
THE WORK AHEAD

Creating Buy-In

A Culture Code for Retaining High-Performers.

WHAT WE'LL WALK AWAY WITH

- How buy-in influences engagement, performance, and retention among high-performing staff and students.
- Key leadership behaviors that build, or erode, trust, psychological safety, and commitment within teams.
- Practical strategies for creating and sustaining buy-in through clear purpose setting, consistent feedback loops, and shared ownership.

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Have you ever watched
someone leave **emotionally**...
before they ever left
physically?

People don't buy into systems
first. They buy into
experiences. Then they decide
whether the system is worth
trusting.

OI



THE THREE SIGNALS

People don't follow ~~plans~~.
They follow signals.

THE THREE SIGNALS (THE CUES WE READ)

01

Energy

They invest in the exchange that's happening. Presence, attention, and effort that says: this moment matters to me.

02

Individualization

They treat the person as unique and valued. Not a role, not a seat. A specific human with a specific story.

03

Future orientation

They signal the relationship will continue. Plans, follow-ups, and language that assumes we'll still be here together tomorrow.

These cues are how the brain
decides: **anabolic** (build,
invest, grow) or **catabolic**
(protect, withdraw, leave).

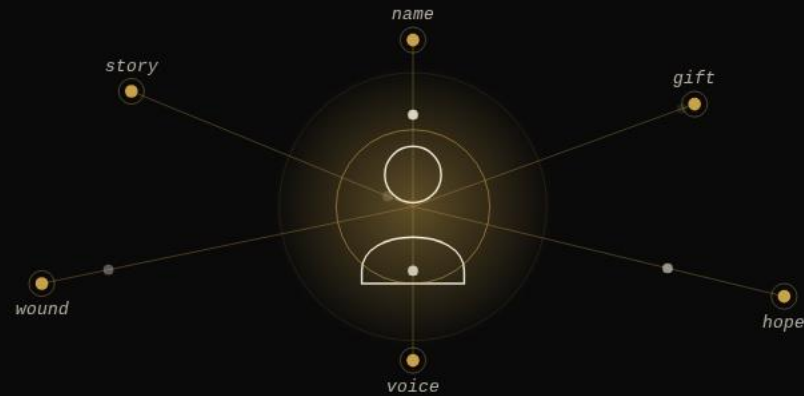
01 · ENERGY

They invest in the **exchange**
that's happening.



Presence, attention, and effort that says: this moment matters to me. Energy isn't volume. It's the signal moving back and forth between us, on its own steady current.

They treat the person as **unique**
and **valued**.



Not a role. Not a seat. A specific human with a specific story, gifts, wounds, and voice
— mapped, named, and held with care.

They signal the relationship will
continue.



FORWARD

Plans, follow-ups, and language that assume we'll still be here together tomorrow.

Trust what you see — the future is worth moving toward.

One signal isn't enough. Two isn't enough. Buy-in is built through consistent signaling, over and over and over.

That's why buy-in is *easy* to
break and *slow* to build.

Retaining high performers
takes the *long, repeated* work
of *meaningful* connection.

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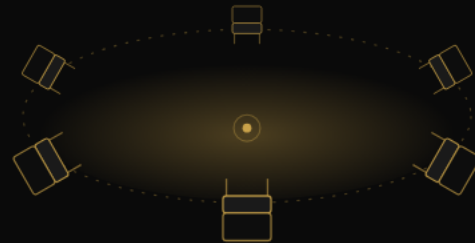
ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY

Stakeholder Seats

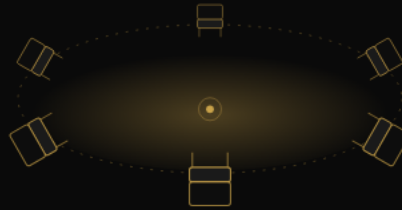
Today, you sit where they sit — those you're trying to build meaningful connection with.

Think of someone whose buy-in you deeply want... but haven't reached yet. You'll carry their name, their seat, and their perspective into this next conversation.



- o 1 Write that person's name on your table tent (title, role, who they are outside of work — mom, dad, Gen Z, Gen X — if it helps you embody them).
- o 2 Place the tent on the seat next to you (an empty seat is even better).
- o 3 Stand up and switch into that seat. You are now embodying that person.
- o 4 Find 3–4 people around you and think → pair → share, one signal at a time.

FROM THEIR SEAT — THINK, PAIR, SHARE



01

Energy

- What does it feel like to carry their role?
- What energy do they experience when they interact with you?

02

Individualization

- Who do they have to become to belong in your culture?
- What unique value do they bring that may not be illuminated enough?

03

Future orientation

- From their seat, does the future feel expanding... or exhausting? Say more.
- Knowing more of who they are, does their current position support them in seeing a future with you long term? Why or why not?

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Whose seat did you avoid?

02

THE FIVE KEY LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS THAT DRIVE TEAM PERFORMANCE

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR 01



Sharing the mic

Everyone in the group **talks and listens** in roughly equal measure, keeping contributions short.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR 02



Non-verbal energy

Members maintain high levels of **eye contact**. Conversations and gestures are **energetic**.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR 03



Patterned conversation

Members communicate **directly with one another**, not just with the team leader.



Side channeling

Members carry on **back-channel** or side conversations within the team.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR 05



Resourcing behavior

Members periodically break, go **exploring outside the team**, and bring information back to share with the others.

When all five are happening
at once, you see something
bigger emerge:

collective systemic
intelligence

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It's how a group thinks together once they're bought into the **experience** and trusting the **system**.



THINK → PAIR → SHARE — WHICH BEHAVIOR IS MISSING ON YOUR TEAM RIGHT NOW?

01

Sharing the mic

- Is someone always taking the mic, or are they sharing it?
- Are quieter voices being challenged to speak, or left unheard?

02

Non-verbal energy

- Is everyone buried in laptops and phones, or actually present with one another?
- Are people being seen and energetically connected with — without needing words?

03

Patterned conversation

- Is everyone just trying to communicate with the leader to win them over?
- Or is there a continuous pattern of members talking directly with one another?

04

Side channeling

- Is there fear of a side conversation — or freedom to express thoughts and future ideas?
- Are people adding value on the side, or only speaking when called on?

05

Resourcing behavior

- Is anyone going outside the team to explore and bring information back?
- Is the team thinking about its collective performance, or only its own lane?

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Buy-in isn't bought. It's witnessed.

THE ROOM, IN A MOMENT

03

THE ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY

Mirror & Window

First, hold up the window.
Look out. Notice everyone
else.

THE WINDOW



The **window** is used to look out and focus on **everyone else**.

The truth is — most of us
spend most of our time at the
window. Watching. Judging.
Pointing. Blaming.

Rarely do we stand in front of
the mirror to check our own
heart, our motives, our
intentions.

Now, pick up the mirror.

THE MIRROR

Heart

Motives

Intentions

Your reflection holds the only three things you can actually
change.

It's easy to see what's wrong
with other people. It's harder
to look at ourselves and deal
with our own.