

## Building Trust in Teams

MONTHLY WEBINAR



### ASCEND LEADERSHIP MONTHLY

To elevate and empower leaders at every stage of their journey

Today's Conversation:

# Building Trust in Teams

March 28, 2025

Etienne Consulting

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Jina Etienne, CPA, CGMA, CDE®

CEO, Etienne Consulting, LLC

(she/her)

Hi! I am a coach and facilitator centered on workplace diversity, inclusion, culture and belonging. I help curious challengers practice what I call fearless inclusion: the freedom to be yourself and the art of creating space for others to do the same. It is the combination of intention and consistent action that shatters unseen barriers.

I practice fearless inclusion in my life, my work and for organizations, individuals and leaders in retreats, workshops and kaleidoscope trainings. Unlike those providing *de rigueur* training, I first honor and validate the individual experiences and feelings of all who participate or attend.

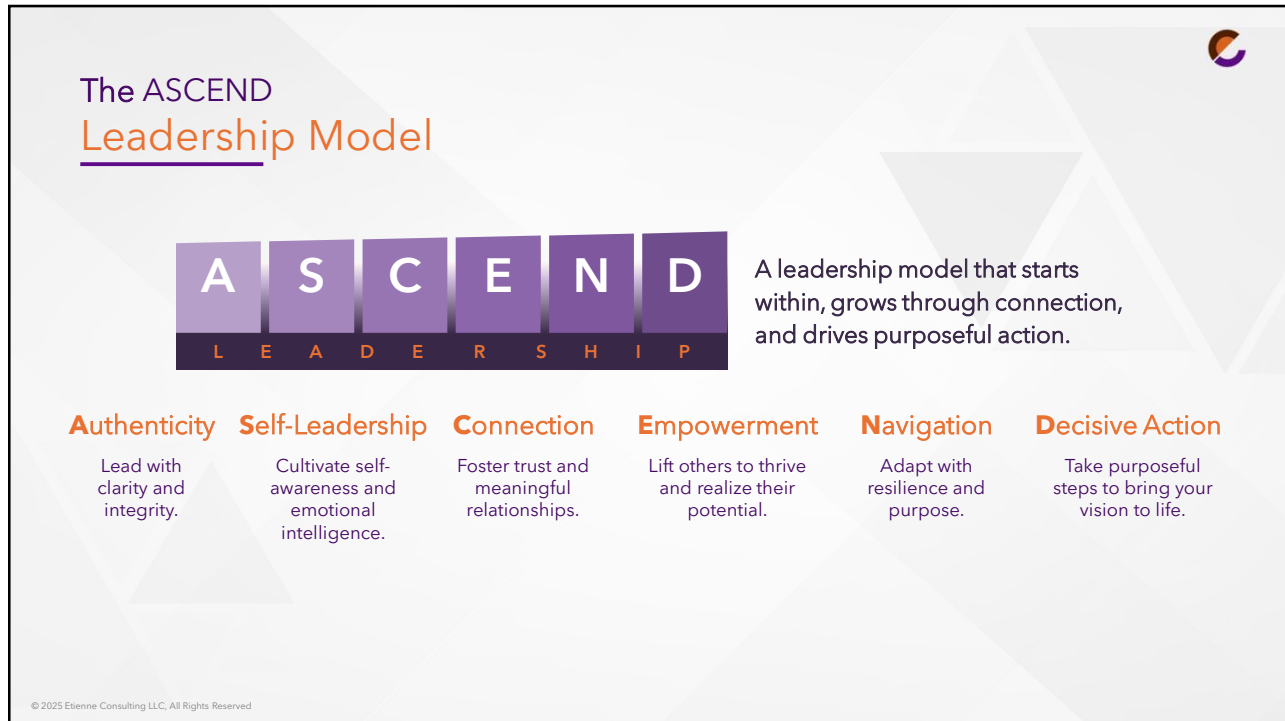
As a facilitator, I am not afraid to honestly invite in the elephant in the room to empower deep that can lead to healing and conversations growth. As a consultant, I challenge my clients to explore and clarify individual and organizational intention as a pathway to creating new frameworks for fostering cultures of connection and individual thinking has changed to power organizational growth.

In my spare time, I enjoy jigsaw puzzles and Sudoku, love chocolate, and appreciate a *really* good cup of coffee. I'm a die-hard fan of Arsenal FC (#COYG), a Peloton enthusiast (#FearlesslyMe on the LB) and love Formula 1 (let's go Hamilton!).

I live in Silver Spring, Maryland, with my husband, two sons, and Doug, our American bulldog.

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## Building Trust in Teams



The ASCEND Leadership Model

A leadership model that starts within, grows through connection, and drives purposeful action.

A	S	C	E	N	D
L	E	A	D	E	R
S	H	I	P		

- Authenticity**  
Lead with clarity and integrity.
- Self-Leadership**  
Cultivate self-awareness and emotional intelligence.
- Connection**  
Foster trust and meaningful relationships.
- Empowerment**  
Lift others to thrive and realize their potential.
- Navigation**  
Adapt with resilience and purpose.
- Decisive Action**  
Take purposeful steps to bring your vision to life.

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There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization.

**That one thing is trust.**


Trust impacts us 24/7, 365 days a year.

I contend that the ability to establish, grow, extend and restore trust is not only vital to our personal and interpersonal well-being; it is the key leadership competency of the new global economy.

~ Stephen M.R. Covey, Author  
"The Speed of Trust"

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## Building Trust in Teams



# Trust trɛst

[noun]

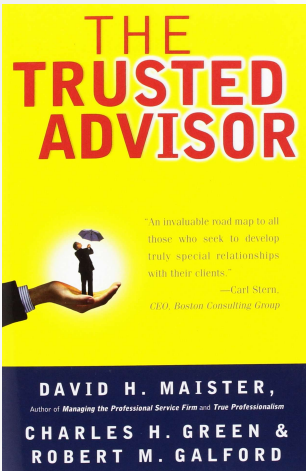

belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, effective, etc.

assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something

a charge or duty imposed in faith or confidence or as a condition of some relationship

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—Carl Stern, CEO, Boston Consulting Group*

**DAVID H. MAISTER,**  
*Author of Managing the Professional Service Firm and True Professionalism*


**CHARLES H. GREEN &  
ROBERT M. GALFORD**

🗨️ You don't get the chance to employ advisory skills until you can get someone to trust you enough to share their problems with you. No one ever taught us how to do that.

Yet we had to learn it. Somehow.

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## The Trust Equation


$$\text{TRUST} = \frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Self-Orientation}}$$

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"The Trusted Advisor" by D. Maister, C. Green & R. Galford

## Credibility has two components:



- Rational
  - Confidence in your skills and abilities
  - Based on: Titles, Credentials, Experience
  - Reinforced by how clearly you communicate what you know
- Emotional
  - Belief that you care about their well-being
  - Based on: Appearance, Demeanor, Charisma
  - Shaped by how comfortable or safe people feel around you

I can trust *what you say* about...

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## Building Trust in Teams

### Reliability is built on repeated experience

- Follows through on commitments
  - Links words and deeds
  - Dependable and consistent
- Aligns action with stated intention
- Meets or exceeds expectations
- Builds familiarity through structure and follow-through
  - Systems and workflows make interactions predictable
  - Routines reinforce consistency

I can trust *you to...*

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### Intimacy requires vulnerability

- Requires mutual risk and openness
- Demonstrated through:
  - Taking responsibility
  - Sharing personal thoughts or emotions
  - Building emotional connection
- Attuning to the internal state of others
- Practicing mutual respect and honoring boundaries

I trust can *talk with you* about...

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## Building Trust in Teams

### Self-Orientation: Shared focus builds trust

- Intentions may be good—but perception shapes reality
- Focus on shared success to build trust
- Signals of high self-orientation:
  - Deflecting blame
  - Taking credit
  - Speaking more than listening
  - Prioritizing personal goals over team needs

I can trust *you care about...*

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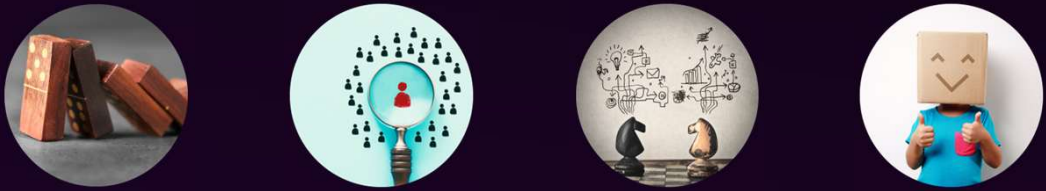
Trust is knowing that when a team member does push you, they're doing it because they care about the team.

~ Patrick Lencioni, Author  
"The Five Dysfunctions of a Team"

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## Building Trust in Teams

# Group Dynamics



Unwritten Rules      Groupthink      Relational Power      Other Factors

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# Unwritten Rules

Behavioral constraints that are not voiced or written.

They usually exist in unspoken and unwritten format because they form a part of the logical argument or course of action implied by tacit assumptions.

- Unwritten rules are often at odds with official company policies and stated goals.
- Often perceived as office politics
- Risks compounded by cultural differences

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## Building Trust in Teams

### Unwritten Rules Dynamics

#### Symptoms

- Favoritism (In-Group Bias)
- Exclusion from decisions
- Lack of transparency
- Resistance to change
- Limited or lack of feedback
- Silence in meetings and group discussions
- Cultural sensitivity

#### Risks

- Confirmation bias
- Lack of innovation
- Disengagement
- Pressure to conform
- Isolation and exclusion
- Misunderstandings
  - Intentions
  - Expectations

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### Groupthink

A phenomenon that occurs when the desire for group consensus overrides desire to present alternatives, critique a position, or express an unpopular opinion.



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## Building Trust in Teams

### Groupthink Dynamics

#### Symptoms

- Rationalization
- Peer Pressure
- Complacency
- Moral High Ground
- Stereotyping
- Censorship
- Illusion of Unanimity

#### Risks

- Decrease in creativity
- Stereotyping teammates
  - Ignore or discredit information
  - Lack of psychological safety
- Absence of critical reasoning
- Unprepared for poor outcomes
- Poor decision making
  - Failure to explore alternatives
  - Unlikely to see other solutions

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### Relational Power

#### How power flows through relationships and structures

- Influence that comes from position, visibility, or access
- Shaped by organizational hierarchy and decision-making authority
- Reflected in resource allocation and who controls budgets or tools
- Plays out in job assignments, visibility, and who gets stretch roles
- Creates headwinds or tailwinds—unspoken advantages or disadvantages
- Can be amplified by networks, reputation, or insider status

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## Building Trust in Teams



**Power Dynamics Can Create Imbalance and Cause Tension**

- Gatekeeping limits access to information or opportunities
- Tribalism promotes favoritism and in-group loyalty
- Unequal visibility leads to assumptions about competence
- Bureaucratic barriers erode transparency and momentum
- People may feel excluded from decisions or looped in too late
- Trust declines when power is used to protect status instead of empower others

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## Other Influences & Factors


Tone Policing

Stereotype Threat

Assimilation Pressures


Cultural Differences

Insider/ Outsider



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**Building Trust in Teams**



The problem with communication is  
the illusion that it has occurred.

~ George Bernard Shaw

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Conscious  
Communication

The ability to convey  
information clearly and  
effectively, while remaining  
considerate of the impact of  
one's words and actions on  
others.

## Building Trust in Teams


### Intention vs Impact



Intention	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Guided by your expected outcome</li><li>Informed by how you think others see you</li><li>Shaped by emotional state and situational factors</li><li>Internal &amp; subjective<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Unseen unless explained</li><li>Dependent on others' interpretation</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Influenced by nonverbal cues, context, and bias</li><li>Affected by emotional state and situational factors<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Amplified by stress or mood</li><li>Context can intensify or soften it</li></ul></li><li>Shaped by differences in:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Personality</li><li>Conflict style</li><li>Cultural background</li></ul></li></ul>

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### Understanding Intention

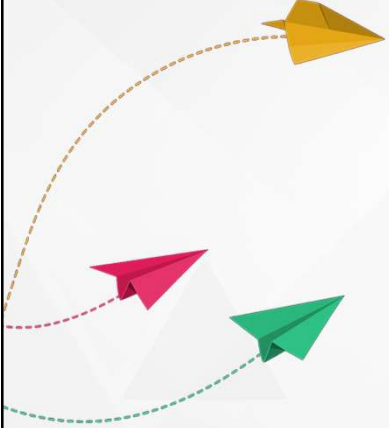


Intent	Intention	Intentionality
<p>Your Why</p> <p>The motivation behind the commitment.</p>	<p>The Goal</p> <p>The desired outcome or the goal you plan to achieve.</p>	<p>Action Plan</p> <p>What needs to be done to achieve the goal.</p>

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### Identifying Intention




- Do you have a specific objective?
- How do you want to show up?
- How will you help the situation?
- Are you making assumptions?
- Am I afraid something might happen if I don't have this conversation?

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### The Importance of Vulnerability

- Not about weakness or oversharing
- Rooted in emotional honesty
- Expressing yourself with clarity and candor
- Willingness to take responsibility
- Owning your reactions instead of deflecting
- Letting go of the need to appear perfect
- Asking for help when needed



Some of the most vulnerable and authentic leaders I've ever had the pleasure of working with personally disclose very little.

~Brené Brown

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## Building Trust in Teams

### Common Anxieties



- Defensiveness
  - Focusing on impact (not intention) can lead to self-defense, denial, or deflection
  - Focusing on the message without the underlying context can sow distrust
- Feeling self-conscious
  - Hyper awareness can result in excessive caution hindering open dialogue
- Avoidance of harm
  - Misperception that avoiding discomfort is a key element of inclusivity
- Self-censorship
  - Holding back can stifle open, honest, and constructive dialogue

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### Strengthening Trust



- Follow through on deadlines—even small ones  
*If you say "I'll get that to you this afternoon," do it.*
- Be transparent about your capacity and limits  
*Say "I need until Friday" instead of silently struggling.*
- Acknowledge people in meetings, not just results  
*"Thanks for flagging that earlier—that helped."*
- Ask questions before jumping to conclusions  
*"Can you walk me through your thinking on this?"*
- Turn feedback into follow-up  
*"You mentioned last week I cut you off—was I better today?"*
- Keep people informed, even if nothing's changed  
*"No update yet, but we're still on track for Thursday."*

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## Building Trust in Teams


### Safeguarding Trust



- Clarify expectations before starting a project  
*"Let's align on what 'done' looks like before we begin."*
- Speak up when something feels off—don't let it fester  
*"Can we check in on something that's been bugging me?"*
- Say "I don't know" when you don't know  
*Builds credibility more than pretending.*
- Stay calm and curious during tense moments  
*"Help me understand where you're coming from."*
- Avoid side conversations about team issues  
*Redirect back to open dialogue: "Let's bring this to the group."*
- Respect people's time—start and end on schedule  
*Reliability in the little things signals bigger trustworthiness.*

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### Restoring Trust



- Acknowledge what happened directly  
*"I realize I missed a key piece—and that impacted you."*
- Take responsibility without excuses  
*"That was on me. I own it."*
- Apologize for the impact, not just the action  
*"I didn't mean to, but I see how that made you feel dismissed."*
- Ask what the other person needs to move forward  
*"What would help rebuild this moving ahead?"*
- Commit to a specific change—and follow through  
*"I'll check in weekly to make sure we're aligned."*
- Don't rush forgiveness—give people time  
*Trust rebuilds through consistency, not declarations.*

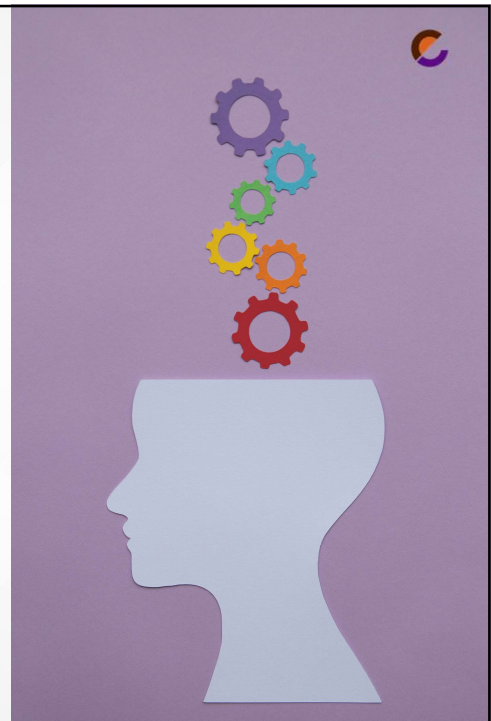
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## Building Trust in Teams

### Final Thoughts

- Trust is...
  - a key leadership competency
  - dynamic, mutual and fragile
- Trust requires...
  - credibility, reliability and vulnerability
  - listening with empathy
- Good intentions are not enough
- Broken trust can be repaired
- Words matter

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### Session Learning Tools & Practice Materials

Be sure to download the supplemental handout. It's a tool to help you assess how trust shows up in your team and includes reflection prompts to identify where you can lead with more clarity, consistency, and intention.

2025 ASCEND Leadership Monthly Webinar Series  
Session Learning Tools & Practice Materials

#### Team Trust Culture Check

Use this worksheet to reflect on how trust shows up in your team—and where you might help strengthen it.

**Part 1. Trust Indicators**  
Read each statement and reflect on how often it feels true in your team.

Trust Indicator	Always	Sometimes	Never
Do we follow through on what we say?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How well do our actions match our words?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deadlines and commitments are consistently met	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People give updates—even when there's no progress to report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decisions and changes are explained, not just announced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow-up happens without needing to be asked twice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Can we speak honestly with each other?</b>			
How safe is it to be candid or vulnerable on this team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Difficult topics are addressed directly—not avoided or side-stepped	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People feel safe saying "I don't know" or asking for help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback is acknowledged and followed up on (not just received)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Everyone has space to speak, regardless of role or title	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## Building Trust in Teams



Scan to learn more about how we can bring value to your next training program, conference or event.



**THANK YOU**


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## Training

Creating safe places and a workable path forward

We help teams connect mindfulness and self-awareness to daily actions and turn them into habits of fearless inclusion. Our programs help organizations create spaces where people can navigate bravely, confidently, vulnerably and openly. Safe relationships help people feel connected, supported, safe, open and bonded at work. This connectedness is what attracts talent, boosts retention, drives innovation, improves operational efficiencies and spurs growth. Our programs are broken down into five categories:

 <h3>Inclusive Leadership</h3> <p>Help leaders and managers understand and connect diversity and inclusivity to unlock team potential.</p> <p>Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organizational Intention</li><li>• Building &amp; maintaining trust</li><li>• Inclusive leaders</li><li>• Leading change</li><li>• Personal branding</li><li>• Imposter syndrome</li><li>• Mindful leadership</li></ul>	 <h3>Understanding Difference</h3> <p>Expand awareness and build understanding of difference, internal and external, across peoples with backgrounds and lived experiences.</p> <p>Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding identities</li><li>• Language of DEIB</li><li>• Hidden diversity</li><li>• Neurodiversity</li><li>• Unlocking creativity</li><li>• Comfortably uncomfortable</li></ul>	 <h3>Crafting Culture</h3> <p>Foster psychological safety to build trusting, intentional and stronger interpersonal connections.</p> <p>Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Candid conversations</li><li>• Unconscious bias</li><li>• Microaggressions</li><li>• Cultural awareness and fluency</li><li>• Value of belonging</li><li>• Work/life balance</li></ul>	 <h3>Authenticity &amp; Awareness</h3> <p>Understand our impact on others to empower bravery, confidence and authenticity how we show up for, encourage and support others.</p> <p>Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-awareness</li><li>• Mindfulness</li><li>• Intentionality</li><li>• Self-care and mental wellness</li><li>• Managing stress</li><li>• Confidence &amp; agency</li></ul>	 <h3>Conscious Communication</h3> <p>Align communication with intention to foster clarity, build trust and strengthen workplace relationships.</p> <p>Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intention vs impact</li><li>• Strengthening communications</li><li>• Power of storytelling</li><li>• Facilitating sensitive conversations</li></ul>
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## Building Trust in Teams

# Ascend Leadership®

## Powering the Journey to Executive Leader

Ascend Leadership® is a comprehensive, tiered leadership development program designed to lead professionals along the pathway from emerging managers to high-impact executives.

The core program is distinguished by its two-part structure: Foundations and Mastery. Ascend Foundations® is designed for emerging managers, to strengthen skills and develop core competencies that serve as the building blocks for effective leaders. Ascend Mastery® is designed for experienced managers and focuses on refining leadership capabilities required to transition from senior management into executive leadership roles. Both programs take place over several months, with a structured curriculum that guides participants through a journey of personal and professional growth.

We also offer stand-alone courses, each designed around a specific theme or leadership or competency. From cultivating emotional intelligence and trust, to mastering effective decision-making, and nurturing influential stakeholder relationships.

Ascend Leadership® offers programs in multiple formats to equip participants with the essential skills, core competencies and leadership capabilities needed for success in today's dynamic business landscape.

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### Ascend Foundations® -The Leadership Journey for Emerging Managers

Ascend Foundations® is a comprehensive leadership development program designed specifically for emerging managers. It focuses on developing the skills and competencies to lay a strong foundation for new managers and leaders. The program includes a mix of live instruction, as well as self-directed intersession work.

By the end of Ascend Foundations®, participants will be able to:

- Understand and apply key leadership principles
- Develop a professional brand and leadership style
- Effectively manage conflict and lead change within teams
- Communicate persuasively and build relationships with key stakeholders
- Develop a personalized action plan for career development.

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### Ascend Mastery® - Advanced Strategies for Aspiring Executives

Ascend Mastery® builds on the foundational leadership knowledge gained from Ascend Foundations®, elevating experienced managers' abilities as they aspire to executive positions.

By the end of the Ascend Mastery® program, participants will be able to:

- Implement advanced leadership strategies to influence decisions and inspire teams at a strategic level.
- Navigate complex organizational change with effective decision-making and risk management techniques.
- Amplify emotional intelligence skills to foster an environment of trust and ethics within senior leadership.
- Mediate high-level conflicts and negotiate effectively to drive team growth and innovation.
- Formulate and execute a tailored executive development plan, aligning career aspirations with organizational objectives.