# Schachter Monthly

By Ephraim Schachter ● Oct 13, 2026

Smart Brevity® count: 5 mins...1267 words

🎃 **October is here** and that means creepy displays on my neighbors' lawns!

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

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## 1 big thing: Is your leadership team falsely aligned?

**If your transformation** effort is stalling, it's probably less about poor execution than of a leadership team that never truly agreed on it.

**Why it matters:** Paralysis, misdirected effort, watered-down compromises, and initiatives that die in execution.

**Zoom out:** New HBR research looked at transformation failures across organizations and found the same pattern:

- **Senior leaders behave** as if they agree on why, what, and how to change *when they don't*.
- **The misalignment is masked** by vague discussions, social pressure to move fast, and a collective avoidance of uncomfortable disagreement.

**Here's the rub:** False alignment *feels* like alignment. Your team leaves the room nodding. Then they go execute three different strategies.

- That's what makes it dangerous!

🪹 **From my perch:** I see this repeatedly: A leadership team spends months designing a transformation. Nobody challenges the premise in the room. Then implementation begins and the cracks appear:

- Conflicting priorities,
- Turf protection, and
- Decisions that have to be re-litigated at every turn.

**The problem wasn't execution**. It was the meeting that happened before execution.

🎯 **My POV:** The discomfort of real debate upfront is a fraction of the cost of false alignment downstream.

**The bottom line:** Before you launch the next initiative, slow down. Direct your team to articulate in writing what they are agreeing to and what they are not. Surface the dissent early.

## 2. Those job satisfaction scores might be misleading

**Record US job satisfaction** likely reflects that workers are grateful to be employed amid widespread uncertainty; not that they're energized by their work, per The Conference Board.

**Why it matters:** A workforce that is relieved is not the same as a workforce that is ready.

- Relieved employees comply.
- They show up.
- They also don't bring their best thinking, push back on bad ideas, or go the extra mile when conditions get hard.

💭 **My thought bubble:** I've walked into organizations with strong satisfaction scores and found leadership teams that were complacent.

- The dashboard looked fine. The culture wasn't.
- Satisfaction data is a lagging indicator. By the time it drops, you've lost something.

🎯 **My POV:** Three things the data says and that I'd push any senior leader on:

1. **Stop reading aggregate scores.** Satisfaction varies sharply by

income, gender, and AI confidence. Your overall number might be masking a pocket of real risk. Find it before it finds you.

2. **Track the metrics that precede attrition.** Engagement, belonging, and intent to stay are better early warning signals than satisfaction. Measure them separately.
3. **Pair any AI rollout** with a visible career story. Workers confident about AI's effect on their careers are more engaged and more likely to stay. Workers who aren't are a flight risk.

**The bottom line:** Gratitude is not engagement. Don't confuse the two.

## 3. Prioritizing your training investment

**When budget constraints hit,** managers face a familiar dilemma: Should scarce training resources go to lower performers to close skill gaps, or to top performers to maximize return?

- A recent study in the *Journal of Accounting Research* found that in organizations where employees have meaningful control over their work, high performers react more negatively than low performers when training and development resources bypass them.

**Why it matters:** This isn't just about feelings.

- **It's about flight risk**. Stars in meritocratic cultures interpret your skipped development investment as a signal.
- **They conclude** that their contributions aren't valued, that the organization doesn't see their future, and that it's time to explore options.

🎯 **My POV:** I've been saying this for years. When a star performer leaves, often it's a lateral move. Not a better title. Not a dramatic pay increase. Just somewhere they feel seen.

💭 **My thought bubble:** Three things to do before the end of the quarter:

1. **Know** what your stars actually want from their careers; not just what you assume.
2. **Schedule** a development conversation. Formal, on the calendar, separate from performance review.
3. **Stop** redirecting your underperformers' work to your stars. That's not a reward. It's a tax.

👉 **Go deeper:** Watch my vlog: *Preventing Your Star Performer from Becoming a Flight Risk*

## 4. October pro tip: Stop asserting and start inviting

🗣 **Most senior leaders** are excellent at asserting positions. Far fewer are good at actually moving people.

- Those are different skills.

**Why it matters:** At the senior level, the people you need to move — peers, boards, direct reports with strong opinions — are not waiting to be told what to think. They have their own read on the situation.

- Walking in with a conclusion and expecting agreement is not influence ...
- 😅 It's what the Sales guys used to call, “spray and pray.”
- They defend it and wonder why the room didn't come along with them.

💭 **My take as a coach:** After 25 years of watching senior leaders try to move each other, here's what I've observed. The ones who consistently land their ideas do three things differently.

🎯 **My POV:**

1. **Lead with the outcome**, not the argument. Start with what you want to achieve together, not with why you're right. Common ground before contested ground.
2. **Name the objection before it's raised.** Acknowledging the strongest counterargument yourself signals confidence and disarms resistance.
3. **Ask before you tell.** A well-placed question does more work than a perfectly constructed argument. It makes the other person think their way toward your conclusion.

**The bottom line:** You don't need a better argument. You need a better invitation.

👉 **Go deeper:** Watch my webinar for Boston University, *How to Flip Resistant Colleagues into Rabid Supporters.*

## 5. Career Corner: The reference call that costs you the offer

💼 **At the VP level and above**, formal interviews are rarely the deciding factor on a job offer. Decision-makers call people in their networks who know you before, during, and after the formal process.

- **Examples:** A former peer. A board member two degrees away. Someone who had a story.
- **Those conversations are unstructured**, off the record, and carry enormous weight. Most candidates have no idea who is being called or what is being said.

**Why it matters:** You can't control what people say. But, you can control whether you've invested in those relationships before you need them.

🎯 **My POV:**The most prepared candidates I've worked with treat their reputation as an ongoing asset, not something to manage when a search begins. By the time you're in a process, the back-channel conversations are already happening.

🔑 Three things to do now, not when you're in a search:

1. **Know your reputation** in the markets where you want to work. Ask people you trust what they hear.
2. **Repair** relationships that went sideways. Unresolved friction has a long memory.
3. **Stay visible** in your field. People vouch for people they know.

**The bottom line:** Your references aren't just the three people on your list. They're everyone who has ever worked with you.

## 6. More to discuss?

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

- **Let's connect** on LinkedIn.
- **Interested in potentially working together?** Email us here and my EA Gale will be in touch to find us time to connect.

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💡 **Parting wisdom:** *"To lead people, walk beside them."* — Lao Tzu

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