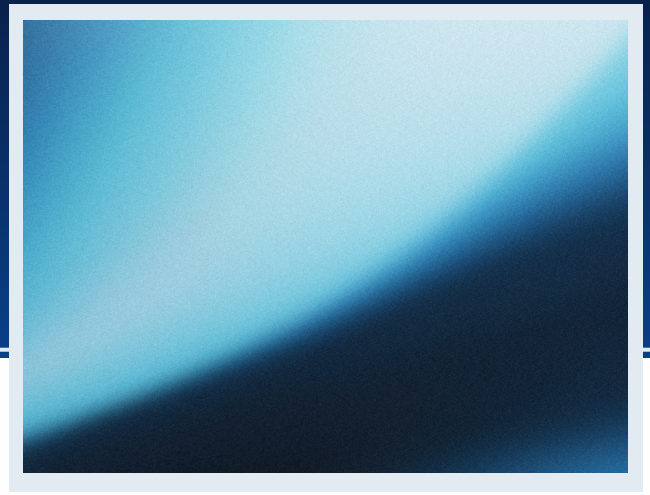


The Deep Dive | August 2026

By Deepsky Leaders

Clarity under pressure. Performance that lasts.



Above the Line

A hard question lands in a board meeting. The leader on the receiving end feels it instantly – the tightening, the urge to defend, the explanation forming before the question has even finished.

In that moment, without noticing, they've moved.

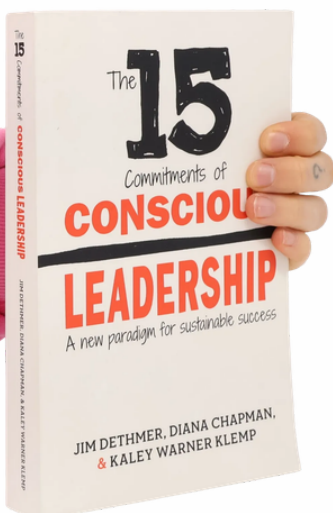
Locating Yourself

One of the most practical frameworks we've worked with in sessions this year comes from conscious leadership: the line.

Above the line, a leader is open, curious and committed to learning.

Below it, they are closed, defensive and committed to being right. Everyone drops below the line under pressure – that's wiring, not weakness. What separates leaders isn't whether they drop. It's how quickly they notice, and how deliberately they come back.

That noticing is called locating yourself. Under pressure, thinking narrows, "to me" – circumstances happening to you, blame and resistance. Accountability begins with the shift to "by me": what am I contributing here, and what do I want to create?



The framework is explored in depth in 'The 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership' (Dethmer, Chapman and Klemp).

State awareness is a human foundation.

You cannot choose your response to a moment you haven't noticed you're in.

Three Ways Back to Above the Line

Locate yourself first:

Awareness precedes choice.

Try this: whilst preparing for your next difficult conversation, silently ask "am I above or below the line right now?" It takes two seconds and changes what comes next.

Name The State:

Putting a word to what you're feeling - even just internally - loosens its grip and turns a reaction into a decision.

Try this: when you feel the tightening, give it one honest word before you speak.

Swap the question:

Below the line asks, "why is this happening to me?" Above it asks, "what is there to learn, and what do I want to create from here?"

Try this: when you catch blame forming, write one sentence starting "What I can influence here is..."

Where Are You Leading From?

No leader can stay above the line all the time. The ones people trust under pressure are simply faster at noticing where they are, and more deliberate about where they lead from next.

In this week's hardest moment, where were you and how long did it take you to notice?

At Deepsky, we work with leaders to build the inner foundations that make performance sustainable — for them, and for the teams they lead. If this resonates, the conversation is worth having.

Connect with us to prepare for tomorrow



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