



(LEADER GUIDE)

LEADERS MUST EARN PERMISSION TO MATTER

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LEADER CORE Guide: Leaders Must EARN Permission to Matter

Your Polished Voice Is Losing to Reddit Threads and TikTok Takes

Duration: 30 Minutes

Purpose:

To facilitate an honest dialogue about the crisis of institutional communication credibility, helping leaders explore how to earn permission to matter in spaces where real conversations happen rather than defaulting to traditional channels nobody engages with.

Pre-Session Preparation

- Send the article to participants 24-48 hours before the session
- Request that they identify one unofficial online space where their institution is discussed
- Ask them to screenshot one example of unofficial content that gained more traction than official communications
- Set up meeting space that encourages candid conversation
- Prepare to share your own example of losing the narrative to unofficial channels

Session Flow with CORE Process Opening (5 minutes)

- Welcome participants
- Briefly explain the CORE process (Call It, Own It, Response, Execute)
- Share a vulnerable example of when unofficial channels shaped your institution's narrative
- Establish urgency: "Today we're confronting why a teenager's TikTok matters more than our official communications"

C: Call It - Questions of Clarity (7 minutes)

Group Discussion:

- "According to the research, what percentage of families make enrollment decisions based on unofficial social media?"
- "What are the five elements of the Permission to Matter Framework?"
- "What's the '2-hour rule' and why does it matter?"

Facilitation Notes:

- Capture insights on shared document
- Address discomfort with the idea that titles don't grant authority
- Reference key data: "Social media conversations reach 22x more stakeholders"

O: Own It - Questions of Meaning (7 minutes)

Individual Reflection:

- "Where is your institution being discussed that you're not participating?"
- "What unofficial content about your school/district has shaped perception more than your communications?"
- "What fear keeps you from engaging in these unofficial spaces?"

Paired Discussion:

- Have participants share their screenshots and reflections
- Partners ask: "What would radical honesty look like in this situation?"

R: Response - Options for Practice (8 minutes)

Application Exercise:

- Working in pairs, participants identify one active unofficial conversation
- Using the Permission to Matter Framework, craft an authentic response:
 - o Recognition: Acknowledge the space's legitimacy
 - o Relevance: Address the actual concern raised
 - o Responsiveness: Commit to responding within 2 hours
 - o Realness: Write with authenticity, not polish
 - o Reciprocity: Offer to implement feedback
- Partners provide feedback: "Does this earn permission or demand attention?"

Group Sharing:

- Invite 2-3 volunteers to share their approach
- Facilitate discussion on comfort with imperfection

E: Execute - Commitment to Practice (5 minutes)

Individual Commitment:

- Each participant completes: "Within 48 hours, I will engage authentically in [specific platform] by..."
- Participants identify their "2-hour window" for daily social monitoring
- Each person commits to one "polish-free" response this week

Closing (3 minutes)

- Round-robin: Share one word describing your biggest fear about this shift
- Leader models vulnerability about their own communication fears
- Close with: "Your community is having conversations with or without you. Choose 'with.'"

Key Concepts for Reference

- "Your degrees and titles mean exactly nothing in the attention economy"
- The Permission Paradox: Official channels signal distance, not authority
- "73% of families trust social media over institutional communications"
- The four digital spaces: Comment Sections, Community Groups, Creator Platforms, Conversation Threads
- "Negative unofficial content spreads 6x faster than positive official messages"

Remember: This session will be uncomfortable. Lean into that discomfort—it's where growth happens. Model the very authenticity you're asking them to embrace by acknowledging your own struggles with letting go of polish.