

20 Questions

Every Leadership Team Should Ask Before a Retreat

BETTER
CONVERSATIONS
BRIGHTER
TOMORROWS

A practical planning guide for executive teams
that want alignment, focus, and results

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PEOPLE
PURPOSE
PRIORITIES
PROGRESS

STRONGER
TOGETHER



ALIGN
PLAN
ENGAGE
ACHIEVE

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PEOPLE
IDEAS
ACTION

A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

Why These Questions Matter

A leadership retreat should not begin with the venue, dinner reservation, or slide deck. It should begin with the decisions the team needs to make and the behaviors that need to change. Use these questions with the CEO, executive sponsor, or full leadership team before the agenda is finalized.

Do not try to solve every issue before the retreat. The purpose of this guide is to identify the conversations that deserve room on the agenda and to make sure the retreat leads to measurable follow through.

1. Purpose and Outcomes

- 1. What must be different 90 days after this retreat for us to call it a success?**
Why it matters: This forces the group to define an outcome instead of planning an event.
- 2. What decision or conversation have we been postponing that can no longer wait?**
Why it matters: Avoidance is expensive. A retreat creates protected space to address the issue directly.
- 3. Which three business priorities deserve the leadership team's full alignment right now?**
Why it matters: Too many priorities create diluted execution.
- 4. What should we stop doing, not only start doing?**
Why it matters: Strategic focus often comes from subtraction before addition.

2. Alignment and Decision Making

- 5. Where are leaders currently sending mixed messages to the organization?**
Why it matters: Inconsistent signals create confusion faster than a bad strategy.
- 6. Which decisions are taking too long, and why?**
Why it matters: This exposes unclear authority, unnecessary escalation, and fear based decision making.
- 7. What does every leader need to agree on, even if we do not agree on everything?**
Why it matters: Healthy disagreement works only when the nonnegotiables are clear.
- 8. Where are our stated priorities different from where we actually spend time and money?**
Why it matters: Resources reveal the real strategy.

3. Team Dynamics and Culture

- 9. What are we not saying to one another that needs to be said?**
Why it matters: Unspoken tension eventually becomes operational friction.
- 10. Where have silos formed across functions, departments, or personalities?**
Why it matters: Silos slow decisions and shift attention from enterprise results to local protection.
- 11. What leadership behavior are we tolerating that is hurting trust or performance?**
Why it matters: Culture is defined by what leaders repeatedly allow.
- 12. Where does our team have strong trust, and where is trust thin?**
Why it matters: Trust is rarely uniform. The weak links matter most under pressure.

4. Execution and Accountability

- 13. Which commitments repeatedly leave meetings without an owner, deadline, or follow through?**
Why it matters: This identifies the gap between discussion and execution.
- 14. Where are we solving the same problem over and over instead of addressing the root cause?**
Why it matters: Recurring problems are usually system problems.
- 15. What metrics would tell us whether leadership behavior is actually improving?**
Why it matters: Without evidence, culture change becomes opinion.
- 16. What will each leader be personally accountable for after the retreat?**
Why it matters: Shared goals still require individual ownership.

5. Retreat Design and Follow Through

- 17. Which topics require facilitated discussion rather than another presentation?**
Why it matters: Retreat time should be used for work the team cannot accomplish through routine updates.
- 18. Whose voice needs to be in the room for the right decisions to be made?**
Why it matters: The wrong participant list can undermine the right agenda.
- 19. What should be decided during the retreat, and what should only be explored?**
Why it matters: Separating decisions from discovery prevents false closure.
- 20. How will we review progress 30, 60, and 90 days after the retreat?**
Why it matters: The follow through system turns momentum into performance.

Key Takeaway

The most effective retreats create clarity around priorities, surface the conversations leaders have been avoiding, and translate alignment into owners, deadlines, and accountability.

Pre Retreat Leadership Worksheet

The three outcomes this retreat must produce

The most important conversation we are avoiding

The one leadership behavior that needs to change

The decision we must leave the retreat having made

The 90 day result we will measure

Planning a Leadership Retreat?

Dr. Rick Goodman designs and facilitates leadership retreats focused on alignment, accountability, adaptability, culture, and execution.

EXPLORE LEADERSHIP RETREATS

SCHEDULE A CONVERSATION

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