# 3720 The UnitLevel Leader

People Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/3720-the-unitlevel-leader/

This is the role Rung 5 lives or dies on.

The unit-level leader runs their unit at 4c posture — bench built, leadership team running consultatively, operator in overwatch. But the overwatch is the unit-level leader's overwatch of their unit, not the multi-unit operator's overwatch of the unit. The unit-level leader is the operator of that unit. The multi-unit operator's job is to develop unit-level leaders, not to run units.

Three failure modes on this hire.

The leader runs it the operator's way out of fear. Technically capable, but defers every call to the operator. Unit 2 runs the operator's way — because the leader checks every decision against the operator's preference. Looks like alignment. Is actually dependency. Same trap as Rung 2's first hire, scaled up.

The leader runs it their own way out of ego. Capable, has their own ideas, runs the unit the way they would build it — which is not the system. Looks like leadership. Is actually drift. The system the operator built does not survive the leader's preferences.

The operator hires the leader and does not develop them. Capable, willing to run the system, but never gets the coaching cadence the operator gave themselves on the way up. The leader hits a constraint at their own Rung 3 or Rung 4 inside Unit 2 — and has no one developing them through it. The unit stalls because the leader stalled because the operator did not lead them.

The unit-level leader is the rung's product. Build them right and Rung 5 works. Build them wrong and Rung 5 collapses Unit 2 back into Unit 1.

The operator's verb at this rung is building unit-level leaders and the system they run. Not running units. Not visiting units. If the operator's calendar shows shifts on the floor at any unit, the verb is wrong. If it shows leadership development sessions with each unit-level leader, system architecture work, and growth work — the verb is right.