When navigating the psychological dynamics of an ADHD leader or manager, standard workplace communication advice often breaks down. Traditional corporate communication assumes linear processing, steady attention spans, and low emotional volatility during feedback.

To bridge this gap, a strategic guide on workplace psychology and communication with an ADHD superior involves shifting from behavioral expectations to cognitive architecture.

1. The Psychological Framework: Understanding the ADHD Boss

- **The Novelty-Seeking Brain:** The ADHD brain is chronically dopamine-deficient, meaning it is biologically wired to seek novelty, high stimulation, and immediate impact. Routine operational details feel physically painful or exhausting to process, which is why your boss may obsess over a massive new strategic vision while letting administrative tasks or emails pile up.
- **Working Memory Bottlenecks:** Executive dysfunction heavily impacts working memory (holding information "online" while working). If your boss forgets a decision made three days ago, it is rarely intentional gaslighting or disrespect—their brain literally has less capacity to store unindexed verbal data.
- **Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) & Criticism:** Many ADHD professionals experience intense emotional pain or defensiveness when receiving critical feedback due to a lifetime of perceived failures. This means feedback or resistance to their ideas must be framed with immense psychological safety.

2. Strategic Communication Rules for Managing Up

A. The "Bottom-Line-Up-Front" (BLUF) Structure

- **The Challenge:** Dense paragraphs or lengthy background explanations cause cognitive overload, resulting in the boss zoning out or skimming.
- **The Strategy:** Put the core request, question, or conclusion in the very first sentence. Use bullet points for the "why" and keep blocks of text short.
    - *Example:* "Hi [Name], **we need your sign-off on the Q4 budget by 3 PM today to avoid a vendor delay.** Here are the 2 key numbers to review: [Bullet 1, Bullet 2]."

B. Externalizing the Working Memory (Paper Trails as an Ally)

- **The Challenge:** Verbal agreements evaporate. If you discuss a project live, it risks disappearing from their mental queue.

- **The Strategy:** Treat written follow-ups not as micromanagement, but as an assistive tool. Send a recap email immediately post-meeting: *"Just dropping a quick summary of our chat so we're aligned on next steps..."* This creates the external structure their brain needs.

C. Redirecting "Idea Floods" Without Causing Friction

- **The Challenge:** An ADHD leader will frequently bring three new, unvetted project ideas into a weekly meeting, threatening to derail existing priorities.
- **The Strategy:** Validate the enthusiasm first, then force a choice using a resource constraint framework.
    - *Example:* "That sounds like a fantastic initiative! Since our current bandwidth is fully allocated to Project X, would you like me to pause Project X to prioritize this new direction?" This places the trade-off back on them without triggering defensiveness.

3. Navigating Feedback and Conflict Safely

- **De-personalize the Delivery:** If your boss is abrupt, changes deadlines at the eleventh hour, or appears distracted while you are speaking, consciously separate their delivery style from your performance. Their internal world is often moving at high velocity; bluntness is usually speed, not malice.
- **Frame Pushback Around Shared Goals:** When you need to tell an ADHD boss why an idea won't work, frame it around protecting their ultimate vision or timeline, rather than pointing out flaws.
    - *Instead of:* "That won't work because we don't have the staff."
    - *Try:* "To make sure we protect your timeline for the launch next month, keeping our current team focused on [X] will get us across the finish line faster."