Safe Space Leadership

LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

Six signs leadership may be adding to retention risk

A quick check for people and culture leaders

Use it to look across your teams, or with a leader to look at their own.

People rarely leave without warning. The signs usually show up in everyday leadership months before a resignation, but they're easy to read as something else: a busy quarter, a difficult personality or a team that's always been that way.

Australian employees name poor manager quality as the top reason they would leave (Gartner, 2026). The signs below are where that often shows first, and each one points to leadership behaviours that can be built.

Retention and leadership in Australian workplaces

1 in 7
employees left their employer in the past year, on average
AHRI, 2026

$28,500
average cost to replace one employee, as estimated by employers
AHRI, 2026

31%
of employers report people management capability gaps among their leaders
AHRI, 2026

Tick the signs you're seeing. One on its own may mean little. Several in the same team are worth a closer look.

	SIGN	WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE	A QUESTION TO ASK
☐	Conversations are being delayed	Performance or behaviour issues raised months after they began. Teams working around a problem instead of addressing it.	*What has this team been working around, and for how long?*
☐	Feedback arrives only at review time	People surprised by their review. Recognition that's rare or general.	*When did people in this team last hear specifically what they did well?*
☐	One team stands out	Higher turnover, unplanned absence or internal transfers than similar teams elsewhere.	*What's different about how this team is led?*
☐	Growth is rarely discussed	Career conversations happen only when someone asks, or resigns.	*Could each person say where they're heading here, and who's helping them get there?*
☐	The same few voices fill the room	Newer, quieter or part-time team members rarely raise ideas or concerns.	*Whose view do we never hear, and what would it take to hear it?*
☐	Leaders are doing instead of leading	Managers absorbed in tasks, with little time left for their people.	*How much of this leader's week goes to their people, rather than the work?*

ONE QUESTION FOR YOURSELF

If one of our best people resigned tomorrow, would we have seen it coming?

If the honest answer is "probably not", start with the sign you ticked most often, and the question beside it. This isn't a score. It's a prompt for a better conversation, with the leader concerned or across your leadership team.

The signs are rarely the problem. Leaving them unanswered is. Each one is a chance to have a conversation earlier, while there's still time to change the outcome.

Want to know where your leaders stand?

The free Retention Scorecard takes about 10 minutes and shows the leadership area that needs attention most.

safespaceleadership.com.au/scorecard

SSL builds leaders people choose to stay for.

General information about leadership practice. Sources: Gartner, Global Talent Monitor, Q2 2026 (820 Australian employees); Australian HR Institute, Quarterly Australian Work Outlook, June Quarter 2026 (606 employers; average turnover 13.5% in the 12 months to March 2026) and March Quarter 2026 (612 employers); AHRI, Managing the 5Rs, 2026 (replacement cost is an employer estimate). Updated November 2026.

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