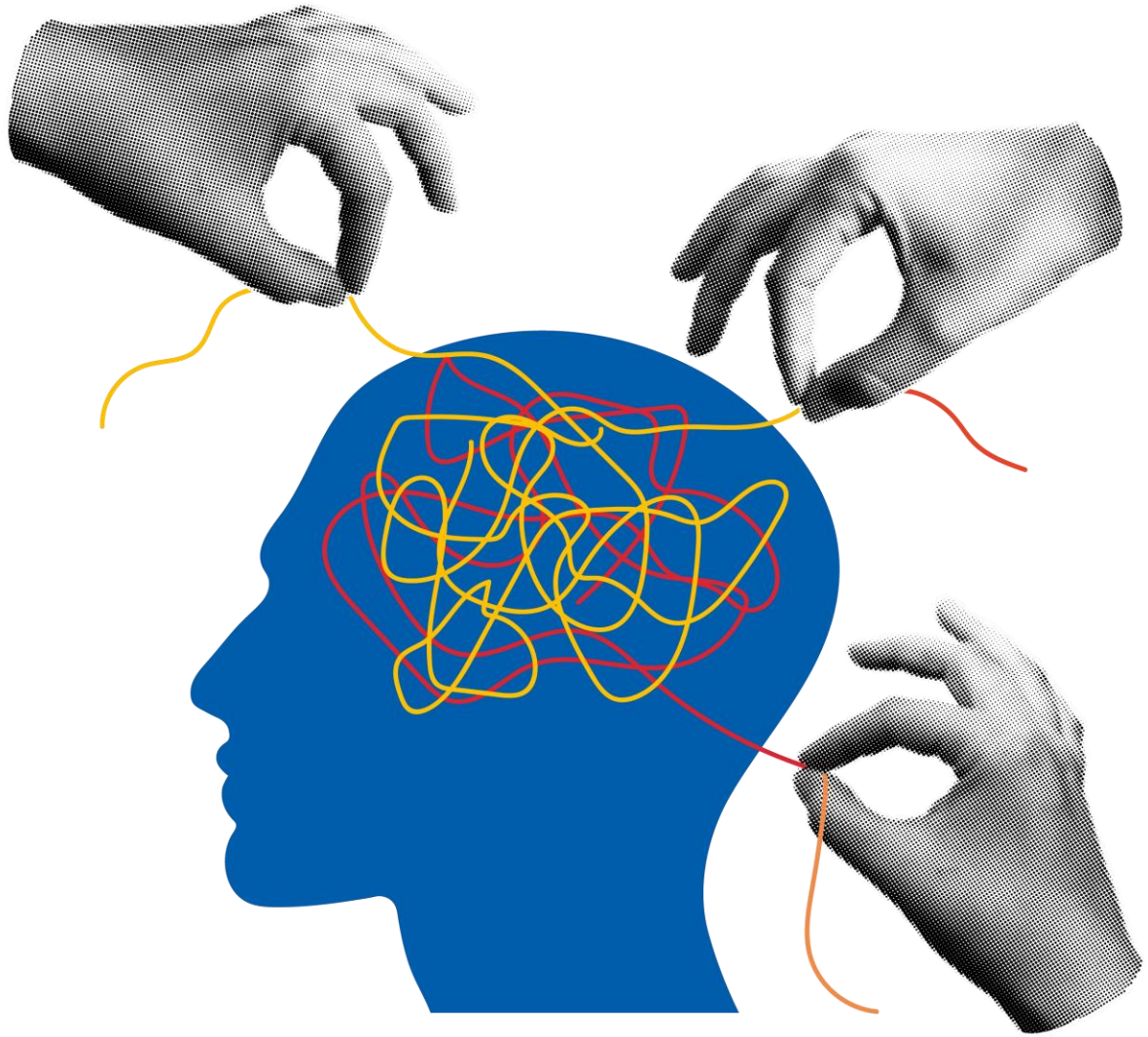
Why This Matters to Leaders



Controlling Outcomes

If leaders can positively shape human factors, workers are more likely to perform well and achieve better outcomes.

Does that mean leaders can control workers' actions?



Control Versus Influence

Distinguishing good leadership.



Bag Boys Don't Make Management Decisions



The Misconception of Control

Think about the times you have worked with a leader and succeeded.

Did they try to control you?
…or…
Did they trust you to get the job done?



The Effects of “Do It Because I Said So”

Short term:

- Quick compliance
- Unquestioning obedience



Long term:

- Lack of commitment and engagement
- Fear of discipline
- Hiding mistakes
- Communication breakdown
- Unsustainable, especially 24/7

The Dangers of Control

- Employees **rush** because they want to avoid blame.
- Employees are **frustrated** because they feel disrespected.
- Employees are **fatigued** because of a lack of fulfillment.
- Employees are **complacent** because they just do what we're told.





Influence



Has long term effects.

- Influenced workers are committed to long-term outcomes.

Grows from consistency, transparency, and fairness.

- The more you build trust, the more influential you can be.

Impacts behaviors when nobody is watching.

- If you inspire someone to be safe at work, there's a better chance they'll be safe at home and on the road.

Have you ever been influenced by a leader in a way that made you safer off the clock?



Soft Skills and Influence

Tools to lead safety.



Three Key Soft Skills



Influential communication



Storytelling



Taking initiative

Influential Communication

Strategies and techniques



Influential Communication

- Employees trust leaders who make them feel seen, heard and valued.
- Trust grows through small, daily choices.
- Every relational interaction is an opportunity to build trust.



L.E.A.D. With Influential Attitude

Learn	**Learn your people.** Know strengths, challenges, family considerations, career goals.
Engage	**Invite participation.** Let workers co-create solutions. They'll own what they help build.
Align	**Explain the "why."** Adults respond better when they understand purpose; it reduces resistance.
Develop	**Use small, frequent coaching moments.** A quick "walk and talk" beats an annual review.

Communication Technique #1

Clear and Concise Communication



State the purpose first
("My goal for this conversation is…")

Remove jargon, assumptions and unnecessary details.

Check for understanding
("What do you think about this approach?")

Communication Technique #2

Active Listening



Active Listening Example

A worker raises an issue about housekeeping.

A leader makes eye contact, doesn't interrupt.

The worker finishes what they have to say, uninterrupted.

The leader pauses to consider what they heard.

Communication Technique #2

Active Listening



Active Listening Example

The leader asks relevant questions to clarify points:

- When did you first notice this issue?
- Do you find this issue puts you in a state of rushing or frustration?

Communication Technique #2

Active Listening



Active Listening Example

The leader restates what they heard.

> "Let me know if this is right: you've noticed tools being left out about a week ago. It's still happening. It's frustrating and adds work for you which makes you rush to make up lost time. Does that sound right?"

The worker has clarity and the leader has demonstrated personal commitment.

Communication Technique #3

No-Blame Mindset



Instead of “Why did you do that?” try:

- “Walk me through what happened.”
- “What did you see from your perspective?”

Storytelling

Building on Influential Communication



Storytelling…

- Is relatable and engaging
- Builds personal connections
- Inspires others to share their own stories
- Builds community and a stronger culture.
- Improves overall communication.



Why Stories Work

- Specific examples **ground messages in reality**.
- Real stories **build real credibility**.
- Narratives are **easy to remember.**



A Simple Storytelling Formula

Choose something that happened to you.

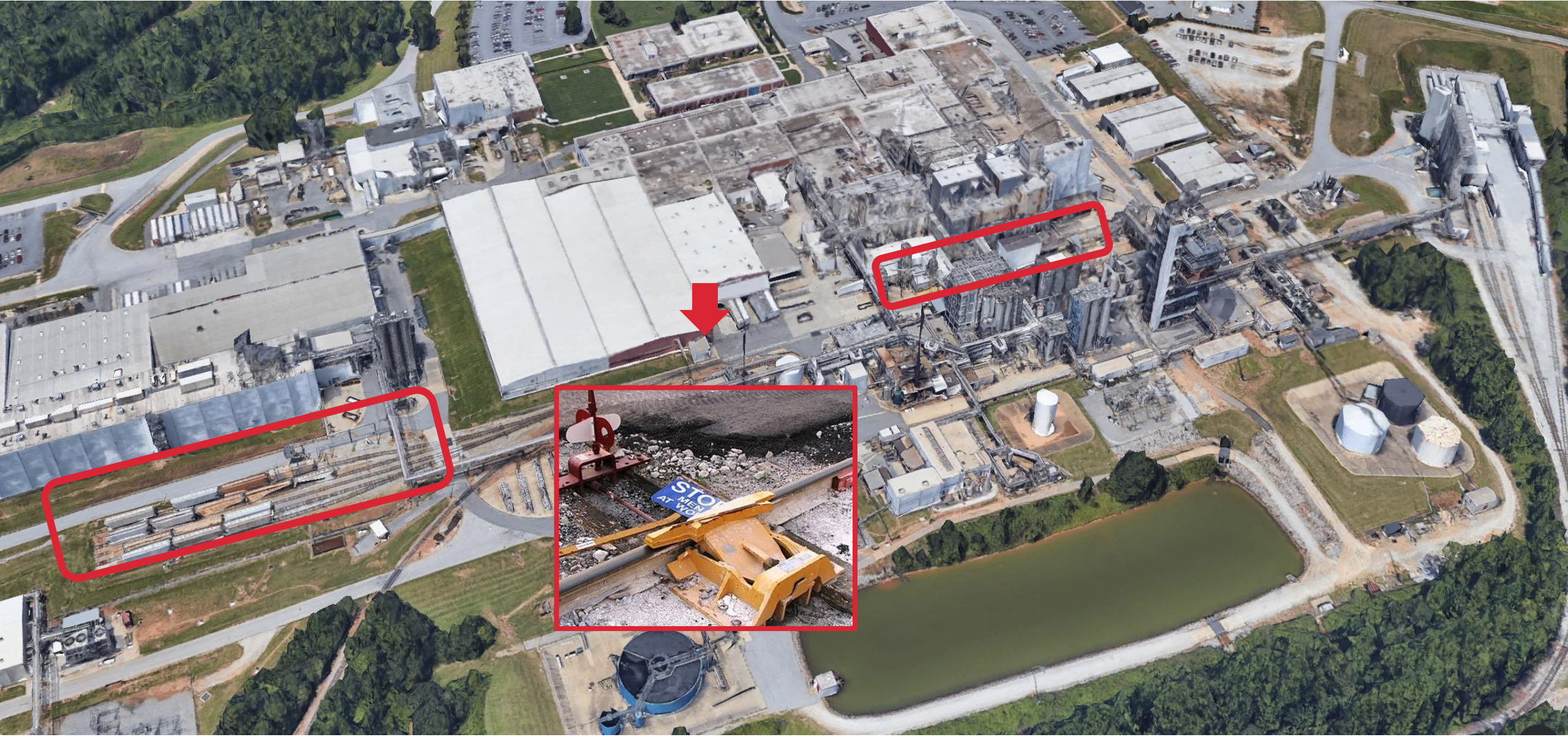
Building Trust With Stories

- Tell stories at the beginning of team meetings.
- Ask for workers to share their similar experiences.
- Tell stories in 1-on-1 conversations.



Trackmobile Incident





Leadership Through Habit



Taking Initiative

Practicing influence and making a difference.



Answering the Call to Leadership

Opportunities to step up, build trust, communicate and tell stories are everywhere.

- Controlling leaders ignore these opportunities.
- Strong leaders see these opportunities as moments of influence.

The trick is to recognize those opportunities when they present themselves.



Initiative is a Reflex

Active Listening

Storytelling

No-Blame Mindset



Set a Leadership Habit Now

Step 1

Pick a prompt.

Pick something specific that happens regularly in your workday.

Step 2

Pick a technique.

Choose one of the techniques we discussed.

Clear Communication
- State the purpose first.
- Remove jargon.
- Check for understanding.

Active Listening
- Make eye contact.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Reflect back what you heard.

No-Blame Mindset
- Say: “Walk me through what happened.”
- Ask: “What did you see from your perspective?”

Storytelling
- Share a story.
- Ask someone to tell a story.

Step 3

Use the Technique.

Use this technique next time you encounter the prompt.

What's Your Leadership Habit?

Every time [MY PROMPT] happens, I will [TECHNIQUE].

Let’s Review

It’s leadership time.

Leadership and Human Factors

- The overall goal of leadership is to move people in a positive way.
- Leadership affects every aspect of an organization, from systems, to individuals, to outcomes.
- Managing human factors in an organization is key to successful leadership.



Influence Versus Control

- Control is leadership through authority.
- Influence is leadership through trust.
- Influence is the leadership style that helps manage human factors.



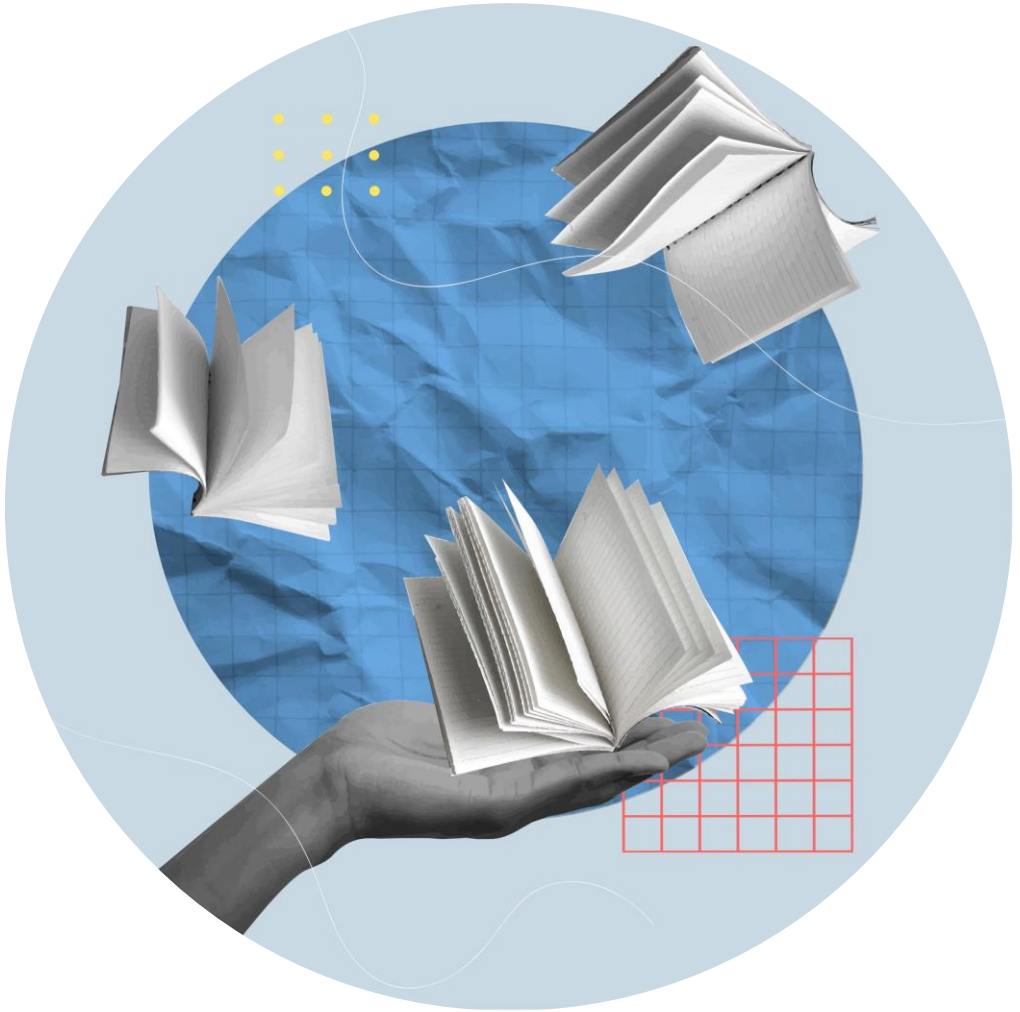
Influential Communication Tools

- Clear and concise communication
- Active listening
- Interest over judgment



Storytelling

- Stories teach lessons and build trust through shared experience.
- Tell stories at the beginning of team meetings.
- Ask for workers to share their similar experiences.



Leadership Through Habit

Every time [MY PROMPT] happens,
I will [LEAD WITH INFLUENCE].



How will you L.E.A.D. ?

Questions?

Kevin Nix
kevin.n@safestart.com

Learn	**Learn your people.**
Engage	**Invite participation.**
Align	**Explain the “why.”**
Develop	**Use small, frequent coaching moments.**

SAFESTART®