

Applied Leadership: A 5-Step Action Plan

Introduction


Taking action as a leader isn't just about knowing what to do—it's about **consistently applying leadership behaviours in real-world situations**. Many leaders hesitate, not because they lack skills, but because they struggle to integrate them effectively. This action plan focuses on **Skills Stacking**, pairing leadership strengths with areas of growth to create a **flexible, action-driven mindset** that helps leaders step up even in challenging situations.

This is a **reflective practice** that helps leaders identify their natural strengths, stack them with skills they need to refine, and build confidence to take action when it matters most.

Step 1: Strengths Spotting – Identifying Your Leadership Foundation

Before taking action, leaders need to understand their existing strengths. These are the skills they already use effectively. **Reflect on:**

- What leadership behaviours come naturally to you? (Strengths Spotting: What activities give you an energetic buzz when you are doing them? What activities come naturally to you, and at which you excel – sometimes, it seems, without even trying?)
- When do you feel most confident in your leadership role?
- What do your colleagues or team members regularly seek your input on?
- In what situations do you find it easy to take initiative?


 **Action:** Write down 3-5 leadership strengths you recognise in yourself. If unsure, ask a trusted colleague for feedback.

Step 2: Spot the Gaps – Where Do You Hesitate?

Once strengths are identified, look at where action is harder. Many leaders struggle with imposter syndrome, avoidance, or uncertainty—especially when balancing [Accountability & Care](#).

Reflect on:

- What leadership actions do you avoid, even when you know they're necessary?
- Where do you second-guess yourself or hesitate before making a decision?
- When have you felt like an “imposter” in your role? What triggered it?
- Have you received feedback about areas you need to improve but haven't acted on?




 **Action:** List 2-3 leadership challenges that cause hesitation.


Step 3: Skills Stacking – Pairing Strengths with Growth Areas

What is Skills Stacking? Skills stacking is the practice of leveraging your existing strengths to improve areas where you struggle. Instead of focusing solely on weaknesses, this approach builds momentum by using what you're already good at to drive improvement in leadership behaviours. Rather than trying to fix weaknesses from scratch, **pair an area of hesitation with a natural strength** to help bridge the gap.

Now, take your strengths and **stack them with the skills you need to develop**. The goal is to use what you're already good at to build momentum in areas where you hesitate.

Example Stacks:

-  Strength: Strong in team check-ins
→ Stack with: Asking 1 accountability-focused question in every check-in
-  Strength: Confident in problem-solving
→ Stack with: Bringing solutions into difficult conversations rather than avoiding them
-  Strength: Great at support and care
→ Stack with: Giving feedback immediately, not just when it feels comfortable

 **Action:** Match each of your leadership strengths to a skill that will help you step into action.


Growth Area	Strength Stack

Step 4: Preventative Leadership – Acting Before Problems Arise

Leaders often focus on reacting to challenges instead of **preventing them**. A skills-stacking practice allows you to stay ahead of issues before they escalate.

Reflect on:

- Where have small leadership gaps turned into bigger issues in the past?
- What actions could you take *now* to strengthen your leadership presence?
- How can you use skills stacking to reduce conflict, disengagement, or decision paralysis?


 **Action:** Identify 1-2 small, repeatable actions that can become habits before challenges arise.

Step 5: Flexibility & Iteration – Keeping the Practice Alive

Leadership isn't about rigid frameworks—it's about adaptable systems. **Skills stacking** isn't a one-time exercise but an ongoing process of building confidence and taking action in new ways.

Reflect on:

- What's working well in your skills-stacking practice?
- Where do you need to adjust your approach?
- What support do you need, to keep growing in your leadership action? (If stuck, ask your team "What are two things I do well that you want me to continue doing, and one area that you'd like to see improvement in?")

 **Action:** Schedule a 10-minute reflection each month to adjust your skills-stacking practice and refine your approach. This is where having a coach work with you is beneficial. Is your leader able to coach you through this? If they're still building this skill base, reach out to us at Well-Led Workplaces, we have a coach for you.

Final Thought

Taking action as a leader isn't about waiting until you feel 100% ready. It's about using what you already know to build confidence in areas where you hesitate. **Skills stacking ensures that even in uncertainty, you can take small, meaningful actions that drive leadership impact.**

Take the Next Step:

Ready to strengthen your applied leadership capability? Book a free 30-minute coaching call to explore how you can apply these pillars to your unique workplace challenges. Together, we'll map out a path to clarity and success.

At Well-Led Workplaces, we're here to help you lead with clarity and purpose. Let's create workplaces where people and results thrive—together.