



Reliability Management

LeadershipForge

User Manual

A personalized leadership book for brand-new managers

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This manual documents LeadershipForge version 1.0.0.

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About this manual

LeadershipForge asks a new manager four questions and writes them a short leadership book. This manual explains what the app does, how to get a book out of it, what it deliberately refuses to do, and how to run it yourself.

It documents LeadershipForge 1.0.0. Screens are shown as they appear in that version; button and field names in this manual are the exact labels on screen.

Who should read what

If you are...	Read
A new manager who just wants a book	"What LeadershipForge is for", then "Create your book" and "Read and keep your book". That is everything you need; the whole job takes about two minutes.
Someone introducing it to a team	"What LeadershipForge is for" and "What the app will not do" in each section — so you can set expectations honestly before people use it.
Running or deploying the app	"Getting started", "Reference" and "Troubleshooting". The reference chapter lists every screen, route, environment variable and book status.

Note Nothing in LeadershipForge requires an account. There is also no account to recover a book with — the link to your book is the only way back to it. This is explained in "Keep your book".

What LeadershipForge is for

Most leadership advice is written for nobody in particular. It is accurate, general, and easy to put down, because it has to serve a first-time team lead of two designers and a director of three hundred people at the same time.

LeadershipForge takes the opposite bet: a short book addressed to one person is worth more than a long one addressed to everyone. You give it four facts about your situation — how big your team is, what is hardest right now, how you naturally lead, and what industry you are in — plus anything else you want to say in your own words. It then writes a five-chapter book for that specific situation.

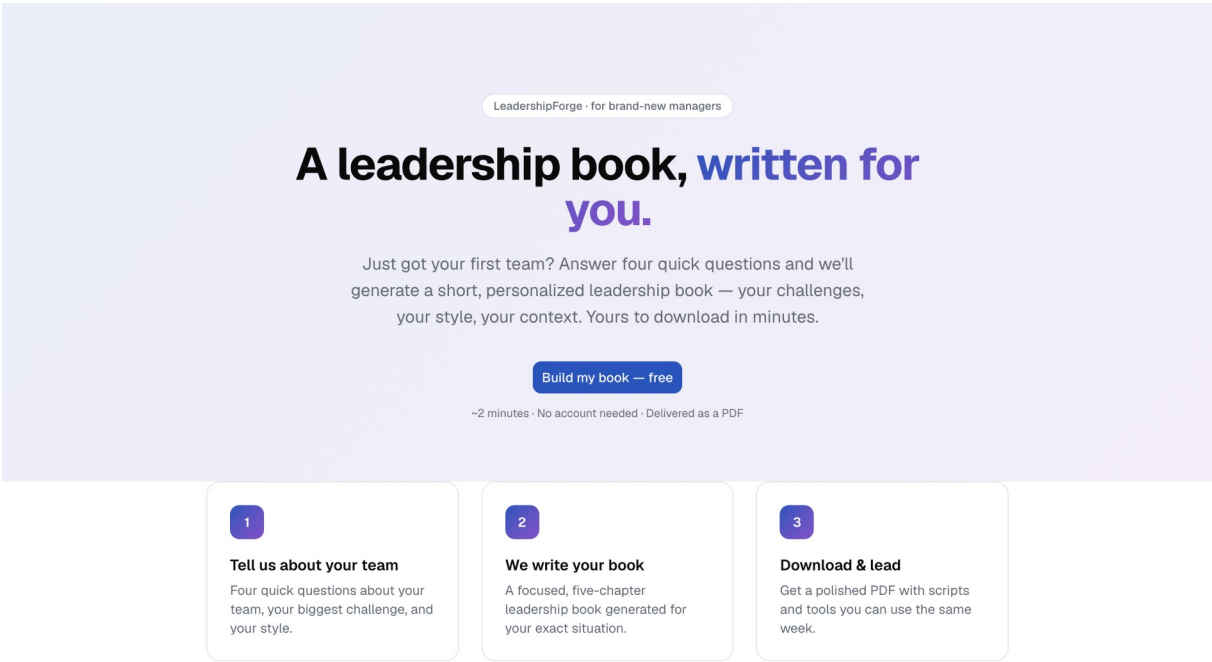
The principles behind it

- One reader. Every chapter is written to the profile you gave, and is expected to reference your team size, your challenge and your context concretely rather than generically.
- Your biggest challenge gets its own chapter. That is a hard rule in the instructions the app gives the model — the question you answered second is the one the book is built around.
- Every chapter must contain something usable: a script, a checklist, a set of questions, or a small framework. Not a summary of ideas.
- Grounded in established management thinking — the first ninety days, situational leadership, candid feedback, psychological safety, delegating by outcome, and 1:1s as the core management ritual.
- Short on purpose. Five chapters of roughly 500–750 words. It is designed to be read in one sitting in your first weeks, not to sit on a shelf.

What it is not

LeadershipForge is a writing tool, not a coach, an assessment, or a record of anything. It does not evaluate you, it does not know your team, and it cannot follow up. It has no memory of you between books: each run starts from the answers you type that time.

The text is generated by a large language model working from an editorial brief. It is well-framed and specific, but it is not reviewed by a human before you read it, and it can be confidently wrong about your particular situation. Treat it the way you would treat a well-read colleague's advice: useful, worth arguing with, not an authority.



The landing page. One route in — “Build my book — free” — and a three-step summary of what happens next.

Getting started

If someone has already deployed LeadershipForge for you, skip this chapter: open the URL you were given and go straight to “Create your book”. This chapter is for running it yourself.

What you need

- Node.js 20 or newer (1.0.0 is developed on Node 22).
- An OpenRouter API key. Generation is the only part of the app that calls an external service, and it will not work without one. Keys come from <https://openrouter.ai/keys> and are billed per generated book.
- A database. SQLite by default — a file, no server to install. PostgreSQL is supported for real deployments.

First run

1. Install the dependencies:

```
npm install
```

1. Create your environment file from the template:

```
cp .env.example .env
```

1. Open `.env` and set `OPENROUTER_API_KEY` to your key. Leave the other values as they are for a local run.

2. Create the database tables:

```
npx prisma migrate dev
```

1. Start the app:

```
npm run dev
```

1. Open `http://localhost:3000`. You should see the landing page shown above.

Note The app starts fine without an API key — the landing page and the questions all work. The missing key only surfaces at the moment you press “Generate my book”, as a failure on the writing screen. If you are setting this up for someone else, generate one book yourself before handing over the URL.

Running it for real

For a server deployment, build once and run the compiled app rather than the development server:

```
npm run build
```

```
npm start
```

Two settings matter more than they look. `APP_BASE_URL` must be a URL the server itself can open, because the PDF renderer loads the book through it — if it is wrong, reading works and downloading does not. And for anything beyond a single-user trial, move from SQLite to PostgreSQL: set `DATABASE_URL` to your Postgres URL, change the provider in `prisma/schema.prisma` from “sqlite” to “postgresql”, and run the migration. No application code changes.

The PDF is rendered by a headless Chromium that Puppeteer downloads during `npm install`. On a bare Linux server it will also need Chromium's system libraries installed, or every download will fail while the rest of the app works normally.

Create your book

What you are trying to achieve

You have just been given a team, you have limited time, and you want something written for your situation rather than for managers in general. The result should be readable tonight and usable this week.

How to do it

1. On the landing page, press “Build my book — free”. This opens the six-step intake; a progress bar and a “Step n of 6” label track where you are.
2. Answer the four questions, pressing “Continue” after each: how big your team is, your biggest challenge right now, your natural style, and your context or industry. Click anywhere on an option card to choose it. “Continue” stays disabled until you have chosen.
3. Use “Back” at any point to change an earlier answer. Nothing is submitted until the last step.
4. On step 5, “Anything specific about your situation?”, describe your circumstances in your own words — up to 1000 characters. This is optional; the button reads “Skip” until you type something, then changes to “Continue”.
5. On step 6, give your first name (optional) and your email address (required), then press “Generate my book”. Pressing Enter in the email field does the same thing.

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Step 2 of 6

What's your biggest challenge right now?

We'll give this the most attention in your book.

☐ Letting go & delegating

☐ Difficult conversations & feedback

☐ Leading former peers

☐ Building trust & credibility

☒ Time & priorities

☐ Driving performance & accountability

Back Continue

Step 2 — the answer that shapes the book most. Whatever you pick here is guaranteed a chapter of its own.

← LeadershipForge

Step 5 of 6

Anything specific about your situation?

Optional — but the more you share, the more tailored your book.

I was promoted over two people who applied for my job. One of them is a close friend and has gone very quiet since the announcement.

Back Continue

Step 5. Optional, and the single highest-leverage field in the app: specifics here are quoted back into the reader profile the book is written from.

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Step 6 of 6

Where should we send your book?

We'll generate it now and you can download it on the next screen.

Your first name (optional)

Alex

Email

alex@northwind.example

Back Generate my book

Step 6. The name is optional and only used on the cover; the email is required, and the book is created the moment you press “Generate my book”.

What you get

The four answers become a labelled profile, and your free text is passed on verbatim as “In their own words”. That profile is sent with every request the app makes — first to design the book's title and five chapter titles, then once per chapter to write it. Your first name, if you gave one, appears on the cover as “Written for ...”.

Answering vaguely produces a competent generic book. The difference between a forgettable result and a useful one is almost entirely in step 5.

What the app will not do

- It will not let you skip the four questions or invent your own — the options are fixed, and the profile is the only thing the book is built from.
- It will not accept more than 1000 characters of free text, and will simply stop accepting input at the limit.
- It will not proceed without a valid-looking email address. You are told “Please enter a valid email address.” and stay on the step.
- It will not verify that the address is yours, and it does not send anything to it. See “Email me a copy”.
- It will not remember you. Returning later and answering the same way produces a new, different book — the model is not deterministic.

Note Your email address, your four answers and your free text are stored in the app's database as

typed, and your free text is sent to the model provider along with the rest of the profile. It is a good place to describe a situation and a bad place to name the colleague it is about.

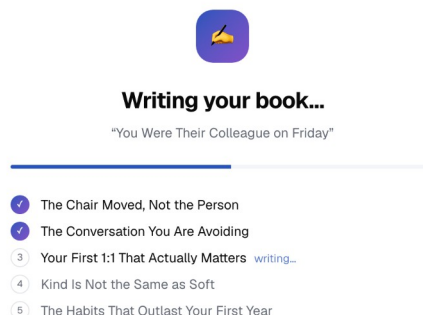
Watch it being written

What you are trying to achieve

Knowing whether the app is working, how far along it is, and whether you can close the tab.

How to do it

1. Nothing — pressing “Generate my book” takes you straight to the writing screen. It moves through “Warming up the press...”, then “Writing your book...”, then “Your book is ready!”
2. Watch the chapter list. As soon as the outline exists, all five chapter titles appear; each one gets a tick as it is finished, and the one currently being written is marked “writing...”.
3. When the last chapter lands you are taken to your book automatically. You do not need to press anything.
4. If you closed the tab, open `/create?resume=` followed by your book's id, or simply open the book link — an unfinished book sends you back to this screen by itself.



The writing screen. Two chapters written, the third in progress. The titles are real — they were designed for this reader before any chapter was written.

What you get

Honest progress rather than a spinner. Each chapter is saved the moment it is finished, so the screen is reporting work that actually exists, and a lost connection cannot lose a chapter that was already written. The bar treats designing the outline as the first fifth of the job and the five chapters as the rest.

A book normally takes well under a minute. The screen re-checks roughly every one and a half seconds, and keeps retrying if your connection drops rather than giving up.

What the app will not do

- It will not let you change your answers while it writes. To change anything you start again from the beginning.
- It will not let you read a half-written book. Opening the book link before it is finished returns you to this screen.

- It will not retry by itself if generation fails. You get “We hit a snag”, the reason, and a “Start over” link — a failed book stays failed, and starting over creates a new one.
- It will not email you when it is done, so closing the tab means keeping the link yourself.

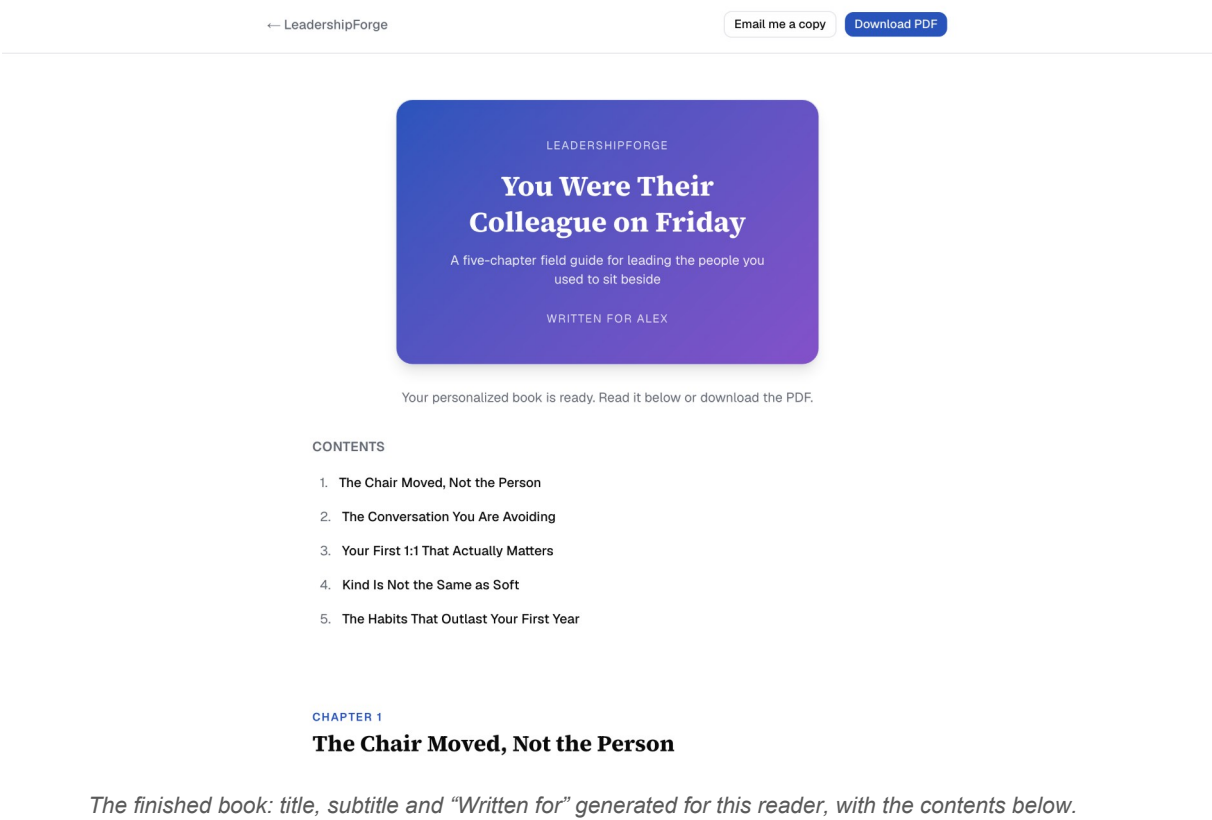
Read and keep your book

What you are trying to achieve

Reading what was written, getting a copy you can keep, and being able to find it again next month.

How to do it

- 1. Read on screen. The book page opens with the cover, then “Contents”, then the chapters in full. Clicking a title in the contents jumps to that chapter.
- 2. Press “Download PDF” in the top bar, or “Download your PDF” at the foot of the page. The file is named after your book's title and takes a few seconds to build.
- 3. Save the address of the page. It contains your book's id and is the only route back to it.



of you has what you need. Here's what I'm not going to do: micromanage work you're already better at than me. Tell me when I get that balance wrong."

Three sentences. Name the awkwardness once, define the job, invite correction. Then stop talking about it. A promotion you keep re-litigating in public stays unsettled for everyone.

The thing you will get wrong first

You will over-consult. You will ask the team what they think about a decision that is yours, hear four opinions, and then make the call anyway — and they will feel consulted for show.

Decide, before each decision, which of three modes you are in, and say which one out loud:

- **I decide.** I'll explain the reasoning, but the call is mine.
- **I decide with your input.** I want your view first; the call is still mine.
- **You decide.** I'll support whatever you land on.

Most new managers use the second mode for everything. Used well, the first mode is a gift: it tells a team exactly where they do not have to carry weight.

This week

Pick one decision currently floating in your team — an unowned priority call, a piece of process nobody likes. Label it out loud with one of the three modes, and close it by Friday. Not because the decision is momentous, but because your team is watching to find out whether decisions now end somewhere.

CHAPTER 2

The Conversation You Are Avoiding

A chapter as it reads on screen. Every chapter is required to contain at least one usable tool — here, three named decision modes and something to do with them this week.

What you get

Two forms of the same book. On screen it is set in a serif face for reading rather than skimming. The PDF is a proper A5 booklet — a full-bleed cover, a contents page, each chapter starting on a new page, and page numbers in the footer — sized to read on a phone or to print two-up.



CHAPTER 2

The Conversation You Are Avoiding

There is a person on your team who applied for your job. You know exactly who they are, you have rehearsed six versions of this conversation in the shower, and you have had none of them.

Every week you wait, the silence hardens into a story: that you are enjoying this, that you do not care, that the friendship was worth less than the title.

Why it has to be you

They will not raise it. From where they sit, raising it looks like sour grapes, and they have their own dignity to protect. The asymmetry is real: you have the power now, which means you also have the obligation to go first.

Go early, go short, and do not bring solutions.

The opening, word for word

"I want to name something instead of letting it sit. You applied for this role and I got it. I don't know how that's landing for you, and I'd rather hear it than guess. I'm not asking you to make me feel better about it."

Then be quiet. The silence after that will feel much longer than it is. Do not fill it with reassurance — reassurance is how you take the conversation back.

What not to say

"I didn't even ask for this." It sounds like humility. It lands as: *the thing you wanted was so unimportant that I got it by accident.*

"Nothing has to change between us." It is not true, and they know it is not true. Something has already changed.

"You'll get the next one." You cannot promise that, and a promise you cannot keep is a debt you have just quietly taken on.

Keep your book

There is no login, no library, and no list of your past books. The book page's address is your only key to it. Bookmark it, or download the PDF and keep the file — the PDF needs nothing from the app once you have it.

If you lose the link, nothing in the app can recover it for you. Whoever runs the app can look it up in the database by email address; that is a manual operation, not a feature.

What the app will not do

- It will not let you edit the book, rewrite a chapter you dislike, or ask for a longer one. Generation happens once, and the only lever you have is starting again with different answers.
- It will not produce anything other than the five chapters it planned — no appendices, no references, no further reading.
- It will not build a PDF of an unfinished or failed book. The request is refused with “Book is not ready yet”, deliberately, so nobody ends up with half a book as a file.
- It will not protect the page. Anyone who has the link can read the book and see the email address it was made for. Treat the link as private.

“Email me a copy”

The button exists and confirms with “We'll email a copy to ...”. In version 1.0.0, no email is sent: delivery is stubbed, and the request only writes a line to the server log. This is the one place where the app says something it does not do.

Download the PDF instead. If you are running LeadershipForge for other people, either wire up a mail provider or tell your users to download, because the message on screen will otherwise be believed.

Reference

Screens and addresses

Address	Screen	Notes
/	Landing	The only way in.
/create	Intake	Six steps: four questions, free text, email.
/create?resume=<id>	Writing	Live progress. Also where an unfinished book sends you.
/book/<id>	Your book	Only reachable once the book is ready; otherwise redirects to the writing screen.
/book/<id>/print	Print view	The plain, self-contained layout the PDF is rendered from. Viewable, but the PDF is what you want.
/api/book/<id>/pdf	PDF download	Builds the file on request. Refused unless the book is ready.

The four questions

Question	Options
How big is the team you lead?	1–2 people · 3–5 people · 6–10 people · More than 10
What's your biggest challenge right now?	Letting go & delegating · Difficult conversations & feedback · Leading former peers · Building trust & credibility · Time & priorities · Driving performance & accountability
Which best describes your natural style?	Supportive & people-first · Directive & decisive · Analytical & systematic · Visionary & big-picture
What's your context?	Tech / software · Healthcare · Finance / professional services · Retail / operations · Nonprofit / public sector · Something else

Book statuses

Status	Meaning	What you see
queued	Created, nothing written yet	“Warming up the press...”
generating	Outline done or chapters being written	“Writing your book...” with ticks
ready	All five chapters written	The book, and a working PDF download
failed	A model call failed	“We hit a snag”, the reason, “Start over”

Settings

Setting	What it does
OPENROUTER_API_KEY	Required for generation. Without it the app runs but every book fails.
OPENROUTER_MODEL	Which model writes the book. Defaults to anthropic/claude-sonnet-4; any OpenRouter model id works.
DATABASE_URL	Where books and emails are stored. A SQLite file by default.
APP_BASE_URL	The address the server uses to reach its own print page when building a PDF, and the attribution sent to OpenRouter. Wrong value means downloads fail while everything else works.

What is stored about each book

One database row per attempt, whether it succeeded or not: the email address, the four answers and free text as typed, your first name if given, the generated title, outline and chapters, the status, any error message, and the times it was created and last changed. Nothing is deleted automatically.

Troubleshooting

Symptom	Cause	What to do
"We hit a snag" saying OPENROUTER_API_KEY is not set	No API key in the environment	Put a valid key in .env and restart the app. The book cannot be recovered — start over.
"We hit a snag" with a provider or model message	OpenRouter rejected the call — out of credit, unknown model id, or rate limited	Check the account has credit and that OPENROUTER_MODEL is a model id OpenRouter actually offers, then start over.
Stuck on "Warming up the press..."	The first call has not returned yet, or the server was restarted mid-generation	Give it a minute. A book interrupted by a restart stays unfinished for good — start over.
"Book is not ready yet" when downloading	The book is not finished or has failed	Wait for all five ticks. A failed book has no PDF.
Download never arrives, reading works fine	The PDF renderer cannot open the app, or Chromium is missing its system libraries on the server	Set APP_BASE_URL to an address the server itself can reach and install Chromium's dependencies.
"We'll email a copy" but no email arrives	Delivery is stubbed in 1.0.0	Download the PDF. Nothing is queued and nothing will arrive later.
Closed the tab while it was writing	Nothing is lost — chapters are saved as they are written	Reopen the book link, or /create? resume= with the book id.
Lost the link to a finished book	There is no login and no library	Whoever runs the app can find it in the database by email address. Otherwise it is gone.
Page not found on a book address	The id is wrong, or the database was reset	Check the link. Ids are long and case-sensitive.

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Book	One run of the app: the answers you gave and everything generated from them. Each has its own id and address.
Id	The long code in a book's address. It is the only key to that book.
Profile	Your four answers and free text, written out as labelled lines. This is what the writing is based on.
Outline	The book's title and its five chapter titles, designed before any chapter is written. It is what the writing screen shows you.
Chapter	500–750 words written in one request, saved as soon as it is finished, and required to contain at least one usable tool.
Free text	The optional “Anything specific about your situation?” answer — up to 1000 characters, quoted into the profile as written.
Model	The language model that writes the text, reached through OpenRouter. Which one is a setting, not a user choice.
Print view	A plain layout of the book with no app navigation, used to render the PDF.
Stubbed	Present in the interface but not implemented. In 1.0.0 this applies to emailing a copy.

Getting help

The current version of this manual is always at pages.apps.wrenchworth.com/manuals/leadershipforge/latest, and is linked from the foot of every screen in the app.