

# Schachter Monthly

By Ephraim Schachter • Nov 14, 2023


Smart Brevity® count: 5 mins...1324 words

🎉 **Happy November** to my senior, executive and HR leaders across industries and academia!

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

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## 1 big thing: Leading in an era of low trust



📉 **What's dropping:** Americans' trust in institutions continues to sag, with organized religion down to 32%, big business at 14%, and Congress at 8%, per [Gallup](#).

- It's no surprise, then, that workforce pessimism also is [on the rise](#).

**Why it matters:** CEOs and senior leaders who focus on building trust with their employees, will likely be rewarded for satisfying the foundational human need to believe and be optimistic.

- **Remember:** Your employees don't just want to trust you ... they want to trust, period.

🔍 **Zoom out:** When you boil it down, trust has two vectors:

1. **Character:** the person does the right thing.
2. **Competence:** the person does things right.

**Zoom in:** Character deficiency is a company's risk factor. Most key leaders can do the technical side of their job just fine.

🎯 **My POV:** CXOs can take hold of this lever for competitive advantage.

- **Identify established leaders** with a trust deficit stemming from behaviors like low empathy, intimidation, solo agendas, team disengagement.
- **Deliver tough-but-honest** feedback to them and support their professional development. Fire them if they don't reform.
- **Scope out and visibly promote leaders** of high integrity who inspire loyalty. They're not hard to find.
- **Articulate a promising vision** of the future at every opportunity.

👉 **The bottom line:** While it's not Corporate America's obligation to singlehandedly heal low institutional trust, it's to everyone's benefit.

## 2. Onboarding leaders need more attention



**Organizations are spending less time** onboarding employees than on talent recruitment. HR executives acknowledge they have deprioritized the onboarding experience in a [Qualtrics survey](#) highlighting the growing strategic importance of HR.

- 📊 **By the numbers:** While 50% of HR execs say talent attraction and hiring are a top priority, just 41% say the same for onboarding. Specifically, managers aren't receiving sufficient support to lead their teams or work on their own professional development.

**Why it matters:** A few years after COVID and the adoption of WFH and hybrid work setups, we find ourselves with managers and workforces who've imprinted on their companies in a unprecedentedly disconnected way.

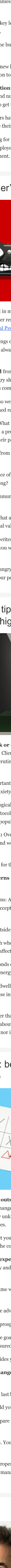
- **Your company** likely has key leaders—even execs—who've onboarded mostly remotely.

🖼️ **The big picture:** Three of the building blocks of executive leadership skill are essential:

1. **Establishing rapport:** A new leader needs to strike and keep a real trust-building connection to wield real influence.
2. **Navigating the organization:** Execs must analyze stakeholders in a detailed and nuanced way and manage relationships strategically to get things done.
3. **Leading the team:** Leaders have to cultivate direct reports, mobilize them and calibrate their performance.

🎯 **My POV:** Robust onboarding for your leadership corps is more critical than ever in ensuring employee engagement, loyalty, skill development and cultural alignment.

## 3. Getting on anger's good side



**Feeling angry can be helpful** in motivating people to overcome obstacles and meet their goals, per researchers at Texas A&M in the "[Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#)."

- **Why it matters:** The findings challenge the notion that "negative" emotions should always be regulated or avoided at work.

✅ **Effectiveness is enhanced** from directing one's anger to the task at hand. Participants who were angry showed a nearly 40% improvement in solving challenging word puzzles compared to those in a neutral state.

- Angry study participants also were better at avoiding obstacles in a video game due to shortened reaction time.

🤔 **A Leadership Question:** What about expressing anger outwardly, as opposed to applying it against a problem set? Are there times when your people want you to share their passion?

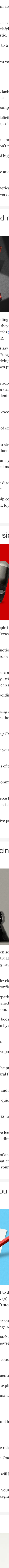
🎯 **My POV:** Execs will benefit from applying "the 3 C's" before speaking out:

1. **Crux.** Laser in on the essence of the issue. Are your people expecting you to right a wrong?
2. **Culture.** Adhere to the communication norms of the organization.
3. **Congruence.** Make sure what and how you communicate is congruent with your personal values.

**Stay in control:** 19th Century writer Ambrose Bierce famously warned: "Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret."

👉 **The bottom line:** Harness angry energy to drive performance-related outcomes and support your people.

## 4. November pro tip: Reducing anxiety when stakes are high



⚠️ **Before a key meeting, talk or decision,** even seasoned executives experience performance anxiety. Clients describe struggling with a fear of making mistakes and negative scrutiny from colleagues, superiors, or the public.

- **Why it matters:** It's important for execs to develop coping strategies to manage this anxiety and project confidence.

🔍 **Zoom out:** Anxiety is a biological response preparing us for an imminent threat. Our body's protocol is better designed for escaping a hungry bear than anticipating a populated boardroom.

**Before the high stakes event:** Over-prepare. It boosts confidence. You will present clear thinking and won't be thrown by something unexpected.

- **Identify your objectives** for the interaction.
- **Anticipate others' concerns** and prepare responses ahead of time.


**As the high stakes event** begins: Acknowledge the predictable physical feelings that arise and accept them as natural (remember that bear?).

- **Shift your focus** to get outside of your head and into the mix.
- **Look for individuals** with whom to strike a quick rapport, mirroring their energy and affect.
- **Memorize** the first 45 seconds of your remarks, make eye contact and allow nervous energy to dissipate.

**After the high stakes event,** dwell in the positive feeling to anchor it. The positive association with these interactions will diminish anxiety the next time.

👉 **The bottom line:** Remember that some level of anxiety is normal and can even be motivating. It's about managing that anxiety to a level that doesn't become debilitating nor interfere with your performance.

## 5. Career Corner: before you accept a change agent job



🌟 **Organizations often look outside** for talent to drive course corrections or all out direction changes. Either they (a) lack viable candidates internally; or (b) they unknowingly can't stomach pushing the contemplated changes, themselves.

🔥 **Why it matters:** You can set yourself up for success before you accept the new gig by assessing the company's change readiness.

**First, test for clear, aligned expectations.** Watch out when key leaders define the role differently and sound like they're hiring for slightly different jobs.

- **Do they describe** it the same way? Are they consistent on why it's imperative and urgent?
- **Are there** any other change advocates in influential roles?

**Second, make sure** that your prospective role is explicitly spelled out.

- **Have they articulated** the goals and performance targets against which you'll be measured?
- **Who owns** the change besides you?

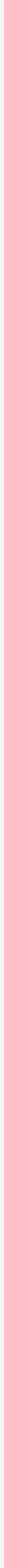
**Third, gauge leadership's change elasticity** and how they handle disruption.

- **How did they fare** on the last big change?
- **Has anyone** previously held your prospective role and failed?

⚠️ **Warning:** you'll need to prepare for resistance. Once you enter, there will be pushback.

- **Master your composure.** Your co-workers will be scrutinizing your behavioral cues.
- **Anticipate anti-change** tropes and prepare your responses before Day 1 on the job and manage your messaging.

## 6. 🙌 Go deeper



**Ephraim Schachter** is an award-winning C-Suite coach, advisor and speaker who has been helping senior organizational leaders across industries and academia with high-integrity, high effectiveness leadership practices and talent optimization for over two decades.

- **Invite** Ephraim to [speak](#) at your next event.
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💡 **Parting wisdom:** "Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained." Marie Curie

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