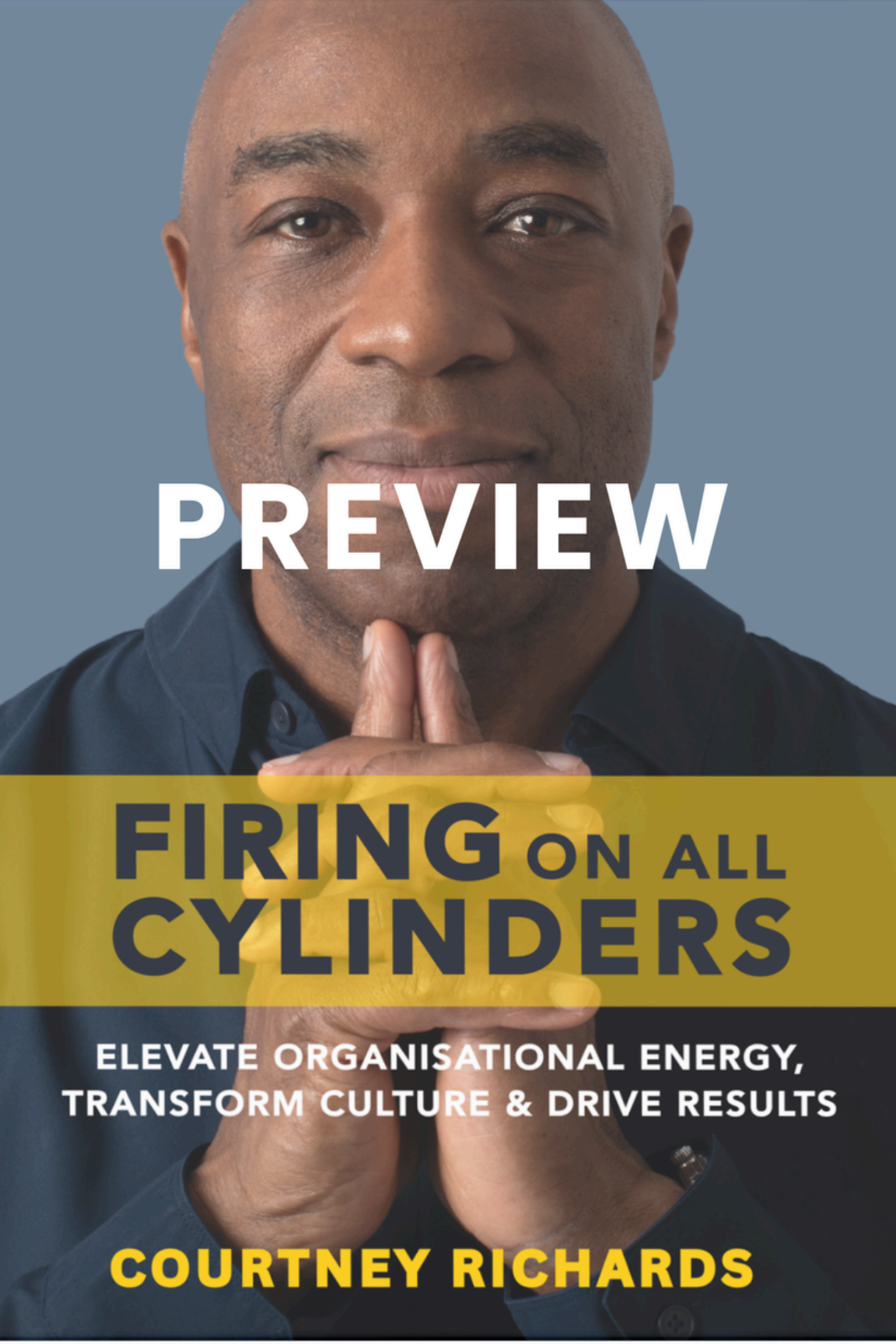


A close-up portrait of a Black man with a shaved head, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. His hands are clasped together in front of his chin, with his fingers pointing upwards. The background is a solid light blue.

PREVIEW

**FIRING ON ALL
CYLINDERS**

**ELEVATE ORGANISATIONAL ENERGY,
TRANSFORM CULTURE & DRIVE RESULTS**

COURTNEY RICHARDS

FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

Elevate Organisational Energy,
Transform Culture & Drive Results.

COURTNEY RICHARDS

Firing on All Cylinders: Elevate Organisational Energy, Transform Culture & Drive Results.

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Cover photo: Karolina Webb

Praise for *Firing on All Cylinders*

“Firing on All Cylinders names a truth many leaders feel but rarely articulate: Performance is not just a strategic or operational challenge, it’s an energetic one. This book doesn’t offer shortcuts - it offers responsibility, awareness, and a more human path to sustainable results. As a Chief Energy Officer, I endorse this book!” **Perry Timms, Chief Energy Officer**

“Leaders don't have an effort problem; they have an energy problem. Courtney Richards understands this deeply, and *Firing on All Cylinders* is the most practical guide I've seen for leading through pressure without creating casualties. The four-stroke framework is memorable, the insights are battle-tested, and the timing couldn't be better. If you're leading people who are capable but drained, committed but close to breaking, this powerful book will change how you show up.” **Fi Hills, Thinking 5.0**

“Culture is not the posters on the wall or the mission statement, but the daily, consistent behaviour of employees and leaders. Courtney inspires the modern leader to build trust, engagement, and authenticity by challenging energy, staying open and being courageous to achieve high-performing teams.”
Sarah Daniels, Chief People and Culture Officer

“In a time marked by fear and disengagement, *Firing on All Cylinders* shows leaders what truly powers performance. Courtney Richards makes energy practical, not abstract and reveals how shifting from fear to courage transforms momentum. This is the manual modern leaders didn’t realise they needed.” **Hélio Vogas, Crisis & Leadership Keynote Speaker**

“Herein is a unique insight into leadership; it’s a compelling reminder that, as leaders, we don’t manage people, we create the conditions for them to become the best version of themselves. This is a book for the ordinary yet extraordinary leader, an intricately simple, deeply sensible guide to leading with energy, clarity, and intent.” **Ade Omooba MBE, Co-founder & Director**

“Some books inform. This one ignites!

Firing on All Cylinders is the user manual for Chief Energy Officers - for anyone who knows that leadership is an inside job. It happens inside the engine before the power ever meets the road, as Courtney might say. He deeply understands that, in any given moment, our giving and taking of energy is what is actually happening. And human performance is ultimately, always, a function of human energy.

To explore how we can awaken and direct that energy in everyday business, Courtney takes us inside the engine. He writes with the precision of an engineer and the heart of a coach. Read it slowly. Then read it again.”

Boris Diekmann, author of the bestselling Chief Energy Officer, Leadership Coach and Culture Shaping Expert at Heidrick & Struggles

“This book is a leadership reset button, inviting you to examine your internal engine so you can lead with clarity, alignment, and sustainable energy.

Firing on All Cylinders offers a refreshing and deeply insightful framework that challenges how leaders think about energy, alignment, and performance. It is both reflective and practical, providing tools that coaches, leaders, and organisations can use immediately. A powerful guide for any leader operating under pressure.” **Elsa Caleb, Business Development & Strategy Consultant**

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To the leaders who chose expectation over cynicism, recovery over martyrdom, and ownership over excuses. You are why this book exists.

For every team that swapped blame for curiosity and noise for coherence. This is your playbook.

To Marcia, my ride-or-die, your encouragement energises me every day. You believed in this work long before it made sense on paper.

FOREWORD

There are moments in leadership thinking when a familiar truth is expressed so clearly, practically and powerfully that it reframes how we see organisations. *Firing on All Cylinders* is one of those works.

This is a leadership book with a difference. It touches the soul of the leader, while equipping them to build trust, handle pressure and sustain performance. It energises leaders to draw on their capabilities with greater courage and clarity, especially when confronting conflict, toxic behaviours and stagnation in the workplace.

For decades, leadership theory has concentrated on structures, systems, targets and strategy. We have refined performance frameworks, strengthened governance models and invested heavily in organisational development. Yet many institutions continue to wrestle with disengagement, fatigue, distrust and cultures that underperform - not because people lack talent, but because they lack the energy, belief and psychological conditions needed to thrive.

What makes this work distinctive is its central premise: energy is the first principle of leadership. Before execution comes engagement. Before transformation comes trust. Before results comes the human capacity, individually and collectively, to bring vitality, meaning, courage and sustained effort to the work.

Using the compelling metaphor of the four-stroke engine - Suck. Squeeze. Bang. Blow. - Courtney provides leaders with a model that is memorable and deeply insightful. Awareness, focus, courageous action and recovery become the rhythm of sustainable high performance, as relevant to boardrooms as it is to frontline teams.

The book also challenges an outdated leadership instinct: the belief that greater pressure automatically produces greater performance. Courtney demonstrates, with clarity and conviction, that pressure without purpose

exhausts; control without trust diminishes; and relentless output without renewal ultimately corrodes both culture and results.

By contrast, when leaders consciously cultivate high-energy environments - where meaning is clear, relationships are strong, courage is practised, and recovery is embedded, extraordinary things become possible. People do not simply comply; they commit. Teams do not merely function; they flourish. Organisations do not simply survive change; they become engines of innovation, resilience and sustained excellence.

This book arrives at a critical moment. Across public, private and voluntary sectors, leaders are navigating unprecedented complexity: economic uncertainty, technological disruption, workforce fatigue, shifting expectations and growing demands for cultures that are productive, humane, inclusive and purposeful. In such a landscape, technical competence alone is no longer enough. Leadership must become more conscious, relational and energising.

Firing on All Cylinders is both a philosophy and a practical guide. It invites leaders to move beyond management as supervision and towards leadership as catalytic influence, shaping the conditions in which people can bring their best selves, their best thinking and their fullest contribution.

Its message is simple, but profound: leaders do not create greatness by extracting more from people. They create greatness by igniting what is already within them.

I highly recommend this book to executives, senior leaders, organisational development professionals and anyone committed to building cultures of excellence. It offers not just insight, but a practical guide for leadership that is energising, courageous and deeply human.

Read it thoughtfully. Apply it deliberately. Lead from it courageously. And most importantly, bring energy worthy of multiplication. Because when leadership fires on all cylinders, people achieve results that go beyond expectations.

Dr Joan Myers OBE, Strategic Leadership Consultant
Joan Myers Consultancy

INTRODUCTION

Who Am I to Write This Book?

I'm the founder of Beyond Expectations, a consultancy that works with organisations navigating complexity, pressure, and change. At its heart, Beyond Expectations exists to help organisations lead high-performance change by elevating energy that fuels growth, creativity, and impact.

My background spans leadership roles in organisational development, learning, and talent. Across local government, healthcare, charities, and the private sector, these roles involved everything from diversity and inclusion to system-wide change. Whether working with frontline staff or executive teams, the goal remained the same: **turning pressure into performance.**

This approach has consistently delivered tangible results:

- **Commercial Growth:** Sales teams once burdened by burnout achieved "unattainable" targets, generating multi-million-pound increases in premium income while simultaneously boosting morale.
- **Entrepreneurial Success:** Early-career professionals I coached have gone on to build and lead their own multi-million-pound businesses by mastering the art of converting effort into momentum.
- **Scaling & Exit Strategy:** In the e-commerce sector, I supported a leadership team in scaling capability and culture in parallel, leading to a rapid growth trajectory and an ultimate sale for tens of millions of pounds.
- **Leadership Transitions:** Mid-level professionals have stepped into senior roles, moving from five-figure salaries to six-figure responsibilities by learning not just how to *perform* leadership, but how to *become* it.

The work hasn't just been about numbers; it's about people. It has involved resolving conflicts that once paralysed teams, enabling them to rebuild trust and regain momentum. During restructures, I've influenced staff engagement to ensure organisations could transition through change without breaking the

system. I have also guided senior leaders through highly charged political environments where every decision carries immense weight and scrutiny.

These outcomes didn't come from one technique, one framework, or one leadership style. They came from understanding **organisational energy**.

The design of this book is based on my observations and experiences over the years of being involved with high and low-performing organisations; and the passion to find tangible solutions that elevate organisational performance through the people within the system.

As you move through these pages, you will observe the many references to cars and their moving parts. Rest assured, you don't need to understand engines. You don't even need to like cars. And you don't need to have ever lifted a bonnet in your life! The engine metaphor in this book isn't about mechanics. It's about how systems work when energy flows, and what happens when it doesn't.

And just as importantly, **firing on all cylinders does not mean running at burnout**. A high-performance engine is not the one revving constantly in the red. It's the one that is well-tuned.

- Not more effort; **better conversion**.
- Not higher pressure; **greater efficiency**.
- Not pushing people harder; **unlocking what's already there**.

Energy

It powers everything from the tiniest particle to the grandest galaxy; it's the spark behind every beat, every breath, every bold ambition. It's your personal rocket fuel, the hidden force propelling you out of bed, into action, and towards your goals. But we've all felt it, that duvet-day drag, when the alarm sounds but the body resists, and the soul cries out for five more minutes (or five more hours).

In today's fast-paced, high-pressure world, energy isn't just a personal asset; it's an organisational imperative. Yet many individuals, teams and leaders are unknowingly operating on empty. Despite the increasing demands of

modern work, energy levels are dwindling. Burnout is widespread, engagement is in crisis, and creativity often feels like a luxury few can afford.

This is the energy crisis no one talks about.

Organisations are often seen just as machines: systems, structures, and strategy. But really, they are the sum total of human energy. Buildings don't innovate. Policies of themselves don't inspire. People do. When energy is high, almost anything feels possible. When it's low, even simple tasks become mountains.

According to Gallup's 2025 Global Workplace Report, disengagement may be costing the global economy around \$438 billion annually in lost productivity. That's not just a line item; it's a loud alarm. It signals a crisis of organisational energy, a breakdown in connection, and a deficit in leadership.

To understand why energy matters so much to me, we need to go back to where it all began...

THE ENGINE THAT NEVER LEFT ME

As a teenager, I dreamed of becoming a car designer. And in my first year studying Motor Vehicle Engineering at Kingston College, I encountered something that utterly fascinated me: the inner workings of the internal combustion engine.

I still remember the first time I heard of the rhythmic sequence of the four-stroke cycle: **Suck. Squeeze. Bang. Blow.**

Four simple words that revealed a universe of precision. A marvel of engineering. Every cylinder, every piston, working in perfect timing to convert potential into power. Suck draws in air and fuel. Squeeze compresses the mixture. Bang ignites it into raw force. Blow clears the chamber to begin again.

I was captivated.

I didn't go on to design cars. But something about that system stayed with me. The pursuit of power, precision, and performance found a new vehicle: people.

What I learned in engineering stuck with me. The idea that with the right inputs, optimised systems, aligned components, and conscious timing, anything can run at peak performance. And just like in a high-performance engine, you can amplify output by increasing pressure in the right way.

The same applies to leadership.

High performers don't avoid pressure. They learn how to regulate it. They don't simply push harder; they adjust timing, focus, and recovery.

So no, I didn't build engines. But I did end up designing something just as exhilarating: helping leaders build cultures where energy flows more cleanly and performance rises as a result.

The dream evolved. The engine still runs.

WHAT DOES FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS REALLY MEAN?

At its core, firing on all cylinders is more than an idiom - it's a vivid metaphor for alignment.

When an engine fires cleanly, every stroke contributes. There's little drag. No misfire. Momentum builds naturally.

In an organisational context, it might look like this:

- Clear thinking.
- Shared purpose and coherent culture.
- Leadership that is intentional rather than reactive.
- People who understand not just what they are doing, but why.
- Systems and structures support maximum output/efficiency.

It isn't about constant activity. It's about coordinated effort. Ideas move forward. Decisions land. Results follow.

The four engine strokes mirror four performance principles:

- **Suck** (intake): drawing in insight, perspective, possibility.
- **Squeeze** (compression): applying focus and disciplined pressure.
- **Bang** (combustion): releasing power through action.

- **Blow** (exhaust): recovering, recalibrating, clearing what no longer serves.

High-performing teams don't grind endlessly. They cycle. They know when to intensify and when to reset.

I know, I know; this is the age of Teslas, torque curves, and near-silent efficiency. And here I am, still talking about pistons and combustion. But forgive me, I've never quite fallen out of love with the beautifully timed chaos of the internal combustion engine.

Some will say it's outdated. Maybe it is. But when I think about energy, pressure, and performance - about what it really takes to generate momentum, nothing captures it for me quite like that explosive, rhythmic sequence: suck, squeeze, bang, blow.

Yes, the world has moved on to electric vehicles and silent torque curves. But when it comes to understanding energy and performance, the rhythm of suck, squeeze, bang, blow still captures something essential.

AN INVITATION TO YOU

This book is for leaders who sense there is more available than what is currently visible. For teams who know they are capable of more, if only they could unlock it. For individuals who feel stuck, tired, or stretched thin, yet still believe there's another level within reach.

We'll explore how hope raises energy, how purpose drives performance, and how mindset matters more than metrics. We'll discover how to build a culture that inspires action, ignites ambition, and sustains achievement. We'll discuss the contributory impact of organisational structures and systems on low energy. We'll examine how state comes before strategy, how to turn conflict into clarity, and why managing toxic energy is critical for lasting success.

So whether you're coasting, over-revving, or somewhere in between, consider this your moment to recalibrate.

Are you ready to fire on all cylinders?

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book isn't just designed to inspire you; it's built to equip you. Each chapter includes:

- Reflection questions to prompt deep thinking and personal insight,
- Real-world case studies to bring the concepts to life,
- Actionable strategies to help you implement the ideas in your organization, your team, and your leadership practice.

You can read it cover to cover or dip into the sections most relevant to you right now. Use it as a guidebook, a mirror, and a catalyst. Highlight what resonates. Share what challenges. Apply what works.

This isn't just theory, it's your practical roadmap to leading with energy, clarity, and conviction.

Every engine begins with intake.

Every organisation begins with energy.

**What you allow into the system determines what it has
the power to produce.**

part

1



SUCK: DRAWING IN INSIGHT,
ENERGY, POSSIBILITY

CHAPTER 1

ENGINEERING PEAK PERFORMANCE: UNDERSTANDING ENERGY IN ORGANISATIONS

My first taste of high-energy leadership

Before joining Churchill Insurance, I'd already worked in sales. But stepping into that organisation under the leadership of CEO Martin Long felt different from day one. Daunting, yes. But also, unmistakably exciting.

There was a constant buzz in the air. An energy that was electric, sometimes intimidating, but always purposeful. It pushed you to raise your game, to work with pride, and to pursue excellence rather than settle for adequacy.

I had never experienced a leader who took such genuine interest in his people. Martin created a deep, authentic connection. Team members didn't just feel managed; they felt seen, trusted, and valued.

His leadership style could be likened to the *"Salt Analogy."* Like good seasoning, he added just enough guidance and energy to help people thrive without over-salting (micromanaging) or under-salting (neglecting).

He actively encouraged people to step out and take chances. One example was his SYNN initiative (Say Yes, Not No), a radical underwriting approach that prioritised common sense over rigid rules. A 24½-year-old sports car driver? Normally excluded for being under 25. But this one happened to be an RAF pilot with a clean driving record. The answer wasn't "computer says no," it was thoughtful, human, and courageous – say yes!

What I observed was this: in the pursuit of outstanding service, balanced risk-taking anchored in personal ownership was not only allowed; it was rewarded.

This ethos transferred to each of his leaders. So, as a consistent top-performing salesperson, I went to the Sales Manager with a complaint regarding the lack of effective sales training for the salesforce. His response stunned me...

"Go on then!"

That was it. No defensiveness. No politics. Just ownership.

In that moment, I was given the opportunity to step into a new role as a Sales Coach for Churchill Insurance, one of the UK's first direct motor insurers.

With no formal training in learning design or leadership development, I simply leaned into what I had: **a passion for people, a love of learning, and a deep belief in what was possible.** I created a development programme that someone (not me!) called "*The Courtney Experience*." Looking back, I realise that the Sales Manager saw something in me I hadn't yet recognised: an ability to infect others with belief, ignite energy, and spark action.

The programme focused on three things: Product Knowledge, Sales Skills, and Personal Management. His faith wasn't misplaced. The programme wasn't the only factor behind the shift, but it played its part. That year, the company exceeded its sales target for the first time in six years.

At the time, I didn't know what the secret ingredient was. But now I do:

It was energy.

- Sometimes we move with grace, but without awareness.
- We do things naturally, without knowing how we're doing them.
- We carry power, but fail to name it, claim it, or teach it.

And here's the danger: **If something isn't recognised, it can't be replicated. If it's not celebrated, it eventually fades.**

The tragedy in success is not knowing what you did to succeed.

The tragedy in failure is not knowing what you did to fail.

Either way, you're left guessing at what to keep - and what to stop. So, in all your getting, get understanding.

FUEL. FIRE. FORWARD MOTION.

That's what energy does. It gets things moving and keeps them moving. In the same way, a high-performance sports car is more than metal and mechanics; your organisation is far more than strategy, structure, and systems. It's energy: of the humankind that truly drives performance (amplifying your strategy, structures and systems).

Yet, how often do we mistake busyness for energy? Frenzied meetings, urgent emails, relentless task lists. High revs, no traction.

We've become masters of activity, yet strangely underdeveloped when it comes to managing energy.

That needs to change.

THE SHIFT TOWARDS HUMAN ENERGY

According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025, **seven of the top ten most in-demand skills** for the future are not technical; they're human.

Qualities like resilience, curiosity, motivation, empathy, self-awareness, and leadership, once dismissed as "soft skills", are now seen as critical differentiators for performance and adaptability.

Yes, digital skills like AI, data analytics, and tech fluency remain essential. But it's the energy behind the skills: the mindset, emotional awareness, and self-leadership that drives sustainable impact.

This global shift affirms a central truth at the heart of high-performance leadership: the future won't be shaped by tasks alone; it will be shaped by how people show up and the energy behind their effort.

In a world where change is constant, **the future belongs** not to those who simply execute tasks, but **to those who lead from within**.

WHY ENERGY DRIVES RESULTS

1) Engagement → Productivity & Economic Value

- Top-quartile engagement outperforms: +23% profitability; +10% customer loyalty/engagement; +14% productivity (production metrics); +18% productivity (sales).
- Risk and waste fall when engagement rises: –78% absenteeism; –63% safety incidents; –32% quality defects; lower turnover (–21% in high-turnover orgs; –51% in low-turnover orgs).

2) Trust → Speed ↑ and Cost ↓

- High-trust cultures move decisions faster and reduce transaction ‘friction’ costs; low trust creates a ‘tax’ of delays, duplication and control layers.
- Measured payoffs of high trust (nationally representative data): 50% higher self-reported productivity, 106% more energy at work, 74% less stress, and 76% higher engagement versus low-trust organisations.

3) Recovery → Sustainable High Performance

- Corporate Athlete principle (Loehr & Schwartz, HBR): alternating high-intensity effort with deliberate recovery expands capacity and improves performance over time.
- Meta-analysis (Wendsche & Lohmann-Haislah, 2017): psychological detachment from work is associated with lower strain and better well-being - micro-recovery matters.

Sources (see References for full details):

- Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2025 (engagement, economic impact).
- Covey, S.M.R., The Speed of Trust (trust impacts speed and cost).
- Loehr & Schwartz, ‘The Making of a Corporate Athlete’, HBR (performance & recovery).
- Wendsche & Lohmann-Haislah (2017) meta-analysis on psychological detachment (recovery).

DEFINING ORGANISATIONAL ENERGY: MORE THAN A BUZZWORD

Organisational energy fuels productivity and acts as a catalyst for creativity. Without it, strategy struggles to translate into results. It's what transforms the theoretical into the tangible - moving from "nice idea" to "game-changing innovation."

Unlike resources you can see, such as budgets, headcount, and office space, energy is intangible yet profoundly measurable. You feel it in the air when a team is buzzing with ideas. You sense its absence when every initiative feels like pushing water up a hill.

The truth is simpler:

Energy isn't just nice to have. It's a strategic asset, as critical as financial capital. According to the Gallup 2025 Workplace Report, 79% of staff are not engaged or **actively disengaged**. That's a lot of misfired engines.

THE MYTH OF PEOPLE MANAGEMENT: TIME FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT

Here's an uncomfortable truth: people management is a misnomer. You cannot successfully manage another adult human being - not if you're aiming for maximum potential. Attempting to "manage" people implies control, containment, and compliance. But real performance doesn't emerge from coercion; it flourishes through self-direction.

To bring this shift to life, consider the story of a friend's daughter. Throughout childhood, mornings were a daily battle - her mum would push, prod, and plead to get her out of bed. The struggle continued into adulthood... until she landed her dream role with an international cosmetics brand. Suddenly, everything changed. Without any prompting, she was up and out of the house by 5:30 a.m. - energised, smiling, and ahead of schedule. What changed? Not her discipline, not her mum's effort - but her motivation. She wanted to. The role tapped into her sense of purpose, identity, and aspiration.

This is the shift we're talking about - from "I have to" to **"I can... because I want to."**

“Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives.” Dan Pink

And that’s the heart of effective leadership - not managing people like cogs in a machine but igniting their internal drive so they want to show up, contribute, and excel.

Reflection Prompt

Think of a time when you witnessed a dramatic change in someone’s energy or engagement. What shifted? Was it a change in external circumstances - or did something tap into a deeper internal drive?

True leadership is less about pressure, more about permission - creating the conditions where people give their best because they want to, not because they’re made to.

Kenneth Thomas, in his book *Intrinsic Motivation at Work*, champions the power of self-management. He argues that intrinsic motivation - rooted in autonomy, purpose, and meaningful progress - is the real engine of sustainable performance.

This shift from control to catalysis is where leadership energy truly magnifies. When leaders focus on creating psychological safety, offering meaningful challenges, and recognising contributions, they activate the very conditions where people naturally step up, lean in, and perform at their best.

So, let’s retire the outdated notion of people management. Instead, let’s embrace the art of energy activation, motivation cultivation, and self-management enablement.

REALISING POTENTIAL: LEADERSHIP AS AN ENERGY CATALYST

When an organisation hires someone, they’re not buying a fixed result - they’re investing in potential.

And for this reason, you can hire the ‘right person’ on paper, and still not get the result you were expecting. That’s because potential is not static.

That potential is **unlocked or blocked** based on:

- The energy state the person is operating in.
- The environment leaders create around them.
- The strength of the emotional and psychological contract at play.

Organisations don't buy performance. They buy the **possibility** of performance, and that possibility depends on energy.

When people feel empowered, when they believe they have agency over their work and outcomes, they activate their own energy. This isn't just motivation. It's self-efficacy: the belief that "I can make a difference."

And self-efficacy is the ignition switch.

It sparks confidence, clarity, and creative energy - qualities found in the **higher levels of the Dynamic Energy Index**, which we'll discuss in the next chapter.

Leadership, then, is not about extracting performance. It's about engineering the environment where potential catches fire.

A WORD TO THE SCEPTICS

Let's be honest. Some of you may already be rolling your eyes. All this talk of energy might sound soft, fluffy, or worse - New Age. After all, the business world prides itself on "hard" skills: strategy, systems, delivery. Surely energy is the stuff of yoga mats, not boardrooms?

Here's the problem: doing the same thing, in the same way, while expecting different results is what Einstein famously called insanity. And yet that is precisely what many leaders are stuck in; doubling down on spreadsheets, KPIs, and task lists, while quietly ignoring the hidden driver behind all of it: the energy state of their people.

This isn't about candles and crystals. It's about clarity, confidence, and culture. Ignore energy, and you get burnout, disengagement, and conflict. Elevate energy, and you unlock creativity, resilience, and flow.

So, here's the reality check:

- Hard skills, effective systems and structures are necessary, but not sufficient. Energy is what determines whether they are fully applied.

- High performance isn't just about competence; it's about coherence. Without aligned energy, competence fragments into silos.
- Culture eats strategy for breakfast, but energy fuels both the appetite and the digestion.

For leaders under pressure, this isn't a "nice-to-have." It's the missing piece of the performance equation.

So, if you're sceptical, good. Stay sceptical, but stay curious. Because the chapters ahead will show you why energy isn't fluffy at all. In fact, it's the hardest of hard skills: the one that drives every result you're measured against.

So, let's dive in.

IMPACT VS INTENTION: THE WEIGHT OF YOUR WORDS

We all carry energy, but how are we using it?

Every one of us is a leader in some way. Whether you're leading a team, a project, or simply an idea, your energy has an impact. And if you hold a title such as manager, director, or supervisor; remember **you manage systems and processes, but you influence people.**

Leadership is influence. But influence is a double-edged force: it can elevate, or it can erode. **Your energy doesn't just stay with you - it transfers, knowingly or unknowingly.** If fuelled by scarcity, it may manifest as control. If rooted in abundance, it can become inspiration.

There's a difference between **positional leadership**, granted by title and **personal leadership**, earned through energy and character. And the higher your position, the greater your impact.

I want you to consider this:

- A 50g stone dropped from 1 inch is harmless.
- The same stone dropped from the Eiffel Tower could kill.
- The stone doesn't change. The height does. And height represents stored potential energy.

In leadership:

- The **stone** is your comment, tone, or action.
- The **height** is your perceived power, authority, or emotional distance.
- The **impact** is how it lands - not in your intention, but in how it is received.

A leadership role amplifies your words, so what might be harmless on the ground can wound from a great height.

That offhand joke, casual remark, or “light” criticism can become a blow when it falls from a height of power. What feels playful or even banter to you might feel crushing to someone looking up at you.

The challenge for conscious leaders is this: be aware not just of what you do, but the energy from which you do it. **Impact always outweighs intention.**

THE HIDDEN LAYER: WHERE RISK REALLY LIVES

Most organisations believe they understand risk; they track financial exposure, they monitor performance metrics, and they build governance, controls, and escalation routes.

And yet, despite all of that, things still go wrong.

Not because the risks weren’t visible... But because the real risk was never being measured in the first place.

The Risk Beneath the Risk

Every organisation operates across two layers:

- The visible layer - strategy, structure, systems, metrics
- The hidden layer - energy, emotion, mindset, and meaning

Many leaders put their focus on the first, but the second is what drives everything.

Because **every decision... every conversation... every outcome... is shaped by the state people are in when it happens.**

And when that state drops - when energy dips, risk doesn’t stay the same.

It goes up.

Low Energy Isn’t Harmless

Low energy gets brushed off far too easily.

“It’s been a tough quarter.” “We just need to push through.”

But low energy isn't neutral. It changes how people show up, and you start to see it in small ways at first:

- Conversations get avoided
- Decisions take longer than they should
- Feedback gets softened or sidestepped
- People play it safe instead of speaking up

And then it builds.

Ownership becomes patchy. Clarity drops, and frustration simmers under the surface. From the outside, everything can still look fine, but underneath... something has shifted.

It's not caution. It's not professionalism. It's protection. And protection, left unchecked, has a habit of quietly increasing risk.

WHERE ENERGY REALLY LEAKS (AND WHERE IT UNLOCKS MOMENTUM)

When leaders talk about "low energy" in their organisations, they often talk as if it's everywhere.

"People are flat."

"Morale is low."

"Engagement has dropped."

But in practice, energy is almost never evenly distributed. Organisations don't lose energy uniformly. They lose it selectively. One part of the system becomes overloaded, another becomes depleted, and another quietly injects friction back into everything else.

Unless leaders can see where that's happening, their interventions, whether it be a generic engagement initiative, a tweak to the structure or introducing another process, all are well-intentioned but slightly wide of the mark.

The Cost of What You Can't See

Here's the problem.

Energy leaks don't announce themselves. They don't show up on dashboards. But you feel them if you know what to look for.

- Decisions that should take minutes... take days
- Issues that should be resolved... keep resurfacing
- Conversations that matter... don't quite happen

And slowly, things start to drift.

What looks like a process issue is often an energy issue.

What looks like a capability gap is often a confidence gap.

What looks like resistance is often someone protecting themselves.

So, leaders step in and fix the visible thing, but the real issue - the thing driving the behaviour stays exactly where it is. And the cost builds quietly in the background.

The Leak You Can't See

This isn't just something I've observed in organisations. I've experienced it personally.

I had what was described as an occult bleed in my GI tract.

Occult, not in the mystical sense, but in the literal meaning: hidden.

There was no obvious sign. Nothing you could point to and say, "there it is." But over time, something wasn't right. My energy was dropping, and I couldn't quite explain why.

On the surface, everything looked fine. Underneath, I was slowly becoming anaemic.

It was only when the right investigation took place, an endoscopic test, that the source of the problem was revealed.

And here's the point.

The solution wasn't to push harder; it wasn't to manage the symptoms; it wasn't to pour in more energy and hope for the best.

The solution was to find and fix the leak.

Because no matter how much energy you try to add into a system... if it's leaking, you will never get the performance you're looking for.

Plug the Leaks

High-performing organisations don't remove risk. They get better at dealing with it. And risks; when they do show up, get dealt with early.

Not buried. Not avoided. Not passed around but faced.

Because in the end... You don't reduce risk through process alone.

You reduce it through people who are clear enough, steady enough, and honest enough to deal with what's really in front of them.

And that starts by paying attention to the layer many organisations overlook - the hidden layer.

Not functions. Not job titles. Energy zones.

Imagine your organisation not as a hierarchy or an org chart, but as a pie of energy, a system made up of distinct but interconnected domains. Each slice represents a part of the organisation where energy is either being generated, blocked, or drained.

The leadership challenge is not to energise the whole organisation at once. It is to ask a far more strategic question:

Which slice of the system, if energised, would unlock the greatest shift everywhere else?

Not All Energy Investments Are Equal

This is where many change efforts go wrong.

When engagement drops, organisations often default to visible, high-effort interventions: company updates/briefings, surveys, wellbeing initiatives, training programmes. These can help, but only if they're applied in the right place.

Because energising the wrong part of the system is like fuelling an engine with a blocked exhaust. The effort is real, the intention is good, but the impact is muted. Consider a few common scenarios:

You can pour energy into frontline teams; training them, motivating them, encouraging discretionary effort, but if leadership energy is incoherent or fearful, that effort quickly dissipates.

You can invest heavily in HR and OD initiatives; values, frameworks, processes, but if recruitment continues to inject misaligned behaviours into the system, the energy leaks straight back out.

You can redesign performance and accountability mechanisms; targets, KPI's, and reviews, but if trust is low and conflict is unresolved, pressure increases without performance following.

In each case, leaders are doing something. They're just not energising the right slice.

Seeing the Organisation as an Energy System

When leaders begin to map their organisation in this way, a different conversation emerges. They start to notice that:

- **Frontline energy** often carries the emotional cost of poor system design
- **HR and OD energy** is frequently expected to compensate for leadership incoherence
- **Recruitment and onboarding** quietly determine whether the system is being replenished or contaminated
- **Team dynamics and trust** dictate whether effort multiplies or cancels out
- **Performance and accountability** either sharpen focus or amplify fear
- **Change and recovery capacity** determine whether the system can absorb pressure without breaking

And at the centre of it all sits **leadership energy** setting tone, pace, and emotional weather, whether consciously or not.

Seen this way, the organisation stops looking like a collection of departments and starts looking like what it really is: a **living, energetic system**.



The Organisational Energy Engine

Strategic Energy, Not Blanket Effort

This lens changes how leaders intervene. Instead of asking:
“What initiative should we launch?”

They begin asking:

- Where is energy being absorbed without return?
- Which part of the system is under the greatest strain?
- Where would a focused shift create momentum elsewhere?

Sometimes the answer is the frontline. Sometimes it’s recruitment or Team dynamics. Often, it’s leadership itself.

The most effective leaders don’t try to fix everything. They identify the constraint, energise *that*, and allow the system to respond.

This is why small, well-placed interventions often outperform large transformation programmes.

They work *with* the energy of the system, not against it.

Why This Matters for Leadership

Once you start seeing organisations this way, you stop treating energy as a soft issue and start treating it as a strategic asset. You realise that:

- Culture isn’t built everywhere at once
- Performance doesn’t rise evenly
- Change doesn’t fail randomly

They all respond to where energy is concentrated, constrained, or released.

This is the logic behind the **Organisational Energy Engine** shown above as a way of visualising where energy flows, where it leaks, and where leadership attention has disproportionate impact.

Reflection:

If you had to choose one slice of your organisation to energise over the next six months - one area where a shift would unlock momentum elsewhere, where would you place your attention, and why?

Because leadership is not about doing more; it’s about **energising the right things, in the right order**. And once leaders learn to see that clearly, organisations stop grinding and start moving.

EXPECTATION AND HOPE: THE HORSEPOWER MULTIPLIERS

Here's where it gets exciting.

Expectation and hope are not soft concepts; they are performance accelerators. They amplify available energy, multiply focus, and convert potential into performance.

- Expectation sets the benchmark: "I believe we can."
- Hope lights the path: "I can see how we will."

Together, they trigger what I call the energy uplift effect.

Consider this: A team faced with a daunting challenge - let's say launching a new product in half the usual time. If the prevailing mood is doubt ("This can't be done"), energy contracts. Effort becomes minimal, ideas dry up, and results disappoint.

But flip the narrative. Inject hope through purposeful leadership:

"We've never done it this fast before - but with our talent, focus, and collaboration, we absolutely can."

Suddenly, energy expands. Creativity flows, and Performance surges.

Expectation sets the tone. Hope sustains the effort. Together, they engineer peak performance.

On the subject of sport, when Liverpool FC found themselves 3-nil down against Barcelona in the Champions League semi-final, most wrote them off. Logic said it was impossible. But football is not played on logic alone; it runs on energy and tactics. Under Jürgen Klopp, Liverpool tapped into something deeper: courage, belief, and a joyful refusal to give up. They played as though the deficit was irrelevant, as though possibility mattered more than probability.

What followed was one of the greatest comebacks in sporting history. Not just a tactical triumph, but an energetic one. Expectation became fuel. Hope became horsepower. And belief, broadcast by a leader and absorbed by a team, turned the impossible into the inevitable.

Case Study: Marks & Sparks Again - The Hope-Led Revival of M&S

In the early 2020s, Marks & Spencer had become something of a national riddle. A beloved British brand with enviable heritage, but a reputation that felt

frayed, slow, and uncertain. The clothing range was confused, food remained strong, but even there, competitors were catching up. Online, they lagged behind. Internally, a fog had descended - of silos, slow decision-making, and faded expectations.

M&S wasn't failing outright. But it wasn't firing on all cylinders either. It was surviving. Coasting. Comfortably uncomfortable.

And then something shifted.

In stepped Archie Norman, Chairman, and Stuart Machin, who became CEO in 2022. But more than a change of titles, it was a shift in energy - grounded in truth, hope, and strategic expectation.

Machin did something simple but radical: he showed up. Physically. Visibly. Energetically. He visited stores. Listened to frontline staff. Asked inconvenient questions. And began removing friction. Norman called it "confronting the unvarnished truth." They acknowledged, with brutal honesty, what wasn't working - but crucially, they paired it with the belief that it could work again. This wasn't a blind positivity. It was expectant leadership.

They focused energy where it mattered:

- Clothing was radically refined: tighter ranges, better fit, improved quality, sharper design.
- Food was further elevated, with M&S doubling down on their edge in taste, freshness and innovation.
- Stores were upgraded or closed, choosing energy-efficient precision over nostalgic sprawl.
- Digital infrastructure was modernised, speeding up e-commerce and aligning better with customer habits.
- Culture shifted from top-down complacency to local empowerment and listening.

The results?

By 2024, M&S had surged back to the top of UK womenswear. Food sales hit record highs. Profits soared. And perhaps most importantly, internally and externally, people believed again.

What Changed? Not just strategy. Not just systems. The organisational energy changed.

BEFORE	AFTER
Busy, scattered, low belief	Focused, fast, hope-fuelled
Siloed decisions	Joined-up thinking
Cautious tweaks	Bold expectations
Legacy-led	Purpose-aligned

Their turnaround wasn't powered by gimmicks - but by hope, clarity, and a conviction that better was not only possible, but necessary. That hope became contagious. It energised teams. It lifted morale. It clarified customer offers. It shaped headlines. Hope, when operationalised, created horsepower.

Nothing just happens.

Success isn't magic, and failure isn't fate. Both are consequences of *what's been tolerated, energised, or ignored over time*.

The M&S turnaround wasn't accidental. It was engineered through courageous truth-telling, belief in the brand's future, and daily decisions that redirected energy toward the right outcomes.

They tuned the engine, changed the fuel, and raised the expectations, and the results followed.

Hope isn't soft. It's the ignition key of organisational energy.

The M&S story shows that when leaders believe, behave, and build in alignment, even legacy brands can fire again.

Leader Reflection Prompts

1. What's the emotional tone in your organisation right now: resignation or expectation?
2. When did you last feel a palpable surge of energy within your team? What sparked it?
3. Where have your people stopped believing things can be better?
4. Are your daily leadership actions fuelling hope or hesitation?
5. What legacy clutter could you prune to free up energy for what matters?
6. What would it look like to lead in a way that unlocks "I want to" rather than enforcing "you have to"?

7. Are you modelling energy-positive behaviours, or accidentally amplifying stress and urgency?
8. What expectations are you setting, explicitly and implicitly? Are they elevating or draining energy?
9. If I stopped trying to 'manage' people and focused on catalysing energy, how would my leadership approach transform?

Leaders need to distinguish between genuine high-energy states and high external activity driven by low energy.

TRUE HIGH ENERGY	HIGH ACTIVITY, LOW ENERGY
Calm and focused	Restless, scattered, overly busy
Purposeful action	Driven by urgency or fear
Emotionally regulated	Emotionally reactive (even if smiling)
Comfortable with stillness	Avoids silence, fills space quickly
Feels uplifting to others	Can feel overwhelming or draining

- High activity + Low energy = red flag (risk of brittle performance and burn out).
- The complete Energy vs Activity Leadership Reflection Tool is located in the tools section at the end of the book, listed in the Implementation Resources section “Tools,” p.195-210

LEADERSHIP ACTIVATION EXERCISE: CATALYSING ENERGY, NOT MANAGING PEOPLE

Before you charge into Chapter 2, take a pit stop for this practical exercise. It's time to apply what you've learned, not as a manager of people, but as a catalyst of energy.

Step 1: Energy Audit Snapshot

- Identify a team member (or a small team) whose energy feels stuck or subdued.
- Observe their current emotional state:
 - Are they disengaged, frustrated, or defensive?

- Are they curious, collaborative, or inspired?
- Reflect on whether their current state is helping or hindering performance.
- Don't worry about frameworks or labels just yet; we'll introduce the Dynamic Energy Index (DEI) in the next chapter to give you a practical model for these observations.

Step 2: Environmental Scan

- Ask yourself: "What aspects of the environment might be dampening their intrinsic motivation?"
 - Is there clarity of purpose?
 - Are they trusted to self-manage?
 - Are there unnecessary controls or bottlenecks?

Step 3: Catalytic Action Plan

For the team member(s) identified:

- What micro-adjustments can you make to the environment?
 - Reduce micromanagement.
 - Offer meaningful challenges.
 - Create space for autonomy.
 - Choose one catalytic action you'll implement in the next 7 days.

Step 4: Energy Check-In

- Observe how this shift impacts their energy, engagement, and self-management.
- Use this experience to refine your own leadership energy awareness.

In Summary:

- Organisational energy is your most undervalued strategic asset. Identify the key area where a shift would unlock momentum elsewhere.
- Expectation and hope are powerful multipliers that amplify team energy.
- Without ignoring effective systems and structures, leaders' first job is to evaluate and elevate energy before executing strategy.
- The people management myth must give way to self-management enablement.

- Be aware not just of what you do, but the energy from which you do it. Impact always outweighs intention.
- The M&S turnaround illustrates how hope-driven leadership transforms performance.
- Your reflection determines your next action. Energy awareness starts with you.

So, here's the final thought for this chapter:

You are the chief energy officer of your organisation. What you radiate, you amplify.

Are you ready to shift gears?

Because in the next chapter, we'll introduce your personal dashboard for energy-conscious leadership: The Dynamic Energy Index.

Buckle up.

CHAPTER 2

THE DYNAMIC ENERGY INDEX - YOUR DASHBOARD TO CONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP

I opened the previous chapter with my first taste of high-energy leadership. This next story is its shadow.

I was genuinely excited when I joined Molly's team. The role represented growth, stretch, and a pay increase. It felt like a step forward.

I threw myself into the work and, early on, things went well. I received praise for turning around a programme that was significantly behind schedule. Results were visible. Momentum was building. And then something shifted.

At first, it was subtle. I found myself second-guessing decisions that had previously felt straightforward. Feedback became vague, then contradictory. Clear one day, reversed the next. Despite my role as a manager, Molly began undermining my authority in front of my team. When I challenged this, she became defensive.

The atmosphere changed. Arguments flared within the team. I started to feel like I was in a boxing match, constantly on the back foot, dodging blows for myself and for them.

It was exhausting.

Demands changed daily. I found myself firefighting problems that hadn't existed before. I was running hard but getting nowhere. The emotional volatility, the distortion of reality, and the outbursts drained me. Slowly, imperceptibly at first, my energy collapsed into survival mode.

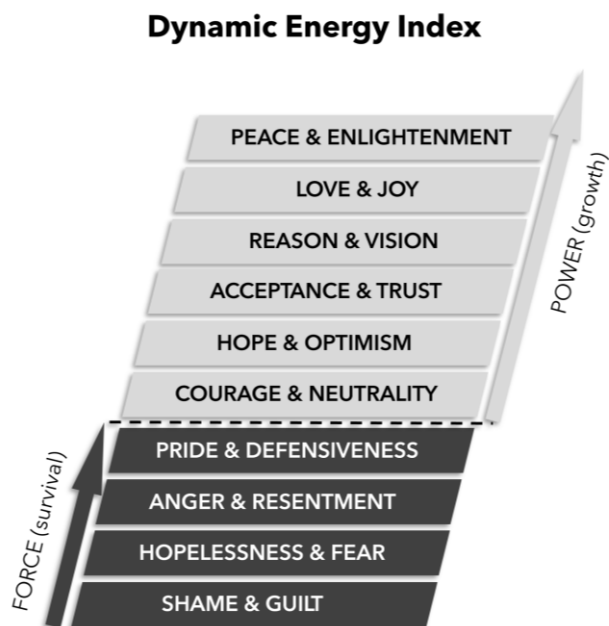
One day, a straw broke the camel's back, and I decided: *enough*.

I handed in my notice. It was unexpectedly empowering. There was an initial backlash, but this time, I stood my ground. I named the behaviour. I challenged what hadn't been okay, and eventually, received an apology.

The Dynamic Energy Index

The Dynamic Energy Index (DEI) helps you see the warning lights, hear the subtle knocks before they become breakdowns, and feel when the engine is running smoothly versus straining under load. It provides the critical diagnostics to assess and optimise energy.

In this chapter, you'll learn how to use the DEI to identify where individuals and teams are operating, whether in survival mode or thriving states, and how this awareness becomes your first conscious step toward elevating performance and potential.



THE REALITY OF MODERN LEADERSHIP ENERGY: LEADERSHIP BURNOUT, STUCK TEAMS, AND THE ENERGY YOU FORGOT YOU HAD

Leading today is like trying to light a fire with damp matches in a wind tunnel. Leaders are expected to inspire, align, resolve conflicts, innovate, and drive change, all while their own energy reserves are running dangerously low. It's not that leaders have forgotten how to lead. The reality is that the leadership

game has fundamentally changed. The pace is relentless. The challenges are thornier. The old leadership playbook? Woefully outdated.

Einstein famously said, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." The same is true for energy. You cannot elevate a team's performance if you're leading from the same depleted, reactive, or defensive energy state that contributed to the current challenges. Energy changes matter, so to find solutions for today's issues, our energy state (frequency) needs to be higher than that of the problem.

Leadership is no longer merely about charisma, positional authority, or clever strategies. At its core, it's about frequency, about the energy you carry into the room. In today's complex and uncertain environments, your energy is your leadership currency. And the state of that energy, whether contracted, reactive, and fear-driven or expansive, resilient, and possibility-focused, determines everything.

Why Energy is the Foundation of Leadership Performance

Energy is not a wellness buzzword. It's the raw material of leadership. Whether you call it presence, mindset, or vibe, the state of energy you bring into the room affects:

- Your capacity to perform under pressure.
- The quality and speed of your decision-making.
- The openness of your communication.
- Whether you inspire creativity or suppress it.

The Physiology of Energy: The Human Brain - A Hungry Beast

Let's start with biology. The human brain, while only accounting for around 2% of your body's mass, consumes up to 25% of your daily energy at rest. Under stress, the brain's amygdala takes control, diverting resources away from higher-order executive functions like empathy, creativity, strategic thinking and into survival mode: fight, flight, freeze or fawn.

This is why burnout feels like brain fog. This is why conflict resolution becomes impossible when you and your team are stuck in reactive survival states. This is why many leaders find themselves locked in patterns of overworking and micromanaging while creativity and collaboration evaporate.

The Psychology of Energy: Emotional Contagion

Leaders broadcast energy. Teams unconsciously tune into and mirror the emotional frequency of their leaders. If you show up in frustration, fear, or overwhelm, those emotions ripple through your team like shockwaves, closing down collaboration, suffocating new ideas, and amplifying defensiveness. For example, have you joined a meeting without emotionally detaching from the previous difficult call?

Conversely, when you show up in grounded clarity, hope, or curiosity, you create an emotional contagion of openness and possibility.

The Physics of Energy: Focus Determines Force

In physics, energy cannot be created or destroyed, only transformed.

Leadership works the same way. If you don't direct your energy, it doesn't disappear. It disperses. It leaks into frustration, distraction, control, or overwork.

Unfocused energy is like sunlight on a cloudy day - present, but diffused. Focused energy is sunlight through a magnifying glass, concentrated enough to ignite.

The difference isn't volume. It's direction.

Leaders who understand this stop trying to generate more energy. They learn to aim it. And once energy is aligned, momentum follows.

The Heart's Field: We Feel State Before We Hear Words

Research from the HeartMath Institute shows that the heart generates an electromagnetic field that literally changes with our emotional state, and it affects people around us. That's why some rooms feel tense before anyone speaks: the air goes heavy, shoulders inch up, smiles thin, eyes dart, and the silence turns brittle. You can almost hear the hum of caution - short breaths, clipped nods, careful words waiting in the wings, because speaking up feels pointless.

Conflict isn't just heard - it's felt.

Even more compelling: the heart's magnetic field has been measured to be 5,000 times greater in amplitude than that of the brain and can be felt up to a

metre outside your body. Which means your emotional state isn't just personal, it's relational. **We broadcast our state long before we speak.**

That's why emotional coherence matters. Conscious leadership isn't just about clarity of message, but clarity of presence. And why high-performance cultures are built not just on vision, but on vibrational alignment. Low-energy leaders unknowingly create low-energy teams.

Culture mirrors consciousness. Mood follows leadership. Performance tracks energy.

It's the hidden variable that powers trust, unlocks creativity, and drives sustainable results.

When leaders elevate their own energy, they don't just show up differently; they light up the systems they lead.

THE DYNAMIC ENERGY INDEX (DEI): FROM SURVIVAL TO TRANSFORMATIONAL MASTERY

This is where the Dynamic Energy Index (DEI) comes in. Inspired by Dr David Hawkins' work in Behavioural Kinesiology and his Scale of Consciousness, the DEI provides leaders with a living dashboard to understand, diagnose, and influence the energy states of themselves, their teams, and their organisations.

While the Dynamic Energy Index draws inspiration from Hawkins' Map of Consciousness, it does not adopt or rely upon behavioural kinesiology as a scientific measurement tool. His calibration methodology sits outside mainstream empirical validation. The broader insight, however, that emotional states shape behaviour, perception, and performance, aligns strongly with contemporary research in emotional intelligence and organisational psychology. The DEI therefore focuses on observable emotional patterns: how fear, pride, courage, trust, and vision show up in tone, decisions, relationships, and culture. This is not about measuring vibration; it is about recognising the energy patterns that drive performance.

Before going further, it is important to clarify that in this book, DEI refers to the **Dynamic Energy Index**. I'm conscious that DEI is also widely used to

mean *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* - a subject that carries strong convictions, lived experiences, and ongoing debate across organisations, cultures, and countries.

This book is not entering that debate.

The Dynamic Energy Index is not a political position, a compliance agenda, or a values campaign. It is a human performance lens focused on mindset, emotional state, ownership, and the *energy behind behaviour*.

Different conversation. Different lens. Same intention: **healthier energy, better leadership, stronger outcomes.**

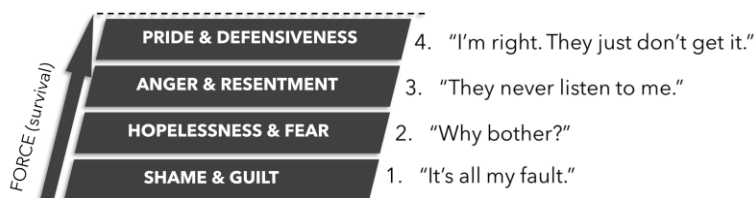
My aim is not to replace existing conversations, but to add a missing one because, regardless of role, background, or belief, *energy is always present... and always at work*.

The DEI maps energy into ten dynamic levels ranging from the most toxic, fear-based survival states to the highest, purpose-driven transformational states. Here's the basic breakdown:

Levels 1–4: Survival States (Below the Line)

1. Shame & Guilt: Deep disengagement, avoidance, burnout.
2. Hopelessness & Fear: Anxiety, paralysis, insecurity.
3. Anger & Resentment: Bitterness, blame, hostility.
4. Pride & Defensiveness: Resistance to feedback, control struggles.

These are **low-energy, reactive states**. People operate from protection, not possibility. Energy is consumed trying to stay safe, not move forward.

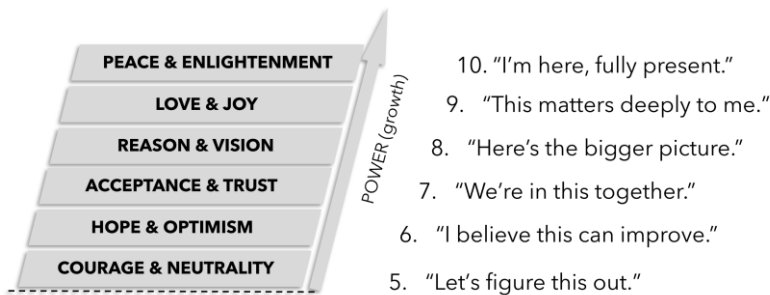


Levels 5–10: Growth States (Above the Line)

5. Courage & Neutrality: Confidence, resilience, openness.
6. Hope & Optimism: Positivity, curiosity, solution-focused.

7. Acceptance & Trust: Inclusivity, adaptability, collaboration.
8. Reason & Vision: Strategic clarity, innovation, visionary leadership.
9. Love & Joy: Purpose-driven, deep connection, inspiring leadership.
10. Peace & Enlightenment: Inner harmony, effortless influence, legacy thinking.

These are high-energy, proactive states. People operate from confidence, creativity, and connection.



Above the Line vs Below the Line

The most important distinction within the Dynamic Energy Index is the line that separates survival from growth, what we call below-the-line and above-the-line energy.

Levels 1 to 4 are survival states marked by fear, frustration, and ego-driven defensiveness. In these states, we often rely on force to get things done: positional power, control, and micromanagement. People comply, but they don't commit. Performance is reactive, not creative.

Levels 5 to 10 shift us above the line into a space of courage, optimism, vision, and inspired action. Here, we no longer push with force; we **move with power**. A quiet authority rooted in purpose, clarity, and emotional coherence. People feel safe to engage, empowered to innovate, and motivated to perform at their best.

Above-the-line energy is where transformational growth begins for individuals, teams, and cultures. Without it, we might survive... but we'll never truly thrive.

The Dynamic Energy Index is not a label, a scorecard, or a judgment. It is a *dynamic lens*.

Energy is not linear. It is contextual, cyclical, and relational. Individuals and teams move up and down these energy states constantly; sometimes several times a day, depending on pressure, trust, meaning, relationships, health, and environment.

Lower energy states aren't failures; they're signals. Higher states aren't moral badges either; they're *conditions*.

This matters because when models are treated as hierarchical ladders, they risk becoming moralised; used to diagnose people rather than develop understanding. That is not the intention here.

The Dynamic Energy Index is designed to support *awareness before action*. To help leaders notice what's present in the system, within themselves, between people, and across the wider context before attempting to fix, correct, or optimise.

The art of leadership is not keeping people permanently "high" on the index. It is recognising energy shifts, understanding what's driving them, and responding consciously; sometimes by elevating energy, sometimes by stabilising it, and sometimes by creating the conditions for recovery.

Used well, the DEI doesn't simplify human complexity. It gives leaders a shared language for navigating it.

Why This is Not 'Leader, Fix Yourself' nor 'Blame the System'

It's true that many organisations are structurally exhausting. Layers of governance, risk aversion, legacy processes, and constant scrutiny can drain energy long before performance visibly drops. Naming that reality matters. But there is a quiet danger when senior leaders begin to experience themselves as

Systems shape behaviour more powerfully than individual intent.

Senior leaders are still accountable for the systems they inhabit.

victims of the system.

In these moments, leaders can slip into *othering*, locating the problem everywhere except where they stand. The system becomes something external, faceless, and immovable. Responsibility is displaced. Agency quietly leaks away.

Othering may feel understandable, even justified, but it comes at a cost. Because once leadership energy is spent explaining why change can't happen, it is no longer available to direct it. At that point, nobody is leading the system; it's just running people.

Systems do not change themselves, and if no one at the top believes they have the agency to change the system, then the system has already won.

They change when someone with authority chooses to intervene: to absorb risk, disrupt patterns, and tolerate short-term discomfort in service of long-term health.

This is not a call for leaders to “fix themselves” in broken systems. Nor is it an invitation to ignore structural reality. It is a reminder of why senior leadership exists in the first place.

The word *director* is instructive. To direct is to govern, guide, and shape outcomes. When that responsibility is abdicated, even unintentionally, leadership collapses into commentary, and energy stagnates.

At senior levels, leadership is no longer about coping well inside the system; it is about stewarding the system's energy: deciding what will be challenged, what will be redesigned, and what can no longer be carried by people alone.

Exhaustion is information.

Victimhood is a warning sign.

Agency is the work.

That's not *leader, fix yourself*. That's **leader, remember what only you can do**.

How the DEI Supports Coaching, Self-Awareness & Leadership Conversations

The DEI transforms vague “vibes” into clear language, allowing leaders and teams to:

- Reflect on their default state,
- Identify emotional triggers and energy leaks,
- Set goals not just by performance metrics, but by energetic alignment.

This shared language creates space for:

- Safe feedback,
- Real emotional ownership,
- And conscious, scalable shifts in performance.

Whether in one-to-one coaching or everyday leadership interactions, the DEI helps:

- Move people from blame to ownership,
- From silence to solution,
- From disengagement to self-leadership.

One of the most powerful uses of the DEI is in resolving conflict.

Conflict is not simply disagreement. It is the outward expression of misaligned energy - a signal that emotional needs, expectations, or values are out of sync.

It's not just tension; it's a clash of emotional frequencies. For example:

- Fear meeting control.
- Hope meeting doubt.
- Anger meeting silence.

From an energy perspective, conflict arises when survival states like fear, shame, or frustration collide and go unacknowledged.

And from a leadership perspective, it's certainly not a problem to avoid, but an invitation to raise awareness, restore alignment, and re-energise relationships. However, many organisations treat it like a weed: clip the visible bits and hope it doesn't grow back.

The DEI helps us go beyond surface behaviours and diagnose the deeper, invisible drivers, the energetic patterns that are either fuelling growth or fuelling dysfunction.

Just as a fruit reveals the identity of the tree, conflict reveals the state of the energy system beneath the surface.

Choose to see conflict not as failure, but as feedback.

It shows us where energy is stuck, where trust is thin, and where vision is either missing or misunderstood.

And that gives leaders the opportunity and the responsibility to shift. We delve further into this in Chapter Seven.

Manage Your Own Energy First

Before leaders can raise the energy of a team or organisation, they must first be able to manage and sustain their own.

High-energy leadership isn't about constant hype; it's about clarity, resilience, and rhythm.

This means being intentionally aware of your stress levels, emotional state, and energetic signals.

It's not indulgent, it's responsible. Because **a leader's energy is contagious, whether they realise it or not.** Practices such as:

- Regular reflection,
- Physical movement,
- Intentional rest,
- And setting boundaries around time and attention...

...are not luxuries. They are essential disciplines for sustained leadership performance.

A well-regulated leader can remain composed in chaos, present in pressure, and generous even under strain.

Conscious leadership starts with self-awareness and grows through consistent self-management and social awareness.

That's the first and ongoing responsibility of any leader who seeks to lift others.

Reflection

Where are you trying to pull harder when you should be leading clearer?

What signal is your energy really sending to those you lead?

The Leadership Blind Spots That Drain Energy

Even high-functioning leaders carry hidden energy leaks. These show up as:

- Cognitive Overload – the mind goes foggy; decisions smear into one; your inner monologue turns to static. Meetings drag, creativity shrinks to the safest option, and innovation idles in neutral.
- Emotional Reactivity – heat in the chest, jaw tight, emails written then deleted. The tone goes sharp or sugar-sweet but cold; people start walking on eggshells. Ripples appear: cautious silence, side chats, compliance instead of commitment.
- Physical Exhaustion – heavy-limbed mornings and the 3 p.m. crash. Caffeine becomes scaffolding; sleep is shallow; recovery gets skipped. Patience thins, judgement narrows, and small errors multiply.

Leaders are human batteries; when the charge drops, everything falters. But perhaps the biggest blind spot is believing that energy is personal when in truth, it's systemic. Energy flows between people. It's cultural. One emotionally volatile leader can drop the frequency of an entire organisation - notice the air go heavy and the darting eyes. However, one aligned and grounded leader can raise the floor of possibility for everyone around them - conversation opens, and progress feels lighter and quicker.

THE HUMAN COMES TO WORK

Too many organisations treat people like processes: programmable and predictable. But every team member brings their full humanity to work - their beliefs, emotions, energy states, past experiences, hopes, and fears – all of which have a powerful influence on how they work and navigate relationships. Some prefer to split themselves into “work-me” and “personal-me;” however, doing this doesn't double your capacity – it halves your coherence. The fragmentation creates friction, burns fuel, and blunts influence: less presence, less power, less performance. Congruence does the opposite: one story, one standard, one self.

For example, take Aisha, a high-performing team leader in a fast-paced public sector organisation. On paper, she's nailing every metric: deadlines met, projects delivered, team output on track. But beneath the surface, something's shifted. Recently, Aisha's elderly mother was hospitalised, and she's been quietly juggling work with daily visits and late-night care responsibilities. She hadn't told anyone at work. Not her manager. Not her peers. She simply kept showing up, pouring caffeine into exhaustion, willing herself to perform (Level 4 on the Dynamic Energy Index: Pride & Defensiveness - that brittle, high-functioning state where leaders hold it all together on the surface but are quietly burning out underneath). She's pushing through, smiling through stress, dodging feedback, and snapping at minor requests. Her energy isn't aligned with the high output she's forcing. She's not lazy or disengaged - she's simply human, running on depleted reserves.

The numbers still look good, but the atmosphere has changed, and the team feels the shift. Meetings feel tense. Collaboration has dropped. Innovation stalls. No one can quite put their finger on it, but the energy has changed.

It wasn't a skills gap. It wasn't a strategy issue. It was energy. Unseen, but deeply felt.

When her manager finally noticed and created a safe space for conversation, everything changed. With some flexibility, emotional support, and a reminder that compassion and vulnerability fuel performance, not just pressure, Aisha began shifting back up the DEI scale. Within weeks, the tension lifted, creativity re-emerged, and the team started firing on all cylinders again.

The crux of the matter is that you don't get to manage people. You get to create the conditions for people to manage themselves. Therefore, conscious leaders don't manage humans; they steward human energy.

They ask:

- What's the emotional climate of this room?
- What's the energy beneath the behaviours I'm seeing?
- What's needed to lift this conversation or interaction to a higher frequency?

Being Before Doing: You Are Not Your Mind

We are human beings, not human doings. From tying shoelaces as a child, to devising complex programmes, we're conditioned to do - until repeated actions harden into habits, and habits into labels: "I'm shy... I'm no good at X...

I can't cope." Those aren't identities; they're scripts. Scripts can be rewritten. Identity sits deeper.

At your core, you are spirit; you have a soul (mind, emotions, will), all housed in a body. These are the three wellsprings of energy: purpose in the spirit, meaning and emotion in the soul, execution in the body. When they align, leaders fire on all cylinders.

I appreciate this may feel abstract, but stay with me.

Your Mind Is a Phone, Not the Person Holding It

Think of your smartphone. It stores contacts, calendars, messages, photos, and transactions. It "knows" staggering amounts about you, but it isn't you? Likewise, the mind is a superb device: it records, predicts, and associates. It knows about you, yet it is not you. **Let the mind be a brilliant assistant, not a terrible boss.**

Here's the liberating truth: **you can change your mind on any matter, at any time, if you decide.** You are not your thoughts.

Thoughts are suggestions, not commands; stories, not sentences. Decision sits upstream of thought; action turns decisions into change.

30-Second "Story Switch" Experiment

Right now, try this:

1. **Cue Anger:** Think of something that makes you genuinely angry. Hold it for 10 seconds.
Notice your body: breath, chest, jaw, stomach, posture.
2. **Cue Glad:** Now switch. Think of something that makes you genuinely happy, grateful or that you're excited about. Hold it for 10 seconds.
Notice your body again.
3. **Ask:** How long did it take to feel different? Who flipped the switch?

With conviction and certainty, say this aloud three times: "I can change my mind/story on any matter, at any time, if I decide."

Debrief:

Attention is a valve; meaning is the fuel; physiology is the gauge. By choosing where you place attention and what story you attach, you alter your emotional

state fast. The feeling followed the focus. In practice, this means you can choose a more useful focus, and your feelings will often follow suit.

Note: This isn't about denying real pain or bypassing grief. It's about recognising agency in everyday moments: you can direct focus, shift meaning, and change state on demand. Another point to note is that you cannot be in a state of anger and gratitude simultaneously.

From Script to State to Strategy

Identity precedes everything. Before any strategy, there is state - and before state, there is *being*. Who you're choosing to be determines what you'll notice, how you'll feel, and what you'll do next. Energy flows from the inside out.

To shift results, you must first shift yourself.

1. Being - Choose your identity before your strategy

Everything begins with self-awareness. Ask, "*Who am I being right now?*" Calm captain or anxious passenger? The moment you name it, you create distance from it. That space is where choice lives. Decide who you *choose* to be - calm, curious, courageous — and let that decision lead.

2. Focus - Direct attention with intent

Where focus goes, energy flows. Most people fixate on what they fear or can't control. Conscious leaders focus on what they *can* influence — presence, preparation, purpose. Pull your attention out of the problem and onto the next useful question: "*What's required of me here?*" The quality of your focus shapes the quality of your performance.

3. State - Align physiology and meaning

Your body is your fastest access point to a higher state. Stand tall, roll your shoulders back, breathe deeply. Physiology leads psychology — every breath signals safety, every movement recalibrates emotion. Then reframe: pressure becomes preparation; setback becomes strengthening. Change your stance, change your story, change your state.

4. Move - Take one aligned action

Action anchors identity. Once your energy and state are aligned, do one thing that expresses who you've chosen to be - send the message, start the meeting, take the first step. Motion creates momentum. The smallest move, made consciously, changes the trajectory.

60-Second State-Shift Practice

1. **Being:** Name who you're choosing to be.
2. **Focus:** Place attention on what you can control.
3. **State:** Adjust your body and your meaning - breathe, reframe, realign.
4. **Move:** Take one purposeful action.

Repeat as needed.

Thoughts inform; physiology transforms; actions sustain.

Leader Prompts

- What label have I mistaken for identity?
- If I were already the leader I aspire to be, what would I do in the next ten minutes?
- Which single courageous action would raise my energy one level today?

Next: We'll map these wells of energy - spirit, soul and body, and show how to tune each so your state powers your strategy.

Spirit, Soul & Body: Aligning the Triple Energy System

Linking back to the thought that the human comes to work, our energy is generated through three distinct, yet interconnected wellsprings – spirit, soul and body; and the DEI is most powerful when integrated holistically across all three.

1. Spirit (Purpose & Legacy)

This is your why; the fuel source beneath everything else. Spirit is your deep inner compass, the quiet conviction that your work serves something larger than yourself. It is where meaning, contribution, and legacy converge.

When spirit is strong, leaders move with clarity and conviction. Their energy is renewable because it's not drawn from ego or approval, but from alignment with purpose. When spirit is disconnected, energy collapses, direction fades, motivation drains, and even success can feel hollow. Spirit-based leadership asks:

- Why does this work matter?
- Who benefits beyond me?

- What legacy am I building through this?

Leaders who operate from spirit, anchor their teams in meaning, contribution, and hope. They draw people upward, not just forward - igniting energy that endures long after the task is done.

The deeper dimensions of passion and purpose are explored further in Chapter Eight.

2. Soul (Mindset & Emotions)

The soul - your mind, emotions, and will - governs the *inner climate* of your leadership. It's the bridge between spirit and body, translating belief into behaviour and emotion into energy.

Think of the soul as the amplifier for spirit energy - the channel that determines how clearly your deeper purpose is expressed in daily action. When it's aligned, spirit flows freely into thought, emotion, and intention, producing calm authority and coherence. When it's cluttered with fear, resentment, or self-doubt, the signal becomes distorted - your energy feels noisy, inconsistent, or drained.

At this level, your dominant mindset acts as the thermostat for your entire system: it decides whether you enter a room radiating trust or tension, curiosity or control, generosity or defensiveness.

Soul-level energy determines whether you operate from *scarcity or abundance, fear or courage, protection or possibility*. When your inner dialogue is rooted in lack, you close down options and creativity; when it's grounded in belief and curiosity, you open the flow of energy that fuels innovation, empathy, and decisive action.

Leaders who work consciously at this level cultivate emotional agility - the ability to feel without being flooded, to think without being trapped by thought. They practise regulating emotion rather than repressing it, using awareness as the lever that transforms reaction into response. They regularly pause to ask themselves:

- What am I believing right now?
- Is this belief serving me or sabotaging me?
- What emotion am I projecting, and how is it being received?
- What state would better serve the moment and the people I lead?

Energy-conscious leadership begins here; in the quiet work of tuning your inner amplifier, reframing the stories that drain you, and choosing responses that elevate rather than erode the energy of those around you.

The DEI provides language to diagnose these states and shift them upward.

3. **Body (Physical Vitality)**

This is an often-overlooked dimension of leadership energy. Your body is your battery. If it's depleted, overstimulated, or neglected, your leadership energy will be fractured no matter how strong your intent or intellect.

Energy-conscious leaders pay attention to four things:

- **Rest and recovery** - Sleep is not optional maintenance; it's the primary reset mechanism for energy, clarity, and emotional regulation.
- **Movement and breath** - Movement clears stress and restores flow. Breath regulates the nervous system. Together, they shift leaders out of survival mode and back into calm, focused presence.
- **Nutrition** - There is no universal formula. High-energy leaders become students of their own physiology, noticing what fuels them and what drains them.
- **Energy hygiene** - Emotional residue, digital noise, and unresolved tension quietly sap capacity. Conscious leaders build simple rituals to reset, close loops, and let go.

When body, soul, and spirit are aligned, leadership becomes coherent. And coherence is felt, before a word is spoken.

From Scripts to Strength: The Integrity Reset

Our souls get shackled by redundant scripts - old stories about who we are, what we deserve, and how we believe things “must” be – these all take energy. Freedom comes through a three-step reset that restores integrity and raises your available energy.

1. **Confession** - Name what has been.

Say the quiet part out loud: “Here’s how I’ve been being.” Describe behaviours, not excuses. Confession collapses denial and returns agency.

2. **Metanoia** - Change your mind, change your map.

Metanoia is a reframe and a decision: a deliberate shift from the old position to a truer one (from fear to courage, from scarcity to service). New map, new moves.

3. **Lay Aside the Baggage** - Remove the drag.

Identify and release what burdens the soul: unhelpful habits, grudges and workplace conflict (e.g. the long-held hostility for not getting the promotion/accolade you felt was yours), cluttered commitments, mismatched roles. Subtract to accelerate.

Result: Integrity. Coherence. Power.

When words, values, and actions line up, the soul is unbound. Coherence reduces friction; energy rises; momentum returns.

Micro-practice (5 minutes)

- Confess: One sentence: “Recently I’ve been...” (behaviour + impact).
- Metanoia: One sentence: “From today I choose...” (standard + why).
- Lay Aside: List one piece of baggage to drop this week (meeting, habit, story) and the replacement standard. Put it on your dashboard.

Integrity isn’t talk; it’s alignment under pressure.

The Virtues of the DEI – Why It’s a Game-Changer

Let’s recap what makes the DEI not just useful but transformational:

- It’s diagnostic - Know what level of energy you’re working with before you take action. Stop guessing.
- It’s dynamic - It moves with people, meetings, moments. Use it in real time, but not to diagnose people rather to develop understanding.
- It’s not a label, a scorecard, or a judgment. It is a *dynamic lens* that’s contextual, cyclical, and relational.
- This matters because when models are treated as hierarchical ladders, they risk becoming moralised; used to diagnose people rather than develop understanding. That is not the intention here
- It links wellbeing with performance - No false divide between thriving and delivering.
- It builds emotional literacy - People can name and shift their state with language, not shame.
- It unlocks creative breakthroughs - Want higher-level solutions? Start at higher energy levels.
- It elevates leadership frequency - Because you can’t lead people to a level you’re not operating from.

LEADERSHIP ACTIVATION EXERCISE: THE DEI LEADERSHIP CALIBRATION CANVAS

Use this as your personal dashboard and team alignment tool. Think of it as your pit stop - a moment to recalibrate, refuel, and re-engage from a higher frequency.

Step 1: Personal Energy Calibration

Reflect on your current state using the DEI:

- What level have you been operating from most often this week?
- What situations tend to pull you into lower levels?
- What's your default energy under pressure?
- What practices help you return to a higher frequency?

Use a journal or voice note to track your daily energy pattern over one week.

Step 2: Team Energy Snapshot

Choose a team or key relationship. Ask:

- What level of energy is most commonly displayed in this group?
- Are people open, optimistic, and creative? Or defensive, fearful, and reactive?
- What's the energy underneath the conversations?

Listen not just to the words, but the emotional tone, body language, and out-comes.

Step 3: One-Level Shift Challenge

You're not trying to jump from Level 2 to Level 9 overnight. Focus on just one shift up the ladder.

- What intervention could raise the energy one level?
- Examples: express gratitude, clarify purpose, create psychological safety, slow down the pace, offer reassurance.

Then observe:

- What changes?
- How do people respond?
- What becomes possible that wasn't before?

Step 4: Reflect, Repeat, Integrate

Make energy awareness a habit. The more you practise, the more intuitive it becomes. Build this into team meetings, check-ins, and strategic reviews.

“What’s our collective energy right now - and what would it take to raise it just one level?”

This question alone can transform meetings from draining to energising.

Team Energy Audit - Self-Assessment

Evaluate your team's overall energy using this questionnaire, rating each question on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high):

1. How effectively does the team manage stress and uncertainty?
2. How positively and enthusiastically does the team approach daily tasks?
3. How readily does the team embrace feedback and change?
4. How frequently does the team exhibit strategic clarity and innovative thinking?
5. How consistently does the team demonstrate trust and collaboration?
6. How regularly do team members express gratitude, inspiration, and purpose-driven behaviours?

Total team scores correspond to energy levels:

- Scores 6–24: Low (Levels 1–4: Survival-based states)
- Scores 25–36: Mid (Levels 5–6: Growth-oriented states)
- Scores 37–48: High (Levels 7–8: Collaboration and clarity states)
- Scores 49–60: Peak (Levels 9–10: Inspirational and enlightened leadership)

More detailed information on the DEI, the self-assessment and audit instruments are listed in the Implementation Resources section “Tools,” p.195-210. You can also download a copy at www.gobeyondexp.com/resources

Energy Triggers & Blockers

Reflect and identify factors influencing energy states:

- Triggers (Boosters): Situations, activities, or interactions that elevate energy levels significantly.
- Blockers (Drains): Obstacles or habitual patterns that consistently reduce energy and engagement.

Mapping these insights helps leaders develop targeted interventions to elevate personal and team energy effectively.

Final Thought: Energy Is Your Leadership Superpower

In today's complex, volatile world, your most strategic leadership tool isn't just your intellect, skills, or experience. It's your energy.

Because when you lead with aligned, elevated energy:

- You make better decisions.
- You resolve conflicts with wisdom.
- You create cultures of trust, hope, and innovation.
- And you don't just manage performance - you multiply it.

Let's stop managing exhaustion; when we lead with energy, impact follows.

Coming up next: We'll explore why emotional and mental state always come before strategy - and how to shift your internal state to engineer external success.

Because, as we'll see in Chapter 3, state always precedes strategy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Courtney Richards is a leadership consultant, executive coach, and the founder of Beyond Expectations, where he helps leaders and organisations unlock the energy that drives extraordinary performance.

Over the past fifteen years, Courtney has worked with senior leaders across public and private sectors, leading organisational development, leadership development, and culture transformation programmes. His work centres on a powerful idea: organisations don't change through strategy alone, they change through the energy of the people within them.



This belief led him to develop the Dynamic Energy Index, a leadership framework that helps leaders recognise and shift the emotional and cultural states that influence performance, collaboration, and innovation. By helping leaders move from fear-based survival states to purpose-driven leadership, the model provides a practical roadmap for building high-trust, high-performance cultures.

Through his work, Courtney helps leaders raise energy, inspire belief, and create organisations that truly fire on all cylinders.