



# Schachter Monthly

By Ephraim Schachter • Mar 03, 2026

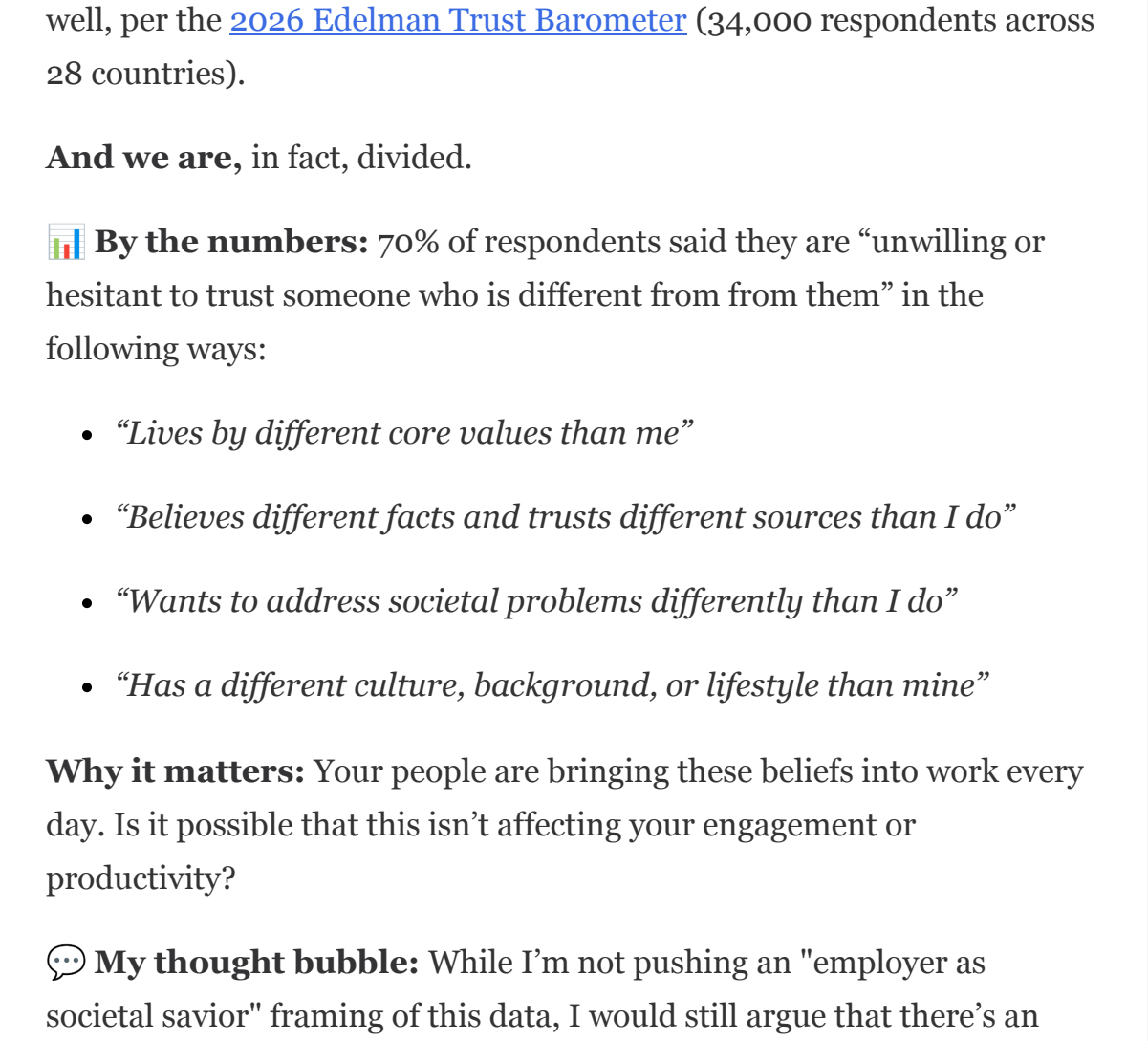
Smart Brevity® count: 5 mins...1351 words

🌱 **March is here.** Time to grow.

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

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## 1 big thing: The trust gap no CEO should ignore



🔊 **75% of people say CEOs are obligated** to bridge trust divides inside their organizations. But only 44% think their CEO actually does it well, per the [2026 Edelman Trust Barometer](#) (34,000 respondents across 28 countries).

**And we are**, in fact, divided.

📊 **By the numbers:** 70% of respondents said they are “unwilling or hesitant to trust someone who is different from from them” in the following ways:

- “Lives by different core values than me”
- “Believes different facts and trusts different sources than I do”
- “Wants to address societal problems differently than I do”
- “Has a different culture, background, or lifestyle than mine”

**Why it matters:** Your people are bringing these beliefs into work every day. Is it possible that this isn't affecting your engagement or productivity?

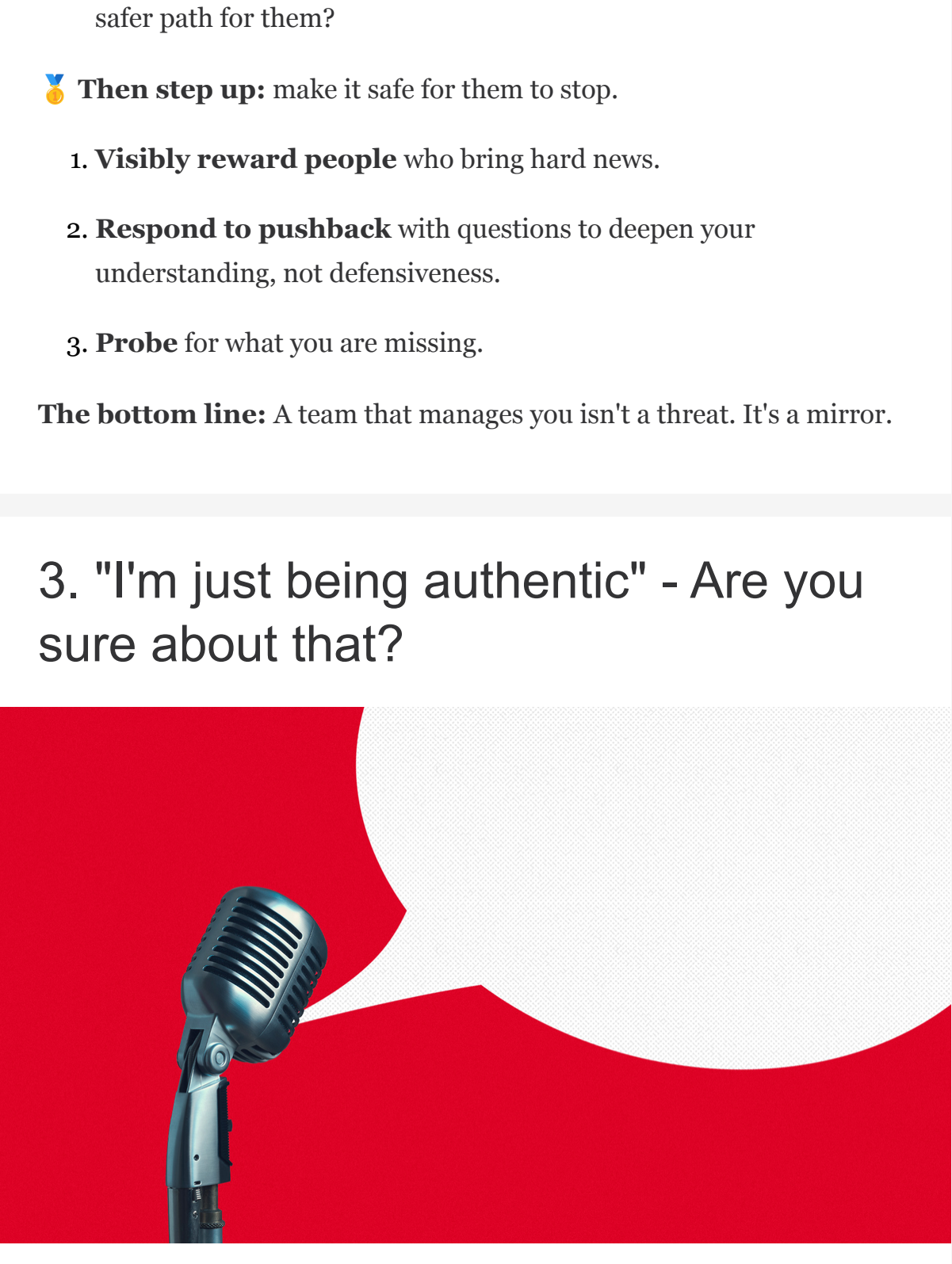
💭 **My thought bubble:** While I'm not pushing an “employer as societal savior” framing of this data, I would still argue that there's an opportunity for senior leaders to step into this space constructively.

- **From the Report:** Edelman says CEOs must “broker trust.” I don't read that as a culture initiative or a town hall. I read it as: does your daily leadership behavior demonstrate that you mean what you say?

🎯 **My POV:** Three simple things CEOs can do now:

1. **Consult before you decide.** Not as theater. As practice.
2. **Engage critics.** 74% of employees want their CEO to engage, not dismiss or pushback. IMHO, that takes equanimity and patience.
3. **Elevate trust to a core metric.** When you measure trust alongside engagement, you gain a clearer read on the true health of your organization.

## 2. Your direct report is managing you



💡 **New research on “managing up”** lays out how subordinates can navigate insecure bosses by calibrating tone, sequencing arguments, and regulating emotional temperature before making a case. See, [HBR](#).

- **Smart stuff.** But as I read it I thought: what about the senior leader on the receiving end?

😬 **Why it matters:** Your high-performing direct reports might just be managing you right now.

- They're shaping what you hear and deciding what's safe to raise and what isn't.
- That's not disloyalty. It's adaptation. And it's a signal worth paying attention to.

⚠️ **Here's the uncomfortable part:** If your team is managing you, it's probably because the environment you've created, intentionally or not, makes honesty feel risky.

🗣️ **How to tell it's happening:**

- You consistently get good news first and bad news late, or never.
- Your team seems aligned in meetings but you hear different things in one-on-ones.
- Certain topics only surface when you raise them first.
- People seem careful about how they phrase things around you.

🎯 **My POV:** The right response isn't to feel betrayed. Get curious instead.

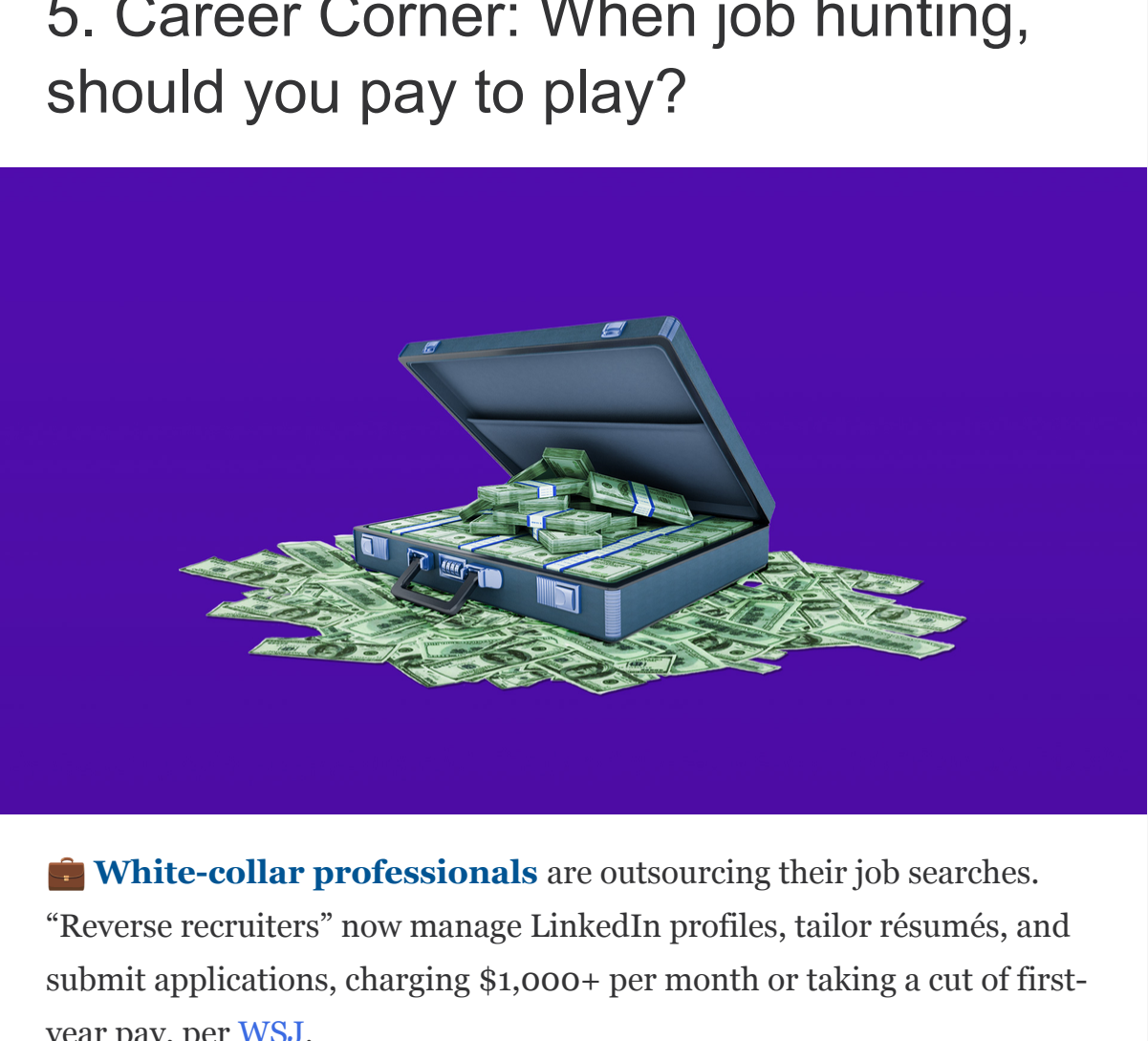
- **Ask yourself:** what have I done or not done that made this the safer path for them?

👉 **Then step up:** make it safe for them to stop.

1. **Visibly reward people** who bring hard news.
2. **Respond to pushback** with questions to deepen your understanding, not defensiveness.
3. **Probe** for what you are missing.

**The bottom line:** A team that manages you isn't a threat. It's a mirror.

## 3. "I'm just being authentic" - Are you sure about that?



**Authenticity is one** of leadership's most celebrated virtues. It may also be one of its most convenient excuses, per new research in [MIT Sloan](#).

🌟 **What's happening:** Researchers have identified the “authentic jerk”: the leader whose commitment to “being real” is, in practice, a license for ego and rigidity.

- **Many aren't malicious.** They genuinely believe their bluntness is integrity and their stubbornness is principle.

**Why it matters:** I see this constantly. A leader gets feedback that they're steamrolling people and responds: “*That's just how I am.*”

- Which is true. And also the problem.

🎯 **My POV:** Real authenticity isn't just self-expression. It includes self-alignment, acting from your actual values, not your default impulses.

**Here's the three-question test** I use with clients:

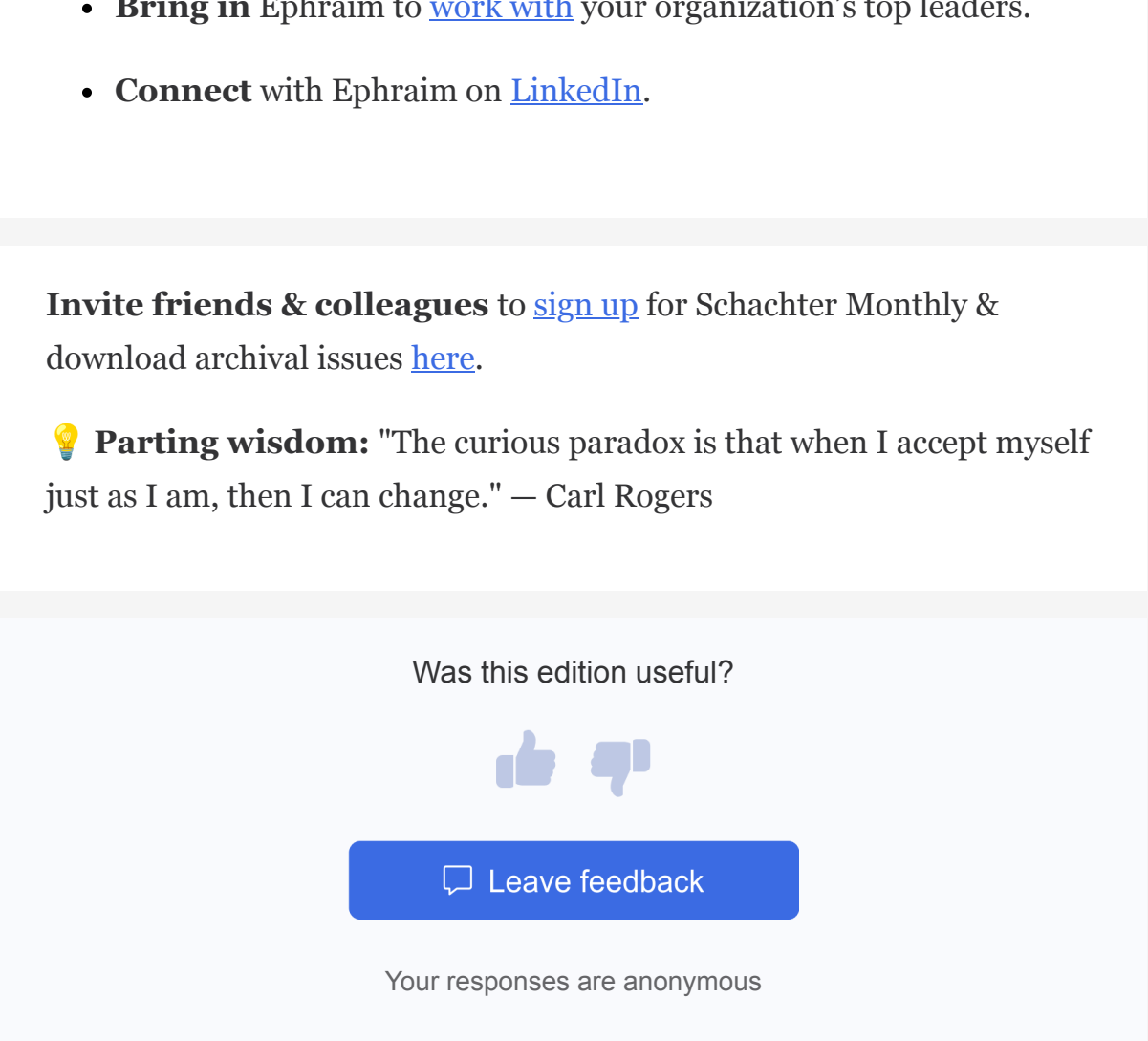
1. **Are you curious** about other perspectives, or just tolerant until you can override them?
2. **Do you invite** pushback, or make people pay for it?
3. **Do you get defensive** or curious when told your impact doesn't match your intent?

**The authentic jerk** almost always fails #3.

👉 **Worth noting:** The higher you go, the more your unfiltered self lands with amplified force on everyone below you. What feels like candor to you may feel like an arrow to them.

**The bottom line:** Authenticity is a virtue. Impulse control is as well.

## 4. March pro tip: When your team isn't gelling



**Every leader has seen this** at one point or another: Meetings where nobody challenges each other. A team that looks aligned on paper and feels fractured in practice.

- This is when clients call me in for some team building to “improve communication.”

**Why it matters:** Communication problems can be downstream of structural problems. Pouring team-building exercises on a structurally broken team is painting over cracks.

🔍 **Try this ‘back-of-the-napkin’ team assessment** to diagnose where your team might be tripping up:

- **M — Mission.** Does the team know why it exists?
- **G — Goals.** Are goals tied to strategy? Does everyone know their part, the *what* and the *how*?
- **R — Roles.** Do people know what they're on the hook for? Fuzzy boundaries cause friction in both directions: people bump into each other or fall through the gaps.
- **P — Procedures.** How are decisions made? Is that standing two-hour meeting worth every dollar of compensation in the room?
- **I — Interactions.** Trust, support, interpersonal dynamics. This is where leaders think the problem lives, but it's more likely that **M**, **G**, **R**, and/or **P** aren't working.

**The bottom line:** Before calling in the team-building cavalry, diagnose first. You'll know where to focus and where your consulting dollars — if still needed — are best spent.

## 5. Career Corner: When job hunting, should you pay to play?



💼 **White-collar professionals** are outsourcing their job searches. “Reverse recruiters” now manage LinkedIn profiles, tailor résumés, and submit applications, charging \$1,000+ per month or taking a cut of first-year pay, per [WSJ](#).

- **The average search** lasts six months, and unemployed workers outnumber openings by roughly one million.

**Why it matters:** Candidates are paying for traction in a market that feels stalled.

**I get it.** It's a vulnerable and (for many) unfamiliar, position to be in.

😬 **But, I have concerns.** At the executive level, these services run \$10,000 to \$15,000 for flat-fee packages.

- **No guarantees.** Placement rates don't impress. One widely-cited boutique placed fewer than half its clients.

**Take a breath:** Before reaching for your credit card, ask the real question: *Why am I not getting traction?*

- **If it's positioning,** i.e., how you're framing your value, a reverse recruiter won't fix that. They'll just mass-apply a broken narrative faster.
- **If it's access,** i.e., not being in the networks where senior roles actually get filled, that's a different problem with a different solution.

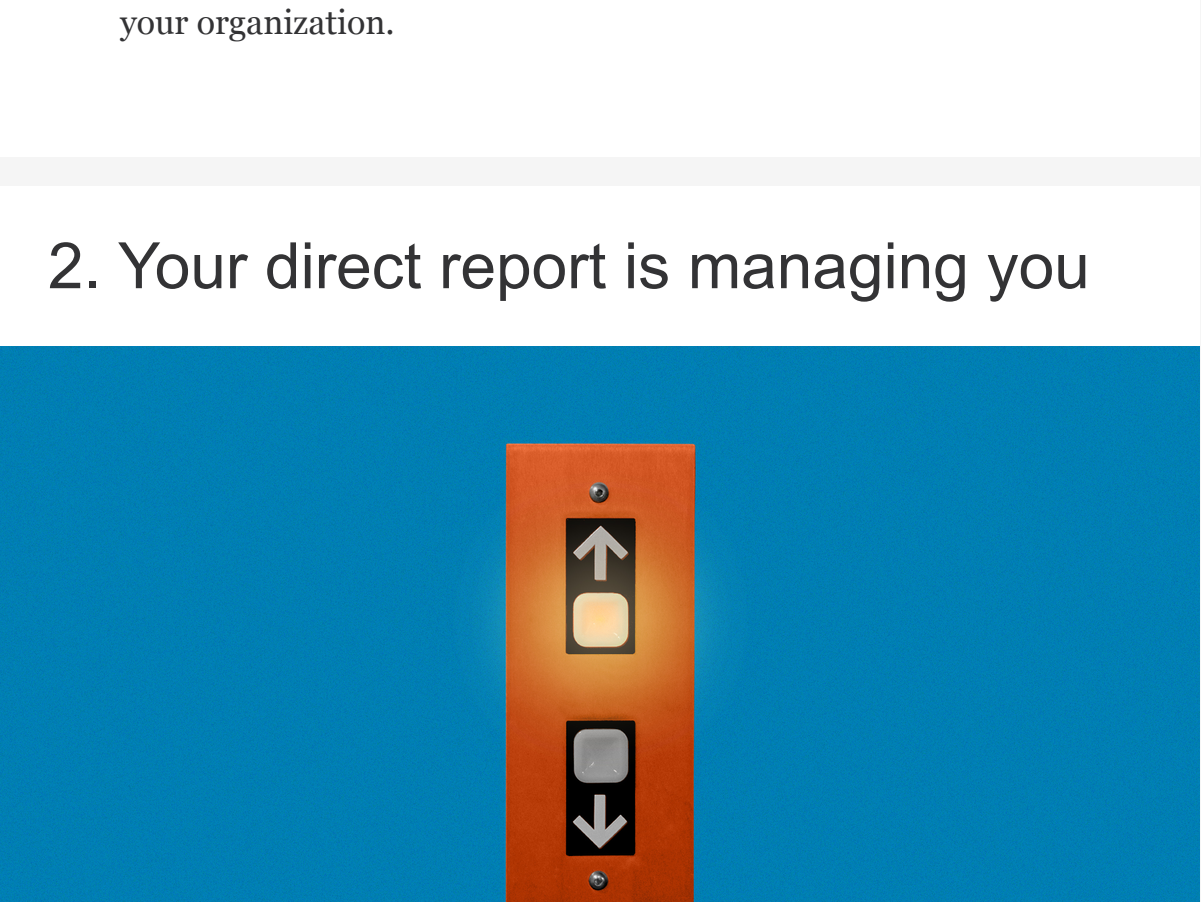
🎯 **My POV:** What really works at the senior level:

1. **Targeted relationship-building.** Most VP-and-above roles are filled before they're posted.
2. **A sharp positioning statement.** Not a résumé trying to be everything to everyone.
3. **Proactive search firm relationships.** Be known to the right firms before you need them.

**The bottom line:** Reverse recruiting isn't a scam. But, for most senior leaders, it's a solution to the wrong problem.

- Diagnose first. Spend later.

## 6. 👉 Go deeper



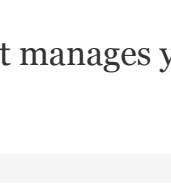
**Ephraim Schachter** is an award-winning C-Suite Coach and Leadership Strategist. For the past 25 years, he has helped organizations excel by developing their leaders' capabilities to accelerate trust, navigate obstacles and communicate influentially.

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💡 **Parting wisdom:** “The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.” — Carl Rogers

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