Implementation Assurance Framework

From Boardroom to Rock Face

An implementation assurance framework for pressure-testing whether a policy will survive contact with daily operations, for large mining and construction organizations

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Principle: **Build policies for the people who use them, not for the binder.**

Challenge: Large operations rarely fail from a lack of good policy. They fail when good policy cannot travel down to daily operations fast enough to shape behaviour, and urgent information cannot travel back up fast enough to change a decision before it becomes a crisis. This framework covers why that gap happens, what closes it, a real case study of what happens when it doesn't, and a practical pressure-test checklist for use before any policy, procedure, or program is finalized.

Part 1 — Why the Gap Happens

- **Complexity gets lost at every handoff.** A board-level policy passes through regional management, site management, supervisors, and finally the crew. At each handoff, nuance gets stripped to make it fit the next audience, until what arrives on site is often unrecognizable from what was intended.
- **Site-level incentives can silently contradict the policy.** If a supervisor is measured on production and schedule, and a safety or community policy asks them to slow down or stop, the policy loses every time unless it is backed by real authority and consequence-free stopping power.
- **Escalation usually only works in one direction.** Companies are generally good at pushing directives down and much weaker at building fast, trusted channels for urgent information or concern to travel up before it becomes a crisis, not after.
- **Frontline input is sought too late, if at all.** Frontline workers are rarely involved in designing the policies meant to govern their work, so policy arrives as something imposed rather than something built with their input — which predicts low fidelity in how it is actually followed.

Part 2 — Case Study: What Happens When the Gap Isn't Closed

In May 2020, Rio Tinto legally destroyed two ancient and culturally significant rock shelters at Juukan Gorge in Western Australia to expand an iron ore mine, despite having spent over a decade in negotiation with the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP) people and holding all required government approvals (Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia, 2021).

The company's own board-commissioned review, released in August 2020 (Rio Tinto, 2020), found the failure was not a single decision or a single person, but a series of systemic breakdowns in how information moved through the organization over an extended period. Archaeological findings in 2014 had already established the site's high significance, and by the years leading up to the blast, the company had internal signals that the PKKP

people's view of the site's importance had changed. That updated information did not reach the relevant senior decision-makers with enough urgency, and material new information about the site only reached the pertinent leadership team a few days before the scheduled detonation — too late to change the outcome. The review characterized the underlying work culture as one oriented around securing necessary approvals on schedule, rather than integrating dissenting or updated information into the decision as it emerged.

The consequences were severe and lasting: the CEO and other senior executives departed, tens of millions of dollars in bonuses were forfeited, a national parliamentary inquiry followed, and five years later the company was still being publicly challenged by Aboriginal groups in the Pilbara over unmet commitments (Burton, 2025). The lesson generalizes well beyond this single incident: a company can hold every required legal approval and every well-intentioned internal standard, and still fail catastrophically if the information and authority needed to act on a warning sign cannot move through the organization in time.

Part 3 — What Makes Implementation Actually Work

Co-design with the people who'll use it, before it's finalized

Site-level workers, supervisors, and community liaisons should shape the policy while it is still a draft, not review it after it is final. This does more than anything else to help a policy survive contact with daily operations.

Translate every policy into a one-page, plain-language site version

The full corporate standard is not the document that should exist at the rock face. A one-page “what this means for your shift” version, reviewed and signed off by site supervisors before rollout, is what actually gets used. If a policy cannot be compressed to something a crew member could explain to a new hire in two minutes, it likely will not survive translation.

Equip and empower middle management as translators, not just messengers

Supervisors are the actual translation layer between the boardroom and the ground. They need training not just on policy content but on why it matters and how to make the case for it in their own words, plus explicit, real authority to act on it — including the authority to pause work, exercised without penalty.

Build fast upward escalation with real teeth

The Juukan Gorge failure was fundamentally an escalation failure. Concretely, this means a clear, short chain for urgent concerns that bypasses multiple management layers when time-sensitive; genuine authority for whoever receives that escalation to pause a decision, not just note it for later; and psychological safety for the person raising it, so flagging a concern about a scheduled, approved, expensive decision does not feel career-ending.

Use leading indicators, tracked at the site level, visible to the boardroom

Most safety and community metrics are lagging — they record harm after it has occurred. Leading indicators, such as near-misses reported, concerns raised and resolved, and stop-work incidents and their outcomes, need to be visible all the way up, not filtered out as noise before reaching leadership.

Pilot before scaling company-wide

Test a new policy at one or two sites first, with a real feedback loop back to the people who wrote it, before rolling it out everywhere. A policy that looks clean in a boardroom often reveals friction points immediately in practice.

Leadership needs to physically show up, regularly, not just issue statements

Executives spending real time on site — informal, unscripted, listening rather than presenting — closes a large part of this gap simply because it makes the distance between decision-makers and daily operations visible to both sides.

Close the feedback loop visibly

If frontline input shaped a policy, or an escalation led to a real decision, say so publicly. Silence after input teaches people that raising concerns does not change anything — exactly the dynamic that failed at Juukan Gorge, where warning signs existed but the system did not visibly act on them until it was too late.

Separate assurance from operations

An internal audit or assurance function with genuine independence, reporting to the board rather than to the operational managers being audited, catches the kind of drift between stated policy and site practice that an internal chain of command has every incentive to smooth over.

Part 4 — Implementation Assurance Pressure-Test

Before finalizing any policy, procedure, or program, work through this checklist with people from both ends of the organization in the room — boardroom sponsors and the frontline supervisors or workers who will actually implement it. A policy that cannot answer these questions convincingly is not ready to roll out, regardless of how sound it looks on paper.

Dimension	Pressure-test question	Status (Y/N/Partial)	Notes
Co-design	Did frontline workers and supervisors help shape this policy while it was still a draft, not just review it after it was finalized?		
Translation	Can this policy be compressed into a one-page, plain-language version a supervisor could explain to a new hire in two minutes?		
Incentive alignment	Does anything in how site performance is measured or rewarded quietly contradict what this policy asks people to do?		
Stop authority	Is there a named individual or role empowered to pause the relevant activity, and can they do so without penalty?		
Upward escalation	If new information emerged tomorrow that should change this decision, how many steps and how much time would it take to reach someone with authority to act on it?		
Leading indicators	What early-warning data will this policy generate, and does it reach leadership before harm occurs, not just after?		

Dimension	Pressure-test question	Status (Y/N/Partial)	Notes
Piloting	Has this been tested at one or two sites first, with a real feedback loop back to the people who wrote it, before company-wide rollout?		
Leadership visibility	Will leadership be physically present at the site to observe and listen during and after rollout, not only communicating remotely?		
Feedback loop closure	Is there a plan to publicly show frontline contributors what changed as a result of their input?		
Independent assurance	Will someone outside the operational chain of command that owns this policy review whether it is actually being followed, reporting to the board rather than to site management?		

How to Use This

- Run this pressure-test before finalizing any major policy, not as a retrospective audit — the value is catching gaps before rollout, not explaining them afterward.
- Include people from both ends of the organization in the room together — a policy pressure-tested only by the people who wrote it will tend to confirm its own assumptions.
- Treat any “No” or “Partial” answer as a required action item before rollout, not a note for later — these are the exact gaps that widen into the kind of failure seen at Juukan Gorge.
- Revisit the same checklist 6–12 months after rollout to confirm the answers still hold once daily operational pressure has had time to erode them.

Version [X] — Reviewed [Month/Year] — Next review [Month/Year]

8. Workforce Risk: Performance Management

Holding The Line Under Staffing Pressure

A decision framework, bench-building guide, and performance improvement plan template for small and medium construction and mining operations

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Principle: **A standard you can't afford to enforce isn't a standard. Build the capacity to hold the line before you need it.**

Challenge: Small to medium sized companies in construction and mining tend to face more critical exposure to not being able to execute their project if they have to let crew members go for poor behaviour. This can lead to keeping people employed that are creating a negative culture or worse. How can these companies deal with this in a functional way?

This is one of the most common reasons good policies exist on paper but never get enforced — and it's worth naming honestly: keeping a bad actor because "we can't afford to lose them right now" is usually a false economy, but it's a real, understandable pressure, especially with skilled labour shortages in remote industries. The fix isn't just willpower to fire people — it's building the capacity to hold the line *before* you're in the moment where it feels impossible. A lot of organizations face this issue every season, it isn't a surprise that it's happening, but it always feels that way in the moment.

Part 1 — Severity Triage: Not Everything Needs the Same Response

Paralysis usually comes from treating all poor behaviour as one category requiring the same all-or-nothing decision. Separating severity first opens up real options.

Category	Examples	Response
Zero-tolerance, non-negotiable	Violence, harassment, serious safety violations, theft, impairment on the job.	Immediate action regardless of staffing pain. An exception here signals the standard is optional, undoing every other culture effort in the organization.
Serious but correctable	Chronic disrespect, repeated minor safety shortcuts, ongoing conflict with crew.	Graduated process: documented warning, clear expectations, timeline, defined consequence if unmet (see Performance Improvement Plan, Part 3).
Low-grade friction	Personality clashes, grumbling, not being a culture "adder".	Often coachable through a direct supervisor conversation, not a disciplinary process at all.

As a reminder, most of the “we can't afford to let them go” paralysis happens in the middle category — which is exactly where a structured process helps most, because it buys time to build a bridge instead of forcing an immediate all-or-nothing choice.

Part 2 — Building the Bench Before You Need It

The real fix to the underlying trade-off is reducing how catastrophic any single departure is — which has to happen before the crisis, not during it.

- **Cross-train more than one person per critical skill.** If only one person can run a specific piece of equipment or hold a specific ticket, that person has accidentally acquired leverage over the company's ability to enforce its own standards. Deliberately building two-deep coverage on critical skills is expensive short-term and cheap compared to the alternative.
- **Maintain a live relationship with a staffing agency or contractor pool.** Maintain this relationship even when you don't need it, so surge or replacement labour isn't a cold start when you do. Reaching out only when desperate is the worst time to negotiate rates and availability.
- **Build and maintain a bench list.** Seasonal workers, past employees who left on good terms, apprentices close to certification — people you could call for short-notice coverage. Maintain this actively, not as a hope that it exists when needed.
- **Consider mutual aid arrangements with other local companies.** Especially in smaller regional markets, informal agreements to loan crew for short gaps are common in some trades and worth formalizing if they aren't already happening informally.

Part 3 — Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) Template

A structured PIP does two things at once: it gives a genuinely fair chance for someone to correct course, and it builds the documentation trail that protects the company if termination becomes necessary anyway.

Employee name: _____

Supervisor / issued by: _____

Date issued: _____

Specific Behaviour of Concern

Describe the specific, observed behaviour — not a general characterization. (“Raised voice and used demeaning language toward a coworker on [date]”, not “has an attitude problem.”)

_____

_____

Specific Expectation Going Forward

State plainly what needs to change, in observable terms.

_____

_____

Timeline

Review period (typically 2–4 weeks for acute issues): _____

Check-in dates: _____

Consequence if Expectations Are Not Met

State plainly what happens if the behaviour continues — further discipline up to and including termination.

_____

Check-In Log

Date	Notes / progress	Signed

Signatures

Employee signature / date	Supervisor signature / date
_____	_____

Involve HR or ownership in this documentation from day one, even in a small company, so there is a clear record independent of any one supervisor's memory.

Part 4 — Making the Hidden Cost of Tolerance Visible

The “we can't afford to lose them” calculation is usually incomplete — it counts the visible cost (a project delay, a scramble to cover a shift) but not the invisible one. Naming these explicitly, even informally in the room where the decision is being made, often shifts what looks like an impossible trade-off into a clearer one.

- **Turnover of everyone else.** Good workers leave operations that visibly tolerate bad behaviour faster than almost anything else drives attrition. The “irreplaceable” person may be quietly costing the company several replaceable people.
- **Safety and liability exposure.** If a known behaviour pattern contributes to an incident after it was documented and tolerated, the company's legal exposure is often worse than if it had acted and dealt with a temporary staffing gap.
- **Culture-code credibility.** Every culture initiative — codes of conduct, inclusion efforts, de-escalation training — depends on the standard actually being enforced. One well-known exception tells the whole crew what's actually tolerated, regardless of what's written down.

A Simple Decision Prompt

Before deciding to retain someone despite a documented issue, write down honest answers to these three questions:

- What is the actual cost of losing this person for [X weeks], specifically?
- What is the cost of everyone else watching this behaviour go unaddressed, for the same period?
- If this behaviour contributes to an incident next month, what does that cost, and who is accountable for having known about it?

Part 5 — Reducing How Often You're in This Position

- **Invest more in the hire, less in damage control later.** Reference checks that actually probe for conduct history, not just skill; a working interview or trial period where feasible; and a genuinely used probationary period all catch problems before someone becomes operationally load-bearing.
- **Set the standard explicitly at hiring.** Telling someone plainly what's expected before they start filters for fit and gives clean ground to stand on if it becomes an issue later — see the companion “Know Who's at the Table” one-pager for a plain-language example of setting this standard at hiring.

Version [X] — Reviewed [Month/Year] — Next review [Month/Year] — Confirm disciplinary and termination steps against current employment standards before use

9. Preparing Young Women for Trades

A guide for schools, families, and industry partners preparing girls and young women for careers in mining and construction

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Principle: **Equip workers with foundational knowledge before they need it: skills, rights and the people in their corner.**

Challenge: Given the gender based violence and discrimination that is prevalent in construction and mining. What are ways we can prepare our girls for work in these camps? What kind of education and awareness needs to be in place?

Preparation works far better as a foundation laid before entry than as damage control after a problem occurs. This guide covers existing programs worth connecting to, what education needs to realistically and unflinchingly cover, how to build support systems around a young woman before she starts, and why this preparation only works alongside real industry-side reform — not instead of it.

Part 1 — Connect to Programs Already Doing This Well

Canada already has infrastructure built specifically for this gap. Connecting girls to these while still in school, rather than after graduation, gives real hands-on exposure before the stakes of an actual job are in play.

- **Career exploration programs:** Newfoundland and Labrador's Equiforce runs career exploration programs for girls and young women, alongside career counselling and employment support once they're working (Equiforce, n.d.).
- **Pre-apprenticeship / trades discovery programs:** BCIT's Trades Discovery for Women and Thompson Rivers University's Women in Trades program let young women try multiple trades hands-on, including field trips to actual mines and construction sites, before committing to one (British Columbia Institute of Technology, n.d.; Thompson Rivers University, n.d.).
- **Programs with built-in gender-based violence support:** Ontario's Women's Economic Security Program explicitly offers specialized support for women who have experienced gender-based violence or are at risk of it — recognizing this as a core part of preparing women for these industries, not a side issue (Government of Ontario, n.d.).
- **Women Building Futures:** Alberta-based, national-reach program combining intensive technical training with confidence-building and mentorship (Women Building Futures, n.d.).
- **Provincial Women in Skilled Trades initiatives:** Most provinces have a Women in Skilled Trades or equivalent initiative funded through the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy — worth checking what exists regionally before building anything from scratch.

Part 2 — What Education Needs to Cover

Practical and unflinching, not fear-based — the goal is genuine preparedness, not deterrence.

Know your rights, concretely

Human rights legislation, workplace harassment and violence protections, and the actual process for filing a complaint — not as abstract legal concepts, but as “here's exactly what a violation looks like and here's exactly what you do about it.” Vague awareness doesn't help in the moment; a clear, memorized process does.

Recognize the pattern, not just the incident

Harassment and exclusion in these industries often escalate gradually — testing behaviour, isolation tactics, undermining competence publicly — rather than starting with an obvious violation. Teaching young women to notice the pattern early, and that noticing it isn't “being too sensitive,” matters more than only covering worst-case scenarios.

Build technical confidence as the foundation

Confidence erosion, not just harassment, can push women out of the trades — being talked over, having competence assumed absent rather than demonstrated (see the "prove-it-again" pattern; Williams & Dempsey, 2014). Strong technical grounding before entry, through pre-apprenticeship programs, gives young women a track record to stand on rather than needing to prove themselves from zero on day one.

Teach negotiation and self-advocacy early

Use the same tools covered in the companion Career Advocacy Toolkit: how to decline non-promotable “office housework” style tasks, how to negotiate pay, how to identify and approach a sponsor. Starting this before the first job changes the trajectory significantly.

Cover reporting realistically, including its limits

Be honest that reporting isn't always simple or without cost, while still teaching the actual mechanisms — union representatives, HR, external human rights bodies, anonymous channels where they exist. False reassurance that “the system will definitely protect you” can be more damaging than honest preparation for a real but imperfect process.

Part 3 — Building Support Systems, Not Just Individual Toughness

- **Mentorship and peer networks, arranged before day one.** Every leading program emphasizes mentorship by women already in the trade — having a named person to call, who has already navigated the specific dynamics of that industry, matters enormously. This helps prevent the isolation described by the “only room for a few of us” scarcity dynamic covered elsewhere in this series.
- **Family and community education, not just the individual.** Parents and communities supporting a young woman entering these trades benefit from understanding the real landscape too — enough to be a genuinely useful sounding board, rather than either minimizing concerns or being so alarmed they discourage a career she wants. Honest information, not fear-mongering that closes off the opportunity itself.
- **Physical safety awareness, matter-of-fact, not alarmist.** Basic situational awareness for remote camp environments, taught as standard workplace orientation the same way any new worker learns site hazards — not framed as uniquely about her vulnerability. See the companion Camp Safety Checklist and Travel Conduct documents for the operational side of this.

Part 4 — Mentorship-Matching Framework

A simple structure schools, industry associations, or companies can use to connect young women entering trades with mentors already working in the field.

Stage	What happens	Who's involved
Before entry	Career exploration / trades discovery program, matched with a mentor already in a related trade for informal conversation	School counsellor, industry association, program coordinator
Pre-apprenticeship	Hands-on training with a named point of contact for questions outside the formal curriculum	Training program staff, peer mentor from a recent cohort
First 90 days on the job	Regular check-ins with an assigned mentor, ideally someone not in the direct reporting line, to allow candid conversation	Company-assigned mentor, external network contact (e.g., Women in Mining chapter)
Ongoing	Access to a lateral peer network across sites or companies, not just a single mentor relationship	Industry association, alumni network from the training program

Part 5 — The Parallel Industry-Side Work

None of the above works if it is purely the responsibility of individual girls and their families to prepare for an environment that hasn't changed. This preparation needs to be matched by the receiving environment actually being safer — the culture code, inclusion toolkit, de-escalation training, and reporting frameworks developed elsewhere in this series.

Preparing girls well and improving the industry are not alternatives to each other. A well-prepared young woman entering an unreformed camp is still at real risk, and a reformed camp with no pipeline of prepared, confident women coming in loses much of its impact too. Both tracks need to run together.

Version [X] — Reviewed [Month/Year] — Companion to the Career Advocacy Toolkit, Closing the Authority Gap, and camp safety documents in this series

10. Career Advocacy Toolkit

Leveraging Your Value

A practical toolkit for women in mining and construction navigating office housework, invisible labour, and the path to promotion and fair pay

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Principle: **We value all work toward the success of our organization.**

Challenge: Female employees in construction and mining are often overlooked for promotions and expected to do more in the emotional labour area of life. How can these employees leverage their skills and value to be recognized and obtain higher employment status and wages? It's not uncommon for female executives to be expected to take notes, get the team coffee, clean up after a meeting and effectively mother their teammates emotionally.

This has a name in workplace research — it's called "office housework" or non-promotable tasks (NPTs), and it's remarkably well-studied. The most rigorous work on this comes from *The No Club*, a book by four professors (Babcock et al., 2022) built entirely around this problem. Their research found women spend roughly 200 more hours a year than men on work that doesn't lead to advancement — about a month of extra labour annually — and that women are about 48% more likely to volunteer for these tasks, while managers of both genders are about 44% more likely to assign them to women in the first place. In a male-dominated industry like mining or construction, this often layers on top of already being one of few women in the room, which makes the "just be a team player" pressure even harder to push back on.

Name what's actually happening, even just to yourself

The tasks you're describing — note-taking, meeting cleanup, "mothering" the team emotionally — are structurally different from the technical or leadership work that gets you promoted. Babcock et al. (2022) distinguish non-promotable tasks are necessary for the organization but rarely show up in a performance review or promotion case, while promotable work (leading a project, owning a technical outcome, being visible to decision-makers) is what actually moves someone up. The problem isn't that the tasks are worthless — it's that doing them instead of promotable work is a direct trade against your own advancement, and it's happening because of assumption, not because you're better suited to it.

Learn to pause instead of reflexively saying yes

Babcock et al. (2022) recommends resisting the instinct to agree immediately when a non-promotable request comes in. A simple, low-friction line like *"Let me check my capacity and get back to you"* buys time to actually decide whether the task serves your goals or just serves the room — rather than agreeing on reflex.

Reframe a decline around workload, not reluctance

Saying a flat "no" can trigger backlash for women in a way it often doesn't for men — but framing a decline around competing priorities is much harder to argue with: *"I'm heads-down on [the technical/leadership work I need visibility on] right now — could we rotate this one?"* This does two things: it protects you from the "difficult" label, and it opens the door to distributing the task more fairly across the team going forward.

Push for rotation systems, not volunteering

Because women volunteer for these tasks more often and get asked more often, the fix isn't individual willpower — it's structural. Advocating for a simple rotation (whoever's turn it is takes notes, organizes the toolbox talk, plans the crew event) removes the gendered default entirely, and it's a concrete, reasonable thing to propose to a supervisor without it reading as a personal complaint.

Make your actual work visible — your manager likely doesn't see it all

A manager typically only has insight into what they specifically asked you to do, not the informal load of emotional and administrative work happening around them. This means the fix isn't just "work harder and hope it's noticed" — it's actively tracking and surfacing what you do:

- Keep a running log (a "brag document") of technical wins, problems you solved, projects you led, and — separately — a rough accounting of non-promotable work you've absorbed. Bring both to performance and promotion conversations.
- When non-promotable work does show up in a review, name it plainly and explain its organizational value, rather than letting it disappear into "other duties" — but frame it as *evidence you've absorbed unstated team-maintenance costs*, not as your primary contribution.

Find sponsors, not just mentors

This distinction matters a lot in male-dominated technical industries. A mentor gives advice; a **sponsor** is someone senior with real influence who advocates for you in rooms you're not in — recommends you for the promotion, the stretch assignment, the project lead role, when you're not there to advocate for yourself. Since promotion decisions in mining and construction are often made informally among senior leadership, having someone credible pushing your name into those conversations does more than almost anything else you can do alone. Identify who actually holds influence over promotion decisions, and be direct about wanting their advocacy, not just their feedback.

Build a coalition, including men who see the pattern

Naming the pattern out loud lands very differently coming from more than one voice. If a male colleague says "hold on, let's rotate who's taking notes," it carries different social weight than the same words from the woman being asked to do it every time — not because it should, but because it currently does. Finding allies (of any gender) who've noticed the same dynamic, and coordinating even informally, makes the redistribution stick rather than reverting after one conversation.

Negotiate promotion and pay with data, explicitly

- Bring market-rate data for your role and region — industry associations, salary surveys, and even public job postings for comparable roles are useful ammunition.
- Ask directly what specific, measurable achievements would justify the next title or pay band, and get the answer in writing if possible — this converts a vague "keep doing good work" into a concrete target you can actually hit and later point back to.
- If the promotion criteria seem to reward visibility on technical or project-leadership work specifically, be deliberate about pursuing exactly that kind of assignment rather than the tasks you're currently being handed by default.

Connect with industry-specific networks

Organizations like Women in Mining and similar construction-sector networks exist specifically because this dynamic is common industry-wide, not unique to any one company. They're useful for benchmarking what fair treatment and compensation actually look like elsewhere, finding sponsors outside your own reporting line, and simply confirming you're not imagining the pattern — which matters when you're one of very few women in a room and the informal message is often that you should just be grateful to be there.

Part 1 — Scripts for Non-Promotable Requests

The goal isn't to never help — it's to stop defaulting into the role and to make the trade-off visible when it happens.

When a request comes in

> *"Let me check my capacity and get back to you."*

Buys time to decide whether the task serves your goals or just serves the room, instead of agreeing on reflex.

When you need to decline

> *"I'm heads-down on [specific technical or leadership work] right now — could we rotate this one?"*

Reframes the decline around competing priorities rather than reluctance, which is harder to push back on and avoids the "difficult" label women often face for a flat no.

When you want to propose a fix, not just decline

> *"Rather than it defaulting to me, what if we rotated note-taking / setup / cleanup across the team?"*

Moves the conversation from your individual refusal to a structural, reasonable fix — far easier for a supervisor to say yes to.

When you're already overloaded with it

> *"I've noticed I'm doing more of the day-to-day team coordination than the technical/project work I want to be evaluated on. Can we talk about rebalancing that?"*

Names the pattern directly and ties it explicitly to your advancement, which is the actual issue.

Part 2 — Brag Document Template

A manager typically only sees what they specifically asked you to do — not the full picture of your contributions. Keep this updated continuously, not just before a review, so nothing gets forgotten by the time it matters.

Promotable Wins (technical, project, leadership)

Date	What happened / your role	Measurable outcome

Absorbed Non-Promotable Work (track separately)

Not to complain about it in a review, but to make the invisible visible and support a conversation about rebalancing.

Date	Task absorbed	Approx. time cost

Part 3 — Sponsor Identification Worksheet

A mentor gives advice. A sponsor is someone senior with real influence who advocates for you in rooms you're not in. Promotion decisions in mining and construction are often made informally among senior leadership — having a credible sponsor pushing your name into those conversations matters more than almost anything you can do alone.

Who holds real influence over promotion decisions in my organization:

_____

Who already knows my work is strong: _____

What I want them to advocate for specifically (a project, a title, a stretch assignment):

_____

How I will ask for their sponsorship directly (not just feedback):

_____

A Direct Ask You Can Use

> *"I respect your judgment and I'd value having you advocate for me when [promotion / project / assignment] decisions come up. Would you be willing to do that?"*

Part 4 — Promotion & Pay Conversation Prep Sheet

Target role or pay band: _____

Market rate data gathered (source, figure): _____

Top 3 promotable achievements to lead with: _____

Specific, measurable criteria my manager has confirmed for this promotion:

_____

Sponsor(s) briefed before this conversation: _____

Opening Line You Can Use

> *"I'd like to talk about what it would take for me to move into [role/band]. Based on [achievements], I believe I'm ready, and I'd like to understand specifically what's needed to get there."*

If the Answer Is Vague

> *"Can we agree on specific, measurable criteria I can work toward, so we both have something concrete to check progress against?"*

Part 5 — Where to Go for Outside Perspective

- **Industry-specific networks:** Organizations like Women in Mining and comparable construction-sector networks exist specifically because this pattern is common industry-wide. Useful for benchmarking fair treatment and pay, and finding sponsors outside your own reporting line.
- **Market-rate data sources:** Salary surveys, industry association data, and public job postings for comparable roles and regions — useful ammunition for a pay conversation.
- **Allies who see the pattern:** Colleagues, of any gender, who've noticed the same pattern. A coalition makes redistribution of non-promotable work stick, rather than reverting after one conversation.

For personal use — update the brag document continuously, and revisit the prep sheet before every performance or pay conversation

11. Closing the Authority Gap

Why women's ideas get discounted or reassigned to men in leadership settings, and what teams can do about it

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Principle: **Equal authority has equal input**

Challenge: Female leaders generally struggle more to be heard, respected or followed. An idea rejected or ignored when raised by a female leader, then embraced when the same idea comes from a man, is one of the most consistently documented patterns in workplace research on gender and leadership. It isn't usually one bad actor — it's an implicit, widespread pattern that requires deliberate, structural counter-measures, not just individual awareness.

Part 1 — Naming What's Actually Happening

- **Credibility discounting ("prove-it-again" bias).** Research from the Center for WorkLife Law (Williams & Dempsey, 2014) found women, especially in male-dominated fields, have to prove competence repeatedly, while men are often assumed competent until proven otherwise. The same idea from a woman gets scrutinized harder before it's accepted.
- **Ideas reassigned to men.** From the boardroom to the political realm you've all seen it: a woman raises an idea in a meeting, it gets minimal response, and minutes later a man restates the same idea and receives credit and buy-in as if it were new. Sometimes shorthanded as an idea getting "hepeated," a term popularized on Twitter in 2017.
- **The likability / competence tightrope.** Research on gender and leadership describes a bind specific to women in leadership (Costigan, 2024) Catalyst calls this the double-bind dilemma: women leaders are judged against a "masculine" standard of leadership, which leaves them few good options whatever their style (Costigan, 2024). Women seen as warm may be judged less competent; women seen as assertive may be judged competent but less likable. Men in leadership do not face the same trade-off.
- **The authority gap.** Journalist Mary Ann Sieghart's (2021), drawing on global surveys, documents that men and women alike unconsciously extend less authority and credibility to women by default, even in cultures that consciously believe in equality — meaning this is a widespread implicit pattern, not just individual bad actors.

Part 2 — Organizational-Level Fixes

Institutionalize attribution, don't leave it to memory

Meeting norms that require crediting the original speaker of an idea — "building on what [name] said" — turn a passive courtesy into an enforced norm. Formalize this as a meeting facilitation rule, not just an individual habit, since relying on people to remember and credit correctly under time pressure does not work reliably.

Track who talks, and who gets credit

A simple, informal audit — who proposes ideas in meetings, who gets attributed with the idea later, whose ideas get implemented — makes an invisible pattern visible. Once leadership sees the actual gap in a meeting they were in, it becomes far harder to dismiss as anecdotal.

Separate the messenger from the message where possible

Anonymize proposals before initial evaluation — written proposals reviewed blind before the author is revealed — so the idea gets judged on its merits first. Not feasible for every decision, but a concrete structural fix for project proposals, budget requests, or process improvements.

Give women in leadership real authority, not just titles

A woman promoted into a role without the budget, staffing, or decision rights her male predecessor had is set up to be second-guessed regardless of her competence. Structural authority needs to match the title for credibility to follow naturally.

Address the double-bind directly in leadership training — for everyone

Training that names the competent-versus-likable bind explicitly, for the whole leadership team, does more than coaching only the women affected by it to "communicate more assertively," which often just triggers the backlash the bind describes.

Part 3 — Team and Peer-Level Fixes

- **Practice amplification deliberately** A strategy popularized by women staffers in the Obama White House (Eilperin, 2016). Any team member, of any gender, who notices an idea getting minimal response can immediately reinforce it: "I think what [name] just said is worth going back to" — restating and crediting it in the moment, rather than letting it die and resurface later under someone else's name.
- **Call out repetition plainly when it happens.** "That's exactly what [name] proposed a few minutes ago," said matter-of-factly and not combatively, interrupts the pattern in real time and normalizes noticing it as a group habit, not a personal grievance.
- **Build male allies who actively redirect credit.** A male colleague or leader who says "let's hear more from [name] on this, it was her idea" carries disproportionate weight in male-dominated environments — not because it should, but because of the authority gap described above.

Part 4 — Meeting Norm Script

A short script a facilitator or team lead can introduce at the start of a meeting cadence — read plainly, not as a lecture.

> *"Quick team norm: when we're building on someone else's idea, let's name them — 'building on what [name] raised' — rather than just running with it. It keeps credit accurate and makes sure good ideas don't get lost or reassigned by accident."*

If a repeat happens despite the norm, any team member can interject lightly:

> *"Just flagging — that's the same point [name] made a few minutes ago. Worth crediting."*

Part 5 — Noticing the Pattern: A Team Guide

Use this as a shared reference, not a scoring system — the goal is building a shared habit of noticing, not assigning individual blame.

Signal to watch for	What it might indicate	What to do in the moment
An idea gets minimal response, then is restated minutes later by someone else and gets traction	Amplification failure — the idea's value wasn't the issue, attribution was	Name the original source plainly: "that's what [name] said earlier"
A proposal from a woman gets more follow-up questions or pushback than similar proposals from men	Possible credibility discounting / prove-it-again bias	Ask whether the same scrutiny would apply to an equivalent proposal from someone else on the team
A female leader is described as "aggressive" or "abrasive" for behaviour that would be called "decisive" in a male leader	The competence / likability tightrope	Name the double standard directly if you notice it, without needing to resolve it on the spot
A woman in a leadership role has to repeatedly justify decisions that would go unquestioned from a male peer	The authority gap in practice	Support the decision publicly if you agree with it, rather than staying neutral and letting scrutiny stand unchallenged

Part 6 — What Individual Women Leaders Can Do

- **State ownership explicitly and early.** Rather than waiting to be credited: "Building on the point I raised earlier..." This isn't about being combative — it's pre-empting the erasure before it happens.
- **Build a visible track record of outcomes, not just ideas.** Because credibility is contested repeatedly rather than assumed, tying proposals to measurable results after the fact gives a concrete rebuttal to prove-it-again dynamics over time (see the companion Career Advocacy Toolkit for a brag-document template).
- **Find and use sponsors specifically for this purpose.** Someone senior who will actively attribute and defend your ideas in rooms you're not in does more to break this pattern structurally than any individual communication tactic.

Version [X] — Reviewed [Month/Year] — Intended for use alongside team meeting norms and leadership training

12. Compensation Equity Psychology

The Psychology of the Pay Gap

Why equally or more qualified female candidates are often offered less — the underlying mechanisms and the structural fixes that interrupt them

Principle: **Qualifications and experience determine salary, period.**

Challenge: The gap between what equally or more qualified male and female candidates are offered is rarely the result of one deliberate decision. It is usually several distinct psychological and structural mechanisms stacking on top of each other. Understanding them separately matters because each one calls for a different fix — a bias-awareness session alone will not fix a salary-history-anchoring problem, and a salary band alone will not fix a negotiation-backlash problem.

Part 1 — The Underlying Mechanisms

1. Salary history anchoring

When employers ask about current or previous salary and use it to set an offer, they mechanically carry forward whatever gap already existed in that person's earnings history. Since women are statistically more likely to be underpaid in prior roles, this single practice compounds the gap forward, career after career — it is not a judgment about the candidate in front of them, it is a carried-over artifact of history.

2. The negotiation backlash effect

Research by Hannah Riley Bowles and colleagues (Bowles et al., 2007) found a genuinely asymmetric dynamic: when men negotiate for more money, they are generally seen as appropriately assertive; when women negotiate the same way, they are often penalized socially — seen as pushier, less likable, harder to work with — even by people who explicitly endorse gender equality. This shapes the gap in two ways: women learn, correctly based on real social cost, to negotiate less often or less assertively, and even when they negotiate identically to a man, evaluators respond to it more negatively.

3. “Think manager, think male” and competence assumptions

Decades of research in industrial psychology, beginning with Virginia Schein's foundational studies (Schein, 1973) and replicated many times since, found that when people picture a successful manager, the traits that come to mind cluster much more closely with stereotypically male traits (assertive, decisive, competitive) than female-coded ones (collaborative, nurturing) — even among people who do not consciously endorse gender stereotypes. This shapes hiring and pay decisions upstream of any negotiation, since identical qualifications can unconsciously read as slightly more convincing coming from a male candidate.

4. Statistical discrimination based on assumed life trajectory

Employers sometimes make an unstated, often unconscious actuarial guess that women are more likely to take extended leave, reduce hours, or leave the workforce for caregiving, and discount expected long-term value or negotiating leverage accordingly, even when the specific candidate has given no indication this applies to them. This connects to the well-documented “motherhood penalty” (mothers rated as less competent and committed, offered lower salaries in controlled studies) versus the “fatherhood bonus” (fathers often rated as more stable and committed, sometimes offered higher pay), found in experimental and audit studies such as Correll et al. (2007).

5. Assumed price sensitivity

A more implicit mechanism: employers may unconsciously anticipate that a female candidate is statistically less likely to negotiate hard or walk away from a lower offer, and price the initial offer accordingly — an unconscious risk calculation about how much negotiating friction the offer will generate, shaped by aggregate patterns rather than anything about the individual candidate.

6. In-group favoritism and comparison bias

In male-dominated fields such as mining and construction, hiring managers, who are disproportionately male, tend to unconsciously rate candidates who remind them of themselves, or of people who have succeeded in the role before, as a better "fit." Because the historical pool of successful people in the role skews male, this quietly advantages male candidates in both hiring and compensation decisions, independent of actual qualifications.

Part 2 — Structural Fixes That Interrupt Each Mechanism

Mechanism	Structural fix
Salary history anchoring	Ban salary history questions in interviews and applications and base offers on role, level, and market data instead of a candidate's prior pay.
Negotiation backlash	Use structured, non-negotiable (or narrowly-banded) offer ranges tied to the role, so the outcome depends less on who negotiates hardest and more on a consistent standard applied to everyone.
"Think manager, think male"	Train hiring managers on this specific research finding by name, rather than generic diversity training.
Statistical discrimination / motherhood penalty	Standardize evaluation criteria in writing before interviews begin, and use structured scoring rubrics rather than open-ended impressions, which reduces room for assumptions about life trajectory to influence the number.
Assumed price sensitivity	Present the same opening offer approach to all candidates for a given role and level, removing case-by-case discretion about how much room to leave for negotiation.
In-group favoritism / fit bias	Use structured, standardized interview questions and multiple, diverse interviewers rather than a single manager's subjective "fit" assessment.

Part 3 — Negotiation Coaching That Accounts for the Backlash Asymmetry

Advice to “just negotiate more” without acknowledging the real social cost documented in the research above can leave women worse off, not better — coaching needs to account for the asymmetry itself, not just encourage the same tactic used by men.

- **Relational framing reduces, but doesn't eliminate, backlash.** Framing a request around organizational or team benefit (“this will let me take on X”) rather than purely personal gain has been shown to reduce the backlash effect in some studies, without eliminating it entirely (Bowles & Babcock, 2013).
- **Anchor requests in external data, not personal need.** Bringing market-rate data as the basis for a request shifts the conversation from a personal ask to an objective standard, which is harder to read as pushy.
- **Use sponsors to advocate directly.** A sponsor or manager who advocates for the increase on a woman's behalf sidesteps the direct backlash risk of self-advocacy entirely — connecting to the sponsorship strategies in the companion Career Advocacy Toolkit.
- **Leadership should actively watch for and name backlash when it happens.** If backlash occurs despite reasonable, well-framed negotiation, name it as a bias pattern in performance conversations rather than accepting it as a fair assessment of the person's approach.

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13. Leadership Development Framework

Turning strong tactical performers into effective crew leaders — promotion criteria, training curriculum, mentorship structure, and an evaluation scorecard

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Every other document in this series — the culture code, de-escalation training, inclusion toolkit, and implementation assurance framework — assumes competent frontline leadership exists to carry it out. That layer has to be built deliberately. What's often described as "being bad at management" is frequently the Peter Principle (Peter & Hull, 1969) in action: people promoted for technical excellence, into a role requiring an entirely different skill set they were never trained for.

Part 1 — Fixing the Promotion Decision Itself

- **Separate technical mastery from leadership readiness as distinct, explicitly assessed criteria.** A promotion decision should ask two different questions, not one: is this person excellent at the work, and does this person show early signs of the very different skills leadership requires — communication, delegation, conflict navigation, and emotional regulation under pressure. Being excellent at the first says almost nothing about the second.
- **Create a technical-expert career track that doesn't require becoming a manager.** A lot of great tradespeople get pushed into supervision because it's the only path to more pay and status — losing a great technician and gaining a mediocre supervisor at the same time. A parallel "senior technical specialist" ladder, with real pay and prestige, gives skilled people advancement without forcing everyone through management.
- **Test leadership aptitude before making it permanent.** A trial period as a lead hand or acting supervisor, with real feedback from the crew, is far more informative before a permanent promotion than any interview — and easier to walk back if it isn't a fit.

Promotion Readiness Checklist

Criterion	Evidence observed
Gives clear, specific feedback to peers without it becoming personal	
Willing to delegate tasks rather than doing everything themselves	
Stays composed and de-escalates rather than escalates under pressure	
Shows awareness of team dynamics, not just task completion	

Criterion	Evidence observed
Sought out informally by peers for guidance already	
Performed well in a trial lead-hand or acting-supervisor period, with crew feedback gathered	

Part 2 — Training Curriculum Outline

Gallup's research on manager quality has found managers account for at least 70% of the variance in employee engagement (Harter & Adkins, 2015). Leadership development is one of the highest-leverage investments a company can make, not a line-item formality.

Module	Covers
Difficult conversations & feedback	Delivering correction without it becoming personal; running the Performance Improvement Plan process; de-escalation techniques (see companion De-escalation & Belonging document)
Delegation	Letting go of the tools — the hardest transition for a new supervisor is learning their job changed from “do the work well” to “help others do the work well”
Team dynamics awareness	Recognizing tokenism/scarcity patterns, old-boys-club dynamics, and credibility discounting, so supervisors can operationalize the inclusion and belonging work rather than just being handed a policy
Performance management	Using the severity triage and PIP tools already built, rather than avoiding conflict entirely or overreacting
Self-awareness & regulation	A supervisor who cannot regulate their own stress response has no chance of de-escalating someone else's

Part 3 — The 70-20-10 Development Model

The widely used 70-20-10 model holds that formal training accounts for roughly 10% of real development (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1996). Hands-on experience accounts for about 70%, and mentorship or coaching from someone more experienced accounts for about 20%. Course content alone is not enough.

- **Pair every new supervisor with an experienced mentor supervisor.** Someone the new supervisor can call when a real situation comes up, not just a classroom contact.
- **Build in real stretch assignments.** Leading a specific project or initiative from this series — the activity calendar, a safety improvement — builds leadership muscle in a lower-stakes way before carrying the full weight of crew management.
- **Debrief real incidents as learning.** When a supervisor handles, or mishandles, a real conflict, a structured, non-punitive after-action conversation teaches more than a hypothetical case study.

Part 4 — Mentor-Pairing Structure

Timeframe	Activity	Who's involved
First 30 days	Weekly check-in with assigned mentor; shadow mentor handling a real difficult conversation if possible	New supervisor, mentor supervisor
Days 30–90	Bi-weekly check-in; first solo-led difficult conversation debriefed with mentor afterward	New supervisor, mentor supervisor
Ongoing	Monthly check-in; participation in cross-site supervisor forum	New supervisor, mentor, peer supervisor network

A regular, even informal, cross-site or cross-crew forum for supervisors to compare notes, share what's working, and get support handling hard situations reduces burnout and spreads good practice faster than any single training session.

Part 5 — Supervisor Evaluation Scorecard

If a supervisor is only ever evaluated on production numbers, the message received is that people-management doesn't actually count, regardless of what's said in training. Evaluation should weight leading indicators alongside output.

Metric	Data source	Rating
Production / operational output	Standard operational reporting	
Turnover on their crew	HR records	
Culture code adherence, peer-reported	Culture code reporting channel	

Metric	Data source	Rating
Psychological safety / fulfillment scores for their crew	Self-report app	
Near-miss and concern reporting rate on their crew	Safety / incident reporting system	
Delegation — evidence of developing others, not just directing	Peer and crew feedback	

Part 6 — Give Supervisors Real Authority

A supervisor asked to enforce a safety stop, a culture code standard, or a difficult HR conversation needs the actual authority to act, or the training is theoretical. If every real decision has to be escalated upward anyway, supervisors learn helplessness rather than leadership, regardless of how well-trained they are — this connects directly to the stop-authority and escalation principles in the companion Implementation Assurance Framework.

Part 7 — Watch for Burnout in the Leadership Layer

Newly promoted supervisors are often squeezed from both directions — expected to enforce standards from above while still being "one of the crew" from below, without the compensation, support, or authority that would make that position sustainable. The mental health and decompression-cycle material earlier in this series applies to supervisors too, and arguably more acutely, since they carry both their own load and the emotional load of managing others.

Version [X] — Reviewed [Month/Year] — Foundational to the effective implementation of every other document in this series