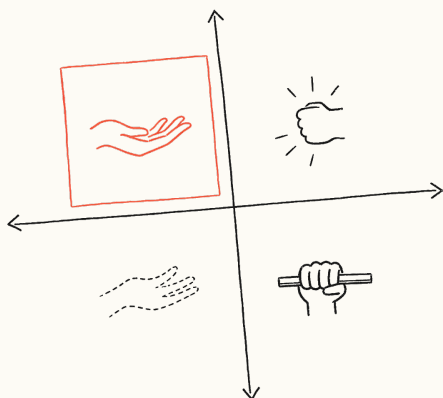


# The Intervention Timing Matrix

Every deviation you see in the work is answered by two questions: how early did you catch it, and how hard did you push when you did? The combination produces four very different kinds of leadership — only one of which builds autonomy. The other three damage trust, teach the wrong lesson, or simply don't work.



**VERTICAL AXIS**

**Timing** — top is Early, bottom is Late.

**HORIZONTAL AXIS**

**Pressure** — left is Light, right is Heavy.

**CORAL SQUARE**

The only quadrant that builds the next leader.

**EARLY · LIGHT**

**Guidance**

A quiet word at the right moment. Preserves autonomy. The person stays in control of their own correction.

**EARLY · HEAVY**

**Overcorrection**

You saw it early and brought a hammer. Kills initiative. People stop surfacing small things because they get big reactions.

**LATE · LIGHT**

**Insufficient**

A soft touch on an issue that's already spread. Feels diplomatic. Solves nothing. The signal is "this doesn't matter enough."

**LATE · HEAVY**

**Enforcement**

The correction you're forced into when you missed the window. Sometimes necessary. Always expensive. Always visible.

# Before you intervene, run these four questions.

Not every deviation needs a response. Light intervention on noise trains your team to second-guess themselves. Heavy intervention on repeat deviations is where trust goes to die. Use this filter to decide whether you're looking at **signal** worth intervening on — or **noise** worth letting pass.

## 1 Does it repeat?

Same deviation, same person or same team, more than once in a rolling window. Once is a data point. Twice is a pattern. Three times is a standard.

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## 2 Does it spread?

Is the deviation showing up on other teams, other groups, other projects? A single-pocket oddity is usually noise. Distribution means the system is sending the same signal everywhere.

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## 3 Does it compound?

Does letting it slide make the next deviation easier? Does it make the recovery more expensive? Some misses are self-contained. Others are on-ramps.

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## 4 Does it redefine normal?

If you don't address it, will people stop flagging this category of miss entirely? That's the most dangerous answer, because you'll stop hearing about it.

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## THE RULE OF THUMB

**Zero Yes answers:** let it go. You'll intervene on the real signal when it comes.

**One Yes:** watch it. Note it. Don't act yet. **Two or more Yes answers:** intervene now, while it's still early and you can still be light. That's the coral quadrant. That's the only place autonomy survives.