

7 Things Staff May Wish They Could Tell Their Leaders

A practical self-check for leaders who want their teams to work with more clarity and confidence

Most staff want to do good work. They also need to know what matters, feel heard, and understand how they can keep growing.

Use these questions to look at your team's experience. The goal isn't to get every answer "right." It's to notice where a small change could make work clearer or more rewarding.

1. "I'm not sure what matters now—or what to do next."

When priorities compete, people may spend energy guessing which task comes first.

Ask yourself:

- Does my team have a clear way to ask me what matters most right now?
- When a new urgent task comes in, do I explain what should pause or move?
- When I assign work, do I include the result, deadline, and next step?
- Do people know how to raise a conflict between deadlines?

A small step: For the next assignment you give, state the desired result, deadline, and next check-in or handoff.

2. "I hear about what went wrong, but not what's going well."

People need to know which actions are helping the team, as well as what needs to change.

Ask yourself:

- Do I give feedback close to the time the work happens?
- Can I name a specific action someone took that helped the team?
- Do I explain what I want them to repeat or adjust?

A small step: Give one person specific, timely feedback this week about something they did that made the work better.

3. “I’m not sure whether it’s safe to raise a concern.”

People may stay quiet when they expect to be dismissed, blamed, or ignored.

Ask yourself:

- When someone brings me a problem, do I listen before explaining my decision?
- Is there safety, space, and capacity for staff to raise a concern privately if they need to?
- Do I follow up and let people know what happened after they brought an issue forward?

A small step: The next time someone raises a concern, ask, *“What do you think we should understand about this?”* Then follow up with what you learned or decided.

4. “The feedback isn’t the same for everyone.”

When similar situations are handled differently, staff may question whether expectations are fair.

Ask yourself:

- Do I give similar feedback when different people make the same mistake?
- Are some people given more chances, more explanation, or more support than others?
- Do I avoid giving certain people direct feedback because I’m worried about how they’ll react?
- Can staff understand what standard I’m applying and why?

A small step: Think of a recent situation where you gave feedback. Would you have handled it the same way with another team member? If not, consider what was different and what drove that difference.

5. “I’m responsible for the result, but I don’t have room to make decisions.”

People need enough authority to carry out the responsibility they’re given.

Ask yourself:

- Do people know which decisions they can make on their own?
- Which decisions should they check with me before making?
- Have I taken a decision back after delegating it without explaining why?

A small step: For one current assignment, clarify what the person can decide independently and when you want them to check in.

6. “There’s too much to do well.”

A workload problem may look like a performance problem when priorities and capacity haven’t been discussed.

Ask yourself:

- Do I know what each person is currently responsible for?
- When deadlines compete, do we decide together what can move?
- Do people have a way to tell me their workload is at capacity?

A small step: Ask each team member, *“What’s taking the most time right now, and what may need to shift?”* Then identify one task to simplify, delay, or reassign.

7. “I don’t know how I can keep growing here.”

People may want to develop even when a promotion isn’t immediately available.

Ask yourself:

- Do I know what skills or responsibilities each person wants to develop?
- Have I made opportunities to learn or practice new skills available?
- Do we talk about growth, or only about current performance?
- Can someone see a meaningful next step in their role?

A small step: Ask one team member, *“What would you like to learn or take on in the coming months?”* Then look for a realistic way to support that growth.

Your team clarity check

Which question gave you pause? Choose one conversation or small change you can make this week. You don’t have to solve everything at once. Clearer communication can help your team see the next step.

Next step

KEYS Leadership helps leaders strengthen clarity, communication, and people-first practices through leadership sessions and workshops.

<https://leadership.keyleader.me/>