



# 4 TYPES OF LEADERSHIP

## THE ONE THAT FEELS LIKE CARING IS OFTEN THE ONE CAPPING YOUR GROWTH

The kindest thing you did for your team this week is probably the exact thing keeping it small.

Not because you don't care. Because caring and enabling feel identical from the inside — and of the four ways leaders actually operate day to day, only one of them scales an organization that still runs when you're not in the room.

## FOUR WAYS TO RESPOND

A rep brings you a problem. What you do next falls into one of four patterns:

| TYPE           | LOOKS LIKE                                                  | WHAT IT CREATES                                                                |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Push</b>    | Pressure. "Do more, be more, knock more doors."             | Resistance — people push back against being pushed.                            |
| <b>Evade</b>   | Unavailable. Reps are left to figure it out entirely alone. | Resentment — the ones who make it outgrow needing you; the rest quietly leave. |
| <b>Enable</b>  | Solving it for them. Going the extra mile, every time.      | Fragility — no resilience, and they can't function without you.                |
| <b>Empower</b> | Asking questions. Guiding them to their own answer.         | Resourcefulness — they carry the answer with them everywhere.                  |

Enable is the one worth sitting with longest. It's the only one of the four that looks like good leadership from the outside — going the extra mile, giving more than you receive — while quietly producing the same fragile, dependent team as the other two.

## LEARNING TO RIDE

Think about teaching a kid to ride a bike.

**Push** looks like standing on the sidelines at a distance, shouting instructions — "pedal faster, you've got this, don't stop!" The kid can hear the urgency in your voice, but nobody's actually out there with them. All they feel is the pressure. None of the support.

**Evade** looks like handing over the bike in the driveway and going back inside. Some kids figure it out through sheer trial and error. Most just fall enough times that they decide biking isn't for them — and quietly resent that no one was there.

**Enable** looks like the parent who never lets go of the seat. Running alongside indefinitely, holding the bike upright at every wobble, every ride, every year — because letting go feels like risking a fall, and watching your kid fall feels unbearable. The kid never has to find their own balance, because someone is always there to keep them from needing to. Ride after ride, they're no closer to riding alone. If anything, they get more nervous, because they've never once had to trust their own balance.

**Empower** looks different from all three. You're right there with them — not on the sidelines shouting, not back inside the house, not permanently gripping the seat. You run alongside, hand hovering near the seat, and you let them wobble. Sometimes they fall. When they do, you're the one who jogs over, helps them up, brushes off the scrape, and asks, "You want to try again?" Not "you have to." Not "I'll hold on tighter this time." Just the question — so they get to decide, for themselves, to recommit to the goal of riding. And when they say yes, you loosen your grip a little more than the time before, until eventually you let go completely, a few seconds before they realize you already have. They ride the rest of the way on their own, and they never forget the feeling of realizing, mid-pedal, that they did that themselves.

From the sidewalk, enabling and empowering look almost identical — a caring adult, running alongside a bike. **The only difference is when your hand actually comes off the seat.** One version never does. The other lets go a little sooner than feels comfortable, on purpose, every time.

## WHAT THIS ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

The shift from enabling to empowering rarely happens through willpower in the moment. It happens by having a different question ready before the rep even finishes talking.

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| <b>ENABLING RESPONSE</b><br><br><i>"I don't know what to say when they push back on price."</i><br>"Here — just tell them this exact line." | <b>EMPOWERING RESPONSE</b><br><br><i>"I don't know what to say when they push back on price."</i><br>"What have you tried so far? What do you think might land better next time?" |
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| <b>ENABLING RESPONSE</b><br><br><i>"I think I want to quit. This is too hard."</i><br>Jump straight to reassurance, or quietly fix their schedule and workload for them. | <b>EMPOWERING RESPONSE</b><br><br><i>"I think I want to quit. This is too hard."</i><br>"What's the actual story you're telling yourself about why this is so hard right now? Where do you think that belief came from — and is there a chance it's not even true here?" |
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## AUDIT YOUR LEADERSHIP

Before you decide whether this applies to you, sit with these honestly:

☐ Think about the last time a rep brought you a problem — did you solve it for them, or ask what they thought first? Give it an honest percentage over the last month, not just today.

☐ How many of your reps could handle a genuinely hard day without you personally stepping in? Give a real number out of your total team.

☐ If you were completely unreachable for a full week, what would happen to your team's production — hold steady, dip a little, or fall apart?

☐ Do you have a go-to set of questions you ask before ever giving an answer — or does your response depend on your mood and energy that day?

If your honest answer leans toward "I usually just fix it" or "it would fall apart," that's not a character flaw. Fixing it yourself is usually the fastest thing that feels like leadership in the moment. Seeing your own default pattern clearly — and building the habits that actually shift it under real day-to-day pressure — is usually the hardest part to do alone.

If that's where you're at, you're not alone in it — and it's a conversation worth having with someone outside your own organization, whenever you're ready for it.