



Commercial Strategy

CONFERENCE



Leadership under Pressure: How to Think, Decide and Lead When Commercial Certainty Disappears



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Commercial Leadership under Pressure



How to Think, Decide and Lead When Commercial
Certainty Disappears



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Over 25 years of Revenue Management, Digital Marketing, Sales & Marketing Consulting & Leadership experience.



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From mindset to commercial leadership practice

We will explore:

- how pressure affects thinking
- how interpretation becomes distorted
- where leadership drift begins
- why decisions become hard to hold
- how Authority Architecture helps create clarity

Commercial
leaders are
making bigger
decisions,
faster, with less
certainty.

Certainty disappears when:

- demand patterns shift
- forecasts move
- owners want answers quickly
- competitors behave unpredictably
- teams interpret the same data differently
- customer behaviour changes faster than internal processes
- leadership expectations increase while clarity decreases

The market may be unclear, but leadership cannot become unclear with it.

Pressure rarely announces itself as pressure.

Pressure does not only affect the decision.

It affects the quality of thinking before the decision.

It often shows up as:

- urgency that shuts down thinking
- more reporting but less clarity
- the loudest voice shaping the conversation
- fast moves toward discounts or tactical offers
- reluctance to challenge assumptions
- polite agreement without real alignment
- repeated revisiting of the same decision
- leaders over-explaining instead of deciding

Pressure enters
through
several doors.

- 1. Performance pressure**
Budget, market share, rate, profitability, commercial gaps.
- 2. Stakeholder pressure**
Owners, asset managers, corporate, brand, or GM expectations.
- 3. Market pressure**
Competitors, demand shifts, booking windows, customer behaviour.
- 4. Internal pressure**
Misalignment across Sales, Revenue, Marketing, Operations, and Finance.
- 5. Personal pressure**
Credibility, confidence, fear of blame, need to appear in control.



The pressure
may start
outside us —
but it does
not stay
outside us.

It enters:

- the room
- the conversation
- the interpretation
- the decision
- the way leaders hold or lose confidence

What starts as external pressure can
become internal drift.

Under pressure, facts, fears, assumptions, and trade-offs start to blur.

A simple example:

Fact: We are pacing behind for selected dates.

Fear: We will miss budget.

Assumption: A tactical offer will solve the gap.

Trade-off: Short-term volume may weaken rate integrity or positioning.

A lot of leadership pressure comes not from the facts themselves, but from the meaning we attach to the facts.

Not all pressure comes from the market.

When the leadership environment is unclear, people often start interpreting pressure as instruction.

Interpretation becomes harder when leaders face:

- unrealistic expectations
- unclear direction
- conflicting stakeholder demands
- accountability without authority
- fear-based decisions from the top
- decisions being challenged or reversed too quickly
- constant changes in direction

Drift is what happens when pressure quietly pulls leaders or teams away from their standards, strategy, or best thinking.

Drift rarely feels like drift in the moment. It often feels like being practical, responsive, careful, or helpful.

Drift can look like:

- rushing
- delaying
- defending
- over-explaining
- taking over
- avoiding tension
- absorbing too much pressure
- looking for certainty before moving
- complying instead of leading

Table Discussion: Commercial Pressure Scenario



- Your hotel is entering the next quarter behind budget. Demand is softer than expected in selected periods, but not across all dates.
- The owner wants immediate action and asks why the team is not being more aggressive.
- Sales recommends tactical offers. Revenue is concerned discounting will weaken rate integrity. Marketing wants more budget. Operations is worried about staffing and guest experience.

Do not solve too quickly. First separate the pressure.

Discuss:

- What are the facts?
- What are the fears?
- What assumptions might be treated as facts?
- What trade-off is the team really facing?
- Where could the team drift under pressure?



What Became Clearer?

Once we separate facts, fears, assumptions, and trade-offs, the leadership challenge becomes clearer

What did your table notice?

- one assumption that needs to be challenged
- one possible drift pattern
- one trade-off that needs to be named

The Pattern Beneath the Pressure

To solve this problem we need an
internal Authority Architecture.

The deeper pattern:

1. **We lose our anchor.**
Pressure starts setting the agenda.
2. **We misread the signal.**
Facts, fears, assumptions, and opinions blur.
3. **We drift.**
We react, delay, defend, comply, or over-control.
4. **We struggle to hold.**
Decisions get diluted, reversed, or poorly communicated.

A practical leadership lens for creating clarity under pressure.

- 1. Anchor**
Return to what must guide the decision.
- 2. Interpret Well**
Read the situation more accurately.
- 3. Notice Drift**
Recognise where pressure is pulling you off course.
- 4. Decide & Hold**
Make the next clear decision and hold it with discipline.

The Authority Architecture Decision Lens



Before pressure decides for you, return to what must guide the decision.

Step 1: Anchor

- What are we here to protect?
- What kind of leader does this moment require?
- What standard should guide us?
- What must not be lost in the pressure?

Anchoring prevents pressure from becoming the authority.

Before reacting, read the situation more accurately.

Step 2: Interpret Well

- What are the facts?
- What are the fears?
- What are the assumptions?
- What signal matters most?
- What are we over-reading or under-reading?

Commercial leaders do not just need more data. They need better interpretation.

Before choosing, notice where pressure is pulling you off course.

Step 3: Notice Drift

- Are we rushing, delaying, defending, or complying?
- Are we leaving our strategy?
- Are we letting fear make the decision?
- Are we confusing urgency with clarity?

You cannot correct drift you have not noticed.

Make the next clear decision and hold it with discipline.

Step 4: Decide & Hold

- What decision are we really making?
- What trade-off are we accepting?
- What must we communicate?
- What will we monitor before adjusting?



A decision is not strong because it is announced.
It becomes strong when it is clear enough to explain, disciplined enough to hold, and flexible enough to adjust when the right signal appears.



Your Leadership Shift Under Pressure

Complete one sentence:

- The pressure I need to handle more clearly is:
- The drift pattern I need to watch is:
- The anchor I need to return to is:
- One leadership behaviour I will practise in my next commercial conversation is:

Lead from clarity, not pressure.

Your team does not need perfect certainty from you. They need clear leadership while uncertainty is still present.

- When commercial certainty disappears, pressure will always try to become the authority.
- The work of leadership is to:
 - anchor
 - interpret well
 - notice drift
 - decide and hold

Commercial Leadership Mentoring

Focused on:

- leadership clarity under pressure
- decision quality
- pressure patterns
- communication under tension
- executive maturity
- boundaries and responsibility
- resilience without burnout
- leadership presence
- navigating complexity

Format:

- 8–10 people max
- live mentoring sessions
- reflective exercises
- confidential environment
- practical application



Thank you



Heidi Gempel,
Executive Coach and Commercial
Expert Hospitality
Beyond Performance





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Afternoon Tea
& Last Chance to Visit the Partner Showcase.
Event concludes at 4:15pm.

