



ESSENTIAL  
LEADERSHIP




HEART ♦ VISION ♦ RESPONSIBILITY



A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR 911 LEADERS



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THE  
REALITY  
OF THE  
ROLE

BEHIND EVERY CALL IS A HUMAN BEING.  
BEHIND EVERY DECISION IS A LEADER.





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In public safety communications, we are trained to **respond**.

We learn policy, procedure, and systems. We learn how to gather information, prioritize calls, and coordinate resources.

Those skills matter. They are the foundation of the job.

But over time, I've come to realize something else.

**In the moments that matter most, success isn't just about what we do—it's about how we lead,**

Because leadership in a 911 center doesn't happen later.

It happens in real time.

- ◆ In the tone you set.
- ◆ In the decision you make.
- ◆ In the way you show up when everything is on the line.



We can react to the call...  
or we can **lead** it.



# REACT VS LEAD

IMPULSE

EMOTION

SHORT TERM

CHAOS

REGRET

INTENTIONAL

FOCUSED

LONG TERM

CLARITY

IMPACT

IN EVERY MOMENT, YOU CAN REACT  
OR YOU CAN LEAD.



## **In a 911 center, reacting is natural.**

The work is fast. The stakes are high.  
The expectation is immediate response.

But reacting, by itself, has limits.  
It keeps us moving—but not always leading.

## **Leading the call is different.**

It doesn't slow the work down—  
it strengthens how the work gets done.

It looks like a leader who:



**Pauses** just enough to  
think clearly



**Sets the tone** instead of  
absorbing chaos



**Creates clarity** for others

**Because the moment we shift  
from reaction to leading,  
everything changes.**



# THE LEADERSHIP TRIAD



EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP ISN'T BUILT ON  
ONE STRENGTH—IT'S BUILT ON THE  
BALANCE OF THREE.



## HEART

HOW YOU LEAD  
PEOPLE WHEN  
IT MATTERS MOST.



## VISION

HOW YOU CREATE  
CLARITY AND  
DIRECTION.



## RESPONSIBILITY

HOW YOU OWN  
YOUR IMPACT AND  
THE OUTCOMES.

MASTER THE TRIAD. MULTIPLY YOUR IMPACT.





If leadership in the moment  
is what shapes outcomes,  
then what is it built on?

HEART,  
VISION,  
RESPONSIBILITY.



This is the foundation of  
intentional leadership.



## HEART

Connection, Trust, Presence.

Am I truly connecting?

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## VISION

Clarity in the moment.

Direction under pressure.

Am I creating clarity  
or confusion?

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## RESPONSIBILITY

Ownership—especially  
when things go wrong.

Am I owning my impact?



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# LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

Effective leadership begins with self-awareness. Take time to reflect honestly on how you lead in the moments that matter most.

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## THE LEADERSHIP TRIAD



### HEART

How you lead people when it matters most.



### VISION

How you create clarity and direction.



### RESPONSIBILITY

How you own your impact and the outcomes.



Which area of the Leadership Triad comes most naturally to you?

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Which area becomes most challenging under pressure?

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Where do you tend to react instead of lead?

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What leadership pattern do you want to strengthen?

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Leadership isn't about being perfect.  
It's about being **intentional**.



# THE ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

A simple, powerful framework  
for leading with clarity,  
purpose, and impact.



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# THE 6 PILLARS OF ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP

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Clarity in the Moment

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Connection & Influence

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Ownership & Responsibility

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Culture by Design

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Service-Driven Leadership

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Thriving, Aligned Teams



# LEADING THE NEXT MOMENT

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

Great leadership starts with honest awareness. Take a moment to rate yourself in the areas below. There are no right or wrong answers—**this is for you.**

RATING SCALE				
1	2	3	4	5
Rarely	Sometimes	About Half the Time	Often	Consistently

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR	RATE YOURSELF				
 I create clarity and direction during stressful moments.	1	2	3	4	5
 I communicate in a way that builds trust and understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
 I create an environment where my team feels supported and safe.	1	2	3	4	5
 I address tension and issues early and directly.	1	2	3	4	5
 I lead with intention instead of reacting to the moment.	1	2	3	4	5
 My team understands my expectations and direction.	1	2	3	4	5
 I own my impact and am accountable for the outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5



### REFLECTION

What is one leadership behavior you want to improve immediately?

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Awareness creates choice.  
**Choice creates change.**  
Change creates impact.



# WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE

Six core principles. One leadership standard.

This is what leading with clarity, purpose, and impact looks like.



## PAUSE

I stay calm, think clearly, and make intentional decisions.



## PEOPLE

I lead with empathy, build strong teams, and value others.



## IDEAS

I stay curious, solve problems, and encourage innovation.



## HEART

I lead with integrity, compassion, and genuine care.



## VISION

I see the big picture, set direction, and inspire others.



## RESPONSIBILITY

I take ownership, hold myself accountable, and protect the mission.



## SCENARIO 1

# A CALL STARTS TO UNRAVEL

It's 0800 hours inside the communications center.

Calls are stacking. The pace is building.  
Then a routine incident starts to unravel.

The room shifts with it.

**How you lead next will shape everything.**

### — THE SCENARIO —



PAUSE

The situation is changing fast.  
Information is coming in from multiple sources.

**What do you do first?**



PEOPLE

Your team is already divided on what to do.  
Stress is rising and patience is thin.

**How do you lead your people?**



IDEAS

What you know right now isn't enough.  
You need a new plan—fast.

**How do you adapt and create a solution?**



HEART

The caller is scared. A family member is overwhelmed.  
Emotions in the room are high.

**How do you lead with compassion?**



VISION

The big picture is easy to lose in the chaos.  
Everyone is looking to you.

**How do you see the big picture?**



RESPONSIBILITY

The outcome depends on your next decision.  
It's your call.

**Do you take ownership?**



LEAD WITH PURPOSE. LIVE THE STANDARD.

**THIS IS WHAT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE.**



## SCENARIO 2

# TENSION BETWEEN TEAM MEMBERS

Two team members are clashing.  
Voices are rising. The atmosphere is shifting.  
It's affecting communication and performance.

**How you lead next will shape everything.**

### THE SCENARIO



PAUSE

The conflict is starting to affect the room.  
Distractions are growing. Others are noticing.

**What do you do first?**



PEOPLE

Both team members feel misunderstood.  
The divide is pulling others in.

**How do you lead your people?**



IDEAS

The usual approach isn't working.  
You need a way forward both sides can accept.

**How do you adapt and create a solution?**



HEART

Behind the tension are deeper feelings—disrespect,  
hurt, or past experiences.

**How do you lead with compassion?**



VISION

Left unresolved, the tension could reshape  
the culture of the team.

**How do you see the big picture?**



RESPONSIBILITY

The team is watching how leadership responds.  
Silence is a decision too.

**Do you take ownership?**

LEAD WITH PURPOSE. LIVE THE STANDARD.

**THIS IS WHAT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE.**



## SCENARIO 3

# STAFFING STRAIN. TEAM UNDER PRESSURE.

Call volume is high. People are tired.  
Sick calls and vacancies are stretching everyone thin.  
Morale is dipping. Burnout is rising.  
The center can't afford to lose anyone else.  
**How you lead next will sustain the team.**

### THE SCENARIO



PAUSE

The phones aren't slowing down.  
Resources are limited and the day is just beginning.  
**What do you do first?**



PEOPLE

Your team is exhausted and stretched thin.  
Every person and every position matters.  
**How do you lead your people?**



IDEAS

You need solutions that work now—  
without creating tomorrow's problems.  
**How do you adapt and create a solution?**



HEART

People are running on empty.  
They need support, recognition, and reassurance.  
**How do you lead with compassion?**



VISION

Sustainable operations protect more than today.  
Your decisions impact retention and the future.  
**How do you see the big picture?**



RESPONSIBILITY

You are entrusted with the well-being  
of your team and the mission.  
**Do you take ownership?**

LEAD WITH PURPOSE. LIVE THE STANDARD.  
**THIS IS WHAT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE.**



# WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE ON SHIFT

Leadership isn't a theory—it's a choice you make in real time.  
Here's how the Leadership Triad shows up in the moments that matter most.



## HEART

How you lead people when it matters most.



## VISION

How you create clarity and direction.



## RESPONSIBILITY

How you own your impact and the outcomes.



### DURING A DIFFICULT CALL

*When emotions are high and information is limited.*

- Stay calm and grounded.
- Listen with empathy.
- Keep the caller connected.

- Ask the right questions.
- Filter the noise.
- Give clear, confident direction.

- Take ownership of the outcome.
- Follow through on commitments.
- Ensure the right resources are dispatched.



### DURING TEAM CONFLICT

*When tension rises and communication breaks down.*

- Lead with respect and empathy.
- Create space for every voice.
- Protect relationships while addressing the issue.

- Look beyond the emotion.
- Refocus the team on the mission.
- Set clear expectations moving forward.

- Address the issue directly.
- Hold people accountable.
- Repair, restore, and rebuild trust.



### DURING STAFFING STRAIN

*When resources are tight and fatigue is high.*

- Recognize the human impact.
- Check in on your people.
- Show appreciation and support.

- Prioritize what matters most.
- Communicate clearly and consistently.
- Adjust and adapt the plan.

- Make tough decisions.
- Protect the long-term health of the team.
- Own the impact of your decisions.



You don't need more time. You need intention.

**Lead with Heart. Create with Vision. Own with Responsibility.**

That's how you lead the moments that matter.



# THE REACTIVE LEADER

You walk into a team meeting already overwhelmed.  
Tension is high. Deadlines are slipping. Emotions are rising.

**You raise your voice. You push harder. You demand more.**

In the moment, it feels like you're taking control.



## IN THE MOMENT



You feel pressure.  
You react.



Your team feels  
stress and uncertainty.



Communication  
breaks down.



Progress slows.  
Morale drops.



## THE OUTCOME

### SHORT TERM

- Temporary compliance
- Problems are masked
- Stress and frustration grow
- You feel drained



### LONG TERM

- Trust erodes
- Disengagement grows
- Turnover increases
- The mission is compromised



When you lead from reaction,  
you create more of what you're reacting to.

**This path leads to exhaustion and instability.**



LEAD WITH PURPOSE. LIVE THE STANDARD.

**THIS IS WHAT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE.**





# PAUSE BEFORE YOU REACT

## A LEADERSHIP TOOL

The moments that challenge you the most are often the moments that shape your leadership the most. Use this tool to lead intentionally instead of reacting automatically.



1

### WHAT IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING?

Get clear on the facts. What is the situation, and what do I know for certain?

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2

### WHAT TONE AM I SETTING?

My tone shapes the climate. How do I want my words and presence to land?

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3

### WHAT OUTCOME AM I CREATING?

What result am I moving toward with my words, actions, and decisions?

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### AM I REACTING OR LEADING?

Am I letting emotion lead me, or am I choosing to lead with intention and purpose?

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A pause is not weakness.

**A pause is leadership.**

Lead the moment. Don't let the moment lead you.

# THE OUTCOME

Every decision creates a ripple. Every choice leaves a mark.

**The outcome depends on how you lead.**



## POSITIVE OUTCOMES

When you lead with purpose, people, and principles—you create clarity, stability, and a stronger team.

- ✓ Trust is strengthened
- ✓ Communication improves
- ✓ Problems are solved
- ✓ Morale rises
- ✓ The team grows stronger
- ✓ The mission is advanced



## NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

When leadership is reactive, inconsistent, or absent—confusion, frustration, and disconnection grow.

- ✗ Trust is eroded
- ✗ Communication breaks down
- ✗ Problems escalate
- ✗ Morale declines
- ✗ Good people disengage
- ✗ The mission is compromised



You may not control every situation.  
But you always control how you lead.

**That is the outcome that truly matters.**



LEAD WITH PURPOSE. LIVE THE STANDARD.

**THIS IS WHAT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE.**



If this resonates with you,  
*you're not alone.*

There are leaders who know  
there's a better way.

The path forward  
starts with intention.

And it starts with how  
you lead the next moment.





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# When leadership shifts, EVERYTHING ELSE FOLLOWS.



**Clarity** replaces chaos.



**Communication** strengthens.



**People** take ownership.



**Culture** begins to change.



Teams don't just function—  
they **thrive**.



Because leadership  
isn't about position.  
It's about **how you show up**.



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# YOUR NEXT STEP

## FINAL ACTION COMMITMENT

Leadership isn't about what we know—it's about what we do next.  
Take a moment to commit to the leader you want to be  
and the impact you want to create.



### 1. WHAT IS ONE BEHAVIOR I WILL CHANGE?

What is one leadership  
behavior you will  
intentionally improve?

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### 2. WHAT CONVERSATION DO I NEED TO HAVE?

Is there a conversation  
you've been avoiding  
or need to prioritize?

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### 3. WHAT KIND OF LEADER DO I WANT MY TEAM TO EXPERIENCE?

How do you want your  
team to feel because  
of how you lead?

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### 4. WHAT WILL INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE THIS WEEK?

What is one specific action  
you will take in the next  
7 days?

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### I CHOOSE TO LEAD WITH INTENTION.

I will lead with **Heart**.

I will create with **Vision**.

I will own my **Responsibility**.

Because how I lead in the next moment changes everything.

*I lead the call.*



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LEAD THE MOMENT.

— ◆ —

# IMPACT THE OUTCOME.

— ◆ —

INSPIRE THE TEAM.



LEAD WITH PURPOSE. LIVE THE STANDARD.

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