Meridian Leadership Consulting LLC

Executive Summary | The Meridian Methodology

Know yourself. Lead better. Build something that lasts.

The Effectiveness Gap in Leadership Development

The traditional "framework-first" sequence (explain the model, then apply it) is deeply embedded in leadership development. It also underperforms. Research on training transfer suggests that less than half of what is learned in a program is still applied six months later (Saks and Belcourt, 2006), and the design of the program itself is one of the biggest levers on whether behavior actually changes (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Organizations invest in programs that produce modest, fragile change that often disappears under the pressure of real organizational conditions.

The Meridian Sequence

Meridian programs are built on a different sequence, grounded in the evidence on how adults actually learn and retain:

Step One. Experience First

We begin with structured encounters that reveal the gap between a leader's intention and their actual impact. Research shows that problem-solving before instruction produces better learning than instruction first (Sinha and Kapur, 2021: 166 comparisons, g = 0.36 overall, up to 0.58 with high-fidelity designs; mostly school and university settings).

Step Two. Reflection Second

Experience alone is raw data. Structured reflection, written in personally meaningful language, converts experience into knowledge the brain can build on. This elaborative encoding has been established across decades of cognitive research (Craik and Lockhart, 1972; Symons and Johnson, 1997).

Step Three. Framework Third

Frameworks arrive only after a participant has felt the problem they address. Information that people generate for themselves is retained better than information they are simply told (Slamecka and Graf, 1978; Bertsch et al., 2007, 86 studies). The framework lands as the name for something the leader already knew.

Why It Holds

Behavior that persists under organizational pressure is not produced by comprehension alone. It is produced by specific design features that research links to transfer:

- Spaced sessions with between-session application in real conditions. The largest meta-analysis of leadership training (Lacerenza et al., 2017, 335 samples) found an average transfer-to-the-job effect of δ = .82 across leadership programs, with larger effects for spaced, practice-based programs with feedback.
- Structured debriefs at the opening of every session except the integration sessions. Tannenbaum and Cerasoli (2013) found debriefs improved performance by 20 to 25 percent over controls (d = .67), with alignment, facilitation, and structure as the strengthening factors.
- Specific if-then implementation plans in every between-session assignment. Gollwitzer and Sheeran (2006) synthesized 94 tests and found a medium-to-large average effect (d = .65) on goal attainment.

These are not aspirational claims. They are deliberate design choices, with evidence to support each one.

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. The protocol is our standard method and a starting point; we adapt it to each client's existing measurement systems without compromising the multi-source, three-point structure.

Methodology Differentiators

Inductive, Not Deductive

Most leadership training is deductive (Theory → Application). Meridian is inductive (Experience → Theory). This aligns with adult learning principles and is supported by the experimental evidence cited above.

Learning Science as the Foundation

Meridian's programs are built on evidence from education research and industrial-organizational psychology, a body of work that has been directly tested against leadership training outcomes. Brain science enters as explanatory framing where it helps a client understand what they are experiencing. It is not the claim on which the method rests.

Built for Behavioral Durability

Meridian measures success by whether a leader's behavior is different six months after the program, in the conditions that matter. The design choices above are specifically chosen to produce that outcome.

The Three Ropes™ and Sherpa Patterns

Meridian's proprietary frameworks for the middle of the climb: the leader who is simultaneously leading down, across, and up without the positional authority to make any of it simple. These frameworks name the specific terrain that generalist leadership programs tend to under-serve. The Three Ropes are the three patterns that, in our experience, most often hold experienced leaders in place: the Competence Identity, the Conflict Calculus and the Productivity Identity. The Sherpa Patterns describe what a leader carries for the team, and what the team stops doing for itself as a result. Both are Meridian’s own practitioner models, built from work with leaders.

Our Approach to Personality and Typing

Meridian does not rely on personality typing or short-form assessments as the foundation of its developmental work. Clients who arrive with language from those instruments can use that vocabulary as a conversation starting point. The developmental work itself focuses on the patterns that show up in practice: under pressure, in real organizational conditions, with the specific people the leader works with every day.