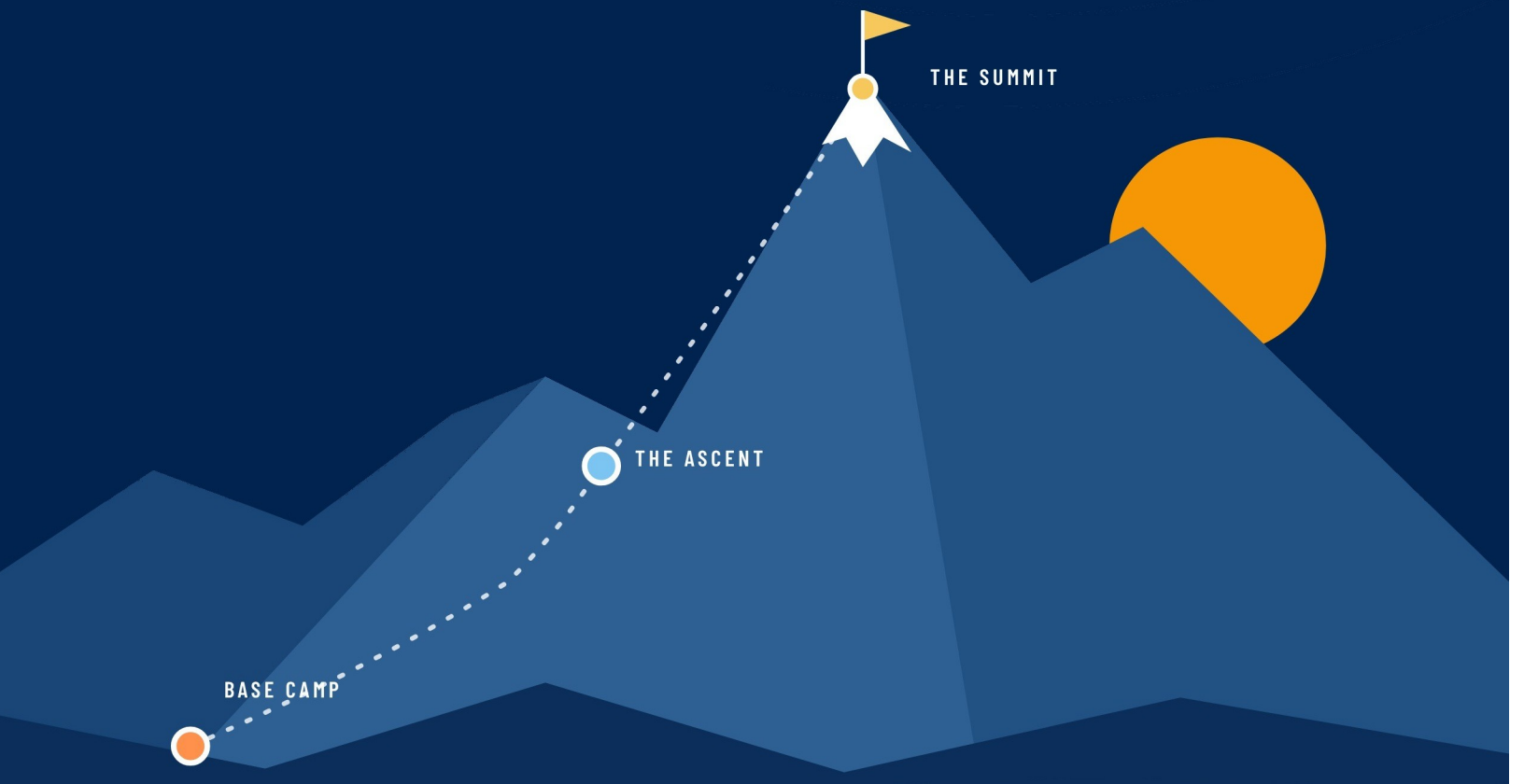
ASCEND LEADERSHIP TRAINING · PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Ascend
Leadership Training

Three tracks. One climb. Development that meets people where they are.



Know yourself. Lead better. Build something that lasts.

ASCEND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The Ascend Program

Leadership is not a destination. It is a climb. Every stage of that climb requires different preparation, different tools, and a different understanding of the terrain ahead. Ascend is Meridian's leadership training program, built on the belief that development should meet people exactly where they are on that climb, and help them go higher.

The program is organized into three distinct tracks. Base Camp is designed for high-potential individual contributors who have been nominated by their organizations: people identified as ready to develop their leadership capacities before the title arrives. The Ascent is designed for newer managers building a conscious leadership identity from the ground up in their first years of leading people. The Summit is designed for experienced managers and directors who have been leading for years and are ready to examine and reshape the patterns that have formed.

The three tracks share a common philosophy: experience first, reflection second, framework third. Participants do not sit through lectures and then try to apply theory. They have an experience that produces a real feeling or realization, and then they are handed the framework that explains what just happened to them. That sequence follows the evidence on how adults learn best, and it is what makes Ascend different from many leadership training programs.

The science of how people learn and change runs through all three tracks, not as a curriculum in itself but as a practical lens. Understanding why people respond the way they do under pressure, in conflict, in change, and in connection does not make leadership more complicated. It makes behavior less confusing and growth more deliberate.



Base Camp
CULTIVATION



The Ascent
CONSTRUCTION



The Summit
EXCAVATION

ASCEND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The Ascend Methodology

01 Experience first. → **02** Reflection second. → **03** Framework third.

Many training programs work backward. They present a framework, explain the theory, and ask participants to apply it. The problem is that adults learn most deeply when they connect new information to lived experience. In our experience, abstract frameworks without that connection produce recognition but rarely change.

The Ascend methodology reverses the sequence intentionally. Every session is designed around an experience that participants have first, before the framework is named. Sometimes that experience is a structured exercise. Sometimes it is a conversation. Sometimes it is a piece of writing, a sensory trigger, or a story that surfaces something the participant already knows but has never articulated. The framework comes after, as the explanation for something the participant has already felt.

This approach is grounded in learning research. Research shows: working on a problem before instruction produces better learning than instruction first (Sinha and Kapur, 2021). In our experience, emotional engagement and hands-on experience make the learning stick, and reflection turns experience into understanding. The Ascend program is engineered around all three.

The other foundational element is the cohort. Participants learn from the material and from each other. The cohort is designed so those relationships can continue after the final session, as a network of peers who keep challenging and supporting each other.

ASCEND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Program Overview and Pricing

	Base Camp	The Ascent	The Summit
AUDIENCE	High-potential individual contributors nominated by their organizations	Newer managers, 0–3 years managing people	Experienced managers and directors, 3+ years
FOCUS	Cultivation: developing leadership capacities before the title arrives	Construction: building a conscious leadership identity from the ground up	Excavation: examining and reshaping leadership patterns already formed
SESSIONS	6 full days		
FORMAT	On-site cohort workshops		
COHORT SIZE	8 to 24 participants*		
PRIVATE RATE	**$24,000 per cohort**	**$28,000 per cohort**	**$36,000 per cohort**
COMBINED DISCOUNT	15% off when two or more tracks are combined, plus a complimentary two-hour alignment session for senior leadership		

**Larger cohorts by arrangement, once a Meridian-certified co-facilitator is available.*

Private company engagements include pre-program consultation, customization of content to the organization's context and culture, all participant materials, and a post-program debrief with organizational leadership.

Meridian works directly with organizations to design each cohort, from initial consultation through delivery and debrief. Every engagement is customized to the organization's context, culture, and the specific people participating.

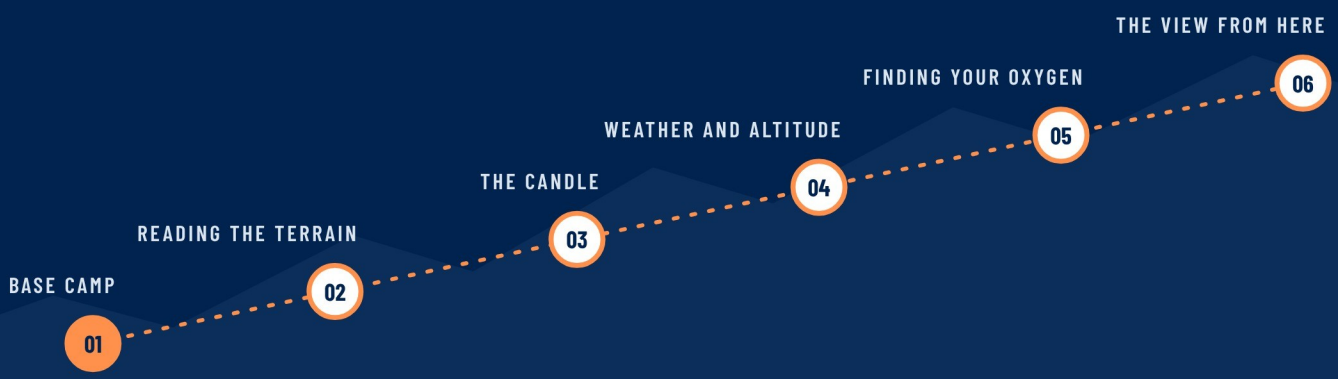
All three tracks are delivered on-site with the organization. Meridian works with each client to identify a space that supports focused, reflective work. The goal is a room that feels different from a standard meeting room: a signal that this day is different from an ordinary workday.

TRACK · BASE CAMP

Base Camp

Cultivation: developing leadership capacities before the title arrives

- TRACK ONE: BEFORE THE TITLE



Leadership does not begin with a promotion. It begins with a choice, and the best organizations do not wait until someone has a title to start investing in their development. Base Camp is for people who have been identified as ready for that investment now, before the weight of a leadership role makes honest self-examination harder.

This track is designed for high-potential individual contributors who have been nominated by their organizations. That nomination is not incidental. It is the context for everything that happens in the program. Participants are here because someone who leads them sees something worth developing. Base Camp's job is to help them see it too, and to begin cultivating the leadership capacities that will carry them regardless of what title comes next.

Base Camp is delivered in a cohort workshop format: six full days, once a month, on-site with the organization. The spacing is intentional. Growth requires incubation.

SESSION 1 OF 6

Base Camp

Who are you before anyone tells you who to be?

Every great climb begins at base camp. Not with the summit in sight, but with honest preparation. This session is about establishing the identity foundation that everything else is built on. Participants examine who they are as people (where they come from, what shaped them, what they bring) before they examine who they are as leaders. The two are inseparable.

CORE THEMES
Self-awareness, identity foundations, the nomination and what it means, recognition of existing leadership capacities

KEY ACTIVITIES
Leadership story exercise, recognition exercise, cohort agreement and personal commitment

TAKEAWAY
A two-sentence commitment grounded in what was seen in them and what they are choosing

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Observe one moment this month when you led something, whether formally or not. Write down what happened and what it felt like.

SESSION 2 OF 6

Reading the Terrain

How do you see the world, and how does the world see you?

Knowing yourself in isolation is only half the picture. This session examines how participants show up in relationship, under pressure, and in the context of their specific environments, and how the world experiences them in return. Participants map the filters and assumptions they look through, and examine the gap between what they intend to project and what other people actually receive.

CORE THEMES
Perceptual filters, the intention-impact gap, blind spots and signature strengths, the Perception Statement

KEY ACTIVITIES
Lens mapping exercise, intention and impact pairs exercise, perception statement development

TAKEAWAY
A two-sentence Perception Statement: one honest sentence about what they bring, one about where the gap lives

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Notice one moment each day where your intention and your impact were aligned, and one where they diverged.

SESSION 3 OF 6

The Candle

How do you move people when you have no authority to move them?

This session takes its name from a simple truth: using your flame to light someone else's does not diminish your light. It creates more light. The focus is on influence without authority: the specific mechanisms through which individual contributors move people, build trust, and create conditions where others want to follow. Participants identify their Influence Signature and test it against the hard cases.

CORE THEMES
Influence without authority, the five sources of influence, the Influence Signature, influence under pressure

KEY ACTIVITIES
Influence inventory, signature identification exercise, hard cases discussion, Flame Exercise declaration

TAKEAWAY
A three-sentence Flame Exercise declaration: influence signature, the situation where it most needs to be used deliberately, and a specific behavioral commitment

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Notice one moment each day when you attempted to move someone. What source did you draw on? What happened?

SESSION 4 OF 6



Weather and Altitude

What do you do when things get hard and you have no lever to pull?

The higher you climb, the more unpredictable the conditions. This session addresses the specific forms of hard that individual contributors face: being overlooked, navigating difficult dynamics without formal authority, sitting with ambiguity, watching something go wrong when you cannot fix it. Participants name their specific weather, identify their altitude warning signs, and build a personal Weather Map.

CORE THEMES
Stress and self-regulation, the altitude problem, naming the weather, altitude warning signs, the Response Toolkit

KEY ACTIVITIES
Weather naming exercise, warning signs small group, Response Toolkit introduction, Weather Map build

TAKEAWAY
A three-component Weather Map: specific weather, altitude warning signs, and a grounding practice

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Use your Weather Map once this month in a real situation. Write down what happened.

SESSION 5 OF 6



Finding Your Oxygen

What sustains you, and what are you actually here for?

At altitude, the most dangerous thing is not the mountain. It is running out of what sustains you: your oxygen. This session asks what oxygen actually looks like for each participant: not the stated motivation,

but the intrinsic drive underneath it that holds even when conditions are unfavorable. Participants excavate the why beneath the what and identify the specific practices that keep that oxygen accessible.

CORE THEMES
Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation, the oxygen vs. fuel distinction, the why beneath the what, sustaining practices, the drain audit

KEY ACTIVITIES
Oxygen vs. fuel mapping, five-whys writing exercise, sustaining practices identification, drain audit, Oxygen Source declaration

TAKEAWAY
A three-part Oxygen Source declaration: what sustains them, what they are actually here for, and one sustaining practice they commit to protect

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Notice each day whether you are drawing on your oxygen source or running on fuel. Record what makes the difference.

SESSION 6 OF 6

The View From Here

Who are you, what do you bring, and what are you committing to?

The final session is not a graduation. It is a launch. Participants bring everything built across the program and name it clearly in three ways: who they are as a leader, what they bring to any room they enter, and what they are committing to going forward. The session closes with the Cohort Covenant, the mutual accountability structure that extends the program beyond the final day.

CORE THEMES
Integration, the three-part declaration, the Cohort Covenant, the 90-day structure

KEY ACTIVITIES
Integration writing, small group witness, declaration exercise, commitment exercise, Cohort Covenant

TAKEAWAY
A three-part declaration, a Cohort Covenant, and a 90-day check-in structure

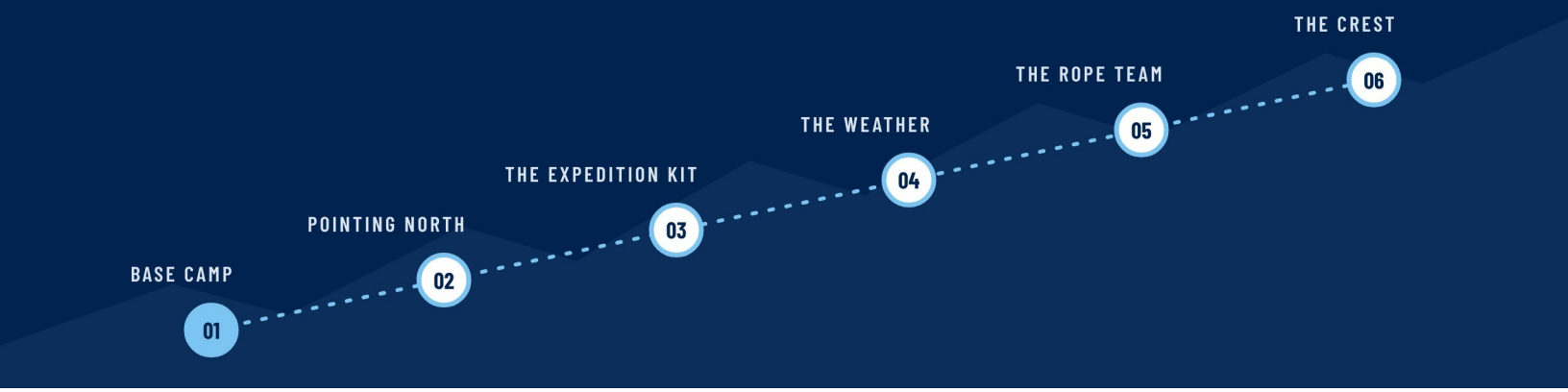
BETWEEN SESSIONS
Three questions at 30, 60, and 90 days: Am I keeping my commitment? What have I learned? What does this cohort owe me, and have I asked for it?

TRACK · THE ASCENT

The Ascent

Construction: building a conscious leadership identity from the ground up

- TRACK TWO: THE FIRST YEARS OF LEADING PEOPLE



In our experience, the first years of managing people are among the most significant and least supported years of a professional career. Many new managers are promoted because they were excellent individual contributors, and then discovered that the skills that earned the promotion are not the skills the new role requires. The Ascent is for people in that transition: newer managers who are ready to build a conscious leadership identity rather than discovering it by accident.

This track is designed for managers in their first three years of leading people. It does not assume prior leadership training or formal development. It assumes a genuine willingness to look honestly at who they are and who they are becoming as a leader. Participants leave with more than a set of frameworks. They leave with a leadership identity that is genuinely theirs.

The Ascent is delivered in a cohort workshop format: six full days, once a month, on-site with the organization.

SESSION 1 OF 6

Base Camp

Who you are and what brought you here

Every great climb begins at base camp, not with the summit in sight, but with honest preparation. This session establishes the foundation that everything else is built on. Participants examine who they are as people before they examine who they are as leaders, because the two are inseparable. The session surfaces the story, the values, and the formative experiences that are already shaping how each participant leads.

CORE THEMES
Self-awareness, personal story, the decision to lead, what brought them here

KEY ACTIVITIES
Leadership story exercise, cohort connection experience, personal commitment

TAKEAWAY
A clear articulation of what brought them here and a written statement of leadership intention

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Observe one moment this month where you led without being asked to. Write down what happened and what it felt like.

SESSION 2 OF 6

Pointing North

What you actually stand for

Values are not a list of words on a wall. They are a decision-making system: the principles that determine what a leader does when the situation is hard, the path is unclear, or honoring what matters will cost something. This session helps participants identify their actual values through three lenses: a structured sort, their peak moments, and their hardest decisions. They leave with three values stated in behavioral language they can actually use.

CORE THEMES
Values as a decision-making system, the values sort, peak moments and hard decisions, behavioral language, values under pressure

KEY ACTIVITIES
Values sort exercise, peak moments and hard decisions lenses, behavioral language translation, values declaration

TAKEAWAY
Three values, backed by evidence from your own decisions, stated as principles in behavioral language, and one commitment for how to lead from them

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Notice one moment each day when you are leading from your values, and one when you are not. What made the difference?

SESSION 3 OF 6

The Expedition Kit

What you naturally bring, and are you using it on purpose?

Every climber's kit is different. Yours was assembled from your experience, your natural strengths, and the specific terrain you have navigated. In this session we open the pack, identifying what is in it, what you reach for most, what you have been carrying without using, and what has been weighing you down without earning its place. The session moves through internal identification, external calibration, shadow discovery, and team composition.

CORE THEMES
Strengths as natural patterns, the three internal lenses, external calibration, the shadow side framework, team composition

KEY ACTIVITIES
Internal inventory exercise, external assessment calibration, shadow discovery work, team lens exercise

TAKEAWAY
Three strengths, backed by evidence from your own work, one named shadow, and two behavioral commitments about how to lead from what they carry

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Notice one moment each day when you are using a strength intentionally, and one when its shadow side is running without your awareness.

SESSION 4 OF 6

The Weather

How you show up, communicate, and influence

The higher you climb, the more unpredictable the conditions. This session addresses the interpersonal terrain that every leader faces: difficult conversations, competing agendas, the challenge of maintaining relationships under pressure, and the question of how to influence people who do not report to them. Participants develop a personal communication framework and practice the hardest conversations before they are in a real one.

CORE THEMES
Communication style and impact, difficult conversations, influence and stakeholder dynamics, emotional regulation under pressure

KEY ACTIVITIES
Communication style assessment, difficult conversation framework, influence mapping, facilitated practice scenarios

TAKEAWAY
A personal communication framework and a preparation guide for one real upcoming conversation

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Have one conversation you have been avoiding. Write down how it went.

SESSION 5 OF 6

The Rope Team

How you see, develop, and bring out the best in others

The strongest climbers are not the ones who summit alone. They are the ones who invest in the people on their rope team, who know what each person needs, how to develop them, and how to create the

conditions where everyone can reach higher than they could alone. This session focuses on the hardest and most important thing a leader does: developing the people around them.

CORE THEMES
Seeing people clearly, feedback as a leadership tool, coaching conversations, creating conditions for growth

KEY ACTIVITIES
Team member assessment exercise, feedback style work, coaching conversation framework, development planning

TAKEAWAY
A coaching conversation framework and a development plan for one specific team member

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Have one coaching conversation with a team member using the framework. Write down what you noticed.

SESSION 6 OF 6

The Crest

The leader you are choosing to be

The final session is not a graduation. It is a launch. Participants look back at the climb they have made across the program, integrate what has changed, and look forward at where they are going. Each participant leaves with a clear, specific commitment about the leader they are choosing to be, witnessed by a cohort of peers who have been on the climb with them.

CORE THEMES
Integration, commitment, forward vision, cohort accountability

KEY ACTIVITIES
Full program reflection, leadership commitment declaration, cohort covenant

TAKEAWAY
A specific leadership commitment statement and a cohort accountability structure

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Return to your commitment at 30, 60, and 90 days. What is true? What has been tested? What do you need from your cohort?

TRACK · THE SUMMIT

The Summit

Excavation: examining and reshaping leadership patterns already formed

- TRACK THREE: LEADING AT DEPTH



Experienced managers and directors have already developed a leadership identity, whether they meant to or not. The patterns formed under pressure, the habits built across years of leading people, the beliefs about what leadership requires that were absorbed from the managers above them: all of it is already operating. The Summit is for leaders who are ready to examine it honestly.

This track is designed for managers and directors with three or more years of experience leading people. It does not start from the beginning. It starts from where these leaders actually are, with the patterns already formed, the strengths already in use, and the blind spots that only become visible when someone is willing to look. The Summit's work is excavation: finding what is already there, naming what is serving and what is not, and making deliberate choices about what to carry forward.

The Summit is delivered in a cohort workshop format: six full days, once a month, on-site with the organization.

SESSION 1 OF 6

The Ledge

Where you actually are, and what brought you here

This session does not ease in. It opens with the direct question that experienced leaders rarely get asked in a professional context: where are you actually in your leadership right now, not where you want to be, where you are? Participants examine the patterns that have formed across years of real leadership, the moments that shaped how they lead, and the costs that have accumulated that they have not yet fully named. The work is honest self-assessment at depth, not retrospective celebration.

CORE THEMES
Pattern recognition, identity-level self-examination, the cost of unexamined patterns, the ledge as the starting point for honest development

KEY ACTIVITIES
The Ledge exercise, personal pattern naming, cohort agreement, the Cost of the Pattern reflection, closing commitment

TAKEAWAY
A specific naming of the pattern that has most shaped their leadership and an honest accounting of what it has cost the people around them

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Observe your pattern running in a real leadership situation this month. Notice what triggers it, what it produces, and what it costs. Write down what you see.

SESSION 2 OF 6

Three Ropes

The patterns that hold experienced leaders in place

Every experienced leader has formed a dominant pattern under pressure: a response that has been rewarded, reinforced, and has become part of how they see themselves. This session names three that, in our experience, are among the most common: the Competence Identity (leading through being the most capable person in the room), the Conflict Calculus (leading through managing tension and avoiding friction), and the Productivity Identity (leading through relentless output and high standards). Participants identify their dominant rope, examine its upside and its shadow, and run a behavioral experiment to begin interrupting it.

CORE THEMES
When a pattern becomes part of identity rather than a habit, the three ropes, the upside and shadow of each pattern, what it means to loosen a rope rather than drop it

KEY ACTIVITIES
The three rope cards, dominant rope identification, the system question, cost mapping exercise, behavioral experiment design

TAKEAWAY
A precise naming of the dominant rope, an honest account of what it has cost the people they lead, and a specific behavioral experiment to run before Session Three

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Run the behavioral experiment. Do one thing differently than the pattern would prescribe. Capture what happened: in the people around you and in yourself.

SESSION 3 OF 6

The Sherpa

What you carry for others, and whether it is helping them climb

The rope each participant identified in Session Two is also the primary way they carry for their team. The Competence Identity carries the intellectual load: always having the answer. The Conflict Calculus carries the relational load: absorbing tension so the team does not have to. The Productivity Identity carries the output load: setting a pace the team follows but does not own. This session examines what genuine development looks like versus what carrying looks like, and surfaces the specific development conversation each participant has been avoiding.

CORE THEMES
Carrying versus developing, the three sherpa patterns, psychological safety and what the leader's pattern does to it, the development conversation

KEY ACTIVITIES
The Sherpa Inventory, sherpa pattern identification, the development conversation preparation exercise, cohort small group sharing

TAKEAWAY
A Sherpa Inventory naming three to five people on their team and what is being carried for each, plus a prepared opening for the development conversation that is most overdue

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Have the development conversation. Tell the person what you have been carrying for them and ask what they actually need instead. Bring what happened to Session Four.

SESSION 4 OF 6

Thin Air

Leadership at altitude: the conditions that change at the top

The conditions of leadership change as leaders move into more senior roles. This session addresses the specific challenges of leading at altitude: navigating organizational complexity without the clarity that positional authority once provided, building earned authority across relationships that formal authority cannot reach, and understanding what the rope pattern is doing in the organizational contexts that matter most. Participants map their organizational landscape and design one specific influence move to execute before Session Five.

CORE THEMES
Positional versus earned authority, organizational navigation, the rope at altitude, the trust mechanism, the influence challenge

KEY ACTIVITIES
Organizational landscape mapping, the rope at altitude facilitated discussion, the influence challenge exercise, personal authority statement development

TAKEAWAY
An organizational landscape map with five key relationships and an honest assessment of what the rope pattern is doing to each, plus one specific executable influence move

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Execute the influence move. Then observe your rope pattern running in organizational contexts: rooms with multiple people, competing interests, and political stakes.

SESSION 5 OF 6

Your Oxygen

What actually sustains you, and what you have been doing instead

Five sessions of excavation have accumulated weight. This session names it directly. The depletion that experienced leaders carry is not separate from their rope: the Competence Identity depletes through cognitive load, the Conflict Calculus through relational load, the Productivity Identity through output load. The session asks what actually sustains each participant (not what should work, what has worked in actual periods of genuine energy) and names the protected practice they are committing to defend regardless of organizational pressure.

CORE THEMES
The rope-depletion connection, recovery versus maintenance, the rationalization story, the oxygen map, the protected practice

KEY ACTIVITIES
The depletion audit, the rationalization story exercise, oxygen map construction, protected practice commitment, cohort accountability small groups

TAKEAWAY
An honest depletion audit, an oxygen map built from actual evidence of what has restored genuine energy, and one non-negotiable protected practice committed to before the cohort

BETWEEN SESSIONS
Protect the practice. Actually protect it, not plan to. When the organizational pressure to give it up arrives, say no. Bring what happened to Session Six.

SESSION 6 OF 6

The Summit

The full picture, the honest accounting, the path forward

The final session is not a graduation. It is a reckoning and a launch. Participants look at the full arc of five sessions of genuine excavation and make an honest accounting: what has genuinely changed, what is still in progress, and what they are choosing to carry forward. The session opens with the facilitator reflecting each participant's arc back to them: a specific, honest account of what was witnessed across five sessions. It closes with three movements: a personal statement of what the program asked and what the participant gave, what five sessions of deliberate practice have built, and the closing line written specifically for this cohort.

CORE THEMES

Honest integration, what changed and what has not, the legacy question, the forward commitment, the Summit Integration Document

KEY ACTIVITIES

The full program arc reflection, the honest accounting exercise, the legacy question, the Summit Integration Document, the cohort witness exercise, the three-movement close

TAKEAWAY

A completed Summit Integration Document: five sections in their own words: where they started, what they discovered, what they built, their forward commitment, and what they want the people they lead to carry from the experience of being led by them

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Protect the practice. Hold the forward commitment. Return to the Integration Document at thirty, sixty, and ninety days. What is still true? What has been tested? What does it mean?

ASCEND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

What Every Session Includes

Regardless of track, every Ascend session is built around the same structural commitments:

1. A pre-session reflection prompt sent in advance to prime participants for the day's experience
2. An opening experience designed to surface the emotional and cognitive reality the session addresses before any framework is introduced
3. A science connection that explains what participants have just experienced, delivered conversationally rather than as a lecture
4. A participant workbook with reflection prompts, frameworks, and space for personal notes that belongs to the participant, not the organization
5. A cohort discussion component where participants learn from each other's experiences and perspectives
6. A specific takeaway that participants can apply immediately in their work or life
7. A between-session assignment that ends with a specific if-then plan, so the learning extends beyond the room
8. A personal follow-up from the facilitator within 48 hours referencing something specific from the session

HOW WE MEASURE

Meridian has built a three-point measurement protocol, now being piloted with its first clients: multi-source assessment (the participant plus two to five observers) at program start, at program end, and six months post-program, with the final time point anchored by a structured conversation about each participant's implementation intentions. We adapt it to each client's existing measurement systems without compromising the multi-source, three-point structure.

ASCEND LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Combining the Tracks

Organizations that invest in more than one Ascend track create something more powerful than separate programs. They create a common leadership language across the organization: individual contributors, newer managers, and experienced leaders developing through a shared framework, building on the same vocabulary, and growing in aligned directions.

This is the condition where culture change actually happens. Not through a mandate or a values poster, but through an organization full of people who have done the same honest work on themselves and who hold each other accountable to the same standards of leadership.

15%

Organizations that purchase two or more tracks receive a 15% discount on the combined investment and a complimentary two-hour leadership alignment session for senior leadership to understand the program framework and discuss how to reinforce it organizationally.

NEXT STEP

Ready to start the climb? Let's begin with a conversation.

Caleb Shuey · Meridian Leadership Consulting · meridianleaders.com

Know yourself.
Lead better.
Build something that lasts.

WHAT COMES NEXT

A First Conversation

Ready to start the climb? Let's begin with a conversation.

