



Leadership Recovery vs. Leadership Coaching

Diagnostic Checklist for HR & Executive Sponsors

Use the questions below to determine whether a leader is facing a developmental **coaching** opportunity or a career **recovery** situation that requires a different kind of intervention.

Answer each question Yes or No.

A pattern of **Yes** responses suggests a recovery situation, not standard coaching.

1. Has the leader's performance history been strong until relatively recently?

If the leader performed well for years and concerns emerged within the last 6-18 months, something changed. Sudden shifts signal derailment more often than skill gaps.

Yes No

2. Is the leader working harder but seeing diminishing results?

When increased effort leads to worsening outcomes, the issue is rarely motivation or capability. It's usually misapplied behaviour under new conditions.

Yes No

3. Have perceptions of the leader changed faster than their actual output?

Feedback about "style," "impact," or "presence" often precedes formal performance issues. Perception shifts are early indicators of reputational risk.

Yes No

4. Are the leader's former strengths now being described as problems?

Decisiveness becoming "controlling," high standards becoming "perfectionism," or passion becoming "intensity" often signal the same behaviours landing differently.

Yes No

5. Has trust eroded with key stakeholders (boss, peers, team, HR)?

Recovery is required when relational damage exists. Coaching alone does not rebuild trust without visible, strategic change.

Yes No



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6. *Has there been a triggering event (360 feedback, HR complaint, escalation, or role change)?*

Formal or informal trigger events often mark the beginning of a recovery window.

Yes No

7. *Is the leader confused or blindsided by the feedback they're receiving?*

Confusion suggests blind spots, not incompetence. Blind spots require diagnosis, not encouragement.

Yes No

8. *Are decisions about the leader's future likely within the next 90 days?*

Time pressure fundamentally changes the intervention required. Recovery situations are time-bound.

Yes No

9. *Would "insight" or gradual development alone be insufficient to restore confidence?*

If the organization needs visible change — not just understanding — recovery is required.

Yes No

10. *Is the organization at risk of losing a high-potential leader if nothing changes soon?*

When retention, reputation, and succession are at stake, the cost of misdiagnosis is high.

Yes No

How to Interpret the Results

- **0–3 Yes responses: Likely a leadership coaching situation**
(skill-building, growth, perspective, long-term development)
 - **4–6 Yes responses: At risk of derailment**
Requires careful diagnosis before selecting an intervention
 - **7–10 Yes responses: Leadership Recovery situation**
Career damage is already in play. A time-bound, diagnostic, corrective approach is required
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Why This Distinction Matters

Leadership coaching is designed to help good leaders become better over time.

Leadership recovery is required when credibility, trust, and trajectory have been compromised and decisions are imminent.

They are **not interchangeable**.

How to Use This Checklist

This checklist is designed to support **early, accurate decision-making**, not to evaluate performance.

- Answer each question **Yes or No** based on observable behaviour, recent feedback, and organizational context.
- Look for **patterns**, not perfection. A single “Yes” does not signal derailment.
- Pay particular attention to:
 - Sudden changes after years of strong performance
 - Increased effort paired with declining impact
 - Shifts in perception, trust, or reputation

If multiple questions are answered “Yes,” the situation likely requires **diagnosis and intervention**, not just support or skill development.

This tool is most effective when used:

- By HR partners
- By executive sponsors
- In advance of formal performance action

Early clarity preserves options. Delayed clarity narrows them.
