

Leadership Altitude *Self-Check*

A simple diagnostic to identify where you are actually spending your time — and whether it matches the altitude you are paid to lead from.

The Altitude Model

Dimension	Team Leader	Manager	Senior Manager
Primary focus	The work and the people doing it	The team and its outcomes	The system: teams, standards, direction
Planning horizon	This week to this sprint	This quarter	Two to four quarters and beyond
Leads mostly through	Doing and coordinating	Delegating and coaching	Setting direction, building leaders
Owens decisions about	Task execution, daily priorities	Priorities, resourcing, performance	Standards, structure, cross-team trade-offs
Signature risk	Becoming the bottleneck	Managing tasks, not leading people	Staying operational, not strategic

The Gravity Problem

There is a gravity in organisations that constantly pulls leaders down a level. This is human — the lower level is where we are most comfortable and where progress feels most tangible — but it is exactly where teams lose leverage. When you feel the pull downward, treat it as a signal, not a failure, and climb back up deliberately.

Run This Diagnostic on Yourself

Set aside ten minutes, once a week for a month. Answer honestly — there is no score to defend, only a pattern to notice.

01 At what altitude did I actually spend most of this week — my own, or the one below it?

02 Name one thing I did this week that someone one level below me should have owned instead.

03 Name one thing at my own altitude that did not get done because I was doing that lower-level work.

04 What pulled me down: a real emergency, a habit, or a gap in someone else's capability?

05 If a Senior Manager spent the week on Manager work, or a Manager on Team Leader work — is that dedication, or a leak of the leverage the organisation is paying for?

06 What is the one thing I will deliberately hand back or stop doing next week to reclaim my altitude?

“A leader operating below their altitude leaves the work above them undone, because no one else can do it.”

This is a companion resource to *Never Down: Leading Technology Operations Through Continuous Transformation* by Domenico Sannelli.