

SPEAK LIKE THE LEADER PEOPLE TRUST

A Practical Leadership Handbook to Build
Influence Through the S.P.E.A.K Influence System

A Proven Method by

Kiran Deep Sandhu

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• Kiran Deep Sandhu •

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01 INTRODUCTION

Why So Many Leaders Are Speaking, Yet Losing Trust

Over the years, I've met leaders who genuinely care. Leaders who work long hours, take responsibility seriously, and want the best for their people. Many of them communicate often, share updates clearly, and try to stay accessible.



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Yet in quiet moments, they confess something that unsettles them.

“My team doesn’t challenge me anymore.”

“They agree too quickly.”

“I don’t get honest feedback.”

What they are experiencing isn’t rebellion. It’s disengagement.

This happens when leadership communication focuses on clarity but misses connection. When leaders speak from habit instead of awareness. When words are correct, but presence is missing.

Trust doesn’t erode in dramatic moments. It erodes slowly, in everyday interactions.

This handbook exists to help you notice those moments — and lead them differently.

The S.P.E.A.K Influence System is not about learning better phrases or techniques. It is about becoming the kind of leader whose words carry weight because people feel safe, seen, and respected.

Before we talk about influence, we must talk about who you are when you lead.



WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO SPEAK LIKE A TRUSTED LEADER

Most leaders believe influence comes from expertise, authority, or confidence. Those things may earn attention, but they don't earn trust.

Trust comes from consistency. People trust leaders whose:

- reactions are predictable under pressure
- words match their actions
- emotional tone remains grounded even in conflict

When leaders lose trust, it's rarely because of poor intent. It's because their communication sends mixed signals. One day calm, the next reactive. One day open, the next defensive.

Speaking like a trusted leader means understanding that communication is relational, not transactional.

Your team is not only listening to what you say. They are watching:

- how you handle disagreement
- how you respond to mistakes
- how you show up when you don't have answers

Influence grows when leaders lead these moments consciously. That is where S.P.E.A.K begins.

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THE S.P.E.A.K INFLUENCE SYSTEM



S

SELF AWARENESS

That voice that whispers, “What if I fail?”—Kiran helps you quiet it with deep mindset work rooted in self-awareness.

P

PRESENCE

Command the room with quiet strength. Learn how to show up confidently—even when you don’t have all the answers.

E

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In our relationship-based work culture, emotional intelligence builds trust. Learn how to lead through connection.

A

AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION

Find your leadership voice—whether in Nepali or English—and speak with structure, simplicity, and impact.

K

KEY LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Leadership presence isn’t a one-time skill. It’s a lifelong practice. Kiran builds custom growth roadmaps for each client.

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SELF AWARENESS

You Can not Influence What You Don't Acknowledge

Every leader has blind spots. Not because they lack intelligence, but because leadership positions reduce honest feedback. Without self-awareness, leaders repeat patterns they don't notice:

- explaining instead of listening
- defending instead of reflecting
- controlling instead of trusting

These patterns don't make leaders bad. They make leaders unexamined.

Self-awareness is the ability to observe yourself in real time. To notice how stress tightens your tone. How pressure shortens your patience. How authority subtly shifts your listening.

**Influence begins the moment a leader asks,
“What is happening inside me right now?”**

Reflection Exercise: Leadership Self-Observation

Think about your last challenging conversation.

- What emotion did you feel first?
- How did that emotion shape your words?
- What reaction did you notice in the other person?
- What part of the conversation felt unresolved?

Now write: What pattern of mine was at play here?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their reflection on the challenging conversation.

05

PRESENCE

Why People Feel You Before They Hear You

Presence is often mistaken for confidence. In reality, presence is attention. Leaders lose presence when:

- they multitask during conversations
- they rush to respond instead of understand
- they listen to reply, not to absorb

Even with good intentions, absence of presence signals disinterest or impatience.

When leaders are present, something shifts. People slow down. They speak more honestly. They think more clearly.

Presence communicates:

“I am here with you.” “You matter in this moment.”

Reflection Exercise: The Quality of Attention Check

Reflect on a typical day:

- How often do I give undivided attention?
- How often am I mentally elsewhere?
- What message might that send to my team?

Now write: One conversation this week where you will be fully present — no interruptions, no agenda, no rush. Presence builds trust silently.



06

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Leadership Is Emotional – Whether You Like It or Not

Many leaders believe emotions should be kept out of the workplace. In reality, emotions are already present. The question is whether they are managed or unmanaged. Emotionally intelligent leaders understand:

- their emotions influence others
- unregulated reactions create fear
- calm responses create safety

Teams don't fear honest feedback. They fear emotional unpredictability. When leaders regulate their emotions, teams feel permission to think, question, and contribute.

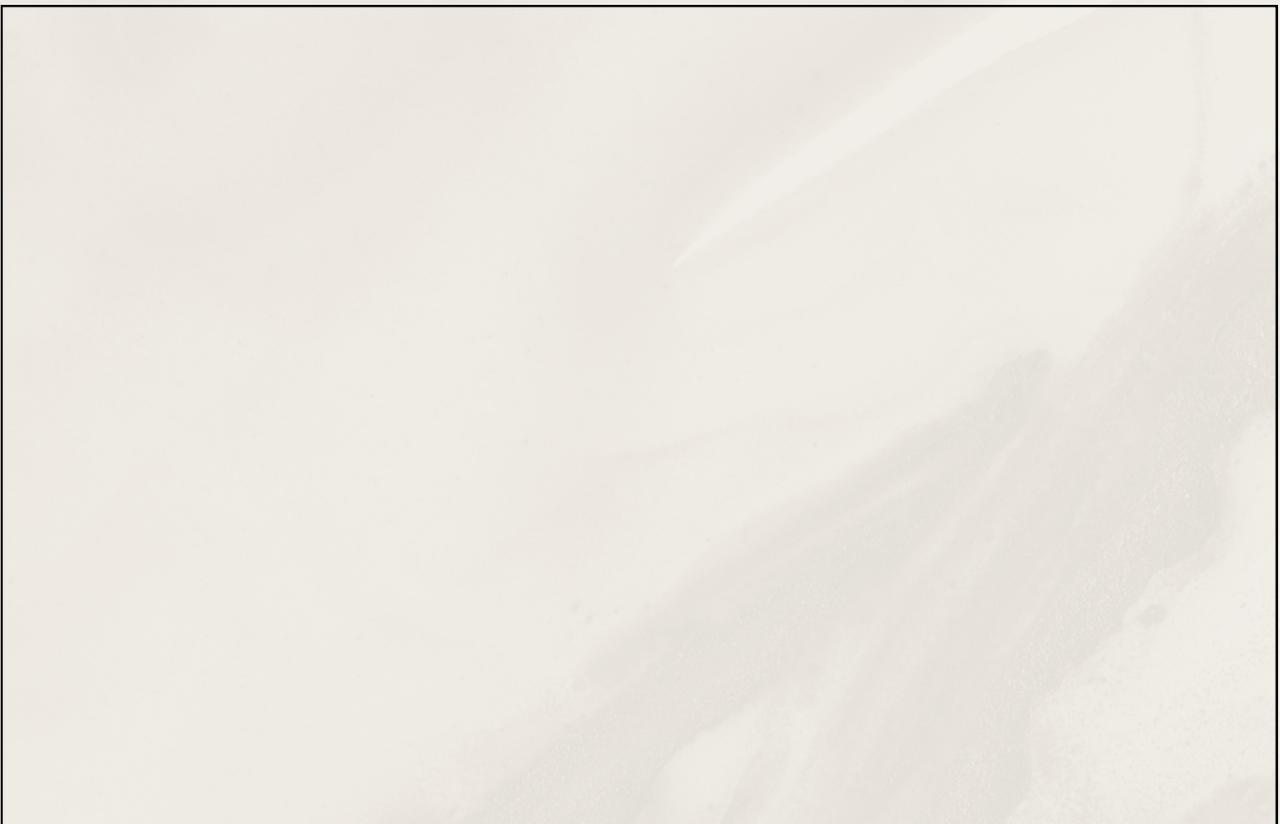


Reflection Exercise: Emotional Patterns

Identify:

- Situations that trigger strong reactions in you
- Your default response under pressure
- How others might experience that response

Now write: What would regulation look like in that moment? Emotional intelligence is not suppression. It is choice.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their reflections on the exercise.

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AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION

Trust Is Built When Words and Actions Align

Authenticity is not saying everything you think. It is standing firmly in what you say. Leaders lose authenticity when they:

- say what sounds right instead of what they mean
- avoid difficult truths to keep peace
- shift messages depending on the audience

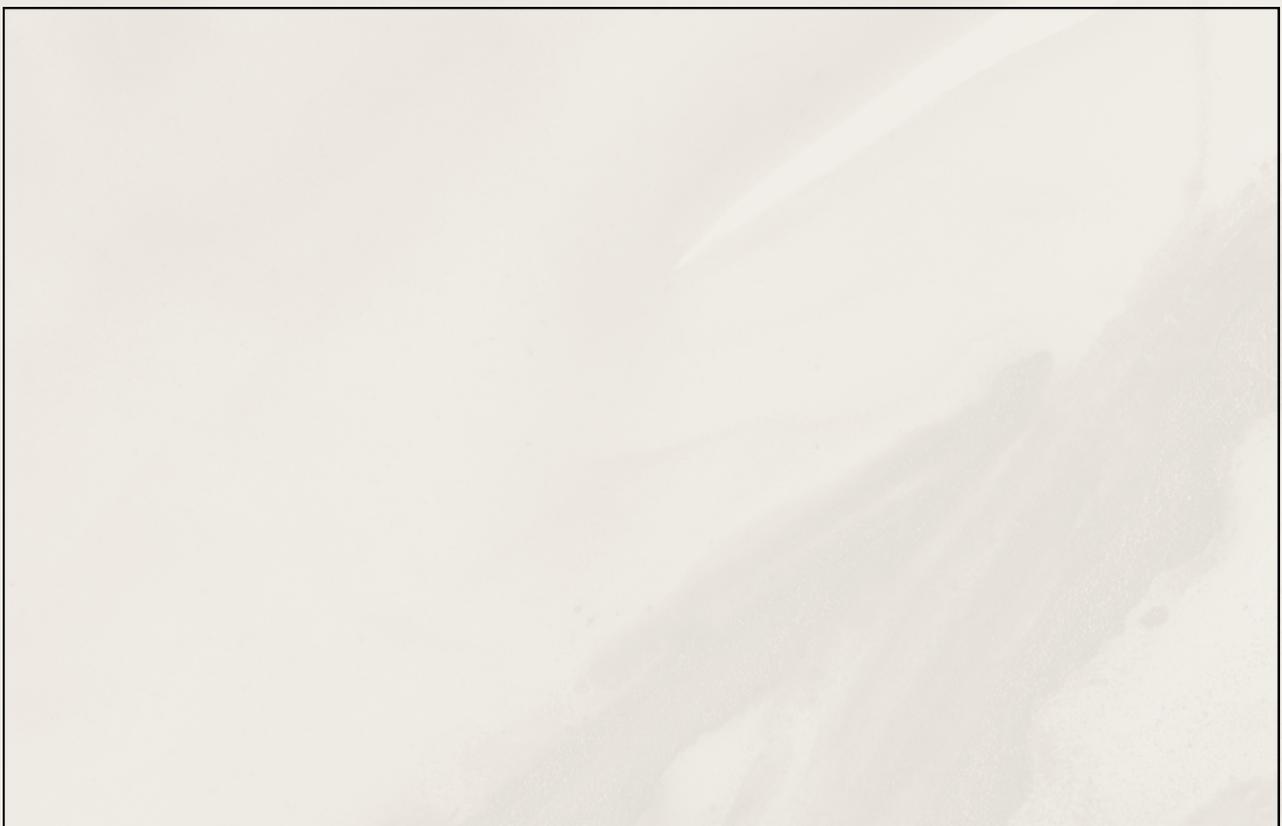
This creates confusion and erodes trust. Authentic communication is clear, grounded, and consistent. It respects people enough to be honest and respectful enough to be thoughtful.

Reflection Exercise: Your Authenticity

Ask yourself:

- Where do my actions support my words?
- Where do they contradict them?
- What message does that send?

Now write: Have one authentic conversation with one of your colleague you have been avoiding and write how do you feel about it?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the reflection exercise.

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KEY LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Awareness Must Translate Into Action

Insight without skill leads to frustration. Leaders need practical skills to express influence:

- asking questions that invite thinking
- giving feedback without triggering defensiveness
- navigating conflict without escalation
- communicating clearly during uncertainty

These skills allow leaders to hold space for difficult conversations without losing trust.

Reflection Exercise: Skill Application

Identify:

- One conflict with your team in the past
- What was the root cause of the conflict
- How will you re-approach it differently using SPEAK

Now write: Go through that one conflict and write what was the root cause and how you will handle it differently?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their reflection on a conflict and their application of the SPEAK skill.

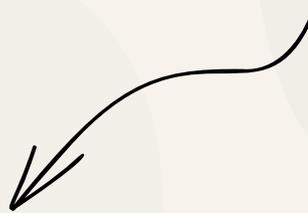
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YOUR SPEAK INFLUENCE REFLECTION

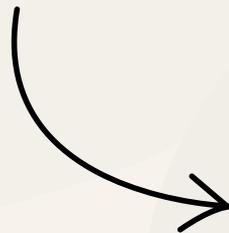
SELF AWARENESS



PRESENCE



EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE



AUTHENTIC
COMMUNICATION



KEY LEADERSHIP SKILLS

RATE YOURSELF HONESTLY FROM 1-10:

Self Awareness -----

Presence -----

Emotional Intelligence -----

Authentic Communication -----

Key Leadership Skills -----

While rating, do notice:

- which area do you feel the strongest
- where are you hesitating to rate yourself

30-DAY LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Write: One habit I will interrupt

One behavior I will practice

One conversation I will lead differently

INFLUENCE IS NOT A MOMENT. IT IS A PRACTICE

Leadership influence is not built in presentations or announcements. It is built in everyday moments of interaction.

The pause before you respond. The attention you give.
The consistency you maintain.

When leaders SPEAK with awareness, presence, emotional intelligence, authenticity, and skill, people don't just comply. They commit. And commitment is what builds cultures that last.





About Kiran Deep Sandhu

She is a Behavioural Coach and Leadership Communication Expert with over two decades of experience working across Asia. She partners with corporate leaders, CEOs, HR heads, and boards to help them strengthen emotional intelligence, communication, and conscious leadership.

Her coaching helps leaders transform quiet compliance into vibrant collaboration — turning “status quo” workplaces into people-first, performance-driven cultures.

Kiran’s work spans countries including India, Malaysia, Singapore, Nepal, US where she has guided organizations through cultural shifts, leadership transitions, and team rebuilding. Through her coaching, keynotes, and workshops, she continues to champion a new kind of leadership — one built not on power, but on presence.

Get Connected



kirandeepsandhucoach.com



kiran@leadershipkard.com