

THE RIGHT ALTITUDE · FLIGHT MANUAL SERIES

A Read on Reese, Direct Report

**Prepared for Jordan Hale**

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This read is based on the leader's observations and self-assessment. It is a preparation tool, not a performance evaluation.

## THE READ

Jordan, here's what jumps out at me. The reorg three months ago took two of Reese's projects and handed them to another lead — and the energy died right after. That's not a coincidence. That's a cause.

Reese didn't complain because Reese is too proud to complain. Strong deputies don't whine — they go quiet, do the minimum, and start looking at the door. What you're watching isn't burnout and it isn't a skill gap. This is someone who got passed over and concluded the climb stalled.

And here's the part you need to hear straight: you said it yourself. You rely on Reese heavily but rarely put Reese forward for credit. The reorg confirmed a story Reese was already half-believing — that the work flows up, but the recognition doesn't.

This is a passed-over read, complicated by a trust crack with you. The good news is both are fixable. But not with another high-visibility project. You already tried that, and I'll tell you why it backfired.

## DIAGNOSIS

Let's walk the logic. If this were burnout, Reese would be running hot then crashing — exhausted, not resentful. If it were a skill gap, you'd see Reese struggling on the work itself, not withdrawing from the room. Neither fits.

What fits is the cluster: pulling back from meetings, going surface-level in 1:1s, pushing back on decisions, floating 'grass is greener' comments. That's not someone who can't do the job. That's someone who's decided the job no longer rewards doing it well. The resistance and the disengagement are two faces of the same thing — Reese protecting against more investment in a place that doesn't seem to invest back.

The timing seals it. Three months ago, two projects got reassigned to another lead. To you that may have read as load-balancing. To Reese — built to climb, hungry for hard problems — it read as a demotion nobody announced. Territory taken away. A signal about where Reese ranks.

And the trust piece is the multiplier. When you gave Reese the high-visibility project but kept absorbing the hard parts yourself, Reese didn't read trust. Reese read it as 'I'll let you carry the visible piece, but I don't actually trust you with the difficult one.' You meant to protect Reese. You confirmed the fear.

## THE MOVES

First move — name it directly in your next 1:1. Don't fish. Say: 'When the reorg moved those two projects, I never talked to you about it, and I think that landed worse than I realized. I want to understand how it hit you.' You're giving Reese permission to say the thing pride won't let them volunteer.

Second — when Reese opens up, do not defend the reorg. Your only job in that conversation is to listen and to confirm you see the talent. Reese needs to hear that the projects moving wasn't a verdict on capability. Say it plainly: 'That wasn't about your work. And I should have told you that three months ago.'

Third — hand over something hard and let it be hard. Take that high-visibility project and give Reese the piece you've been absorbing. Then step back. Reese rebuilds trust by being trusted with the difficult thing, not by being shielded from it. The struggle is the message.

Fourth — fix the credit problem out loud and in public. Next time Reese delivers, put Reese forward where it counts — in front of your peers, your boss, the room. Reese has been doing the work and watching you get the visibility. Reverse that, visibly, and watch what happens.

Fifth — paint a path. Reese is built to climb and right now sees no slope. Get concrete about what's next: a bigger role, a stretch mandate, a timeline. Not a vague 'you've got a future here.' Something Reese can hold onto.

## WHAT NOT TO DO

Don't throw another shiny project at this and call it solved. You already did, and it didn't move the needle because the problem was never a shortage of work — it was a shortage of trust and recognition. More work without more credit just confirms Reese is the engine nobody names.

Don't keep absorbing the hard parts. I know your instinct — Reese seems checked out, so you compensate by quietly carrying the load. Every time you do that, you tell Reese you don't fully trust the very person you're trying to win back. Hand it over and let Reese feel the weight.

And don't wait for Reese to bring it up. Pride won't allow it — Reese will keep going surface-level until one day the resignation lands on your desk and you'll call it sudden. It won't be sudden. You've had three months of signal. Move now.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Go to The Redirect. This isn't a performance conversation — Reese isn't failing, Reese is drifting after a hit that nobody addressed. The Redirect will help you structure the course correction: naming what changed, re-establishing where Reese stands, and rebuilding the slope Reese needs to see. Use it to script that first 1:1, because how you open that conversation determines whether Reese lets you back in or keeps the door half-shut.

— *Don*