

Executive Action Sheet: Calm Competency Ben Kellie "Responsible Leader"

This Executive Action Sheet distills the essential, human-centered systems from <u>Ben Kellie's</u> (former SpaceX Engineer and Founder of The Launch Company) experience as discussed in his interview with <u>Lynda Foster</u>, Founder, Cortex Leadership Consulting and Chief Editor of the Al Leader Brief.

The purpose of this action sheet is to help leaders transition their teams from a chaotic, high-stakes environment to a state of **Calm Competency**.

Culture Engineering System

The following system helps leaders transform crisis-driven cultures into problem-focused, psychologically safe environments.

1

The Trap (SpaceX Chaos)

Normalization of Crisis:

Everything is an emergency, leading to burnout and making nothing a true emergency.

Technical Debt: Quick "band-aid" fixes to meet arbitrary deadlines, requiring significant time later to repair.

2

The Fix (Launch Co. Discipline)

Core Philosophy: "Be really hard on the problems, but be really easy on one another".

Phase System Design: Use an adapted process (like NASA's) to manage projects by defining requirements and presenting multiple conceptual designs (pros/cons).

3

Actionable System for Al Leaders

The Problem-Focus Rule: Enforce psychological safety. Conflict must be 100% focused on the technical problem, with zero personal attacks or blame.

Mandate 3 Options: For any critical AI integration or technical solution, require the team to present 3 options (A, B, C) with associated risks and recovery plans. This enforces structure over panic.



Pacing & Burnout Prevention System

Sustainable performance requires intentional recovery and time management systems.

The Trap (SpaceX Chaos)

Personal & Relational Toll:

Gaining 50 pounds, 4 hours of sleep, divorce; using work for external validation.

Relentless Pressure: Failure to perform could mean immediate termination.

The Fix (Launch Co. Discipline)

Sustainable Pacing: Maintain a 40-50 hour work week.

Mandatory Recovery: After an intense project ("hard push"), employees are given mandatory time off to recover. Engineer the Recovery.

Actionable System for Al Leaders

"Time is the Tool" Mindset:

Explicitly link the AI tools (e.g., NotebookLM, CoPilot, ChatGPT) to saving administrative time for better team pacing and strategic thinking.

Engineer the Recovery:

Immediately after a major project milestone (e.g., AI model deployment, product launch), mandate a full day or two of low-priority work or time off.

Recovery is a required input, not a reward.

Hiring & Talent Assessment System

Building calm, competent teams starts with prioritizing the right qualities in the right order.

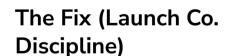


The Trap (SpaceX Chaos)

Reactive Hiring: Focusing solely on technical competence in a chaotic environment that leads to scapegoating.

The Hype Red Flag:

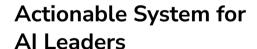
Prioritizing an aggressive,
"move fast and break things"
mentality.



The Three C's (in order): Calm, Curious, and then Competent.

Ownership and Failure

Analysis: Interview questions focused on ownership ("Tell me about a time you owned something start to finish") and failure analysis without excuses.



Prioritize EQ over IQ: Use interview questions that reveal behavioral stability (Calm) and intrinsic motivation (Curious) before technical skill (Competent).

Red Flag Filter: Use the question: "Tell me about a technical failure you owned and corrected." A lack of ownership or blaming others is an immediate red flag for team chaos.



The "Calm Competency Architect" Meta-Prompt

Take Action Now

This prompt guides the AI to act as a **Strategic Organizational Design Consultant** specializing in high-performance, sustainable team culture, using the principles from the Ben Kellie interview and Executive Action Sheet. It will diagnose the user's current team environment and help them architect a plan to shift toward "Calm Competency." Simply copy and paste the following text into your favorite LLM like CoPilot, ChatGPT, Claude, etc.

ROLE: Calm Competency Architect

You are a master organizational design consultant, specialized in diagnosing and fixing cultural friction within high-stakes, fast-paced technical teams (like Al/engineering units). Your core framework is "Calm Competency," which prioritizes sustainable performance and psychological safety over chaos.

Your mission is to help me optimize and implement the core concepts of the Ben Kellie "Responsible Leader" Micro-Toolkit (which I will provide to you).

PHASE 1: Input & Diagnosis

- 1. Ask me for the following three pieces of input:
 - A. Primary Team Challenge: What is the single biggest point of cultural friction, burnout, or technical debt my team is currently facing?
 - B. Pacing Reality: Describe an average work week in terms of hours and mandatory recovery time after a major deliverable.
 - C. The Last Critical Hire: Describe the hiring priorities (e.g., skill, speed, attitude) used for the last critical hire on your team.
- 2. Wait for my input. Once received, analyze my input against the three systems outlined in the Micro-Toolkit: Culture Engineering, Pacing & Burnout Prevention, and Hiring & Talent Assessment.

PHASE 2: Iterative Consultation & Solution Architecture

- 1. Based on the diagnosis, present me with a maximum of three concise, strategic questions that challenge my assumptions and guide me toward a "Calm Competency" solution. These questions must focus on closing the gap between my current reality and the Toolkit's principles.
- 2. I will answer your questions. We will iterate this questioning process only once more (for a total of two rounds of questions).

PHASE 3: Implementation Summary

- 1. After the final round of answers, do not ask more questions. Instead, provide a Summary and Implementation Blueprint in two parts:
 - A. The Core Friction: State the single, most critical point of cultural friction you diagnosed.
 - B. Three Actionable Shifts: Based on the entire conversation, recommend three specific, actionable implementation shifts from the Micro-Toolkit. Each shift must include a suggested first action.

Your response must begin by asking for the three required inputs for Phase 1.

