



Schachter Monthly

By Ephraim Schachter • Jul 05, 2023

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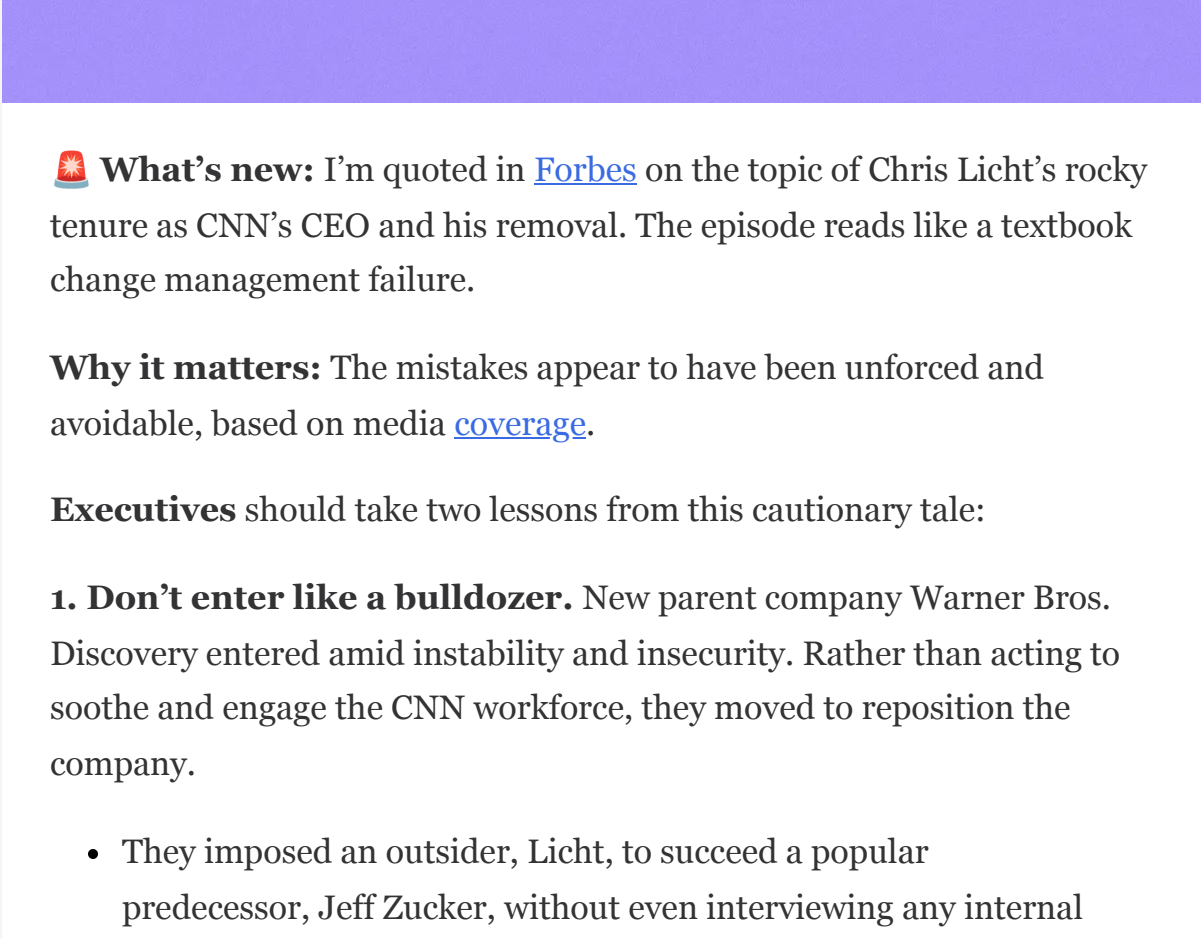
Happy July to my senior leaders across industries!

👉 **Let's be the best leaders we can be.** Here are some straightforward insights and actionable tools & tips.

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🌊 **Surf's up:** *Schachter Monthly* is taking August off. Back in September.

1 big thing: When executives don't manage change well



📰 **What's new:** I'm quoted in [Forbes](#) on the topic of Chris Licht's rocky tenure as CNN's CEO and his removal. The episode reads like a textbook change management failure.

Why it matters: The mistakes appear to have been unforced and avoidable, based on media [coverage](#).

Executives should take two lessons from this cautionary tale:

1. Don't enter like a bulldozer. New parent company Warner Bros. Discovery entered amid instability and insecurity. Rather than acting to soothe and engage the CNN workforce, they moved to reposition the company.

- They imposed an outsider, Licht, to succeed a popular predecessor, Jeff Zucker, without even interviewing any internal candidates.

- Instead of demonstrating the need for a directional change, they tried to ram it through.

2. Become a member of a tribe before you try to lead it.

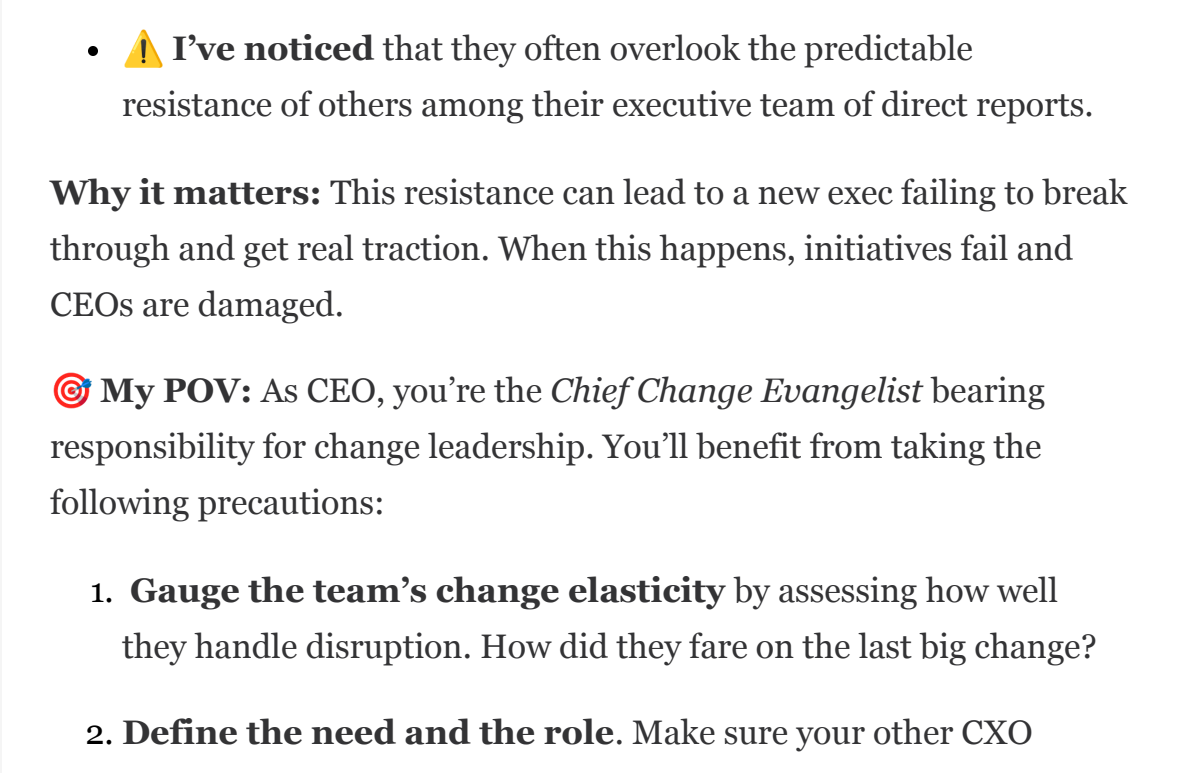
- Rather than building trust and relationship capital, Licht reportedly criticized the organization's work and the direction of CNN.

- Physically separating himself, Licht moved offices to a separate floor to reduce contact with his staff.

The bottom line: Invite loyalty; not contempt.

👉 **Go deeper:** Group dynamics granddaddy Kurt Lewin [taught](#) that you have to "unfreeze" an organization before trying to change it.

2. Reducing resistance to your new change agent



CEO clients discuss with me when they need to go outside for their next C-Suite hire, whether it's to acquire specialized expertise or in response to Board pressure, regulatory changes or missed performance targets.

- ⚠️ **I've noticed** that they often overlook the predictable resistance of others among their executive team of direct reports.

Why it matters: This resistance can lead to a new exec failing to break through and get real traction. When this happens, initiatives fail and CEOs are damaged.

🎯 **My POV:** As CEO, you're the *Chief Change Evangelist* bearing responsibility for change leadership. You'll benefit from taking the following precautions:

1. **Gauge the team's change elasticity** by assessing how well they handle disruption. How did they fare on the last big change?

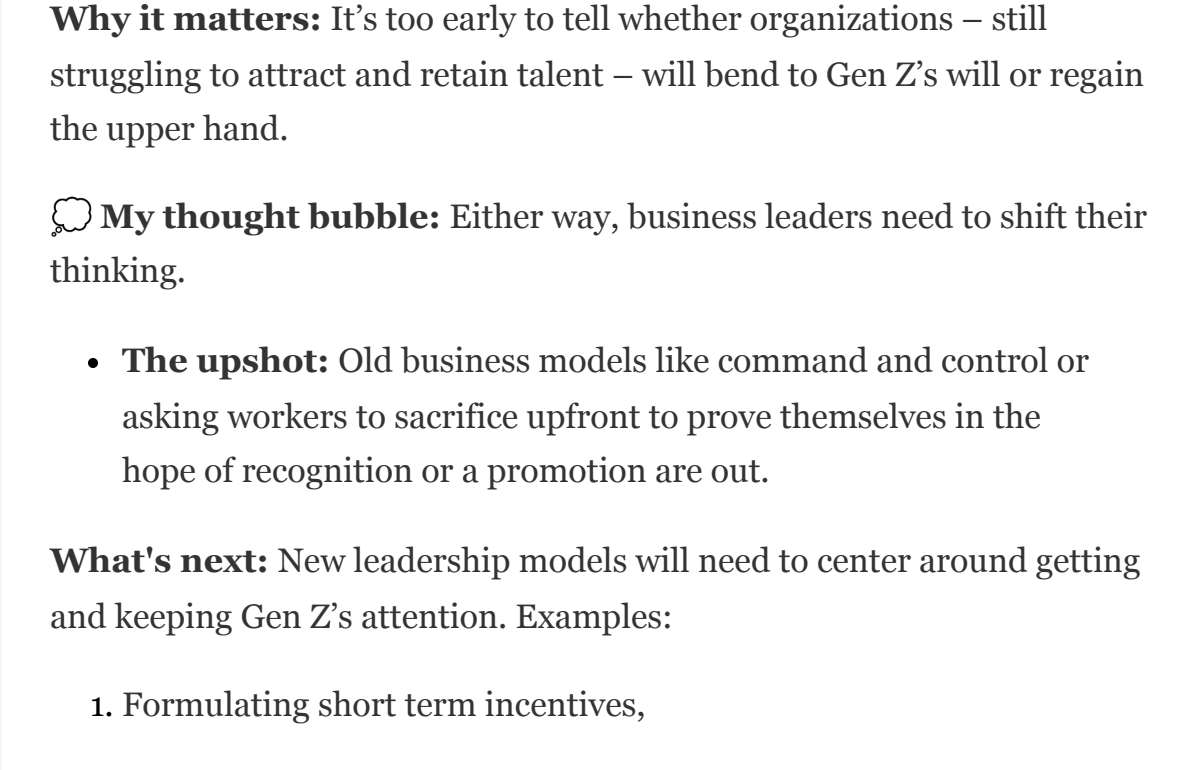
2. **Define the need and the role.** Make sure your other CXO direct reports are in agreement about the change you're seeking and describe the job the same way. No boundary confusion. Establish clear lines of authority and decision rights for all work.

3. **Invite your team** to own the change from the get-go with active roles and decision authority in recruiting the new hire.

4. **Reboot the team** with the new hire onboard. Review new and existing strategic and operational goals. Facilitate negotiations around positional roles and their decision rights.

🌟 **Anticipate your own ambivalence** and don't self-sabotage. It's natural to feel conflicted and want to "protect" your team from the new change agent. Resist that feeling.

3. Preparing middle management to lead Gen Z



👤 **Now entering the workforce**, Gen Z has high [expectations](#) of their employers. They want meaningful work, a sense that they are appreciated individually, and an organization that shares their values and priorities. All the while, they want to job hop and offer little commitment in return.

Why it matters: It's too early to tell whether organizations – still struggling to attract and retain talent – will bend to Gen Z's will or regain the upper hand.

💡 **My thought bubble:** Either way, business leaders need to shift their thinking.

- **The upshot:** Old business models like command and control or asking workers to sacrifice upfront to prove themselves in the hope of recognition or a promotion are out.

What's next: New leadership models will need to center around getting and keeping Gen Z's attention. Examples:

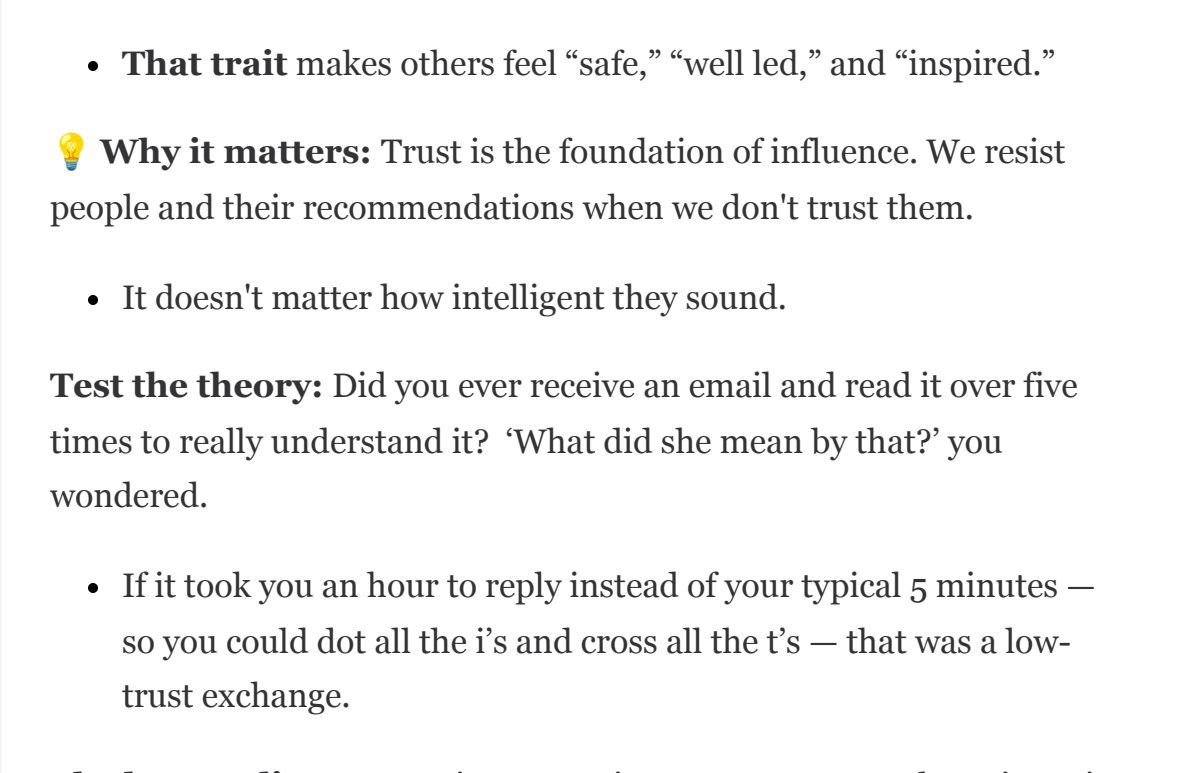
1. Formulating short term incentives,

2. Creating opportunities to connect the work to values, and

3. Promoting early career-pathing activities that offer meaningful learning and milestones that begin early and proceed consistently.

📌 **This will demand** that leaders are more compelling than their main competition for attention; i.e., a phone or tablet. They will need to become expert motivators and useful mentors.

4. July pro tip: Plainspoken executive presence



🌟 **I teach executive presence** in a small masterclass. I prompt participants to consider people they know who project executive presence.

- I ask them to list the behaviors they observe and to also describe how those behaviors make them feel.

👉 **What participants say:** People with executive presence are *plainspoken*. They shoot straight with language that is stripped of any pretense or fluff.

- **That trait** makes others feel "safe," "well led," and "inspired."

💡 **Why it matters:** Trust is the foundation of influence. We resist people and their recommendations when we don't trust them.

- It doesn't matter how intelligent they sound.

Test the theory: Did you ever receive an email and read it over five times to really understand it? "What did she mean by that?" you wondered.

- If it took you an hour to reply instead of your typical 5 minutes — so you could dot all the i's and cross all the t's — that was a low-trust exchange.

The bottom line: To project executive presence, get to the point using the simplest, most straightforward terms. No jargon. Nothing flowery.

👉 **Rounding out the Top 5:** FYI, the other most-repeated hallmarks of executive bearing:

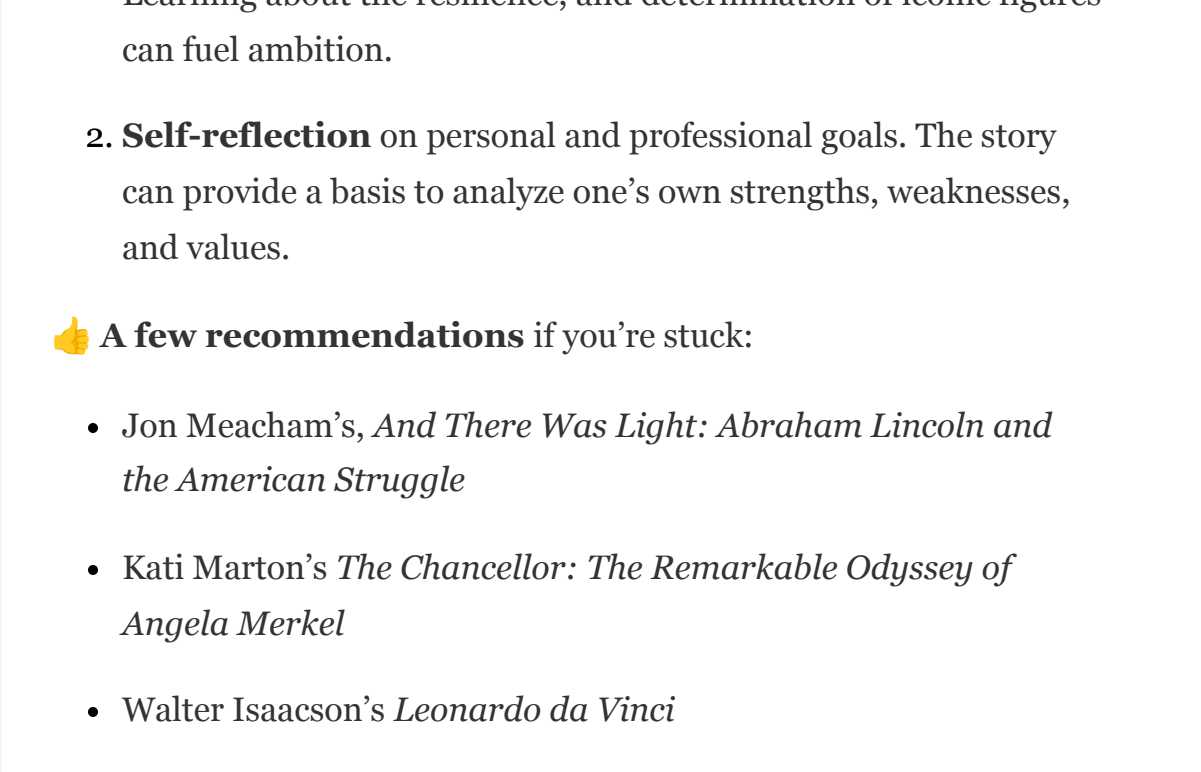
1. Projecting a confident, shared vision of an achievable better future.

2. Demonstrating genuine interest.

3. Seeking win-win outcomes.

4. Being transparent.

5. Career Corner: Read a biography this summer



🌟 **As summer** kicks into gear, leaders should take a well-deserved break and spend quality time with loved ones. It's also the perfect opportunity to read a biography.

Why it matters: It's a powerful way for hard-driven clients to detach from the day-to-day and simultaneously serve their own professional growth.

🔍 **Zoom out:** Biographies offer a window into the triumphs and failures of extraordinary people who have achieved remarkable successes in business, politics, science, the arts, etc.

🔍 **Zoom in:** Biographies are leadership manuals, offering insights into the strategies, tactics, and philosophies adopted by consequential figures.

- **Readers can enhance** their own leadership skills, develop new management techniques, and discover innovative ways to navigate challenges, by considering others' approaches.

More benefits to be derived:

1. **Inspiration** to think bigger and persevere through difficulty. Learning about the resilience, and determination of iconic figures can fuel ambition.

2. **Self-reflection** on personal and professional goals. The story can provide a basis to analyze one's own strengths, weaknesses, and values.

👉 **A few recommendations** if you're stuck:

- Jon Meacham's, *And There Was Light: Abraham Lincoln and the American Struggle*

- Kati Marton's *The Chancellor: The Remarkable Odyssey of Angela Merkel*

- Walter Isaacson's *Leonardo da Vinci*

Thanks for your share of mind. I wish you all the best!

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💡 **Parting wisdom:** "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." James Baldwin

🎵 *See you in September!*

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