

# People-Driven Leadership

## How the Best 9-1-1 Centers Inspire Positive Change

Practical culture levers that improve retention, performance, and trust

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# Why This Matters

## Morale Drives Performance

When telecommunicators feel valued and supported, call handling quality improves, situational awareness sharpens, and critical decisions become more confident and accurate.

## Trust Enables Growth

Coaching and learning flourish in environments where people trust their leaders. Without trust, feedback feels like criticism and development opportunities are missed.

## Consistency Builds Stability

When standards are applied fairly and predictably, retention improves. People stay where they understand expectations and see equitable treatment across all shifts.

## Safety Improves Recovery

Psychological safety directly impacts how telecommunicators handle errors and near-misses. When people can speak up without fear, problems get resolved faster and learning happens.

## Accountability Shapes Climate

How we address behavior—or fail to—creates the emotional atmosphere of the entire center. Consistent accountability protects the culture and the people within it.

- ❑ **Reflection prompt:** Where is your center feeling the strain most right now? What's the cost of leaving it unaddressed?

# Working Definition

## Clarity

People know what "good" looks like in both performance and conduct. Standards are visible, teachable, and repeatable—not buried in policy manuals or left to interpretation.

## Consistency

Standards are applied the same way, every day, across every shift. Fair treatment isn't negotiable. What matters on Monday matters on Friday night.

## Care

People feel respected, supported, and developed. Leaders invest in growth, recognize contributions, and create space for people to bring their whole selves to work.

## People-Driven Leadership = Clarity + Consistency + Care

This formula builds culture on purpose, not by accident. It transforms communication centers from places people endure into environments where they thrive and deliver their best work.

# Leadership Isn't a Title

Leadership is a set of behaviors—not a rank on an organizational chart. People-driven culture emerges from daily actions, not mission statements posted on walls. Every interaction either builds culture or erodes it.



- **Remember:** Every shift has a culture. The question is: is it healthy, or is it slowly deteriorating?

# Culture Signal Test

## Quick Scan – Rate Each Signal 1–5

Use this diagnostic tool to identify where your center's culture needs the most attention. Circle your honest assessment for each dimension, then focus on your lowest score.

### 1 Clarity

Expectations are visible, documented, and consistently communicated. Everyone knows what "good" looks like for both performance and professional conduct.

### 2 Psychological Safety

People can ask for help without fear of judgment or retaliation. Mistakes are treated as learning opportunities, and speaking up is encouraged and protected.

### 3 Recognition & Respect

Good work gets seen and acknowledged. Contributions are valued across all shifts and positions. People feel their efforts matter and make a difference.

### 4 Accountability

Behavior standards are real and enforced consistently. Performance issues are addressed promptly and fairly. No one gets special treatment from consequences.

### 5 Development

Coaching is consistent, constructive, and frequent. Leaders invest in skill-building. Feedback is specific, actionable, and tied to growth rather than punishment.

- Next steps:** Pick your lowest score. Write down what that gap is costing your center. Identify one observable proof—something you see or hear regularly that demonstrates the problem.

# Debrief: What Does Your Score Cost You?

Low scores don't just represent abstract cultural weaknesses—they create concrete operational and human costs that compound over time. When we ignore cultural signals, we pay the price in ways that directly impact our mission and our people.

## 1 Errors & Near Misses

Cultural gaps create conditions where mistakes multiply and critical information gets missed or miscommunicated during high-stakes calls.

## 2 Training Failures & CTO Burnout

Inconsistent standards exhaust training officers who can't align trainees with shifting expectations. Good CTOs leave when they can't succeed.

## 3 Sick Time & Overtime Pressure

Toxic environments drive people to use sick time as mental health breaks, creating chronic understaffing and crushing overtime burdens.

## 4 Conflict & Shift Warfare

Unaddressed cultural problems manifest as interpersonal conflicts, cliques, and destructive shift-versus-shift dynamics that poison morale.

## 5 Cynicism & Emotional Numbing

People withdraw emotionally to protect themselves, leading to disengagement, apathy, and loss of the passion that brought them to this work.

## 6 Turnover & Quiet Quitting

The best people leave—either physically or mentally. You lose institutional knowledge, operational capacity, and the energy that drives excellence.

**Critical question: If nothing changes, what will this cost in 6 months?**

# 5 People Driven Practices That Move Culture Fast

These five practices create immediate cultural movement when applied consistently. They don't require massive resources or reorganizations—just disciplined execution and leadership commitment.

01

## Make Expectations Visible

Define and communicate what "good" looks like in observable, teachable terms for both performance and professional conduct.

02

## Run Micro-Leadership Moments

Create brief, frequent touchpoints that align, support, and reset your team throughout every shift.

03

## Build Psychological Safety

Establish environments where people can learn, ask for help, and admit mistakes without lowering performance standards.

04

## Protect the Emotional Climate

Address negative behaviors consistently to maintain a healthy, respectful workplace atmosphere for everyone.

05

## Convert Feedback into Development

Transform every coaching conversation into an opportunity for skill-building and professional growth.

## The One-Lift Plan

Cultural transformation doesn't require fixing everything at once.

Choose one real, pressing issue in your center and apply focused effort. Small, consistent wins build momentum for larger change.

### Choose One Real Issue

Select the problem causing the most immediate pain: persistent negativity or interpersonal conflict, inconsistent training standards, accountability gaps, destructive shift divisions, or visible burnout behaviors.

### Select Your Practice

Which of the five people-driven practices (1–5) best addresses this issue? Match your chosen practice to the cultural signal that needs strengthening.

### Proof of Progress in 14 Days

Define what measurable evidence will demonstrate movement. What will you see or hear differently? How will you know this intervention is working?

1

2

3

4

5

### One Problem. One Lever. One Next Step.

#### Define Target Behavior

Get specific about what needs to change. Use the Start/Stop/Continue framework to clarify exactly what you want people to begin doing, cease doing, or maintain.

#### First Step in 72 Hours

Take one concrete action within three days. Have the conversation. Send the communication. Make the standard visible. Momentum matters more than perfection.

**72 hours**

Your deadline for the first action

**14 days**

Your checkpoint for measurable progress

# Barriers (And How Healthy Leaders Respond)

Cultural change faces predictable resistance. Healthy leaders anticipate these barriers and have clear responses ready. Don't let common obstacles derail your momentum.

## "We're Too Busy"

**Counter-move:** Micro-habits beat big programs. The five practices don't require adding hours to your day—they transform how you use the time you already spend leading.

## "We Tried That Before"

**Counter-move:** Inconsistency kills change. Previous attempts likely failed due to inconsistent application, not flawed strategy. Commit to sustained, disciplined execution.

## "Politics / Union / History"

**Counter-move:** Focus on observable behaviors, not personalities or past grievances. Document standards, apply them consistently, and let results speak for themselves.

## "Leadership Isn't Aligned"

**Counter-move:** Lead your circle of control and document results. Cultural improvement within your span of influence becomes proof that spreads upward and outward.

- ☐ **Remember:** Change gets easier when results show up. Early wins create believers and build momentum for broader transformation.

# Your 14-Day Commitment

Cultural transformation begins with personal commitment. Don't leave this session without defining your next steps. Small, disciplined actions compound into significant change when sustained over time.

1

## One Practice You Will Apply

Which of the five people-driven practices addresses your most pressing cultural challenge? Write it down. Make it specific.

2

## One Behavior You Will Address

Name the specific behavior—positive or negative—that you will reinforce or correct in the next 72 hours. Be concrete.

3

## One Micro-Leadership Moment You Will Repeat

Choose a brief, high-impact interaction you'll make a daily habit. Consistency transforms micro-moments into culture.

4

## One Measure You Will Track

Define the evidence that will show progress. What will you see, hear, or measure differently in 14 days?

**Create a culture worth fighting for—because healthy dispatchers save more lives.**

# Thank you for what you do!

The practices we've explored today require courage and genuine care for your people. Consistency is the key to developing these skills so you can access them effectively, every day.

## Your Next Steps:

- Commit to beginning today, and keep at it
- Enroll Your Other Team Members - **you don't have to do this alone!**
- Reach out to **THD** if we can help you get clear on your near-term strategy

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