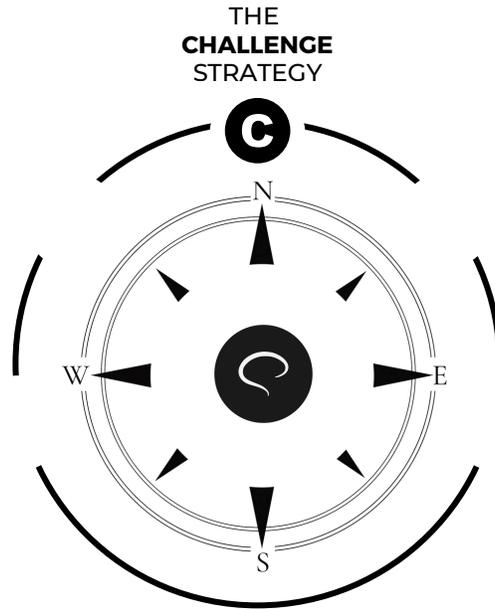# THE CHALLENGE STRATEGY

## DECREASE THREAT. INCREASE TRUST.

THE BIG IDEA

Threat kills, steals, and destroys.

With every decision, we choose to create a culture of threat or a culture of challenge.

BREAKTHROUGH BELIEFS

- Your PFC is priceless
- Threat to the brain is threat to the brain.
- Your current rules are creating your current results.
- You can be right, or you can be rich.
- Trust starts with YOU.
- With every interaction, you are either creating greater trust or greater threat.
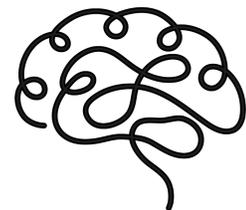
Discovery Call Overview

Below are the key insights from all 32 discovery calls. This insight will guide program content and discussions.

What's Going Well: Momentum to Leverage

These are key strengths and positive shifts that Connect leaders already recognize:

- Family-feel culture and strong relationships: Multiple leaders noted the "Connect family" vibe, expressing deep appreciation for how valued they feel, especially compared to previous jobs.

- Visible and supportive leadership: Exec team is more present and invested than in the past. Training investments, one-on-ones, and DiSC sessions were mentioned positively.

- Cross-functional collaboration is improving: Leaders acknowledged strides in communication across departments, though not yet consistent.

- People are stepping up: New leaders are emerging, and there's excitement about upward mobility, development, and leadership growth.

- Momentum from retreats and other initiatives: Events like the leadership retreat, team challenges, and one-on-one coaching have boosted morale and connection.

Discovery Call Overview

Below are the key insights from all 32 discovery calls. This insight will guide program content and discussions.

What Leaders Want to Work On

Across the board, leaders identified specific growth areas they hope to develop in the series.

1. Communication Clarity and Consistency
- Disjointed communication across levels and departments
- Leaders not always in the loop—or find out last minute
- Mixed messages from execs and lack of follow-through

2. Confidence in Conversations
- Many leaders feel under-skilled or uncomfortable with:
- Delivering feedback
- Having difficult conversations
- Being direct without being harsh
- Several want to learn to "say hard things well" and step into more authority

3. Letting Go to Scale Leadership
- Delegation is a major challenge for senior leaders
- Many still carry too much day-to-day work and need to empower others
- Leaders want tools to build trust and release control without chaos

4. Leadership Identity & Image
- Several want to redefine or rebrand how they're seen (e.g., "too strict," "pushover")
- Others are stepping into leadership for the first time and want to feel confident, strategic, and seen as credible

5. Clear Vision and Strategic Direction
- Leaders crave clarity on:
- What winning looks like
- Future org growth plans
- Expectations for leadership roles

6. Real Inclusion and Psychological Safety
- Perceived favoritism, siloed teams, and micromanagement surfaced
- Many want to build teams where people feel safe to speak up and take risks
- Some feel their contributions go unrecognized

7. Training and Leadership Development
- Strong desire for consistent, ongoing leadership development—not just one-offs
- Many asked for practical tools to train their teams and grow future leaders
- Requests for industry knowledge, process automation, and tech training

Organizational Trust Assessment

<u>Directions</u>: Using a 1 through 4 scale, rate each statement by considering how frequently your organization displays the ability described. There are no right or wrong answers. Try not to spend too much time on any one statement.

Almost Never	Rarely	Often	Almost Always
1	2	3	4

1.	We keep promises and honor commitments.	1	2	3	4
2.	We acknowledge and apologize for mistakes.	1	2	3	4
3.	We are loyal to the absent.	1	2	3	4
4.	We seek to understand each others' needs and concerns.	1	2	3	4
5.	We say what we feel in a way that shows respect for others' opinions.	1	2	3	4
6.	We seek constructive feedback.	1	2	3	4
7.	We are open and honest with information.	1	2	3	4
8.	We involve people in decisions that affect them.	1	2	3	4
9.	We encourage others to openly contribute ideas and opinions.	1	2	3	4
10.	We give credit where credit is due.	1	2	3	4
11.	We share decision making with team members and support the collective decisions.	1	2	3	4
12.	We view mistakes as learning opportunities.	1	2	3	4
13.	We act on information only after hearing and understanding all the facts.	1	2	3	4
14.	Our actions are consistent with our words regardless of the person or our stress level.	1	2	3	4
15.	We communicate clear expectations.	1	2	3	4
16.	We honor confidential and sensitive information.	1	2	3	4
17.	We make eye contact and address one another by name.	1	2	3	4
18.	We promote our team's reputation with others.	1	2	3	4
19.	We are fully present and listen to understand.	1	2	3	4
20.	We stay curious and assume good intent.	1	2	3	4

3 Big Deals

BIG DEAL #1:

Your [PreFrontal] [Cortex] is priceless

- Analysis
- Speech
- Creativity
- Willpower
- Innovation
- Planning
- Forming goals
- Evaluating consequences
- The brain's "CEO"

BIG DEAL #3:

[Emotions] run the show

- Memory
- Health
- Emotions
- Critical role in learning
- Essential to memory
- Accelerating ingredient

BIG DEAL #2:

[Threat] to the brain is [Threat] to the brain

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Basic body function
- Especially triggered by threat and fear
- The brain's "bouncer"

> ❝
>
> We aren't thinking individuals who happen to have emotions...we are emotional individuals who happen to think.
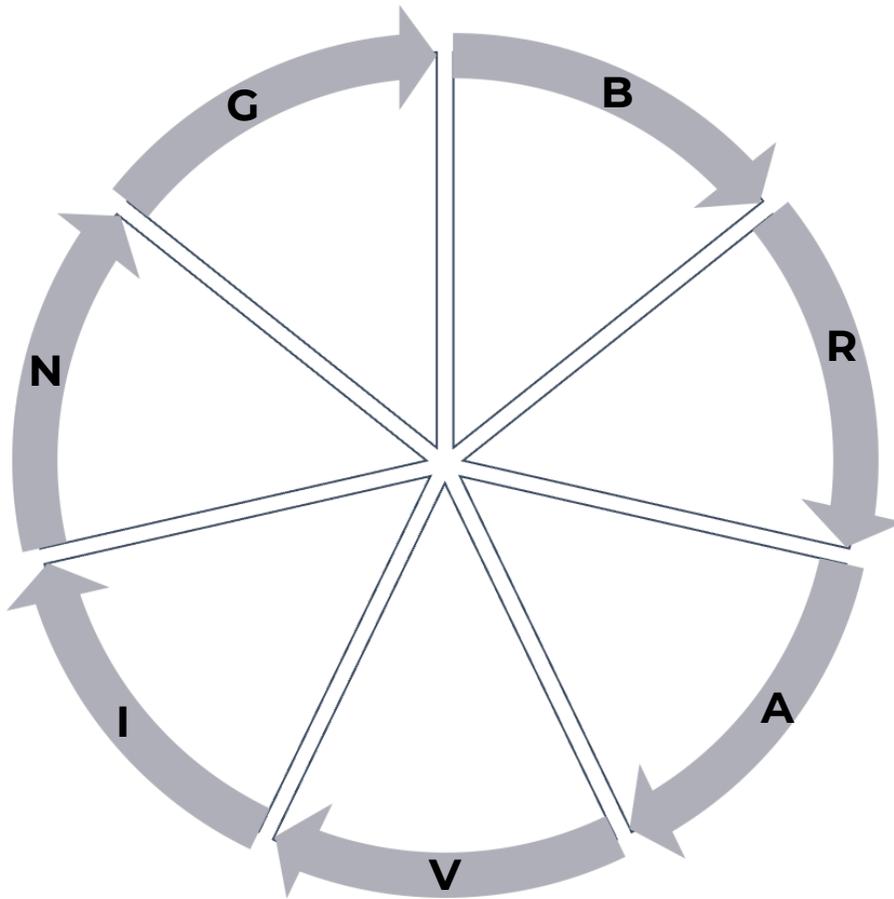>
> **- Joseph LeDoux**

The Anatomy of Trust

Widespread distrust in a society imposes a kind of tax on all forms of economic activity, a tax that high-trust societies do not have to pay.

.

- Francis Fukuhama

Brene Brown. The Anatomy of Trust.

youtube.com/watch?v=OqB5CEkPll4

Personal Trust Assessment

Directions: Using a 1 through 4 scale, rate each statement by considering how frequently you display the ability described. There are no right or wrong answers. Try not to spend too much time on any one statement.

Almost Never	Rarely	Often	Almost Always
1	2	3	4

1.	I keep promises and honor commitments.	1	2	3	4
2.	I acknowledge and apologize for mistakes.	1	2	3	4
3.	I am loyal to the absent.	1	2	3	4
4.	I seek to understand others' needs and concerns.	1	2	3	4
5.	I say what I feel in a way that shows respect for others' opinions.	1	2	3	4
6.	I seek constructive feedback.	1	2	3	4
7.	I am open and honest with information.	1	2	3	4
8.	I involve people in decisions that affect them.	1	2	3	4
9.	I encourage others to openly contribute ideas and opinions.	1	2	3	4
10.	I give credit where credit is due.	1	2	3	4
11.	I share decision making with team members and support the collective decisions.	1	2	3	4
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15.	I communicate clear expectations.	1	2	3	4
16.	I honor confidential and sensitive information.	1	2	3	4
17.	I make eye contact and address others by name.	1	2	3	4
18.	I promote our team's reputation with others.	1	2	3	4
19.	I am fully present and listen to understand.	1	2	3	4
20.	I stay curious and assume good intent.	1	2	3	4

Trust-Building Tips

Extend Trust...Build Trust

- Extend trust to yourself and others.
- Challenge the stories that play out in your head and the meaning you give events.
- Use power words like appreciate and trust.
- End requests with the powerful, clarifying phrase and here's why.
- Share information as early as possible.
- Consistently model respect.
- Build a sense of inclusion and belonging in every interaction.
- Always be open to learning, growth, and feedback.
- Don't be the threat.
- Maintain a growth mindset.
- Adopt an attitude of "What do we have here that's good?"
- Ask for help.
- Create a hope FULL environment; communicate good things happen here.
- Evaluate what is yours to own (and what isn't yours to own).
- Give credit.
- Identify how far you can push yourself and others.
- Always communicate an "I am for you" attitude.
- Consistently set up others for success; never to trick, humiliate, or belittle.
- Choose to see setbacks as moments of valuable learning.
- Self-regulate. Your team doesn't need a perfect leader; they need a collected leader.
- Give a choice and a voice to promote engagement and ownership.
- Honor the absent and refrain from gossip of any type.
- Hold self and others accountable to any inappropriate behavior.
- Avoid micromanaging by honing your delegation skills.
- Introduce, lead, and manage change visibly, slowly, and deliberately and allow for employee input.

Rounding with Team Members

Steps:	Comments:
1. Make a personal connection *Connect with something in their life such as children, interests, vacations, etc.*	
2. What's working well? *Like what? What's a best practice you've seen lately? Even better if?*	
3. Is there anyone in our department we can recognize for doing great work? *Who makes your life easier? Has anyone helped you recently?*	Who: What and Why?
4. Is there someone in another department we can recognize? *Is there someone who has gone above and beyond? Some who has been particularly helpful?*	Who: What and Why?
5. Are there any systems or processes that need improving? What are obstacles?	
6. Do you have the resources you need to do your job?	
7. What (tough) questions do you have for me? *What's bugging you? Keeping you up at night? Is there anywhere you would like clarification?*	
8. Touch Base: (Reminder to every team member) *Ex: behaviors, policies, initiatives, etc.*	
9. Is there anything I can help you with right now? *I've got the time, what can I do for you now? What's a pressing need that I can help you with immediately?*	

For more information on rounding, visit www.studergroup.com – the site for Quint Studer

The Challenge Strategy

Application

I commit to:

[   ]

Recommended Reading: The Challenge Chapter, pages 10-55
The Science of High-Performance Leadership: 7 Brain-Based Strategies to Become a Leader Worth Following

TEAM TALK

Have your team take the organizational and personal trust assessments and discuss high scores/low scores, costs, and actions to improve.

Watch Brene Brown's *Anatomy of Trust* together as a team and discuss which areas of BRAVING are followed on your team and which could be even better.

Schedule regular rounding sessions with team members and remember:
- Don't cancel unless there is no other choice
- Don't dominate the conversation
- Don't forget to follow-up and follow-through on commitments

> Stop paying unecessary taxes. Build trust.