



glêe
coaching

Lead Decisively Under Pressure

WHY LEADERSHIP FEELS
HEAVIER THAN IT SHOULD

A practical 5 step system for leaders to stop firefighting, create time to think, and lead decisively even when timelines, resources and client needs keep changing.

www.gleecoaching.co.uk

Introduction

If you feel constantly pulled into noise, firefighting and reporting, you're not alone. Most leader in the housing, construction and engineering space speak to me of the pressure of operational BAU.



Who This Is For

This guide shows you how to get space back without losing control. It's for technical leaders running diverse, teams on demanding client projects. Most leaders carry a hidden emotional load that absorbs frustrations, steady's the team, manages up, and focuses on keeping clients confident.

My Background

My career has been spent working in housing, construction & engineering organisations, creating great places for people to work, and live. As an accredited coach I now help clients grow their strategic leadership capabilities through 1:1 coaching and through a range of training and strategic partnership activities.

What You'll Discover

- Why leadership can feel heavy and the shifts that lighten it
- How to reset expectations and move away from being the default fixer
- Routines that cut escalations and free up thinking time
- Clear ways to communicate under pressure
- How to build confidence and autonomy in your team

Barbra

The 5 Step system

Step 1 : See the Load

Name what is making leadership heavy to you, so that you stop carrying it by default. Identify your triggers, invisible expectations and “default fixer” moments.

Step 2: Cut Noise: Keep Control

Instead of being pulled into every question, update, report or issue, this step helps you reduce the noise that lands on your desk - even when the project is demanding.

Step 3: Communicate Under Pressure

When things are moving fast, people need certainty. This step shows you how to communicate decisions clearly, steady your team, reduce repeat questions, and build buy-in.

Step 4: Create Space

Win back thinking time without hurting delivery. Delegate with decision boundaries and protect a 60-90 minute weekly block for pure strategic thinking.

Step 5: Build Ownership

Shift from “I’ve got this!” to “You’ve got this!”. Give your team the clarity you need for them to do their jobs brilliantly.

QUICK WINS

Start this Week

Step 1: See the Load

- Spot Your Automatic “Fixer” Moments

Notice when you jump in to solve something that is someone else’s job function

Ask: “Who should really own this?” Then redirect with a recommendation

Step 2: Cut Noise: Keep Control

- One Front Door for Updates

Create one channel (e.g., Teams/Slack/Circle) for all updates, issues, and questions.

Say: “If it’s not in the channel, it won’t be seen.”

Step 3: Communicate Under Pressure

- Lead With the Headline

Always start with: Decision → Why → Impact → Next step.

Keep your message to under 90 seconds.

Step 4: Create Space

- Protect a Weekly 60–90 Minute Block

Label it “Strategic/People/Risks - Leader Only.”

Treat it like a board meeting. Non-negotiable.

Step 5: Build Ownership

- Use the Recommendation Rule

When someone brings a problem, ask: “What do you recommend?”

If they can’t answer, coach - don’t carry it.



STEP 1

The Three Sources of “Leadership Load”

1. Operational Gravity

Urgent issues dominate. Reporting, approvals, escalations, meetings, team 1:1, client queries. There’s always something going on. This isn’t a prioritisation problem. It’s an environment that constantly rewards reaction.

2. Emotional & Relational Load

You don’t just manage tasks, you actively steady frustrations, support people, and absorb uncertainty. With diverse teams, different personalities, and varying confidence levels, you’re continually adjusting how you lead. Seasoned staff may resist change, and younger leaders may lack lived experience - both add to your load.

3. Invisible Expectations

When you’re capable, people assume you’ll notice, step in, fix, decide. Responsibility accumulates quietly. Boundaries blur. Leadership gets heavier without anyone intentionally adding weight.

STEP 2

Cut Noise: Keep Control

**REDUCE QUESTIONS, UPDATES AND
ESCALATION - EVEN WHEN
PROJECTS ARE DEMANDING.**

High-complexity project leaders receive 20–30% more inbound comms than those in stable environments.

Only 12% of it is decision-relevant.

Why it matters:

If every query comes to you, the team never learns to filter, frame or solve. You're dealing with duplicate conversations, rework, stop-start instructions and sudden dial-ups from the client.

Impact if not addressed:

- Noise buries the real risks.
- You end up firefighting instead of steering.

(Source: PMI, Construction Leadership Council)



STEP 3

Communicate Under Pressure

WHEN THINGS MOVE FAST, YOUR TEAM NEEDS CERTAINTY AND CLEAR DIRECTION - NOT MORE DETAIL.

Teams remember the first 10-15 seconds of what you say . The rest gets lost. This is why holding the room matters more than saying more.

Why it matters:

Long, technical explanations create confusion and repeat questions, which cost you even more time.

Impact if not addressed:

- People fill gaps with assumptions.
- Teams drift, clients panic, and you get pulled into unnecessary re-work.

STEP 4

Create Space

WIN BACK THINKING TIME WITHOUT HARMING DELIVERY.

Leaders who protect a single 60–90 min deep-work block each week improve strategic output by 23% and reduce reactive work by 19%.

Why it matters:

Without structured space, you default to doing, and BAU quietly takes over your week.

Impact if not addressed:

You stay stuck in operational mode - in the weeds along with your team, bouncing between priorities and getting drained, never feeling that you have actually achieved anything productive.

(Source: HBR, Global Leadership Survey)



STEP 5

Build Ownership

SHIFT FROM YOU CARRYING THE TEAM TO “THE TEAM OWNS IT.”

Clear standards and decision boundaries reduce escalation by up to 50% in complex projects.

Why it matters:

Ownership isn't about giving people more tasks. It is about giving them clarity, confidence, responsibility and standards.

Impact if not addressed:

You stay the centre of everything, everyone leans on you. Your team never grows, and some staff may get resistant. And your reputation becomes tied to personally carrying the load, which increased the risk of your burnout and limits the business.

(Source: CMI, ILM, Engineering Leadership Institute)

Establish momentum for long term success

Initial focus: Build awareness

- Personal discovery: your story, values, motivations & derailers.
- Emotional & relational intelligence: triggers, recovery strategies, presence under pressure.

Outcomes: Ability to Know Yourself to Lead Yourself

Growth Phase: Optimise communication

- Communication playbook: briefings, toolbox talks, progress reviews and stakeholder understanding.
- Hard conversations: frameworks for performance, behaviour and team autonomy.

Outcomes: consistent routines that reduce ambiguity.

Mastery: Driving Strategic Impact

- Move from expert-doer to leader-coach: delegate, develop, hold to standards, inspire and motivate.
- Create strategic thinking time; shift from reactive to proactive leadership.

Outcomes: visible team ownership, stronger project delivery and a leader with time to plan and guide.



Moving Forward

This framework provides the foundation for elevating your impact as a leader. As a professional, you understand that sustainable growth comes from structured implementation and strategic timely support, and having a life outside work.

Next Steps

- Apply the framework to a live challenge this week
- Choose two practices from Step 1 to 4 to start now
- Set one behaviour goal and one results goal; track weekly
- If involving your team, schedule the baseline assessment this month

Book a [clarity call with me here](#) to see how I can support you to excel in leading projects without stress.

Barbra

