



Randel Consulting Associates

Leading Organizations through Change and Growth



The Perspective Building Toolkit

Strengthening Your Foundation in
Disruptive Times

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Building Your Perspective As A Leader

If the thought of creating detailed plans for 2026 makes you want to throw your laptop out the window... you're not alone.

This year has been a masterclass in adaptation. You've navigated constant disruption. You've made impossible decisions. You've kept your team moving forward when the path wasn't clear.

And now someone wants a five-year plan?

Here's what actually prepares you for uncertainty: reflection, not projection.

This month's newsletter: "**Finding Clarity in the Year-End Clearing**"

I share the paradox of year-end planning, why perspective matters more than predictions, and three practices that help you extract the wisdom you've already earned this year.

Two practices for you as an individual leader. One for your team.

No strategic planning templates. No forced optimism. Just practical tools for making sense of what you've experienced.

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Helping Leaders and their Teams
Move Through Change and Growth
With Calm and Confidence

The Leader's Year in Review

Purpose: Understand what your 2025 decisions reveal about your actual priorities

Materials Needed: Blank paper, sticky notes (or digital equivalent), quiet space

Step 1: The Year In Review (15 minutes)

On a blank page, create four columns and label them as follows:

Moments of Pride	Moments of Regret	Unexpected Growth	What Drained Me
<i>When did you feel most aligned with your values?</i>	<i>When did you compromise something important?</i>	<i>Where did you discover new capabilities?</i>	<i>What activities depleted your energy?</i>

Instructions:

- Set a timer for 15 minutes
- Capture specific moments, not general themes
- Don't edit or judge—just record what comes to mind
- Include at least 3 items in each column
- Be honest—no one else needs to see this

Step 2: Pattern Recognition (15 minutes)

Review your four columns and reflect:

- What patterns emerge across these categories?**
 - Do certain themes appear multiple times?
 - What connects your proudest moments?
- Which moments still carry emotional weight when you recall them?**
 - What situations made you feel most yourself?
 - What compromises still bother you?
- What do your proudest moments reveal about what matters most to you?**
 - When you felt aligned, what were you protecting or prioritizing?
 - When you felt regret, what did you sacrifice?

Write down 2-3 insights that emerge. These will inform your foundation.

The Leadership Learning Harvest

Purpose: Extract the wisdom and insights from your 2025 experience that will guide you forward

You've reviewed your year. Now it's time to harvest the lessons—the hard-won insights that only come from navigating real challenges. These learnings become part of your leadership foundation, informing how you'll approach 2026.

Step 1: Identify Your Crucible Moments (20 minutes)

A crucible moment is a situation that tested you and taught you something important about yourself as a leader.

Looking back at your "Year in Review" columns, **identify 3-4 crucible moments—specific situations** where:

- You were pushed beyond your comfort zone
- Your leadership was genuinely tested
- You learned something you couldn't have learned any other way
- You came out different than you went in

These might be moments of:

- Difficult decisions with no good options
- Failures or setbacks that revealed something important
- Unexpected successes that surprised you
- Conflicts that forced you to clarify what matters
- Crises that required you to dig deeper than usual

Write each crucible moment as a brief headline:

Example:

- "When I had to lay off three team members despite strong performance"
- "When the board overruled my recommendation and I had to implement their decision"
- "When my key deputy resigned unexpectedly and I had to step into operations"
- "When I confronted a colleague about undermining team decisions"

YOUR CRUCIBLE MOMENTS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Step 2: Mine for Insights (20 minutes)

For each crucible moment, answer these three questions:

Crucible Moment #1: _____

What did this experience teach me about myself as a leader?

(What capability did you discover? What limitation did you confront? What pattern became visible?)

Example answers:

- "I'm more risk-averse than I realized—I need others to push me toward bold moves"
- "I can handle conflict better than I thought, but I wait too long to initiate difficult conversations"
- "I default to over-functioning when my team is struggling, which prevents their growth"

Your answer:

What will I do differently because of this experience?

(This is the actionable insight—the specific behavior change or approach you'll adopt)

Example answers:

- "I'll name tensions earlier, before they escalate to crisis"
- "I'll explicitly invite my team to challenge my thinking when I'm too cautious"
- "I'll ask 'What support do you need?' before jumping in to fix things"

Your answer:

What wisdom can I offer others who face similar situations?

(If you were advising another leader in this situation, what would you tell them?)

Example answers:

- "You can't protect people from all difficult realities—sometimes the kindest thing is honest clarity"
- "Your team is watching how you respond to setbacks more than they're watching the setback itself"
- "The decision that feels impossible today becomes clearer when you anchor to your non-negotiables"

Your answer:

Repeat for Crucible Moments #2, #3, and #4

Step 3: Synthesize Your Leadership Learnings (20 minutes)

Look across all your crucible moments and responses. What themes emerge?

Complete these sentences based on what you discovered:

About my leadership strengths:

"This year confirmed that I'm particularly strong at"

About my growing edges:

"This year revealed that I need to develop"

About my leadership approach:

"Going forward, I will ..., because I learned that"

About what drains me:

"I now understand that I lose energy when ..., so I will"

About what sustains me:

"I discovered that I'm energized by ..., so I will"

The Team Learning Harvest

Purpose: Help your team collectively reflect on 2025 experiences and extract shared insights that will strengthen your work together in 2026

Best For: Leadership teams, functional teams, project teams—any group that works together regularly and has shared experiences to reflect on

Time Required: 90 minutes

Participants: 4-10 team members (works best with teams small enough for everyone to contribute substantively)

Format: Facilitated team session (can be done in-person or virtually)

Before the Session

Preparation for Facilitator (15 minutes)

1. **Review your team's year:**
 - What were your major initiatives, projects, or challenges?
 - What unexpected situations did you navigate together?
 - What successes and setbacks stand out?
2. **Identify 2-3 potential "team crucible moments"** to have as examples (you may not need them, but having them ready helps if the team struggles to identify moments)
3. **Prepare materials:**
 - Large surface for capturing ideas (whiteboard, flip chart, or digital collaboration tool)
 - Sticky notes or digital equivalent
 - Timer
4. **Set the right tone:** This is about learning, not judgment. You're not evaluating performance—you're harvesting wisdom.

Optional Pre-Work for Team Members:

Send this 24-48 hours before the session:

"In our upcoming session, we'll reflect on what we learned together this year. To prepare, think about:

- *A moment when our team was tested this year*
- *Something you learned about yourself as part of this team*
- *Something you learned about how we work together"*

Note: Pre-work is optional. The exercise works well even without it.

The Team Session

Part 1: Setting Context (10 minutes)

1. Frame the purpose:

"We're here to harvest the wisdom from our shared experiences in 2025. This isn't about evaluating our performance or solving current problems. It's about capturing what we learned—individually and collectively—so we can carry that forward.

Teams that learn and grow together take time to reflect on their experiences. Today is that time."

2. Establish session norms:

- Curiosity over judgment - We're exploring what happened, not blaming
- Honesty over harmony - Surface real experiences, not sanitized versions
- Everyone contributes - All perspectives matter
- What's shared here stays here - Create safety for honest reflection

3. Introduce the concept of "crucible moments":

"A crucible moment is a situation that tested us and taught us something important. These are the experiences that shaped us as a team—moments where we were challenged, where we struggled, where we surprised ourselves, or where we grew.

Today we'll identify our shared crucible moments and mine them for insights."

Part 2: Identifying Team Crucible Moments (20 minutes)

Round 1: Individual Brainstorm (5 minutes - Silent)

Give each team member sticky notes (or digital equivalent).

Instructions to team:

"Think about moments this year when our team was genuinely tested—situations that challenged us, stretched us, or taught us something important. Write one moment per sticky note. Capture 3-5 moments."

These might be:

- A difficult decision we had to make together
- A crisis or unexpected challenge we navigated
- A conflict we worked through (or didn't)
- A failure or setback that taught us something
- An unexpected success that surprised us

Important: Focus on shared experiences—moments the team navigated together, not individual experiences.

Round 2: Posting and Clustering (8 minutes)

- Each person posts their sticky notes on a shared surface
- Team works together to cluster similar moments
- Group reads all posted moments silently first, then begins clustering
- No discussion yet—just organize similar experiences together

Round 3: Naming the Crucibles (7 minutes)

For each cluster, create a descriptive headline that captures the essence of that crucible moment.

Select 3-4 crucible moments that:

- Feel most significant to the team
- Represent different types of experiences
- Team members have energy to discuss

Note the moments you're setting aside—you can return to them later if time allows.

Part 3: Mining for Team Insights (45 minutes)

For each of your 3-4 selected crucible moments, work through this process (10-12 minutes per moment):

Crucible Moment: [Write the headline where everyone can see it]

Question 1: What did this experience teach us about ourselves as a team? (4 minutes)

Possible angles to explore:

- What strengths showed up?
- What limitations or gaps became visible?
- What patterns in how we work became clear?
- What surprised us about our response?

Format: Popcorn sharing - team members share observations as they come to mind. Facilitator captures key insights.

Question 2: What did this experience teach us about our leadership? (3 minutes)

Note: This is about how leadership functions in the team—formal and informal, individual and collective.

Possible angles:

- Who stepped up in this situation?
- What leadership was needed but missing?
- How did we share or concentrate leadership?
- What leadership behaviors helped or hindered?

Capture 2-3 key insights.

Question 3: What will we do differently because of this experience? (4 minutes)

This is where insight becomes actionable. Push for concrete, behavioral changes, not vague aspirations.

Examples:

- ✗ Vague: "We'll communicate better" ✓ Specific: "We'll name tensions in our weekly meetings before they escalate"
- ✗ Vague: "We'll be more proactive" ✓ Specific: "We'll dedicate the first Monday of each month to anticipatory thinking, not just responding"
- ✗ Vague: "We'll support each other more" ✓ Specific: "When someone is overwhelmed, we'll ask 'What can I take off your plate?' before offering advice"

Capture 2-3 specific behavioral changes the team commits to.

Repeat this three-question process for each of your 3-4 crucible moments.

Part 4: Synthesizing Team Wisdom (10 minutes)

Facilitator guides team to look across all crucible moments and identify patterns. Pose each prompt, give the team 2 minutes to discuss and complete the sentence together. Capture the final version where everyone can see it.

About our team strengths: "This year confirmed that we're particularly strong at ..."

About our growing edges: "This year revealed that we need to develop our capacity for"

About how we work together: "Going forward, we will ..., because we learned that"

About what drains us: "We now understand that we lose energy when ..., so we will"

About what sustains us: "We discovered that we're energized by ..., so we will"

Part 5: Closing (5 minutes)

Facilitator invites each team member to complete one of these sentences:

- "One insight from today that will shape how I show up in this team..."
- "One thing I appreciate about how this team navigated 2025..."

Format: Quick popcorn round—one sentence per person, no discussion needed.

Facilitator closes: "Thank you for bringing honesty and reflection to this conversation. The wisdom we captured today isn't abstract—it's hard-won from real experience. Let's carry it forward."

YearCompass

A tool for reflecting and planning



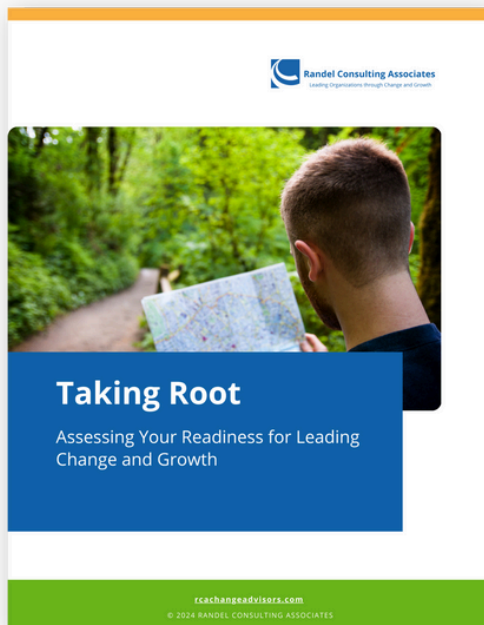
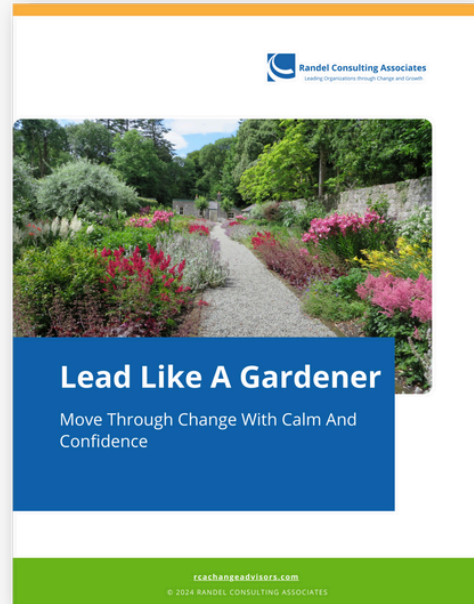
The YearCompass is a free tool that provides a more extensive reflective and planning process. While more suited to individual use, you can draw on questions to use with your team.

YearCompass.com



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