

Seeing What Employees See: Actions for People, Culture and Change Leaders

What to do next to address the slow drain on motivation, contribution and performance

Culture rarely erodes all at once. It weakens through everyday signals about credibility, transparency and fairness. Our data from 148 organizations and 400,000 employees shows that when leadership signals of credibility and transparency weaken, motivation and contribution slowly drain, undermining collaboration, psychological safety and business performance.

Human resource, inclusion, culture and employee experience leaders are often the first to see these shifts, and they carry a responsibility to help leaders and the organization respond well. The work begins with how well you see the moment: take early signals seriously, stay close to the employee experience behind the data, and help leaders consistently move through transformation in ways that strengthen culture, and create consistency in how people are led, supported and treated over time. This guide focuses on the mindset that turns early signals into clearer decisions and stronger results.

MINDSET: Treat data as a starting point, not a conclusion

Engagement and culture data is rarely straightforward, but early patterns often reveal where leadership signals, systems or experiences begin to break down before performance drops. Progress shows up when leaders slow the rush to solutions and focus on the behaviors that drive trust, credibility, learning and lasting business impact.

What To Do (Examples):	What You May Say:	What To Watch Out For:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Before landing on conclusions, look for patterns, gaps and tension, not just averages or headlines, » Slow down when results feel confusing or inconvenient and ask what might be underneath instead of assuming the data is wrong. » Widen the lens by bringing in other perspectives and employee voice to add context the numbers can't provide on their own. 	<p><i>"The data isn't telling a clean story yet. Before we jump to conclusions, let's look at where it breaks down or check any assumptions we may have."</i></p> <p><i>"Let's learn more by getting perspective from people closest to the work, especially those with difference experiences."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Explaining away, minimizing or oversimplifying results by attributing them to timing, external factors or employee fatigue. » Using analysis to confirm what you already believe instead of exploring what's really happening. » Jumping to solutions before you understand the problem.

MINDSET: Hold uncomfortable truths long enough to learn

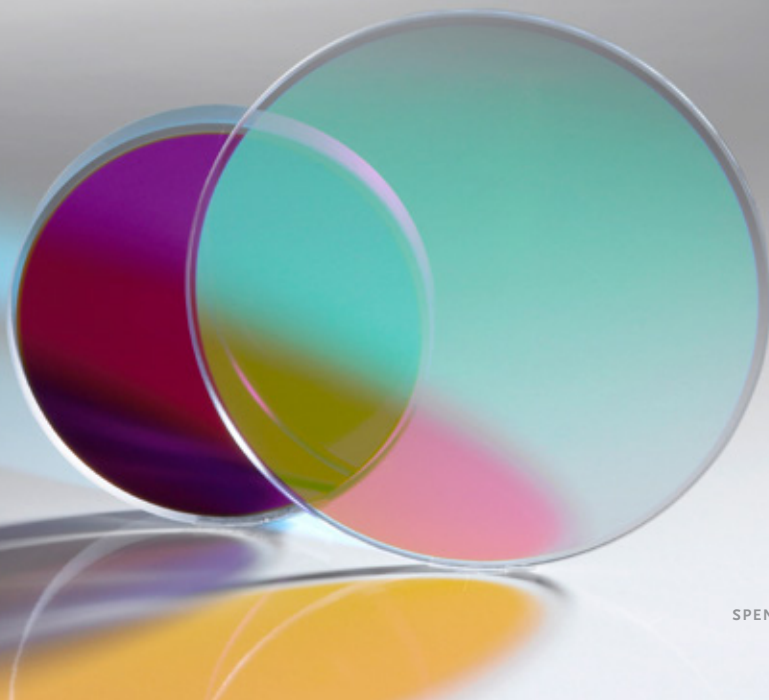
People, culture and change leaders often see problems early. When uncomfortable data is softened or rushed, the organization loses the chance to learn and innovate. Early signs of progress show up when organizational leaders and their teams stay with inconvenient or surprising results, discuss challenging data openly, test assumptions and reference employee experience alongside metrics to guide decisions.

What To Do (Examples):	What You May Say:	What To Watch Out For:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Hold the tension a little longer where possible. Resist the pressure to resolve, reframe or reassure before the meaning is clear. » Name what feels uncomfortable without blaming any person, team or group. » Share what's uneven or surprising, not just the takeaway, and connect the numbers to real employee experiences. 	<p><i>"This isn't an easy picture, and we don't fully understand it yet. What's not lining up, and what are we missing?"</i></p> <p><i>"We cannot fix what we are not willing to talk about"</i></p> <p><i>"If the data is telling us something that we don't like, our job is to stay with it enough to learn."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Feeling responsible for making the talent challenges feel better instead of offering clarity and transparency. » Editing out inconvenient findings to protect relationships. » Moving too fast to solutions because you feel responsible for "fixing it."

MINDSET: Create consistency in how people are supported and treated over time

Consistency is about whether employees experience leadership, decisions and processes as reliable and predictable over time. Research shows that consistent experiences — across leaders, teams and moments of change — are a primary driver of trust, engagement and performance, even more than a single program or initiative. Progress shows up when leaders create confidence that people will be led, supported and treated consistently, regardless of role, team or circumstance.

What To Do (Examples):	What You May Say:	What To Watch Out For:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Hard wire consistency into decision-making, hiring processes, talent reviews and change processes so you are not dependent on who is leading or who is in the room. » Use shared criteria, clear standards and repeatable processes to reduce uneven experiences. » Use data to see who is consistently left out and treat that as a system signal. » Close the loop. Show how input shaped decisions or lead to change. 	<p><i>“Let’s be clear about the standards we’re using here and apply them the same way we have elsewhere.”</i></p> <p><i>“If we’re asking for input, we should be explicit about how it will be used.”</i></p> <p><i>“We may not have all the same concerns, but everyone desires the same clarity and fairness. Here is what we know, here is what we don’t know yet. And here is where we will come back with more.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Allowing exceptions to quietly become the norm. » Confusing consistency with sameness, instead of being clear about when leaders are exercising judgment and when standards apply. » Treating inclusion as optional or a separate initiative instead of part of how work happens. » Relying on a few familiar or the loudest voices in the room. » Not following through with feedback or data insights. People notice when input is gathered but not used.



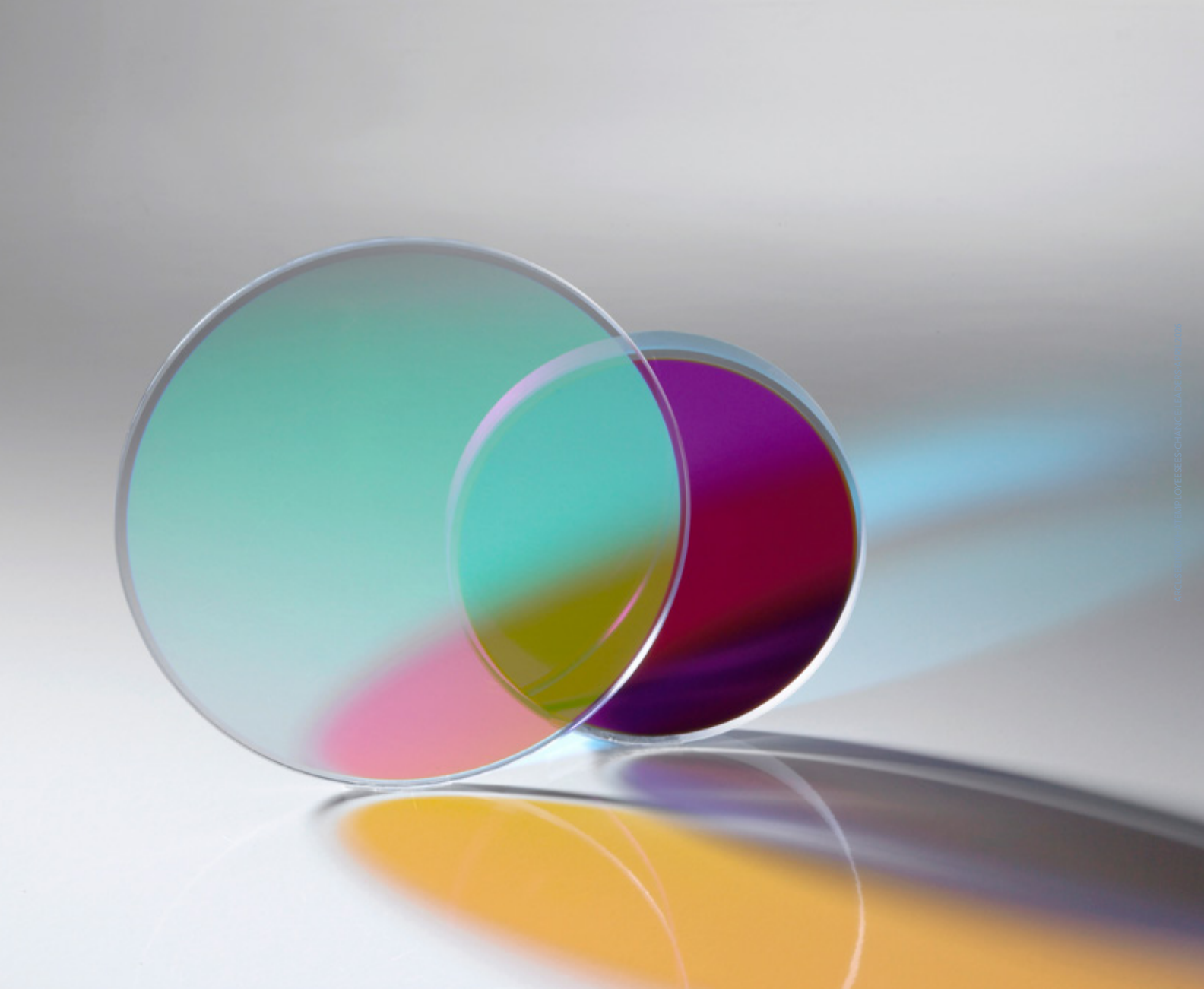


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Authors

Tony Byers, PhD (Seattle)
Jeff Jolton, PhD (New York)
Dnika J. Travis, PhD (Atlanta)



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