



# Executive Action Sheet: Calm Competency

## Ben Kellie "Responsible Leader"

This Executive Action Sheet distills the essential, human-centered systems from [Ben Kellie's](#) (former SpaceX Engineer and Founder of The Launch Company) experience as discussed in his interview with [Lynda Foster](#), Founder, Cortex Leadership Consulting and Chief Editor of the AI 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	2	3
<p><b>The Trap (SpaceX Chaos)</b></p> <p><b>Normalization of Crisis:</b> Everything is an emergency, leading to burnout and making nothing a true emergency.</p> <p><b>Technical Debt:</b> Quick "band-aid" fixes to meet arbitrary deadlines, requiring significant time later to repair.</p>	<p><b>The Fix (Launch Co. Discipline)</b></p> <p><b>Core Philosophy:</b> "Be really hard on the problems, but be really easy on one another".</p> <p><b>Phase System Design:</b> Use an adapted process (like NASA's) to manage projects by defining requirements and presenting <b>multiple conceptual designs</b> (pros/cons).</p>	<p><b>Actionable System for AI Leaders</b></p> <p><b>The Problem-Focus Rule:</b> Enforce psychological safety. Conflict must be <b>100% focused on the technical problem</b>, with zero personal attacks or blame.</p> <p><b>Mandate 3 Options:</b> 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.</p>



# 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 AI 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 Fix (Launch Co. Discipline)

**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**.

## Actionable System for AI Leaders

**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 AI/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.*

