

THE PLAYBOOK

What basketball knows about leading change

Where will your next change get stuck? 7 lessons from basketball, and a scorecard to find out.

Meral Bedretdin-Rousku

Change Management & Leadership Coaching

From the court to the boardroom

I spent ten years as a professional basketball player, in Finland and abroad. I represented the Finnish national team and was the first Finnish woman to play in the EuroLeague.

“Sport teaches you things no classroom does: how to be accountable to people counting on you, and how a team either trusts each other under pressure or falls apart.”

After my playing career, I moved into finance, then into a People role at a tech company, supporting teams through growth and change. That's where I learned the other half of this: you cannot copy-paste a locker room into a corporation.

Today, our team at More Than Group helps organizations do exactly that: turn a plan like this one into something people actually live, day to day, not something they just sign off on in a meeting.

This Playbook takes seven of those rules and puts them to work, on and off the court.



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PHASE ONE

Before you plan

Understand who you're leading before you decide what to do.

Scouting report

→ *Understanding people before you plan for them*

“You can't lead people you don't understand.”

IN PRACTICE

A coach studies the opponent before choosing a game plan. Rolling out change without understanding the people it affects is like walking onto the court blind.

WATCH OUT FOR

The rollout gets designed in a strategy offsite with zero input from the people who'll live with it. It looks great on a slide, then stalls in week one, and nobody knows why.

REFLECT

First, be honest

Do you already know how the people affected by your next change are likely to react?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Now go deeper

What's one conversation you could have this week to actually find out, instead of assuming?

One thing I'll do differently this week:

PHASE TWO

While it's landing

What leadership actually looks like in the middle of change.

Timeout

→ *The strategic pause*

“The best leaders slow down before they speak.”

IN PRACTICE

Before reacting to bad news, a good coach calls a timeout instead of letting the team spiral. That's the pause before the email, the meeting, or the decision.

WATCH OUT FOR

A setback hits and the instinct is to patch it fast and quietly, hoping nobody notices. No pause, no check-in, just a rushed fix that creates next week's bigger problem.

REFLECT

First, be honest

Did your team pause before reacting the last time something went wrong?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Now go deeper

What would have to change for pausing to become the default, not the exception?

One thing I'll do differently this week:

Point guard

→ *The middle manager*

“Give the people closest to the work the power to adjust it.”

IN PRACTICE

The point guard calls plays out on the court, not from the bench, always reading the floor and adjusting on the fly. Middle managers do the same, if you let them.

WATCH OUT FOR

Leadership designs the change in a boardroom and hands managers a finished plan to execute. The people closest to the daily friction never get asked what they're actually seeing.

REFLECT

First, be honest

Do your middle managers feel equipped to read the floor on their own?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Now go deeper

What's one decision you're still making yourself that could move to them instead?

One thing I'll do differently this week:

Home court advantage

→ *Psychological safety*

“Change only sticks where people feel safe enough to be honest.”

IN PRACTICE

Teams perform differently when they feel safe on their own court, free to take risks and make mistakes without fear. Change sticks faster where people can name what isn't working.

WATCH OUT FOR

Meetings stay polite and everyone nods along. The real objections surface afterward, in hallway conversations and private messages, never in the room where a decision could actually change.

REFLECT

First, be honest

Does your team feel safe naming what isn't working, out loud, in the room?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Now go deeper

What's one thing that would need to change for it to feel like home court instead of away?

One thing I'll do differently this week:

PHASE THREE

After, to make it stick

How the habit survives once the kickoff energy is gone.

Film review

→ *Honest retrospectives*

“What gets reviewed without blame gets better.”

IN PRACTICE

Teams that win consistently watch the tape together, no blame, no ego, just an honest look at what worked. A retrospective should feel the same, a shared look back.

WATCH OUT FOR

The retro turns into a status update, or worse, a hunt for who to blame. People start giving the answer that keeps them safe instead of the one that's true.

REFLECT

First, be honest

Does your team have a regular, blame-free space to review how a change is landing?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Now go deeper

What would need to be different for people to speak honestly in that space, not carefully?

One thing I'll do differently this week:

Reps in practice

→ *Coaching, not a one-off workshop*

“One workshop doesn't change a habit. Reps do.”

IN PRACTICE

No player changes a habit after one lecture on technique. It takes repeated reps, feedback, and adjustment, and behavior change at work needs exactly the same thing.

WATCH OUT FOR

A training day gets scheduled, everyone claps, and six weeks later nothing's different. It gets marked 'done' in a project tracker, but nothing in the daily routine actually changed.

REFLECT

First, be honest

Has your organization tried to install a change with a single workshop or training day?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Now go deeper

What would turning that into ongoing reps actually look like, week to week?

One thing I'll do differently this week:

Bench depth

→ *A team, not one hero*

“If one person leaving breaks everything, you don't have a team yet.”

IN PRACTICE

A team with real bench depth doesn't collapse when one player is out. A culture that survives turnover works the same way, built on more than one person.

WATCH OUT FOR

One person quietly becomes the keeper of how things really work. Everyone depends on them, until they go on leave, or leave for good, and the gap becomes obvious.

REFLECT

First, be honest

Would your team be fine if your strongest person left tomorrow?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Now go deeper

What knowledge or authority needs to move out of one person's hands, and whose?

One thing I'll do differently this week:

Your scorecard

Flip back through the Playbook and count how many of your answers were No. That number is where to start, not a verdict on your team.

Tick the box for every play where your answer was No:

BEFORE YOU PLAN

Scouting report → Understanding people before you plan for them ☐

WHILE IT'S LANDING

Timeout → The strategic pause ☐

Point guard → The middle manager ☐

Home court advantage → Psychological safety ☐

AFTER, TO MAKE IT STICK

Film review → Honest retrospectives ☐

Reps in practice → Coaching, not a one-off workshop ☐

Bench depth → A team, not one hero ☐

Total No's: ____ / 7

Now look at where your No's are: Before, While it's landing, or After. The phase with the most No's is probably where I'd start.

0-1

Your team already plays like a team, rare enough that it's worth protecting. Can you name your team's unique strengths, and the ways you actively enable them?

2-4

Real strengths, real gaps. The gaps are usually smaller than they feel, and a few well-targeted actions can create ripple effects that go further than you'd expect.

5-7

This isn't a light tune-up. At this stage, you owe it to yourself and your team to take a proper timeout before rolling out anything new.

Wherever you landed, bring it with you. That's exactly what we'd start from.

Let's talk about what's next

Bring your score. In 20 minutes, we'll look at where your change is most likely to get stuck, and where I'd start.

Book a 20-minute conversation

meral@morethan.fi

+358 45 132 1678

www.meralbedretdin.fi