

Schachter Monthly

By Ephraim Schachter • Feb 06, 2024

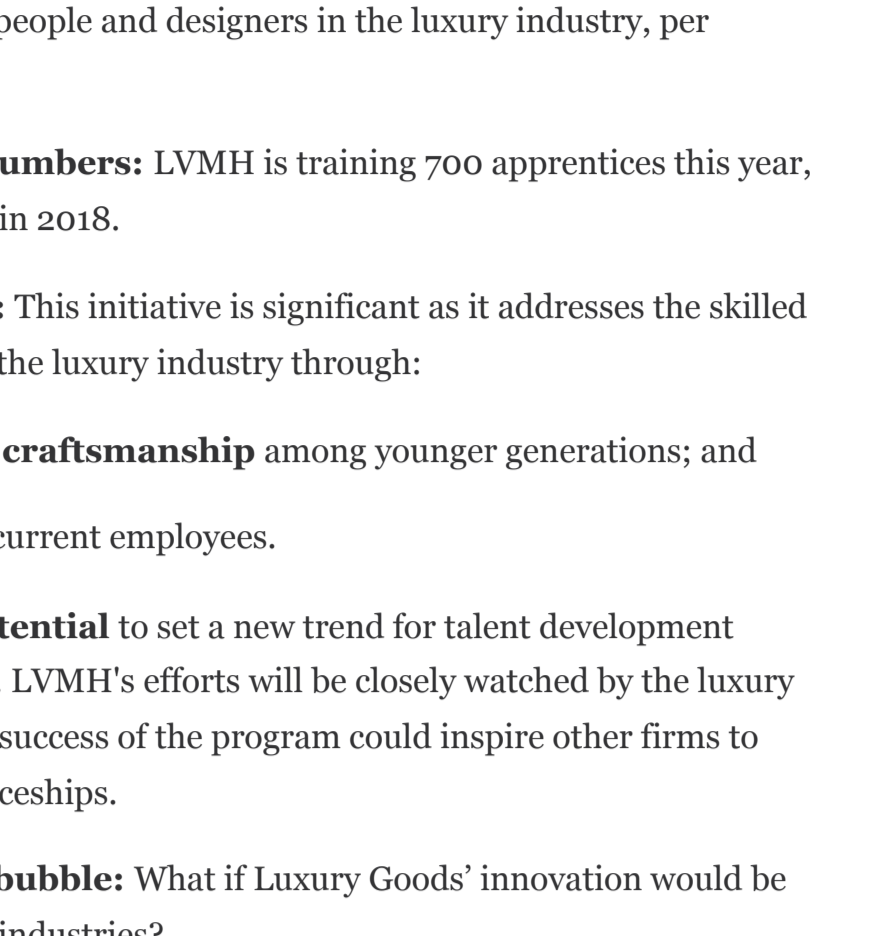
Smart Brevity® count: 5 mins...1301 words

Happy February to my senior, executive and HR leaders across industries and academia!

🏆 **Let's be great leaders!** Here are some straightforward insights and actionable tools & tips.

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1 big thing: Apprenticeship to upskill leaders?



LVMH is partnering with educational institutions to train apprentices in jewelry-making and other artisanal skills as it faces a shortage of craftspeople and designers in the luxury industry, per [Bloomberg](#).

- **By the numbers:** LVMH is training 700 apprentices this year, up from 180 in 2018.

Why it matters: This initiative is significant as it addresses the skilled labor shortage in the luxury industry through:

- **Promoting craftsmanship** among younger generations; and
- **Reskilling** current employees.

This has the potential to set a new trend for talent development within this sector. LVMH's efforts will be closely watched by the luxury industry, and the success of the program could inspire other firms to invest in apprenticeships.

💬 **My thought bubble:** What if Luxury Goods' innovation would be applicable across industries?

The ranks of skilled managers have dwindled since the seismic work shifts beginning in 2020 in which incumbent leaders struggled with WFH and newer managers were — let's be honest — inadequately onboarded and enculturated.

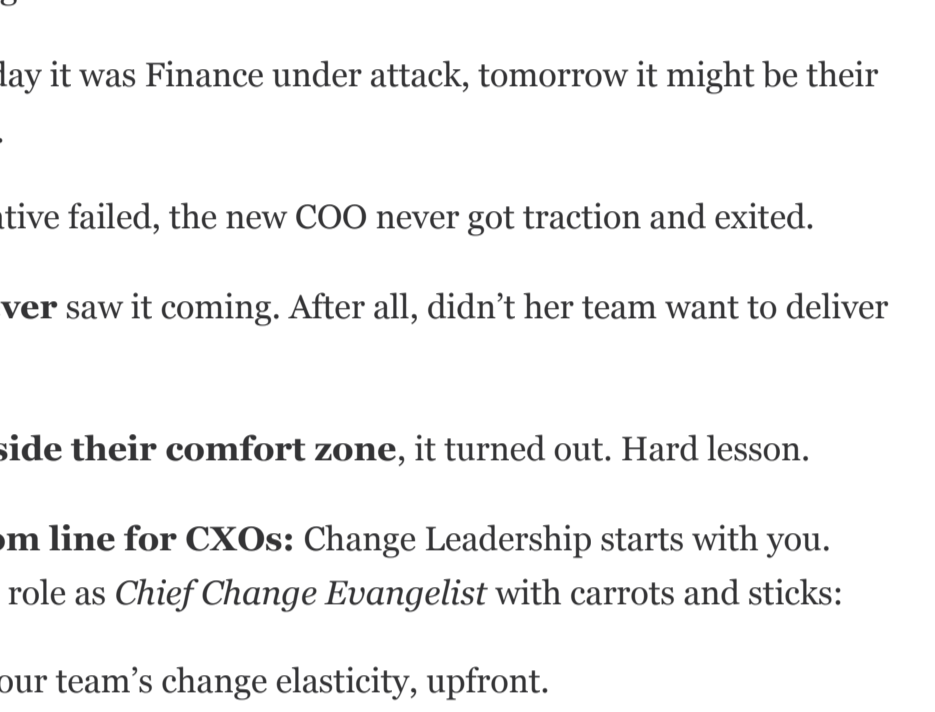
🎯 **My POV:** Talent Management leaders across the board ought to take a cue from Luxury Goods sector and initiate apprenticeship programs for leaders throughout the organization.

A robust apprenticeship program for leaders might drive multiple benefits, including:

1. **A re-articulation** of desired culture norms and attributes
2. **An opportunity to engage** the best existing organization leaders to participate
3. **Industry-wide buzz** to drive renewed talent attraction.

The bottom line: Sectors beyond Luxury Goods should follow LVMH's inspiration and apprentice new and existing leaders.

2. When a direct report resists the change agenda



If you're like some chiefs I encounter seeking to drive change, you'll recruit an outside candidate to come in and shake things up ...

- **But, you'll neglect** to set up the newcomer for success.

🖼️ **Big picture:** The behavior of your current lieutenants will disproportionately influence your change agenda's success or failure.

⚠️ **Sometimes, your direct reports** appreciate the call for change, but resist it when they suspect it's their ox up for the goring.

Case in point: A client CEO hired a new COO to, among other things, streamline financial reporting systems across operating units.

- The veteran CFO passively resisted the upstart COO at every turn, and the rest of the executive team closed ranks to bar the “meddling.”
- While today it was Finance under attack, tomorrow it might be their bailiwick.
- The initiative failed, the new COO never got traction and exited.

My client never saw it coming. After all, didn't her team want to deliver for her?

- **Not outside their comfort zone**, it turned out. Hard lesson.

👉 **The bottom line for CXOs:** Change Leadership starts with you. Embrace your role as *Chief Change Evangelist* with carrots and sticks:

1. **Gauge** your team's change elasticity, upfront.
2. **Charge** the team with co-ownership for the change with explicit metrics.
3. **Celebrate** change champions and discipline change resisters.

3. Devil's Advocate: Stop tolerating ambiguity



💡 **The widely cited** job competency, “Tolerates Ambiguity” is a misguided aspiration. I've got two qualms:

1. It allows that as long as leaders hire well, they're excused from key leadership responsibilities, e.g., articulating an inspiring vision, setting clear goals and providing direct feedback.
2. It implies that demonstrating a bias for action will excuse under-developed ideas, sloppy work or lack of stakeholder engagement.

Many senior leaders I've observed overestimate the quality of their communication, i.e., they tolerate their own ambiguity.

🗨️ **What they're saying:** During my confidential one-on-one meetings with a leader and her team members they will separately describe the same live issues differently.

- **On the one hand:** The exasperated exec can't understand why her deputy hasn't acted on the “clear message” she delivered.
- **On the other:** The anxious deputy complains about not knowing what the boss wants.

💬 **Our thought bubble:** Tolerance is a virtue when applied to how we treat others' differences, resolve conflicts and open our minds and hearts. I'm all for it!

- **Ambiguity, on the other hand**, is an often temporary and remediable condition. Like a skin rash, it's something to minimize; not tolerate.

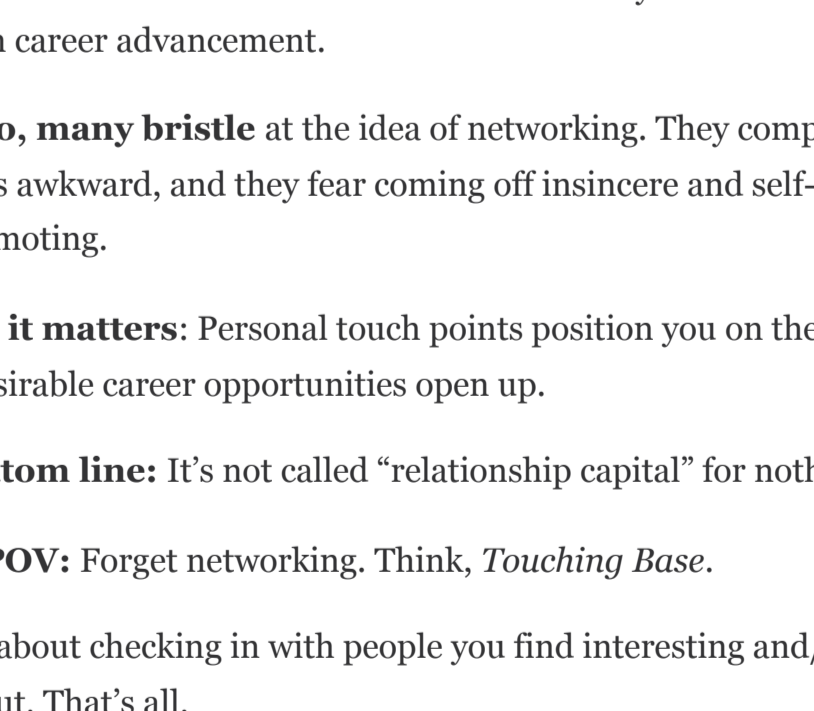
📝 **Minimize Ambiguity** by clearly articulating (and repeating, when useful) expectations, including:

- Short and long term objectives
- Available resources — human, financial, technical
- Connection to the strategic “big-picture”

Provide direct and comprehensive feedback, both positive and constructive.

👉 **Go deeper:** my thoughts on feedback, [here](#).

4. Pro tip: Don't take it personally



🌟 **One of the top five** self-defeating behaviors I see exhibited by otherwise talented, aspiring executives is when they react personally to the actions and remarks of others.

- **Why it matters:** Knocked off-balance, they assume a defensive posture and then behave out of reaction and without regard to the long-term.

The bottom line: Instead of advancing their interests, they give away some of their own power.

💬 **My thought bubble:** I'm not sure that the Buddha contemplated the corporate org chart, but the principle of compassionate detachment from outcomes is the way to go.

- **It's not about you.** When someone disagrees with you — even strongly — it is typically not a personal criticism. They're just trying to advance their own differing idea of what will work best. Let it go.

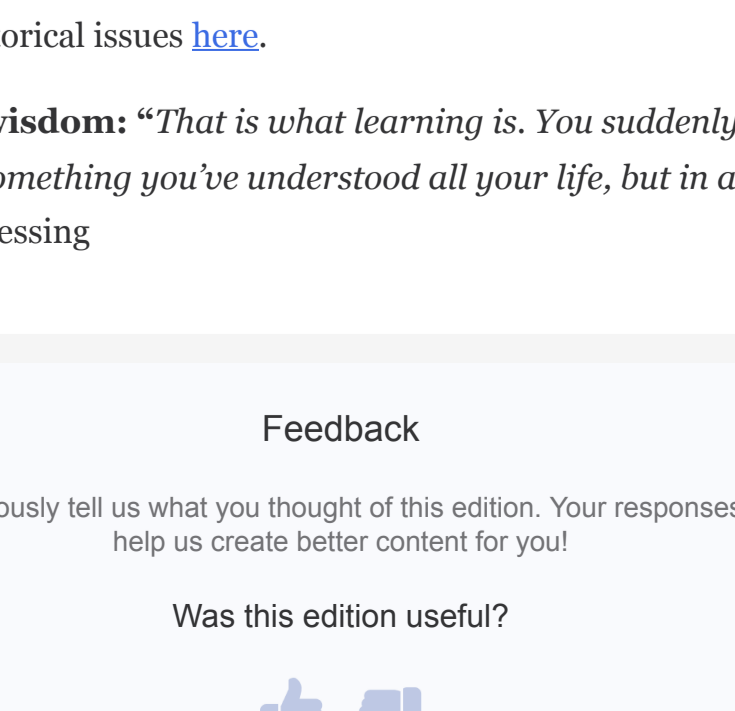
The big picture: Confident leaders don't get undermined by personal drama.

🌟 **Follow these steps** to comport yourself with executive presence:

1. **Take a breath.** Get your bearings and assume the posture of a seasoned statesperson.
2. **Address the substance** of the comment and not any of its emotional content. Proceed as if the slight didn't happen.
3. **Address the emotional content** by framing it as an area of shared passion and importance. Proceed as if the slight might have happened but wasn't personally directed at you.

The bottom line: Preserve your power and advance your interests. Avoid taking disagreements personally and maintain a detached and objective stance.

5. Career Corner: Have you touched base?



📁 **Many senior leaders** don't actively navigate their own career.

- **They presume** a tacit *fairness principle* at play, i.e., that their contributions are seen and valued and that they will be rewarded with career advancement.
- **Also, many bristle** at the idea of networking. They complain it feels awkward, and they fear coming off insincere and self-promoting.

⚡ **Why it matters:** Personal touch points position you on the radar for when desirable career opportunities open up.

- **Bottom line:** It's not called “relationship capital” for nothing.

👉 **My POV:** Forget networking. Think, *Touching Base*.

- It's about checking in with people you find interesting and/or care about. That's all.

📅 **Your assignment:** It's January! Keep this super-simple and start now:

1. Make a list of colleagues at your current and former jobs.
2. Connect on LinkedIn.
3. Get in touch via DM or email and suggest a “quick call to catch up.”
4. Schedule one or two per week.

I'm betting you will marvel at how plugged into the community and the information flow you will quickly find yourself.

👉 **Go deeper:** My take on “*Why 'Hustle & Hope' is Not a Strategy for a C-Suite Promotion*” [here](#).

6. Want more?

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 career optimization for over two decades.

- **Invite** Ephraim to [speak](#) at your next event.
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💡 **Parting wisdom:** “*That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way.*” Doris Lessing

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