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The Leadership Harvest

A reflection guide to make sense of your year as a leader.

Human Potential Unlocked

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Gather what the year has taught you

Look back before you move on.

The end of a year has a way of rushing us forward. New plans, new targets, new priorities. Yet the year behind you holds a great deal of learning: decisions you made, conversations that went well and some that didn't, moments when you surprised yourself, and times when you wish you had shown up differently.

At Companions for Leadership, we believe wisdom lives in your relationship to your experience: what you notice, how you make sense of it and what you choose to do next. We call this Leadership Wisdom in Action™. You already have it, and it grows each time you pause to learn from what you've lived.

This guide invites you to look honestly at your year, with curiosity and care. You don't need to turn every experience into a lesson. Some things deserve celebrating; others may need more time.

How to use this guide

- Set aside some time in a place where you won't be interrupted. You can work through the guide in one sitting or return to it over several.
- Turn off notifications. Keep your phone nearby for the first exercise only; after that, put it away.
- We encourage you to **print this guide and write by hand**. The fillable version works on screen too.
- There are no right answers. Write what feels true before trying to make it sound polished.

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01 REMEMBER

A highlight and a lowlight

Every year has moments that lift us and moments that test us.

Both can tell us something. Start by gathering a few moments that stand out, then choose one highlight and one lowlight to explore more closely. Look for moments that reveal something about how you lead, not only the biggest achievements or the hardest days.

Scroll back through your year

About 5 minutes. Your phone is welcome here, and only here.

Our phones often hold traces of a year we may struggle to remember. Open your photos and calendar, and scroll back month by month. Don't judge or sort yet. Notice what stands out: people, places, decisions, conversations, successes, tensions, turning points or small moments that mattered. Jot down a few notes, then put your phone away, face down and out of reach.

What stands out?

Capture moments, people, choices or conversations that stay with you.

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Your highlight

Look at your notes and choose one moment that stands out as a highlight of your year as a leader. It doesn't have to be a major achievement. Choose a moment that feels meaningful.

Close your eyes for a moment and travel back to it. Where are you? Who is with you? What can you hear, see or smell? What colours, light or atmosphere surround you? Take your time, then write.

What happened? Capture the moment in as much detail as you can.

What made this moment possible? Consider the people, the conditions and your own choices.

What personal qualities of yours were at play in your highlight?

Core qualities are the qualities that connect you most deeply to your life and make you feel most alive. They are already in you, and you can often recognise them in moments like the one you've just described. Under pressure, it's easy to lose touch with them, which is why it helps to name them.

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Your lowlight

Now choose one moment that was hard. It doesn't have to be the hardest moment of your year. Choose one that still feels a little unfinished, or one you want to understand more clearly. You can choose a manageable moment; you don't need to revisit an experience that feels overwhelming.

What happened?

What did you notice and sense at the time?

Think of what was going on around you and within you: your thoughts, your emotions and what you felt in your body.

How did you respond? What did you do, say or avoid doing?

You've gathered two moments that mattered. Now step back and look at your lowlight from a different perspective.

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02 REFRAME

Stepping onto the balcony

A little distance can reveal what was hard to see up close.

When we're in the middle of something, it fills our whole view. The meeting running over, the decision needed by tonight, the conversation that went sideways: up close, it's hard to see the wider picture, and hard to see ourselves clearly within it.

In this exercise, you'll return to your lowlight and imagine stepping out of the moment and onto a balcony overlooking the scene, seeing it from above or taking a meta-view. From there, look down at what is happening and try to see the whole situation at once: the people, the pressures, the context and your own part in it.

If visualising isn't natural for you, simply take a mental step back and observe the situation as an outside observer would.

The perspective we take on a situation, the lens we look through, shapes the story we tell about it and what we do next.

From the balcony, what do you understand differently about this moment?

A different perspective can change how we understand a moment. Now turn to what this year has given you to celebrate, and where it has helped you grow.

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03 RECOGNISE

Celebrating and growing

Some questions ask to be answered straight away. Others need a little time.

You've looked closely at two moments. Now turn to what this year has given you to celebrate, and where it has helped you grow.

Take the questions one at a time. Write freely, without editing yourself. Let your pen move faster than your inner critic.

i What are you celebrating?

What are you quietly proud of that nobody else may have noticed?

Which hope, intention or ambition became real this year, and what helped make it happen?

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ii Where did you grow?

What did this year reveal about yourself as a leader, something you hadn't fully recognised before?

Which difficult experience, feedback or change challenged an assumption you held about yourself?

The title of your chapter

Look back over everything you've written so far: your highlight and lowlight, the view from the balcony, and what you're celebrating and where you grew.

If this year were a chapter in the book of your life, what would you call it?

A title is a frame too: it shapes how you'll remember this year. It doesn't need to be clever, only true.

Your experiences tell a story. The next exercise gives you a lens for examining how you showed up in those moments.

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04 UNDERSTAND

Caring & Daring™

Leadership that balances care for people with courage for results.

At Companions for Leadership, we believe progressive high performance can only be sustained, by individuals and by teams, when caring for people and daring for results are intentionally balanced. We call this Caring & Daring™ leadership.

Caring

Caring is about people: building trust, listening deeply, making sure people feel seen and supported, and looking after wellbeing and relationships.

Daring

Daring is about results: setting a bold direction, making clear decisions, stretching yourself and others, challenging assumptions, and having the courage to say what needs to be said.

Each needs the other. When caring outweighs daring, a team may feel comfortable but avoid necessary challenge or progress. When daring outweighs caring, results may come at the expense of trust, inclusion or sustainability. Most of us have a side we lean towards, especially under pressure. Leading well means noticing that tendency and rebalancing, again and again.

The map on the next page describes how you showed up in particular moments, not who you are as a person. Every leader moves between the quadrants. The aim is to bring both caring and daring to the situations that need them.

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Your Caring & Daring™ map

Think of three or four real moments from your year. Choose a range if you can: a moment when you felt proud of how you led, a moment when you avoided something difficult, a moment when you pushed for an outcome, and a moment when you held care and challenge together.

Write each moment in the quadrant that best describes how you actually showed up, not just what you intended. Consider the choices you made, what you said or avoided saying, and the effect your behaviour had.

Caring at its best

Building trust, listening deeply, supporting growth and making people feel seen.

Daring at its best

Setting direction, making clear decisions, challenging assumptions and acting with courage.

Too much caring

Avoiding necessary challenge, protecting people from discomfort or delaying a difficult conversation.

Too much daring

Pushing for results without enough listening, moving too fast or overriding people's concerns.

When the pressure was on, which way did you tend to lean? What does your map suggest?

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Go deeper

When we hold back from daring, or from caring, we're often protecting something: a relationship, our reputation, being liked, or feeling in control. Often an assumption keeps that protection in place, one we've never really questioned.

Where you held back this year, what were you protecting?

What might you be assuming that isn't entirely true?

What might become possible if you no longer needed to protect yourself in this way?

What's one small act of caring or daring you could practise next time?

You've recognised what mattered, where you grew and how you led. Now bring those insights together.

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05 INTEGRATE

What you take with you

Gather the learning. Choose what comes next.

A year changes what we know, and sometimes what we're sure of. You've looked at what the year presented, stepped back to see it differently, and explored how you balanced caring and daring. Now choose what you'll do with it. Experience becomes wisdom in the choices you make next.

What I've learned

What do you understand now about yourself, your leadership and the conditions in which you do your best work?

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One thing I'll practise

Reflection creates the possibility of change. Choose one small, meaningful leadership behaviour to practise. It doesn't need to be a big goal or a promise to become a different person. Choose something you can try in a real situation.

What is deeply true for you now that you haven't acted on yet?

What is one specific behaviour you want to practise more deliberately?

In what situation are you likely to have the opportunity to practise it?

How will you catch yourself? Think back to your lowlight: what will you sense first when an old pattern starts?

Keep this commitment somewhere you can return to it. You don't have to get it right every time. Catching yourself, whenever it happens, is the practice.

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06 APPRECIATE

Gratitude

Before you close this guide, pause for a moment of thanks.

Leadership is never a solo endeavour. Some people made your work possible, some helped you see differently, and some stood beside you when things were difficult. Some supported you in plain sight; others contributed quietly, in ways that were easy to miss. And then there's you: the person who kept showing up, on the good days and the difficult ones.

Think back over your year and write down the people you want to acknowledge, and what you appreciate about them.

Someone who supported me

Who helped me feel supported, seen or encouraged?

Someone who contributed quietly

Whose contribution might otherwise go unnoticed?

Someone who challenged me

Who helped me see something differently or grow?

Myself

What do I want to acknowledge about how I showed up this year?

Let them know

Gratitude grows when it's shared. Choose one or two people you've named and let them know what their contribution meant to you. It could be a message, a call, a handwritten note or a few words in person.

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Thank you for giving yourself this time

Looking back honestly at a year takes courage. You've noticed what mattered, looked again at the stories you tell, and chosen what you want to carry forward.

You don't need to remember every insight or follow through perfectly. Keep this guide somewhere you can find it, and return to it when you need to reconnect with what the year has taught you. Every year brings new moments to learn from. Grow as you go™.

We wish you a wholehearted year ahead.

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We accompany leaders who choose to grow from the inside out, anchoring their impact in clarity, courage and care. If you'd like support in turning what you've learned into new ways of leading, for yourself or your team, we'd be glad to walk alongside you.

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