



# A Critical Friend

Supporting Workbook



Building healthier teams

**“All leaders are different. I think all leaders bring something different to the conversation.”**

– Vicki Flindall, Director of Financial Management

### Getting the most out of this workbook

- Print out this workbook to aid in your reflections
- Take a few minutes to watch the episode
- Review the actions to take throughout the workbook
- Reflect on the key phrases that stand out to you
- Think about how you can apply that to your team



Watch the Episode Again

# “The key is to be challenging, but be respectful in the challenge.”

## About this quote

Vicki talks about how she sees her role very much as being a critical friend to her team, her colleagues, and her stakeholders. Far from being critical in a negative sense, it's about being able to challenge constructively when things are not right, listen and understand the challenges people are facing and then working together. So, it's critical, as in important.

## Key actions to take / reflect on

- Think about your style and how you handle things when they are not right
- The key to Vicki's approach is working through things together, listening, understanding, and sharing ideas, rather than telling people what is wrong
- This can reveal different approaches, things you may have not considered before that have a positive impact

**“I don’t pretend to know myself perfectly, but I think over time as I have developed my leadership style, you do start to get to know yourself better.”**

### **About this quote**

Vicki shows a lot of self-awareness and knows what her preferences are, but also how they can impact her team. Vicki talks about knowing exactly how she wants things done and how she wants them to look but also knows she can’t impose that on her team.

### **Key actions to take / reflect on**

- What do you do that your team finds unhelpful?
- If you’re struggling with that question, ask them
- When your team talk to you, it’s important that you listen and respond

**“As and when you become more senior and become more of a leader in your role, it’s not your job to design what everything needs to look like.”**

### **About this quote**

Building on the previous quote, as you become more senior, there will be things that are simply not your job. Asking other people to do things will be, and it’s so helpful for them to have a chance to deliver what’s required without you being prescriptive.

### **Key actions to take / reflect on**

- Support what you’ve asked for by leading the direction of travel, not the detail
- Don’t be focused on exactly what it needs to look like
- It’s not developmental for individuals to be prescriptive
- Often, when you step back, the result is better
- If you struggle to keep yourself in check, think about what you can do to remind yourself. Vicki for example, sits on her hands

# “Build the **right team around you** and have confidence in them”

## About this quote

Vicki talks about not ‘recruiting in your own shadow’ and surrounding yourself with like-minded people. If you do, it will be far less of a challenge as a manager or leader, but there is plenty of evidence that you won’t get innovative approaches and new ideas by doing this.

## Key actions to take / reflect on

- This will challenge you, but it will be worth it
- When you recruit, how can you think more broadly?
- No innovation comes from agreeing with each other all the time

**“Opening up that avenue that we can think differently and still be successful is really, really important.”**

– Vicki Flindall, Director of Financial Management







