

# Quiet Command

The power of calm, credible and unshakable leadership in fire and EMS  
Participant Handout



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## What Is Quiet Leadership?

Quiet leadership is a style grounded in influence, trust, and deep listening rather than positional authority or visible dominance. Quiet leaders lead by example, think before they speak, and create conditions where every team member can contribute fully. Research confirms this style is highly effective for culture-building, long-term development, and operational resilience in the fire service. Both quiet and traditional leadership styles are needed; neither is superior.

## Core Strengths of Quiet Leaders

<b>Focus and Attention to Detail</b> Thorough in planning, execution, and follow-through.	<b>Creativity and Innovation</b> Reflective thinking generates original, well-considered ideas.
<b>Building Strong Relationships</b> Meaningful 1:1 and small-group connections build crew trust.	<b>Calm and Thoughtfulness Under Pressure</b> Reflects before responding; models composure during crisis.

## Leadership Style Comparison

Traditional Leadership Style	Quiet Leadership Style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Directs through authority and rank</li><li>• Leads visibly and vocally from the front</li><li>• Rapid, decisive, command-and-control</li><li>• Values assertiveness and individual performance</li><li>• Effective in crisis and emergency response</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leads through influence, trust, and relationships</li><li>• Leads by example; listens first</li><li>• Thoughtful, deliberate, and reflective</li><li>• Values humility, empathy, team success, and growth</li><li>• Effective in culture-building and long-term development</li></ul>

## Challenges & Strategies for Quiet Leaders

Challenge	Strategy
<b>People exhaustion</b>	Take space for quiet reflection and recharge
<b>A fast pace</b>	Take time to think; there is power in a pause
<b>Getting interrupted</b>	Prepare key points in advance; use brevity strategically
<b>Pressure to self-promote</b>	Self-promote with 'we' not 'me'; use storytelling
<b>Emphasis on teams</b>	Nurture your 1:1 and small group relationships
<b>Negative impressions</b>	Be aware that body language is often misread; name it

## My Quiet Leadership Commitment

Plan	Do	Act
One quiet leadership strength I will bring more deliberately is...	One thing I will do in the next 30 days to run a quieter debrief is...	One change I will make to create more space for quieter voices is...

"True leadership is quiet. It's not about grandstanding or seeking attention. It's about listening, guiding, and empowering others to shine." – VandeSchoot, 2026

## Benefits of Quiet Leadership

<p><b>Enhanced Team Cohesion</b> Quiet leaders build deep trust through consistent presence and attentive listening.</p>	<p><b>Improved Communication</b> Active listening and deliberate speech reduce misunderstanding and conflict.</p>
<p><b>Promotion of Autonomy</b> Team members are empowered to lead and decide, increasing ownership.</p>	<p><b>Calm Under Pressure</b> Reflective leaders model emotional regulation during high-stakes incidents.</p>
<p><b>Adaptability</b> Thoughtful, evidence-informed decision-making supports flexible responses.</p>	<p><b>Effective Conflict Resolution</b> Empathy and patience create space for productive dialogue and resolution.</p>
<p><b>Promotion of Safety Culture</b> Psychological safety grows when every voice is genuinely heard and valued.</p>	<p><b>Long-Term Development</b> Quiet mentorship shapes the next generation of leaders over time.</p>

## Developing Quiet Leaders: Action Checklist

<b>Training &amp; Development</b>	Seek or create targeted leadership development opportunities that honour reflective learning styles.
<b>Mentoring &amp; Coaching</b>	Invest in 1:1 relationships with introverted team members navigating career growth.
<b>Encouragement</b>	Reinforce self-confidence through private feedback and strengths-based conversations.
<b>Nurture</b>	Protect space for solitude and reflection, in yourself and on your team.
<b>Support</b>	Use tools, peer networks, and external resources to grow your quiet leadership practice.
<b>Challenge Stereotypes</b>	Actively name and disrupt assumptions that visibility equals competence.

## 5 Key Takeaways

1. Quiet leaders lead through influence, trust, and relationship, not volume.
2. Both introverted and extroverted styles are needed; neither is superior.
3. Strengths like listening, reflection, and empathy are force multipliers in the fire service.
4. Developing quiet leaders requires intentional support, not just encouragement.
5. You don't need a title to practise quiet leadership; it starts today.

## Core Sources

Cain, S. (2012). *Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking*. Crown. | Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. Harper Business. | Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership*. Paulist Press. | Buckingham, M., & Clifton, D. O. (2001). *Now, discover your strengths*. Free Press. | Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge* (6th ed.). Wiley. | Kahnweiler, J. B. (2018). *The introverted leader* (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler. | Grant, A., Gino, F., & Hofmann, D. A. (2011). Reversing the extraverted leadership advantage. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(3), 528–550.

“The quieter you become, the more you are able to hear.” — Rumi

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