



# 10 Principles Leaders Should Look For Before Change

## **A practical orientation for the design of management and organizations**

Most organizations do not struggle because leaders care too little.

They struggle because leaders are expected to act in conditions they do not yet see clearly.

The design of management and organizations therefore begins with a different discipline: not immediate intervention, but disciplined observation. Before leaders redesign structures, launch initiatives, or demand change, they need to understand how management, leadership, and work actually interact in practice.

The following ten principles summarize what leaders should look for before deciding what to change. They are not abstract ideals. They are practical orientation points for leaders who want to strengthen management and organization with greater clarity and less guesswork.

### **1. Clarity before change**

Do not intervene before the organization becomes visible. Better decisions begin with better visibility into how management and organization actually work.

### **2. Patterns before events**

Do not overreact to isolated incidents. Look for recurring patterns that shape behavior, performance, collaboration, and learning over time.

### **3. Conditions before targets**

Results matter, but they emerge from conditions. Strong management improves the conditions from which performance, trust, and capability grow.

### **4. The whole before the fragments**

People, work, organization, operations, and management must be understood as an interconnected system — not as separate topics managed in isolation.

### **5. Human capability at the center**

Performance depends on awareness, judgment, trust, learning, and contribution. People are not simply resources to allocate, but the living source of organizational capability.

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### 6. Intelligence distributed close to the work

Good organizations do not rely on a few decision-makers at the top. They create judgment, initiative, and responsibility where reality is encountered.

### 7. Adaptability by choice

An organization should not change only under pressure. It should be able to adapt deliberately, intelligently, and in time.

### 8. Learning without blame

Management improves when leaders can see reality without triggering defensiveness, politics, or fear. Learning must come before judgment.

### 9. Design for context

There is no universal best practice. Management must fit the organization's purpose, situation, capability, and trajectory.

### 10. Mastery before muddling through

The task of leadership is not merely to cope. It is to improve the quality of management itself — consciously, systematically, and over time.

### Where these principles come from

These principles are founded in the broader body of work behind **Clarity Before Change**, the **Organization Twin**, **Diagnostic Mentoring**, and the books *The Performance Triangle*, *People-Centric Management*, *Management Design*, *Agile by Choice*, *Better Management*, *The Transition of Organizations*, *Patterns of Mastery*, and *Unmanaged*.

Across this work, one conclusion has become increasingly clear: leaders need a way to understand organizational reality before they decide how to act within it. Without that, change easily becomes reactive, fragmented, political, or performative.

### From principles to practice

Principles are useful only when they help leaders see their own organization more clearly.

That is why the next step is not another assessment, score, or prescriptive model. It is a first experience of clarity.

A **Guided Clarity Session** offers a safe and practical way to begin. It combines structured reflection with the **Organization Twin** — a disciplined representation of how management and organization work together in practice. The purpose is not evaluation. The purpose is learning.

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For leaders who want to move from general principles to a clearer understanding of their own organization, the Guided Clarity Session provides an initial point of orientation.

**Clarity is not intervention.**

**Clarity is orientation.**

**And better management begins there.**

**The most useful way to begin is not with another initiative, but with a first Guided Clarity Session.**

Start here.



Scan to begin your reflection