

A PRIVATE REFLECTION FOR SENIOR LEADERS

On the internal negotiations that start the moment you hand something over, and the one underneath them all.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

You already believe in empowering your people.

This guide isn't about whether you believe it. It's about what happens inside you after you say the words.

Handing work back is one moment. Leaving it in their hands is every moment after that. Somewhere in those moments, a negotiation starts. It's subtle, it's fast, and it usually sounds reasonable.

Nothing in these pages asks you to fix anything. The work here is noticing. A negotiation you can see has a lot less power than one running in the background.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Choose one person. Someone on your team you've told, in some form, "you own this." Keep them in mind on every page.

Go slowly. Twenty quiet minutes will tell you more than an hour of skimming.

Write by hand if you can. The first answer is usually the polished one. Stay for the second.

Keep it private. This is for you. No one needs to see it.

START HERE *The person I'm holding in mind is:*

What I told them they own:

01 · NOTICING

Where is your hand still on the seat?

Imagine teaching someone to ride a bike. You say, "I've got you. Go." They pedal. They wobble. They're doing it. And you never let go of the seat. Not because they can't ride. Because you can't stand to watch them wobble.

From the outside, holding on rarely looks like control. It looks like support, involvement, high standards. Check any that have shown up with this person in the last month.

- ☐ I asked for a quick update. Then another one.
- ☐ I joined the meeting just to listen.
- ☐ They brought me their plan, and I edited it until it was mine.
- ☐ I asked "what do you think we should do?" when I already knew the answer.
- ☐ I gave them room to decide, then quietly fixed the decision afterward.
- ☐ I told myself it was faster that way.

REFLECT *What do you notice about the ones you checked?*

Lately, does this person bring you ideas, or questions? What might they be responding to?

02 · NAMING

The four negotiations

The moment you hand something over, one of these usually speaks first. Each one sounds like a virtue. Read all four, then notice which one is loudest for you.

01 · SPEED

“It’ll be faster if I do it.”

It sounds like efficiency.

If your brain gets to the answer before they’ve finished describing the problem, waiting can feel unbearable. It’s faster today. And you’ll be the one driving next time too.

Where did speed cost me something this month?

02 · RISK

“If this goes wrong, it’s on me.”

It sounds like accountability.

It is on you. But “I’m accountable” can quietly become “I have to control every step.” One is ownership. The other is fear, dressed up as ownership.

What am I actually afraid would happen?

03 · STANDARDS

“They won’t do it the way I would.”

It sounds like quality.

Usually true. The question is whether different means wrong. Every time you correct a difference that wasn’t a mistake, you teach them the real job is guessing what you’d do.

What have I corrected that was only different?

04 · IDENTITY

“If they don’t need me, what am I?”

The one nobody likes to say out loud.

Being the one with the answers may be how you earned your place. When you truly empower someone, part of you feels a little less necessary, and part of you pulls back to stay needed.

What does being needed give me?

03 · UNDERNEATH

There’s one more negotiation.

It sounds like realism. *Can they really do this?* You’ve seen their misses. So you hand it over with one hand and hold a backup plan in the other. People can feel whether you believe in them long before you say a word.

WHEN FAITH IS MISSING	WHEN FAITH IS THERE
Speed feels urgent.	Speed can wait.
Risk feels like yours alone.	Risk is shared.
Different looks wrong.	Different is just different.
You need to be needed.	You’d rather watch them grow.

The four negotiations aren’t four separate problems. They’re four ways *missing faith* shows up.

Faith isn’t believing they’ll get it perfect. It’s believing they’re capable, and that they’ll find their way to right, even through a wobble. You don’t let go of the seat because you’re sure they won’t wobble. You let go because you believe they can ride.

Do I have faith in this person?

REFLECT *If I'm honest, what's my answer right now? What is it based on?*

What would they see in me this week if my faith in them were fully there?

Handing off the task, or handing over authority?

Frameworks move the task. They don't touch the negotiation. Circle where you've been operating with this person.

HANDING OFF THE TASK	HANDING OVER AUTHORITY
"Here's what I need. Run it by me first."	"Here's the outcome. You decide how."
Checking in to stay comfortable	Checking in when they ask for it
Fixing the decision afterward	Letting the decision stand, then talking about it
"I'm accountable, so I control it."	"I'm accountable, so I back you up."
The need to be needed	The need for them to grow

The left column keeps the work moving. The right column grows leaders. And it isn't harder. It's lighter.

Letting go isn’t something you add.

You take the negotiation out one piece at a time. Choose one practice for this week. Use the space to note what happened when you tried it.

1

Name your negotiation out loud.

Next time you feel the pull to step in, stop and ask: which one is this? Speed, risk, standards, identity? And underneath it, do I have faith in this person? You don’t have to fix it. Just name it.

2

Define the outcome. Step out of the method.

Be clear about what done looks like, then leave the how to them. That’s not lowering your standard. It’s putting your standard where it belongs: on the result.

3

Ask a question you don’t know the answer to.

If you already know the answer, you’re testing, and they know the difference. Try: “What do you see that I might be missing?” Then wait longer than feels comfortable.

4

Separate wobbling from falling.

Before you step in, ask: is this actually going to fail, or is it just not going the way I’d do it? If it’s only a wobble, keep your hands off the seat.

5

Back them up where they can see it.

Empowerment is also what you say about your people when they’re not in the room. Back them up in front of others, and they start to believe they actually do own it.

06 · CARRY THIS INTO YOUR WEEK

Four questions

Come back to these with the same person in mind. Notice whether your answers change by Friday.

01 *Where is my hand still on the seat with this person?*

02 *Which negotiation shows up most for me? And do I have faith in this person?*

03 *What would this person do if they knew I'd back them up no matter how it went?*

04 *If I didn't need to be here, what would I let go of first?*

GO FURTHER

The Leadership Friction Assessment

If you recognized yourself in one of these negotiations, it's worth looking at where else it shows up. Twelve questions. A few minutes. It shows you where internal negotiation is making your leadership heavier than it needs to be.

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From The Private Leadership Reset Podcast with Ryan Watts · privateleadershipreset.com
You already said you own this. Now take your hand off the seat.