

Team Reading Guide

Six sessions to work through *The Systems-Building Leader* as a team. Each session covers three chapters and one shared tool. Each ends with one structural change the team commits to making.

How each session runs

About 90 minutes. Leave two to three weeks between sessions so there is time to act on the commitment.

Time	Step	What happens
10 min	Check in	Review the commitment from the last session. Did it happen? What did it change?
30 min	Compare results	Share what the tools surfaced. Look for patterns across the team, not scores for individuals.
30 min	Discuss	Pick three or four questions from the chapter guides for this session's chapters.
20 min	Commit	Agree on one structural change: what it is, who owns it, the date, and how you will know it worked.

For the facilitator

- Rotate the facilitator each session so the conversation does not depend on one person.
- The most senior person speaks last. Ask before you decide.
- Talk about conditions, not people. When a problem comes up, ask what allowed it, not who caused it.
- Commit to one structural change per session. One that happens beats five that do not.
- Record each commitment in the Tool Log at the back of the workbook.
- Leave two to three weeks between sessions so there is time to act on the commitment.

Every tool is in the free Field Guide Workbook. Discussion questions for each chapter are in the chapter guides at systemsbuildingleader.org.

SESSION 1

Trust is designed

Chapter 1 Trust Is More Than a Personality Trait · **Chapter 2** Stewardship: Leaders Who Design Systems · **Chapter 3** Accountability: Moving Beyond Micromanagement

Before the session. Read Chapters 1 to 3. Everyone completes Tool #1 before the session. Volunteers bring Tool #2 or Tool #3 on one real situation.

Starter questions

- Where does our team's reliability depend on one person being in the room?
- Which three fires took the most leadership time this month? What made each one predictable?
- Where have we added oversight to make up for unclear outcomes or standards?
- How much of our week goes to working in the system compared with working on it?

Our commitment · Owner · Date · How we will know

SESSION 2

Signals and safety

Chapter 4 Communication: Synchronizing Signals · **Chapter 5** Psychological Safety: When Honesty Is Rewarded · **Chapter 6** Continuity During Change

Before the session. Read Chapters 4 to 6. Everyone completes Tool #5 before the session. Volunteers bring Tool #4, or Tool #6 if a change is under way.

Starter questions

- What have we called a priority that our decisions and resources do not support?
- Think of the last time someone brought bad news. What happened in the ten seconds after they spoke?
- How does our current change connect to what came before? Could each of us explain it?
- What topics come up in one-on-ones but never in the group meeting?

Our commitment · Owner · Date · How we will know

SESSION 3

From intelligence to expertise

Chapter 7 Expertise Is Not Intelligence · **Chapter 8** Stop Asking Who Failed · **Chapter 9** Metrics Governance: Informed Decision-making

Before the session. Read Chapters 7 to 9. Everyone runs Tool #8 on one recurring problem. Volunteers bring Tool #7 or Tool #9.

Starter questions

- Which decisions pass through one person because they are the smartest in the room?
- What problem has come back under different names at least three times?
- If our most-watched metric moved sharply in the wrong direction tomorrow, what would we do differently?
- When something goes wrong, is our first question who or what?

Our commitment · Owner · Date · How we will know

SESSION 4

Deciding well

Chapter 10 When You Don't Have All the Facts · **Chapter 11** Operating Cadence: Learning from Experience · **Chapter 12** Strategic Tradeoffs: The Discipline of Saying No

Before the session. Read Chapters 10 to 12. Everyone runs Tool #10 on one open decision. Volunteers bring Tool #11 or Tool #12.

Starter questions

- What decision are we delaying while we wait for information that may never arrive?
- What are we doing that we would not start today? Why haven't we stopped?
- What lesson has our team learned more than once?
- Where does our learning live: in people, or in a standard anyone can use?

Our commitment · Owner · Date · How we will know

SESSION 5

Designing empowerment

Chapter 13 Empowerment Is Not Delegation · **Chapter 14** System Design: Build Things That Don't Need You · **Chapter 15** Calibrated Authority: Right Level Right Time

Before the session. Read Chapters 13 to 15. Everyone completes Tool #13 for one domain. Volunteers bring Tool #14 or Tool #15.

Starter questions

- Where have we been told we are empowered, yet still ask for confirmation? Why?
- Which situations needed the leader personally last month? Which could the structure have handled?
- Where do we treat everyone the same when people start from different places?
- Which structural condition causes most of our escalations: role, decision, workflow, metrics or feedback?

Our commitment · Owner · Date · How we will know

SESSION 6

Making it last

Chapter 16 Growth Infrastructure: Development by Design · **Chapter 17** Reinforcement Loops: Making Change Stick · **Chapter 18** Ownership Endurance: Protecting the Energy

Before the session. Read Chapters 16 to 18. Everyone runs Tool #17 on one recent change. Volunteers bring Tool #16 or Tool #18.

Starter questions

- Who on our team is performing well but not stretching?
- Which recent change is quietly reverting? What is it competing with?
- What work is finished but has never been declared done?
- Is the resistance we see a capability gap, a clarity gap or a conviction gap?

Our commitment · Owner · Date · How we will know

After Session 6, run Tool #1 again and compare it with your first result. A tool completed once is a baseline. A tool completed quarterly is a development practice.

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