



Schachter Monthly

By Ephraim Schachter • Nov 12, 2024

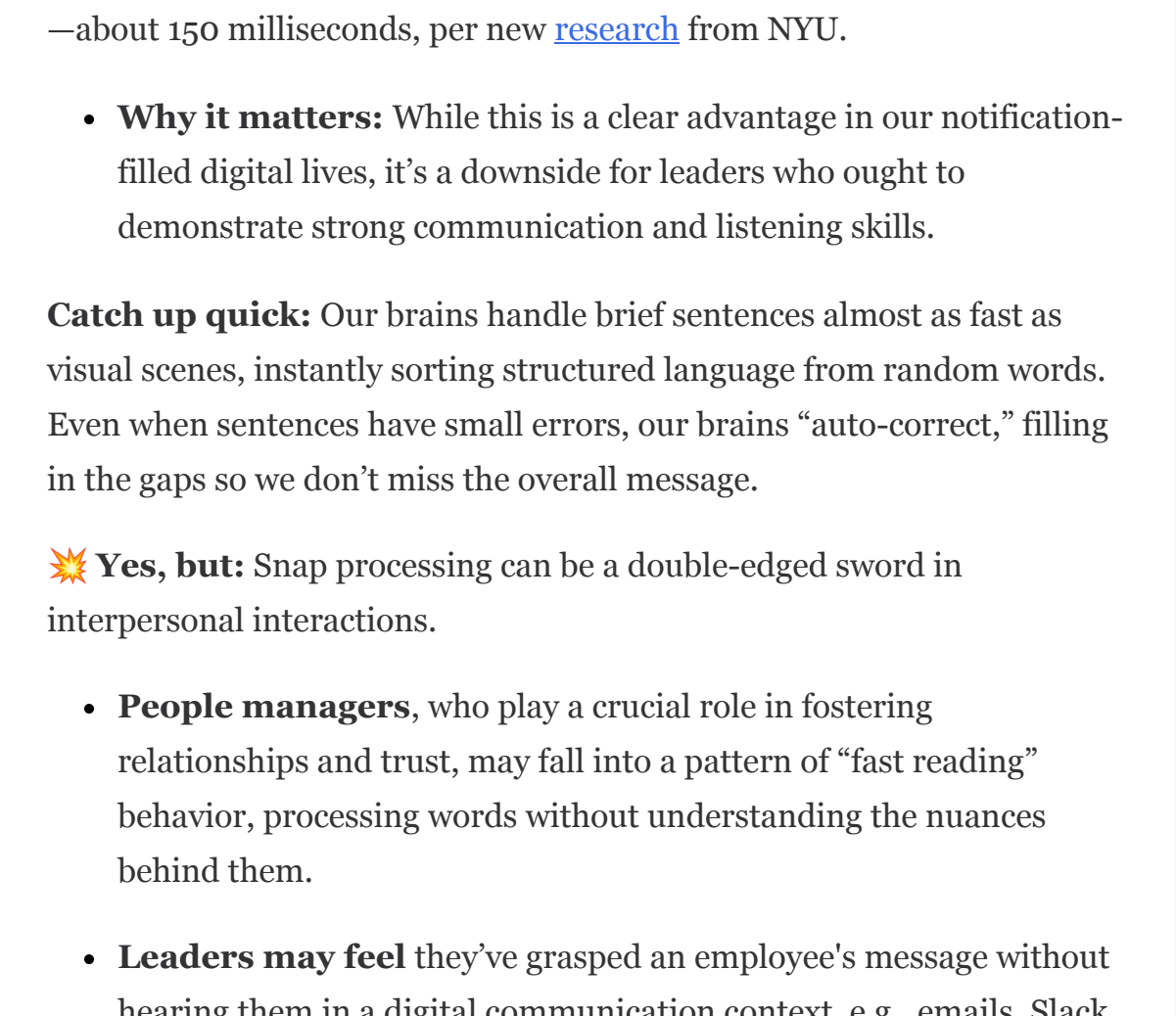
Smart Brevity® count: 5 mins...1343 words

🌟 **Happy November!** Thank you to our veterans!

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

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1 big thing: Fast brains, fractured communication



🧠 **Our brains process** short, written messages at near-instant speeds—about 150 milliseconds, per new [research](#) from NYU.

- **Why it matters:** While this is a clear advantage in our notification-filled digital lives, it's a downside for leaders who ought to demonstrate strong communication and listening skills.

Catch up quick: Our brains handle brief sentences almost as fast as visual scenes, instantly sorting structured language from random words. Even when sentences have small errors, our brains “auto-correct,” filling in the gaps so we don’t miss the overall message.

⚡ **Yes, but:** Snap processing can be a double-edged sword in interpersonal interactions.

- **People managers**, who play a crucial role in fostering relationships and trust, may fall into a pattern of “fast reading” behavior, processing words without understanding the nuances behind them.
- **Leaders may feel** they’ve grasped an employee’s message without hearing them in a digital communication context, e.g., emails, Slack, texts.

🔍 **Zoom out:** Quick processing can result in:

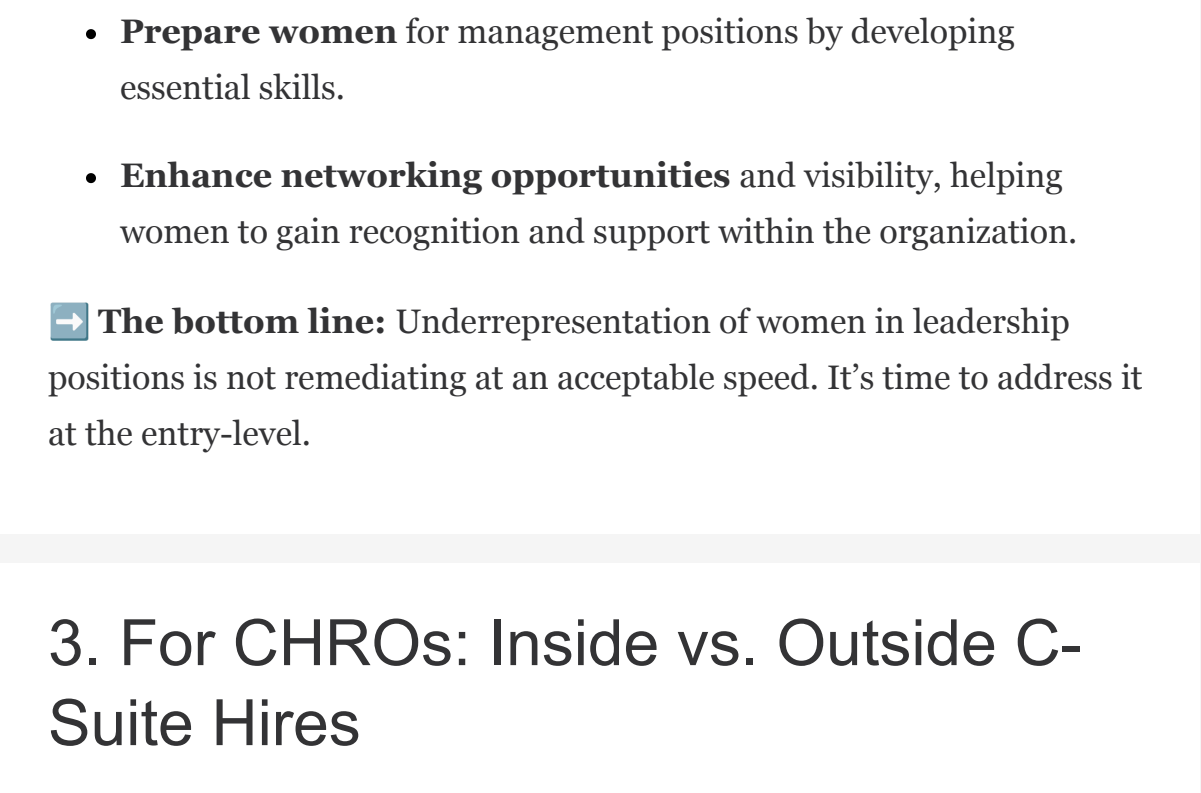
1. **Superficial understanding** making it easy for managers to overlook underlying concerns or subtext in employee communications.
2. **Impatient and unfocused listening** with an urge to rush through conversations.
3. **A transactional style** and checklist-driven communication pattern.

✅ **The Solution:** Professional people managers should be aware of this tendency to rush processing.

- **Practice “slow listening.”** Move beyond fast but shallow interactions by focusing and resisting the urge to skim. Clarify misunderstandings.

🌟 **The Bottom Line:** By leaning into intentional listening, managers can build stronger, more trusting relationships and better understand the real needs of their teams.

2. Increasing women leaders from the beginning



📊 **Women’s underrepresentation as leaders** begins way back at the entry level, where they are less likely than men to be hired, per McKinsey’s latest *Women in the Workplace* [report](#).

Why it matters: This early hurdle creates a ripple effect, limiting their career advancement and contributing to the persistent gender gap in leadership positions.

📊 **By the numbers:** For every 100 men who receive their first promotion to manager, only 81 women do, revealing a “broken rung” in the corporate ladder.

The big picture: Despite some progress, women remain underrepresented across the corporate pipeline, with men consistently outnumbering women at every level.

- The challenges are more pronounced for women of color, who face compounded obstacles in advancing to senior roles.

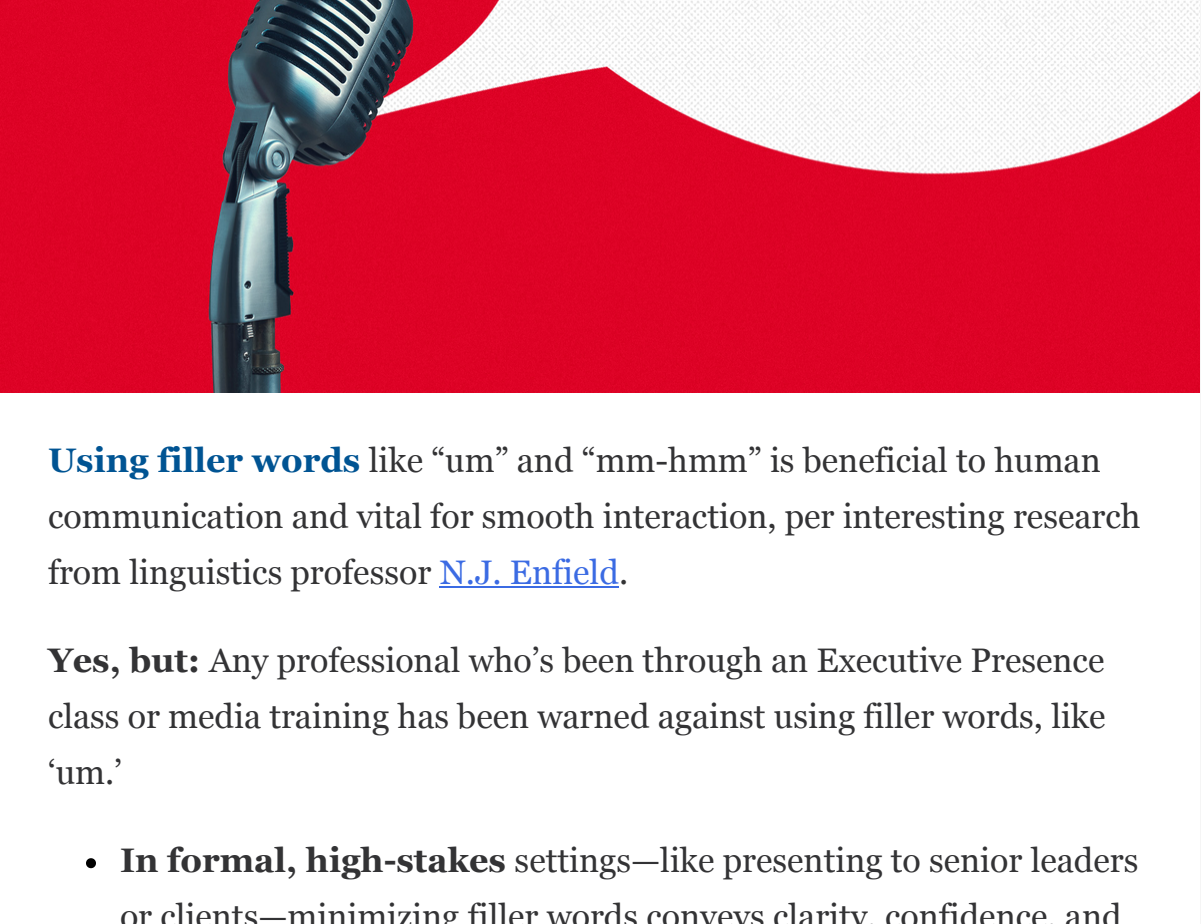
🎯 **My POV:** Organizations should carry out formal mentoring programs for women upon their hire, well before they reach managerial roles.

This strategy must serve the following objectives:

- **Address the “broken rung”** and create pathways for advancement to ensure fair opportunities for women to climb the corporate ladder.
- **Prepare women** for management positions by developing essential skills.
- **Enhance networking opportunities** and visibility, helping women to gain recognition and support within the organization.

📌 **The bottom line:** Underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is not remediating at an acceptable speed. It’s time to address it at the entry-level.

3. For CHROs: Inside vs. Outside C-Suite Hires



CEO succession in the news: Ross Stores and Estée Lauder have hired new CEOs. Ross went inside and Estée Lauder opted for an outsider, per [Yahoo! Finance](#).

- **Why it matters:** Whether promoting from within or bringing in fresh talent, CHROs ought to step forward and play a crucial role in ensuring a smooth transition and long-term success for new leaders.

📌 **The big picture:** There are trade-offs for each type of candidate

Insider Pros & Cons: Knowledge of company culture, strong internal relationships, and deep institutional knowledge.

- **Versus:** Lack fresh perspectives to break status quo, challenge ingrained processes or pivot when significant change is required.

Outsider Pros & Cons: Fresh eyes and experiences to rejuvenate company culture, spark transformation, and address inefficiencies.

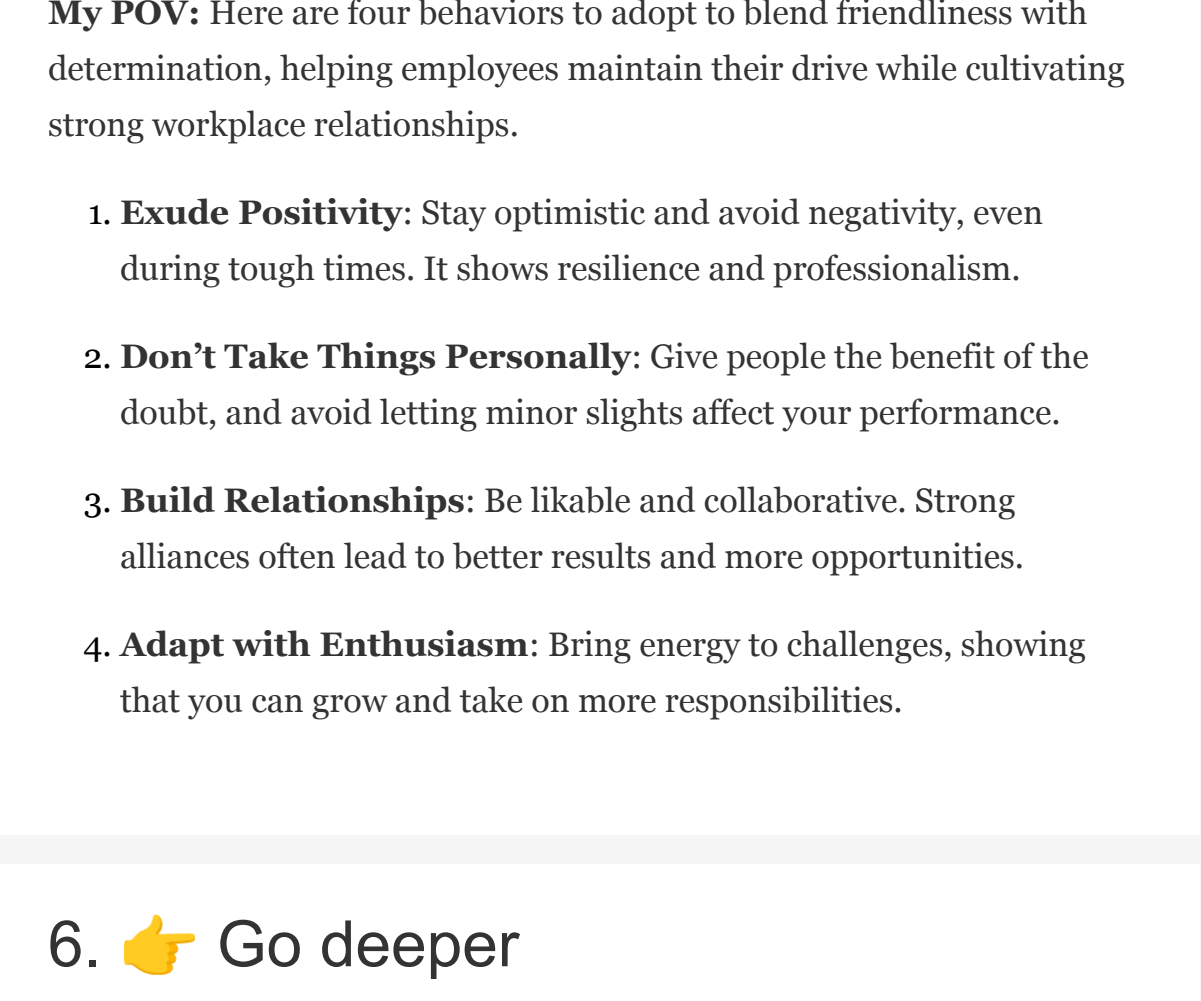
- **Versus:** Building trust with inherited team takes time, and steeper learning curve can slow decision-making.

🎯 **My POV:** Whether the new chief is an insider or outsider:

1. **Structure Onboarding:** Develop a phased plan with goals for the first 90 days, ensuring time for the leader to learn the culture and meet key stakeholders.
2. **Set Clear Metrics:** Align on short- and long-term success measures to keep the new leader focused and aligned with organizational goals.
3. **[For outsiders] Provide a view inside:** Pair the new CEO with a peer ‘godparent’ who can illuminate internal dynamics, helping them navigate the organization’s history and nuances.

🌟 **The bottom line:** CHROs shouldn’t wait for an invitation. This is where their expertise is critical.

4. November pro-tip: Are filler words allowed now?



Using filler words like “um” and “mm-hmm” is beneficial to human communication and vital for smooth interaction, per interesting research from linguistics professor [N.J. Enfield](#).

Yes, but: Any professional who’s been through an Executive Presence class or media training has been warned against using filler words, like ‘um.’

- **In formal, high-stakes** settings—like presenting to senior leaders or clients—minimizing filler words conveys clarity, confidence, and authority.

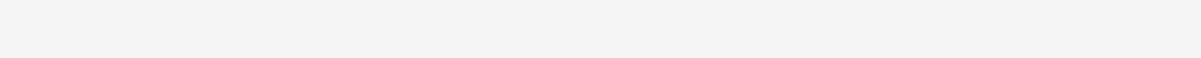
Why it matters: It’s imperative as an organizational leader to be credible and influential.

🧵 **Thread the needle:** Synthesizing the use of filler words with the desire for polished, crisp communication requires nuance.

1. **Adapt to your audience.** With senior leaders or clients, precision matters. Limit filler words to convey a stronger executive presence. OTOH, occasional fillers are okay for casual communication or brainstorming with team members to create a conversational rhythm that feels natural and collaborative.
2. **Use filler words intentionally.** Keep your communication conversational where appropriate but centered and clear, ensuring that each filler word serves a purpose or is omitted when precision is crucial.
3. **Stay authentic.** Authenticity builds trust, and a perfectly polished style isn’t always the answer.

🌟 **The bottom line:** Filler words aren’t inherently unprofessional, but how and when you use them matters. As a leader, balancing authenticity with a refined, confident style will enhance your credibility and influence.

5. Career Corner: The ‘happy warrior’ mindset advantage



🔑 **Simple truth:** Positivity and ambition drive success in challenging work environments.

- The WSJ [says](#) the “happy warrior” mindset—combining fierce ambition with a positive attitude—is gaining traction. [paywall]

Why it matters: Happy warrior leaders get noticed for their initiative and contribution. They rally teams, boosting morale, productivity, and collaboration.

💭 **My thought bubble:** It’s about the intersection of resilience and optimism. Leaders who remain optimistic despite setbacks are often seen as more capable and dependable.

Case in point: Despite 27 years in prison, *Nelson Mandela* emerged with a positive outlook. His warmth and optimism bridged deep divides in post-apartheid South Africa.

- He famously invited his former prison guards to his inauguration!

My POV: Here are four behaviors to adopt to blend friendliness with determination, helping employees maintain their drive while cultivating strong workplace relationships.

1. **Exude Positivity:** Stay optimistic and avoid negativity, even during tough times. It shows resilience and professionalism.
2. **Don’t Take Things Personally:** Give people the benefit of the doubt, and avoid letting minor slights affect your performance.
3. **Build Relationships:** Be likable and collaborative. Strong alliances often lead to better results and more opportunities.
4. **Adapt with Enthusiasm:** Bring energy to challenges, showing that you can grow and take on more responsibilities.

6. 👉 Go deeper

Photo by: Randy Belice

Ephraim Schachter is an award-winning C-Suite Coach and Leadership Strategist. He helps organizations thrive through disruption by developing their leaders’ capabilities to accelerate trust, navigate obstacles and communicate influentially. These skills have never been more in demand than in the evolving workplace with its growing disaffection with traditional management practices. Ephraim is a trusted expert and thought partner known for strategic, insightful and practical problem-solving.

- **Invite** Ephraim to [speak](#) at your next event.
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💡 **Parting wisdom:** “Guard well within yourself that treasure, kindness. Know how to give without hesitation, how to lose without regret, how to acquire without meanness.” George Sand

🌟 Have a great year—end! See you in January!

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