



EPISODE 1

The Promotion Language Is Strategy

Doing great work isn't the same as being seen as promotable. Fresh 2026 research reveals what promotion committees actually score — and it's not your task list. This episode breaks down the shift from **doing to directing**: how to speak the language of strategy so senior leaders recognize you as one of them, before the title catches up.

KEY STRATEGIES & IDEAS

What promotion committees score in 2026: **direction setting** (a twelve-month vision in one paragraph), **decision quality** (calls that still hold up six months later), **communication cadence**, **coaching**, and **delivery credibility**.

1. The Two-Levels-Up Question

Before any significant decision, pause and ask: *what would my boss's boss be weighing right now?* It forces you out of execution mode into enterprise thinking — and it changes the recommendations you bring to the table.

2. Write the 12-Month Vision Paragraph

Sit down and articulate a twelve-month vision for your team in one paragraph. If you can't, *that* is the work. Share it with your team and your manager — committees are literally scoring this, and almost nobody at your level is doing it.

3. Start a Decision Log

Every meaningful call you make: write down what you decided, what you expected, and the date. Six months later, review it. You're building the exact muscle committees measure — decisions that age well, and the judgment to see why.

ACTION & REFLECTION STEPS



Write the vision paragraph before Friday. Show it to one trusted peer and ask: *does this sound like direction, or a task list?*

My 12-month vision paragraph:

SKIP LEVEL

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP FOR LEADERS
READY TO THINK TWO LEVELS UP



JOE DUTKIEWICZ

SKIP LEVEL

strategic leadership for leaders ready to think two levels up

EPISODE 1 · WORKSHEET

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- ☐ **Start your decision log.** Pick one decision you made this month, write down what you expected, and set a calendar reminder six months out to check it.
 - ☐ **Ask one enterprise-level question.** In your next one-on-one with your manager, ask something like: *what tradeoff is our leadership team wrestling with this quarter?* Then listen.
 - ☐ **Reflect tonight:** where in my week am I still doing work that belongs to the level below me — and what would it look like to direct it instead?
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Think two levels up. — Maya & Marcus

Joe Dutkiewicz

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