

Facilitated Learning Lab – Strategic Team Building: Leading Growth Through Restructuring

Lecturers:

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Duration: 2 Hours

Course Description:

As practices evolve, leadership teams may outgrow alignment with current vision, pace, or values. This two-hour learning lab, designed for optometrist-owners and executives facing major team restructures, provides real-world guidance on difficult transitions—such as releasing long-time leaders. Facilitated by experienced optometrist-CEOs who have successfully navigated these changes, the session delivers courageous leadership strategies and practical tools to rebuild teams with clarity, integrity, and momentum—empowering attendees to realign their practices for lasting success.

Learning Objectives (Slide 1):

- Recognize signs of leadership misalignment within an optometric practice that indicate the need for restructuring or personnel changes.
- Apply compassionate and strategic approaches to releasing high-level team members, such as a COO, while maintaining practice stability and morale.
- Design a leadership team structure that supports long-term growth, operational clarity, and alignment with evolving business goals.
- Implement communication and cultural strategies to reinforce core values and maintain team engagement during periods of transition and leadership change.

Speaker Notes:

Welcome the group. Our session is both strategic and deeply human. Vulnerability and leadership evolution.

Slide 2: Why This Conversation Matters

- Leadership drift: When growth outpaces your team
- The cost of keeping the wrong person too long
- Your vision demands alignment

Breakout Prompt:

What is one sign you've noticed that someone on your team may no longer align with your current vision? Share in pairs.

Slide 3: Leadership Drift & Its Hidden Costs

- Hidden inefficiencies
- Delayed innovation
- Decreased morale
- Slower decision-making

Speaker Notes:

Introduce the concept of "silent drag" on progress—how well-meaning leaders can unknowingly become obstacles.

Slide 4: Recognizing Misalignment in Leadership

- Conflicting values or priorities
- Resistance to change or feedback
- Emotional exhaustion and avoidance
- Communication breakdowns

Breakout Prompt:

What behavior or dynamic are you tolerating that might signal leadership misalignment? Small group share (3–4 people).

Slide 5: When Good People Are No Longer a Good Fit

- Misalignment in values, pace, or communication
- Stagnant leadership = stagnant culture
- Symptoms: tension, confusion, missed opportunities

Speaker Notes:

This isn't about blame. Examples of misalignment without malice.

Slide 6: Cognitive Biases

- **Mental shortcuts the brain uses to process information**
 - **Often distort interpretation of events**
 - **Leaders especially vulnerable due to rapid decision-making**
 - **Without awareness → misinterpretation, frustration, reactive responses**
 - **Conscious leadership = slowing down the default brain**
 - **Biases multiply when modeled by leadership**
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Slide 7: Common Cognitive Biases in Leadership

- **Negativity bias – brain prioritizes negative signals**
 - **Confirmation bias – noticing what supports pre-existing beliefs**
 - **Attribution bias – assigning character flaws instead of context**
 - **Emotional contagion – team mirrors leader tone automatically**
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Slide 7: What Is Negativity Bias?

- **Brain evolved to prioritize negative info for survival**
- **Negative events activate the amygdala more intensely**
- **Negative signals processed faster + stronger than positive ones**
- **Brain stores negative experiences more deeply**
- **Requires 3–5 positive events to offset one negative**
- **Small issues feel bigger due to threat amplification**
- **Why Leaders Are More Vulnerable**
 - **Higher exposure to problems, mistakes, interruptions**
 - **More frequent amygdala activation throughout the day**
 - **Harder to stay in prefrontal cortex (reasoning)**
 - **Team only sees your response, not the load beneath it**
 - **Reactive states spread quickly to the department**

- **Leader stress → department stress → patient impact**
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Slide 8: Case Study – Letting Go of a COO

- **What prompted the decision**
- **Emotional and operational process**
- **What we wish we knew before**
- **What changed in the business after**

Breakout Prompt:

What leadership decision have you been avoiding? Why? What would shift if you made it?

Slide 9: The Decision-Making Process

- **Gathering data and feedback**
- **Coaching or intervention first?**
- **Legal and HR consultation**
- **Setting a firm timeline**

Speaker Notes:

Walk through a timeline of decision clarity. Offer templates for feedback gathering.

Slide 10: Cutting the Cord – With Clarity & Care

- **Prepare: documentation, expectations, timing**
- **Scripts for offboarding conversation**
- **Communicating with the rest of the team**
- **Follow-up strategy**

Breakout Prompt:

If you had to release a high-level team member next month, what would you need in place to do it ethically and effectively?

Slide 11: Leadership Void – Managing the Gap

- **Temporary responsibility delegation**
- **Clear communication to staff**
- **Emotional leadership during instability**
- **Avoiding overload on top performers**

Speaker Notes:

Encourage attendees not to rush. This is a chance to assess structure, not just refill it.

Slide 12: The 30-Day Fallout & Opportunity

- **Reactions: relief, grief, gossip**
- **Holding emotional space**
- **Opportunity for cultural reset**
- **Resetting norms and expectations**

Breakout Prompt:

Have you experienced a team departure that turned out to be a gift? What did it allow you to rebuild or reset?

Slide 13: Protecting the Culture During Change

- **Transparency and consistency**
- **Reinforce shared mission**
- **Invite questions and feedback**
- **Celebrate resilience and adaptability**

How Leadership Overrides Negativity Bias

- **Awareness activates the prefrontal cortex**
- **10–20 second pause reduces amygdala dominance**
- **Reframing builds new neural pathways**
- **Neutral language calms team threat response**
- **Calm presence regulates team nervous systems**
- **This emotional labor is why leadership is compensated more**

Speaker Notes:

Culture lives in what you tolerate and what you celebrate. Set the tone post-transition.

Slide 14: Rebuilding with Intention

- Clarify needs before rehiring
- Updated job descriptions and goals
- Involve team in defining new roles
- Use interim phases strategically

Breakout Prompt:

What role or function in your org needs reimagining—not replaced? Share with your table.

Slide 15: Avoiding the Panic Hire

- Dangers of reflexive hiring
- Slow, intentional process
- Values-based interview questions
- Involve multiple team members

Speaker Notes:

Hiring too fast is how many practices repeat the same dysfunction. Share interview frameworks.

Slide 16: Redefining Leadership Structure

- Lean vs. layered leadership
- Decision-making pods
- Cross-functional task forces
- Creating accountability without bureaucracy

Breakout Prompt:

How is your current leadership structure supporting—or stalling—your growth? Brainstorm alternatives.

Slide 17: Culture as Your Foundation

- Define and share your "why" post-change
- Culture rituals: standups, celebrations, check-ins
- Align evaluations with values-lean on SOPs and cross training
- Publicly reward aligned behaviors

Speaker Notes:

Your team needs culture scaffolding during and after restructure. Reinforce it with consistency.

Slide 18: Performance & Accountability Reset

- Clarify new KPIs or OKRs
- Weekly alignment check-ins
- Empowering feedback loops
- Realignment or exit pathways

Breakout Prompt:

Where is accountability unclear in your practice right now? What needs to be redefined post-change?

Slide 19: Peer Coaching – Strategy Pods

Prompts:

1. What's the hardest leadership conversation you're avoiding?
2. What part of your team structure no longer serves you?
3. What action are you resisting and why?

Speaker Notes:

Encourage sharing with honesty and strategic feedback.

Slide 20: Action Planning Worksheet

Template Questions:

- Who is not aligned with your vision?
- What role needs reimagining?
- What's your next step in leadership evolution?
- What support do you need to lead with clarity?

Breakout Prompt:

Choose one action to commit to in the next 30 days. Share it with a peer partner.

Slide 21: Live Shareback: Integration & Accountability

- Volunteers share one insight or commitment
- Common themes from the room
- Opportunity to build post-event support

End-of-Day Emotional Hygiene

- Identify what you're carrying that isn't yours
- Write down top stressors → decide which belong to tomorrow
- Release emotional residue to prevent next-day spillover
- Leadership requires recovery rituals

Speaker Notes:

Create community. Encourage mastermind or follow-up accountability groups.

Slide 22: Final Reflections + Q&A

- What belief are you releasing?
- What belief are you embracing?
- What does brave leadership look like for you next quarter?

Leadership Perspective Shapes Department Reality

- Leader lens → department narrative
- Leader tone → department mood
- Leader stress → staff withdrawal
- Leader calm → team confidence
- Emotional climate always flows downward

Breakout Prompt:

Reflect and journal, then share with a partner: What kind of leader do you want to become in this next phase?

Slide 23: Resources & Continued Support

• Book recommendations:

- ***Dare to Lead* – Brené Brown**
- ***Traction* – Gino Wickman**
- ***Necessary Endings* – Henry Cloud**
 - **Peer mastermind invite**
 - **Email follow-up & support options**

Speaker Notes:

Aligned teams start with courageous leadership.