

Schachter Monthly

By Ephraim Schachter • Oct 15, 2026

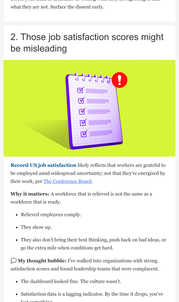
Email theme: Fresh Time, ~287 words

🎃 **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.

❗ **Did someone forward you** this email? Subscribe here to receive it directly.

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:

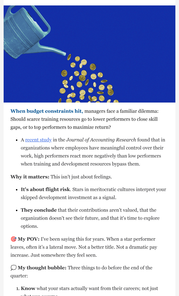
- Conflicting priorities,
- Turf protection, and
- Decisions that have to be re-litigated at every turn.

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 exact 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.

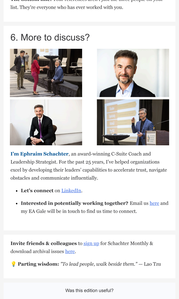
🎯 **My POV:** I've been saying this for years. When a star performer leaves, often it's a lateral move. Not a better title. Not a dramatic pay increase. Just somewhere they feel seen.

💭 **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 clip: *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 35 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.

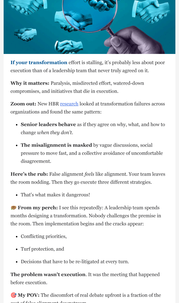
🎯 **My POV:**

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 35 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 Gile will be in touch to find us time to connect.

Invite friends & colleagues to sign up for Schachter Monthly & download archival issues here.

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

Was this edition useful?

Leave feedback

Your responses are anonymous.

Unsubscribe

This email was sent by Cliché Accelerator