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Powering Strategy
Through People.

Rethink, Rebuild, Lead: **HR Strategy for a New World of Work**



Elli Matsouka
Strategic Advisor | Executive & Team Coach – Elli & Co

How are you feeling right now?

RETHINK, REBUILD, LEAD
HR Strategy for a New World of Work

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A story of failing on being strategic

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HR Plan & Budget for Europe & Middle East 2015

S/N	Actions	Timeframes	Expected Results / Benefits	People / Teams to be involved
	OPERATIONS			
1	Take full responsibility of all offices as stated above	By the end of 1st quarter	Efficient and timely response to local needs	Elli Central HR (if necessary
2	Fully manage all operations from Cyprus (incl. docs management, PMP management, etc.)	By the end of 2nd quarter		
3	Close monitor of working schedules/ attendance and leave management for all defined offices	ongoing - As soon as authorities are given	Better control of offices' performance and cost; ensure compliance and oversight	Elli
4	Close monitor and overlook of payroll for all defined offices	As soon as respective authorities are defined		Elli
5	Update / finalize handbooks & employment contracts to ensure compliance with global practices and local employment legislation	By the end of 1st quarter	Ensure compliance with legal requirements	Elli
	RECRUITMENT			
1	Create and communicate a clear and structure policy to all MDs, reg. hiring approvals and procedure (will include the new procedure sent by Nik & other processes, such as the need to involve HR in all stages of the hiring process, etc.)	By the end of 1st quarter	Minimize consultants' cost for recruitment purposes; better control of the overall cost from hiring; ensure that hirings are as per standards / required qualities	Elli & Rajiv (Kiran & Nik might want to review this)
2	Develop benchmarks for hiring standards based on hierarchical level and unit. Thomas Assessments reports will be used to identified trends and minimum standards (i.e. min. score of the 'Strategic Selling' indicator for Sales people)	TBC	Reinforce effective talent acquisition and minimize cost from 'unsuccessful' hires	Elli, Binu and his team,.....
3	Ensure that Thomas Assessment is being utilized for all the job positions during the selection process	ongoing		Regional HR and Binu's team
	ONBOARDING			
1	Full responsibility of the onboarding process:			
1(a)	Revamping of the onboarding, including all processes from the time that offer letter is signed till 6 months after the commencement day of employment	By the end of 1st quarter	Eliminate delays and faults; minimize relevant burden from MDs / Managers; facilitate the transition period for the new comer; contribute in building the professional image of the company to the new comers	Elli (accountability), Academy (to support)
1(b)	Implementation of the revised scheme and overlook on a global level *Overall Accountability: Elli*	Implementation - By the end of 1st quarter Monitoring - ongoing		Regional HR, Central HR Academy (responsibilities will be defined at a later stage)
	PERFORMANCE AND TALENT MANAGEMENT			
1	Closely monitor performance of employees - updates / reports need to be communicated and reviewed regularly	ongoing	Minimize cost (time and expenses) from non-performing employees; timely enrollment of PEP and/or release of employees, if needed	Regional HR & Binu
2	Measure employees commitment, engagement and satisfaction so as to better manage areas of improvement	TBC - Binu is working on this	Retain employees (mainly talents / key individuals) - long term expected result	Binu & Regional HR
3	Management Development: initiatives to enable managers to become 'HR Managers' (to effectively manage, develop and lead their people)	will be discussed with Binu	Enhance management development which will contribute in increasing employees satisfaction and engagement levels and therefore, reinforce employees' retainment	Binu & Regional HR
4	Thomas Assessment Reports - need to decide the way forward: adopt a developmental and individualized approach;	Brainstorming will begin within February with Binu, Elli		Binu & Regional HR

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HR Strategic Plan for year 1-2

Operations and compliance

take full responsibility for all 13 offices and bring every handbook and employment contract in line with local law

Recruitment

one hiring policy every Managing Director follows, hiring benchmarks by level and unit, assessments used in every selection

Onboarding, performance and talent

rebuild onboarding from offer letter to six months in; monitor performance properly; measure engagement; turn managers into people managers

Learning and development

a learning plan for every office, built from local needs rather than a central catalogue, and the values actually embedded

Rewards and communication

finish the awards scheme and build real working relationships with the MDs and their people, through visits and regular contact

Budget

1. hiring of one HR Officer in Cyprus
2. travelling expenses to visit the offices

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Three months later

Job descriptions written.

Recruitment advertisements placed.

CVs reviewed, interviews run, final shortlisting done.

Employment offers made.

A couple of offices helped with disciplinary and performance issues.

Performance reviews, chasing for completion, hold difficult discussions.

A complete failure
at being strategic!!!

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MY TODAY PROMISE

THE START

Be honest with you about where HR actually stands right now.
Where you stand.

01	02	03	04
THINK STRATEGICALLY	**PAPER TO REALITY**	**KEEP IT GOING**	**WHAT HR NEEDS TO LEAD**
Look wider	Influence	Data & fuel	Better questions

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THE HONEST PART

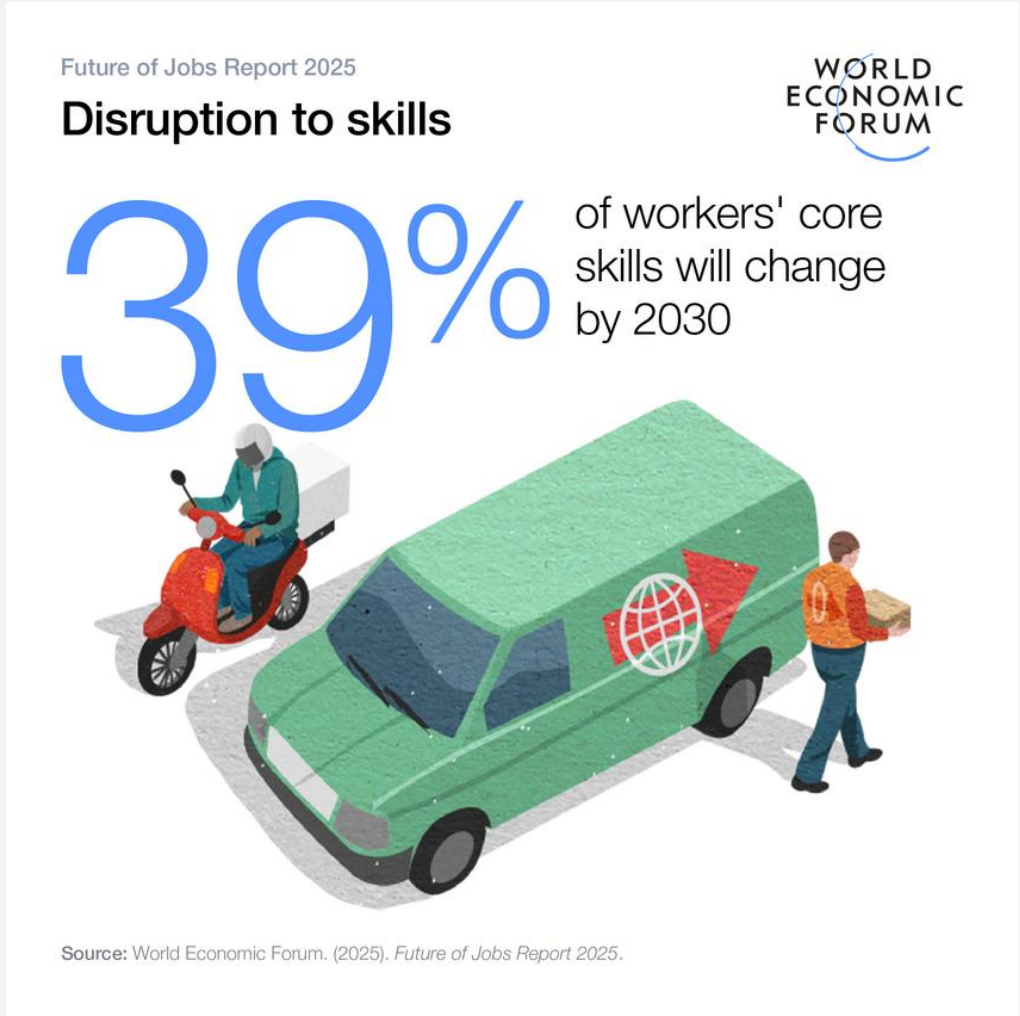
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Where HR actually stands

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How relevant will your role be in the future?



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FHRD Surveyed HR professionals

69%

spend less than 25% of the working week on strategic HR activities

8%

described their role as primarily strategic

76%

believe their HR strategy is failing to address something important

24%

believe their priorities are properly aligned with what the business needs

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What gets in the way

- 31% insufficient leadership support and buy-in
- 16% gaps in HR capability or confidence
- 15% the organisation simply is not ready
- 14% genuinely do not know where to begin

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Not a Maltese problem

In our survey, 65% of senior leaders view HR as a key business enabler, yet 51% cite administrative load as the primary barrier to the function making a more strategic contribution.

Source: Boston Consulting Group, with the World Federation of People Management Associations.
Creating People Advantage 2026 Survey
7.000+ HR and business leaders.
Across 115 markets, in 25 industries.

REFRAMING THE PROBLEM

So the belief that HR is important is already there.
What is missing is the space

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BCG EXHIBIT 8

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EXHIBIT 8

Regional Breakdown of the 10 People Management Topics with the Highest Overall Future Importance Rankings

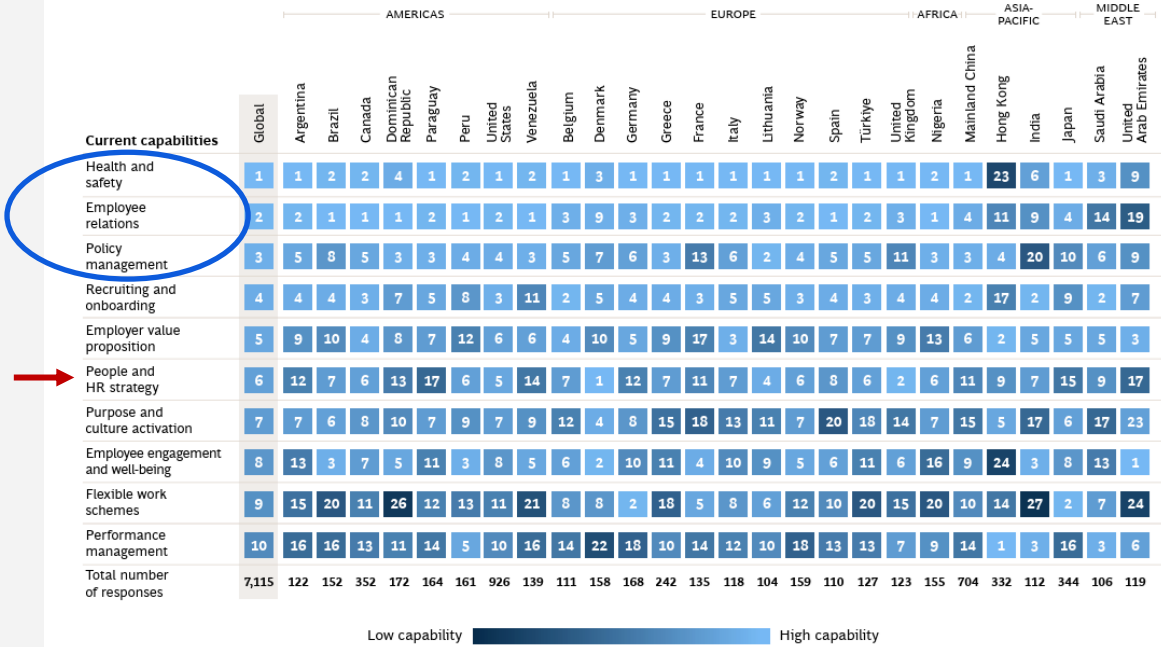
		AMERICAS								EUROPE											AFRICA		ASIA-PACIFIC			MIDDLE EAST	
Future importance	Global	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Dominican Republic	Paraguay	Peru	United States	Venezuela	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	Greece	France	Italy	Lithuania	Norway	Spain	Türkiye	United Kingdom	Nigeria	Mainland China	Hong Kong	India	Japan	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates
People and HR strategy	1	1	1	1	10	13	3	1	10	1	2	1	2	1	3	3	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	1	22
Strategic workforce planning	2	20	8	2	13	19	16	2	16	3	8	3	6	5	12	1	7	15	2	12	5	2	7	2	4	9	20
Leadership development	3	2	16	4	8	3	11	6	5	2	1	7	5	11	6	2	2	3	9	22	15	3	10	9	3	24	16
Employer value proposition	4	12	6	3	9	8	7	4	14	9	9	16	7	22	2	12	12	4	16	10	13	7	8	6	7	8	2
Recruiting and onboarding	5	17	2	5	15	8	9	3	18	5	5	17	1	15	4	5	1	17	22	3	11	10	18	6	11	5	23
Purpose and culture activation	6	16	15	11	5	11	4	9	4	12	7	15	12	16	8	8	8	9	6	12	6	11	2	15	1	14	18
Upskilling and reskilling	7	7	3	9	16	23	18	11	20	3	6	6	3	7	7	16	4	6	6	5	3	9	4	15	8	20	10
Talent management and succession planning	8	18	14	7	21	20	14	7	24	8	11	10	4	19	5	18	13	11	8	8	18	4	11	1	6	6	4
Performance management	9	4	8	12	4	2	4	9	11	14	16	21	13	13	17	7	16	9	20	6	7	5	9	4	12	10	8
Employee engagement and well-being	10	13	5	6	6	6	12	5	9	6	3	9	9	9	1	4	5	2	15	4	19	15	22	5	5	12	14
Total number of responses	7,115	122	152	352	172	164	161	926	139	111	158	168	242	135	118	104	159	110	127	123	155	704	332	112	344	106	119

Low importance — High importance

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EXHIBIT 9

Regional Breakdown of the 10 People Management Topics with the Highest Overall Current Capability Rankings



Source: 2026 BCG/WFPMA proprietary web survey and analysis (n = 7,115).

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THE RELEASE

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What you put down first

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What is one thing you are ready to release if you are going to become more strategic on your role?

One minute to think. Then turn to the person next to you and say :

"I release my fear / shame / disappointment / limiting belief ....."

2 minutes

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1. Think strategically



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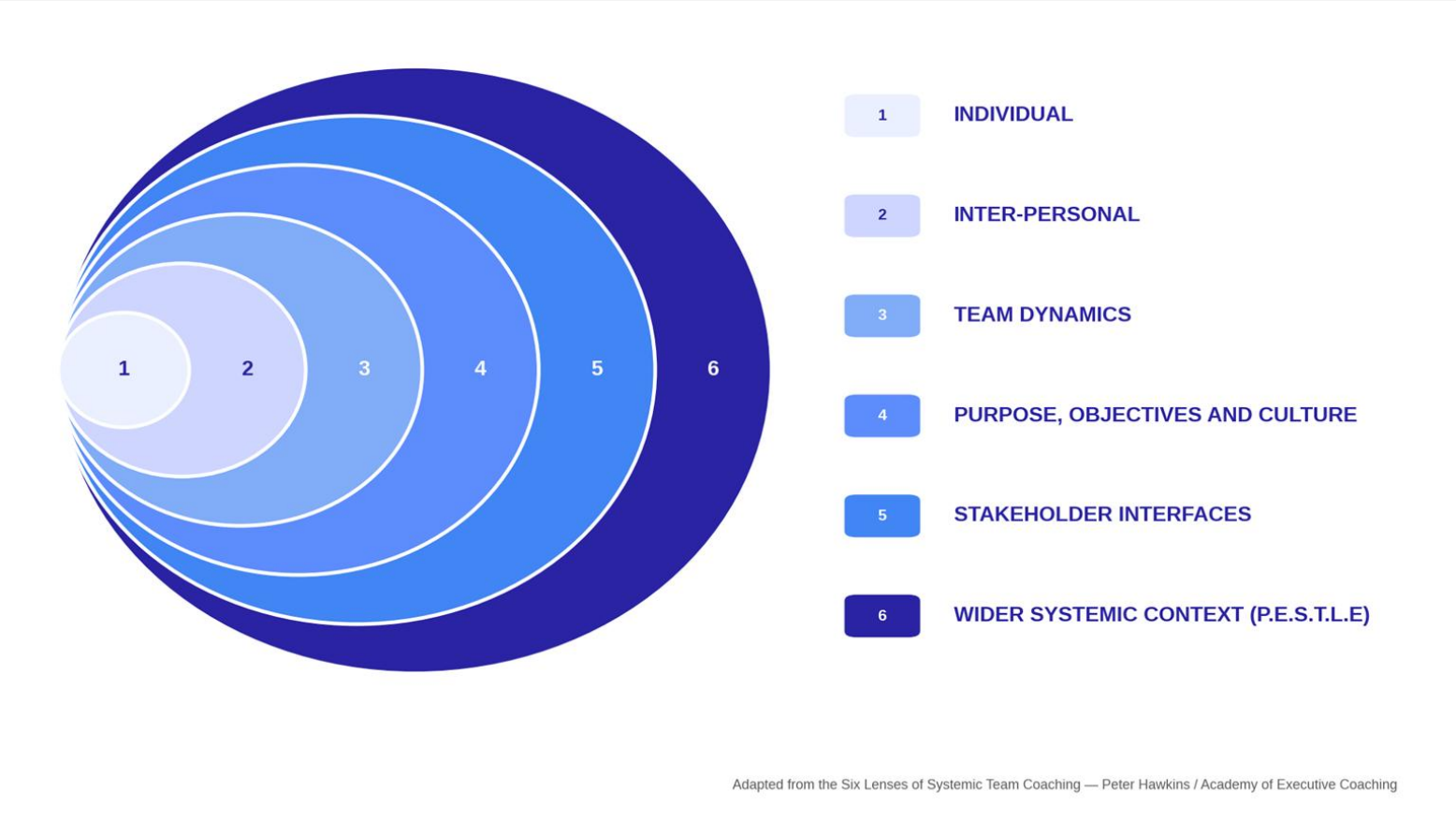
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THE FIRST THING

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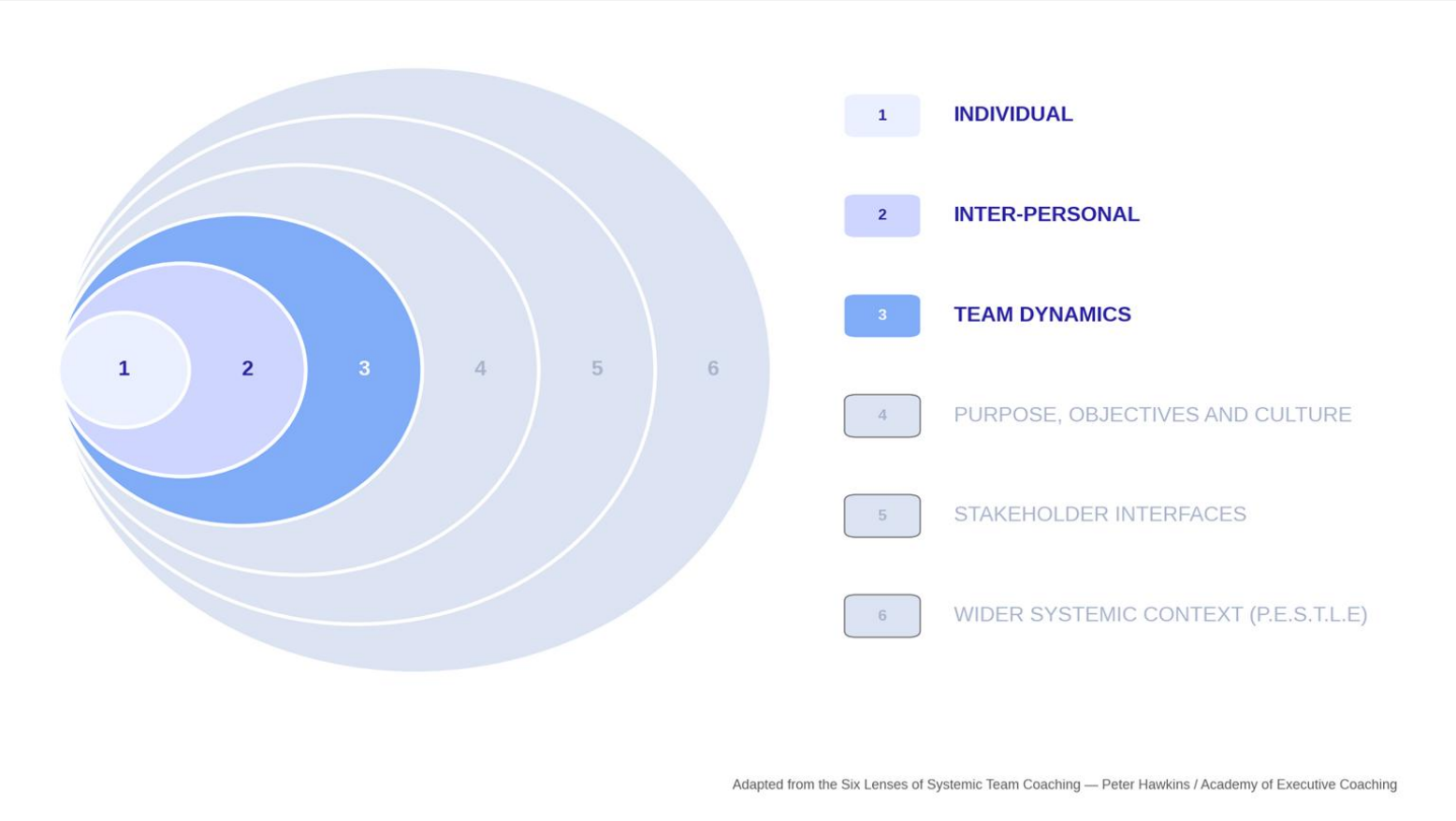
Look wider to think strategically

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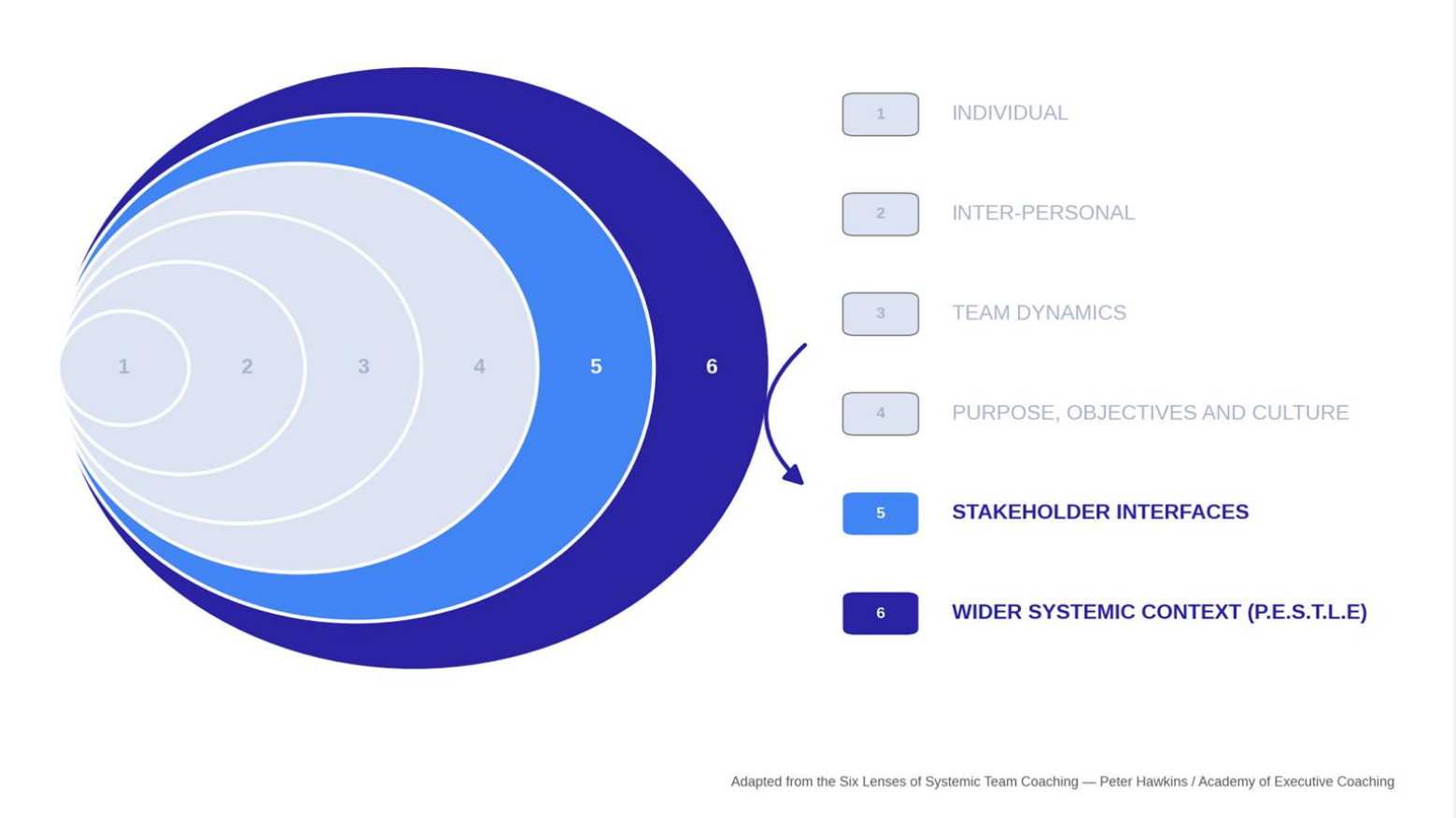
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Lens six

- The market you are in and who you are competing against
- The economic and political context that might affect your business
- Your industry's own changes, regulations and labour market trends
- AI and the other technologies reshaping every sector
- Social expectations around work, inclusion and flexibility
- Major global events - a pandemic, a recession, a war

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What is on CEO’s minds

1. "Are we transforming our business fast enough to keep up with technology, including AI? "
2. "Is our innovation capability good enough for a future this uncertain?"

Source: PwC's 29th Global CEO Survey.
4,454 CEOs across 95 countries and territories.
Fielded last quarter of 2025;
Published January 2026.

Not people-related questions directly.
But you need HR to answer them

What is on CEO’s minds

Future of Jobs Report 2025

Five key labour-market drivers

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM



Source: World Economic Forum. (2025). *Future of Jobs Report 2025*.

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What you can do

to focus your attention more on lens 6

READ · one global survey every few months - BCG, PwC, the World Economic Forum. What your formal association in your own sector publishes. It is free and it is sitting there

KEEP A RHYTHM · not once a year when it is time to put a strategy on paper. Consistently and constantly.

GO WIDER THAN HR · events that are not HR events. Your sector, the politics, ESG, AI - what is on the minds of chief executives generally. And be curious. Actually curious.

TALK ABOUT IT · with your leaders, in their rooms, in their meetings.

Your strategy needs a heartbeat,
not a publication date.

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2. From paper to reality



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What gets in the way

31% insufficient leadership support and buy-in

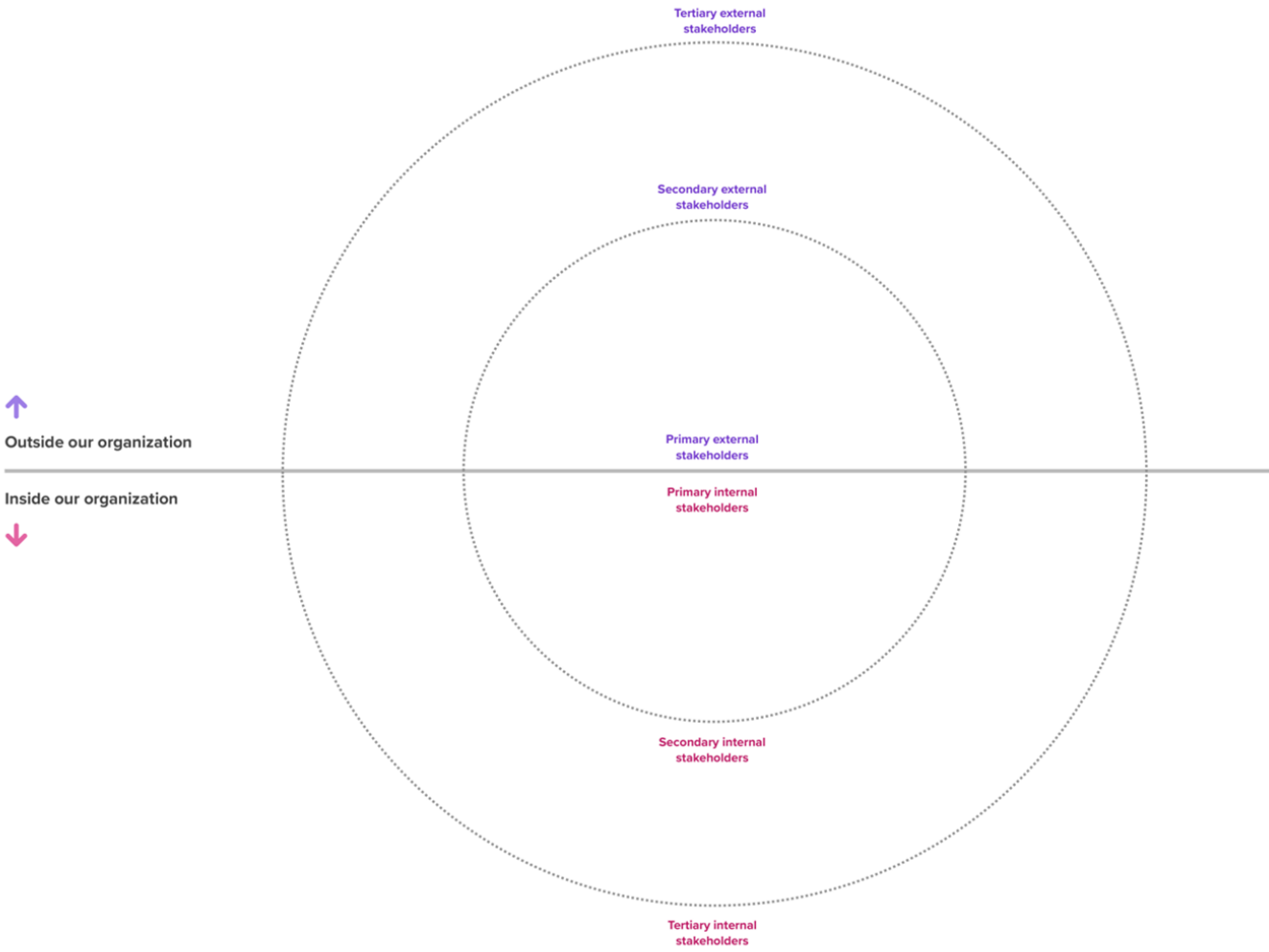
16% gaps in HR capability or confidence

15% the organisation simply is not ready

14% genuinely do not know where to begin

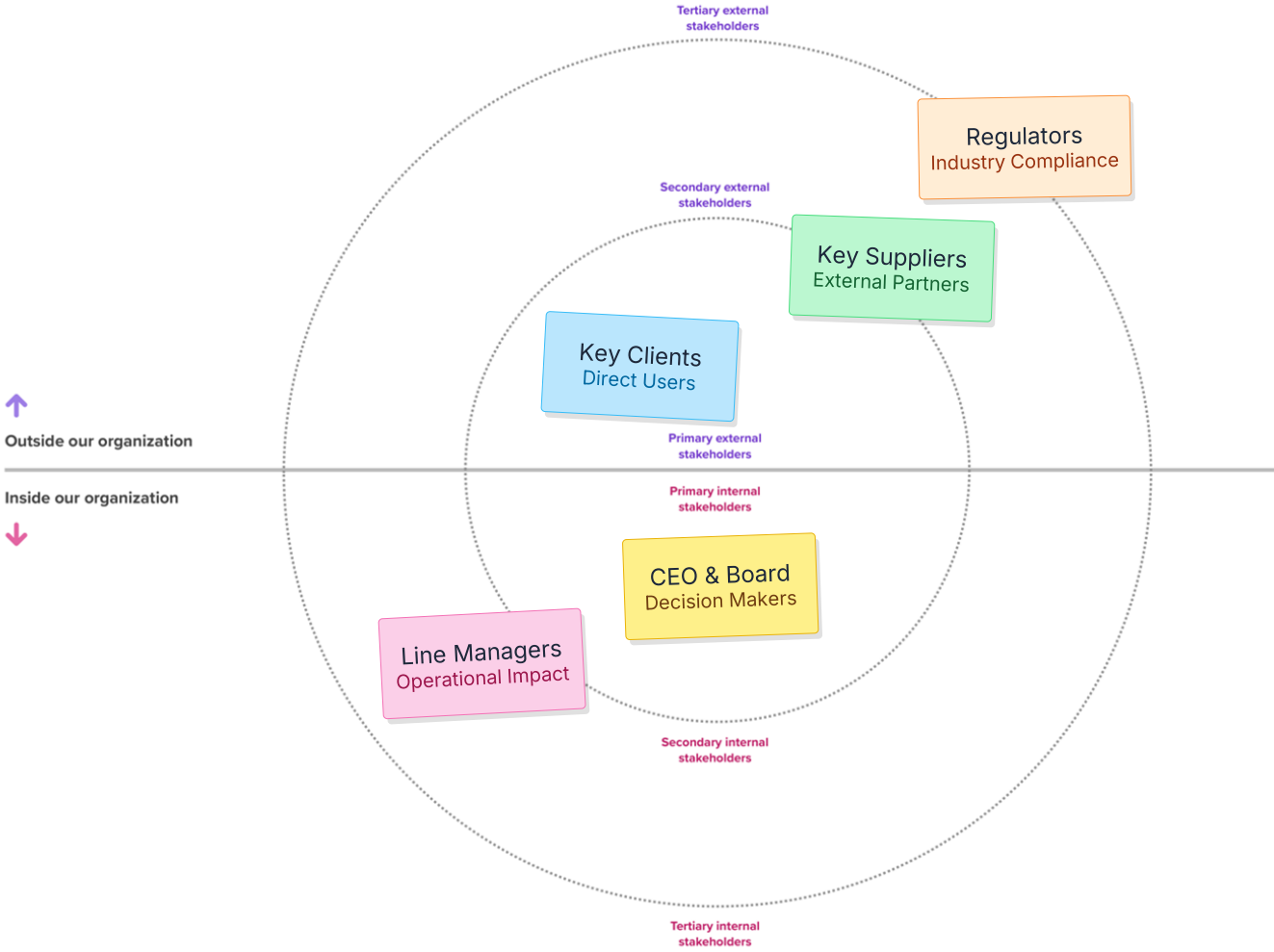
Stakeholders map

Who counts



Stakeholders map

Who counts



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STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS · SARAH'S CASE

STAKEHOLDER	INT / EXT	RELATED TO	TOPICS OF INTEREST	PRESSURES / PAINS	RECENT EVENT	POWER	INTEREST
CFO	Int	Reports to board; works with CEO on budget	Cost control, protecting this year's budget	Under pressure to hold spend flat	Had just rejected Sarah's proposal	High	Low
CEO	Int	Peer of the CFO; briefed by the team's manager	Retaining specialised talent, team stability	Aware the team is struggling, had not pushed	Just told of the latest resignation	High	High
Team manager	Int	Reports to CEO; works daily with the team	Team stability, workload, morale	Losing people hard to replace in a scarce market	Had just lost another member	Med	High
The team	Int	Reports to the team manager	Culture, ways of working, being heard	Whatever drove the exits	Colleagues leaving, morale low	Low	High
External coach	Ext	Approached directly by Sarah	A clear brief; delivering something that works	Needed the CFO on board first	—	Low	High

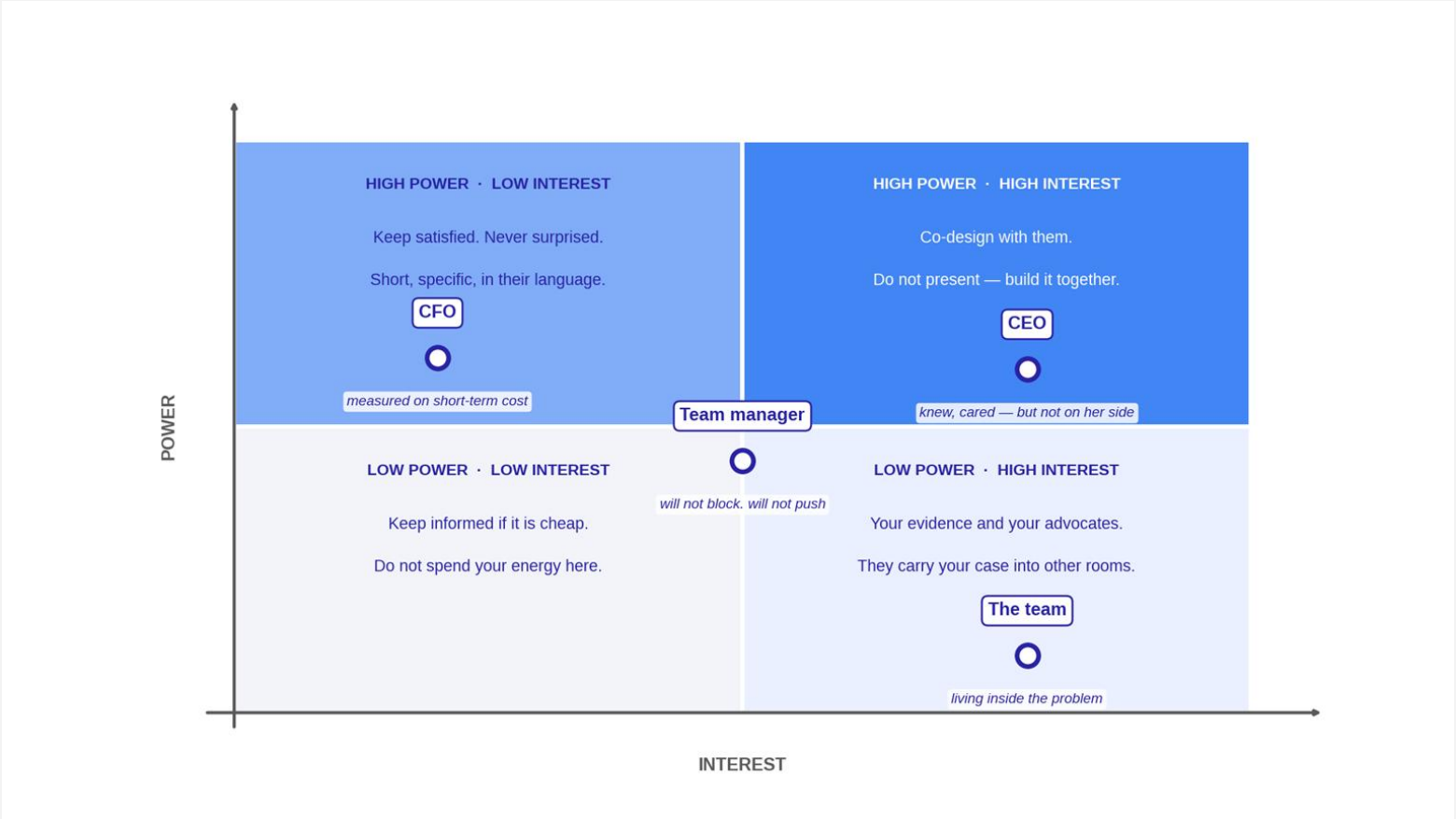
The CEO sits high on power AND interest — the person to engage directly, and first.

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POWER AND INTEREST

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Let’s talk about politics!!

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The purpose is the difference

BAD POLITICS

the purpose is you

- Using what you know to buy loyalty
- Taking credit that is not yours
- Telling different people different versions
- Alliances built to block, not to build

You warn the two managers you like
about the restructure, and nobody else.

GOOD POLITICS

the purpose is the work

- Understanding how decisions really get made
- Building relationships before you need them
- Sequencing so nobody is surprised in public
- The right person hearing it from the right person

You ask Finance and Operations what
would make it work — before the meeting.

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Reframing politics

When you hear the word "politics", what do you actually think?

Write down the words that come to mind.

Where did that belief come from? Is it helping you or limiting you in any way?

A belief you have never examined is still running your behaviour.

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3. Keep it going with evidence & fuel



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Two types of HR professionals with metrics



TYPE 01 · THE INTUITION-LED

No Metrics, Just Stories

They don't like metrics much, relying mostly on intuition, anecdotes, and narratives with no evidence behind them.

→ Consequence: They wonder why finance does not take HR seriously.



TYPE 02 · THE DATA-DROWNED

Drowning in Numbers

They love numbers and metrics, but drown the room in raw data without a narrative attached.

→ Consequence: They produce monthly dashboards that nobody really reads.

Three well-chosen numbers at the right moment

do more for your credibility than a monthly dashboard nobody reads closely.

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Intentionally choose your metrics. Be selective

METRIC	USE THIS TO…
Turnover / attrition rate	Show where the business is losing capability, not just people
Regretted attrition	Separate the leavers you needed from the ones you did not
Retention in critical roles	Put a number on the risk inside your scarcest skills
Time to hire	Show what a slow decision costs in delivery terms
Cost per hire	Compare the cost of replacing against the cost of keeping
Time to productivity	Argue for onboarding investment in revenue terms
Offer acceptance rate	Test whether the market believes your employer story
Internal mobility	Show whether you are building capability or buying it
Absence rate	Early warning on workload and management quality
Engagement / eNPS	Predict turnover before it happens
Span of control	Explain why your managers cannot coach anybody
Manager effectiveness	Locate the teams where leadership is the problem
Exit reasons	Name the pattern behind the departures
Headcount against plan	Connect the people conversation to the budget one

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What else to think about metrics

Beyond Standard HR Metrics

Move beyond traditional metrics such as time-to-hire or engagement scores to quantify how talent decisions directly affect profitability, growth, and innovation.

Predictive Business Insights

Translate workforce analytics into predictive insights that anticipate business needs, identify opportunities, and guide strategic resource allocation.

Focus on Decision-Making

Before you choose anything to measure, ask what you are actually trying to understand or prove. Then ask “what decision might this data help somebody make?”
If you cannot answer that, the number will not help you, however interesting it is.

Open Conversations

Use them to open a conversation, not to close one. Use them to invite the other person into the thinking.
"We introduced this because of X. After six months, in the pilot area, we are seeing Y and Z. We cannot say that is only the initiative, but it suggests we are moving in the right direction. Here is what we propose next."

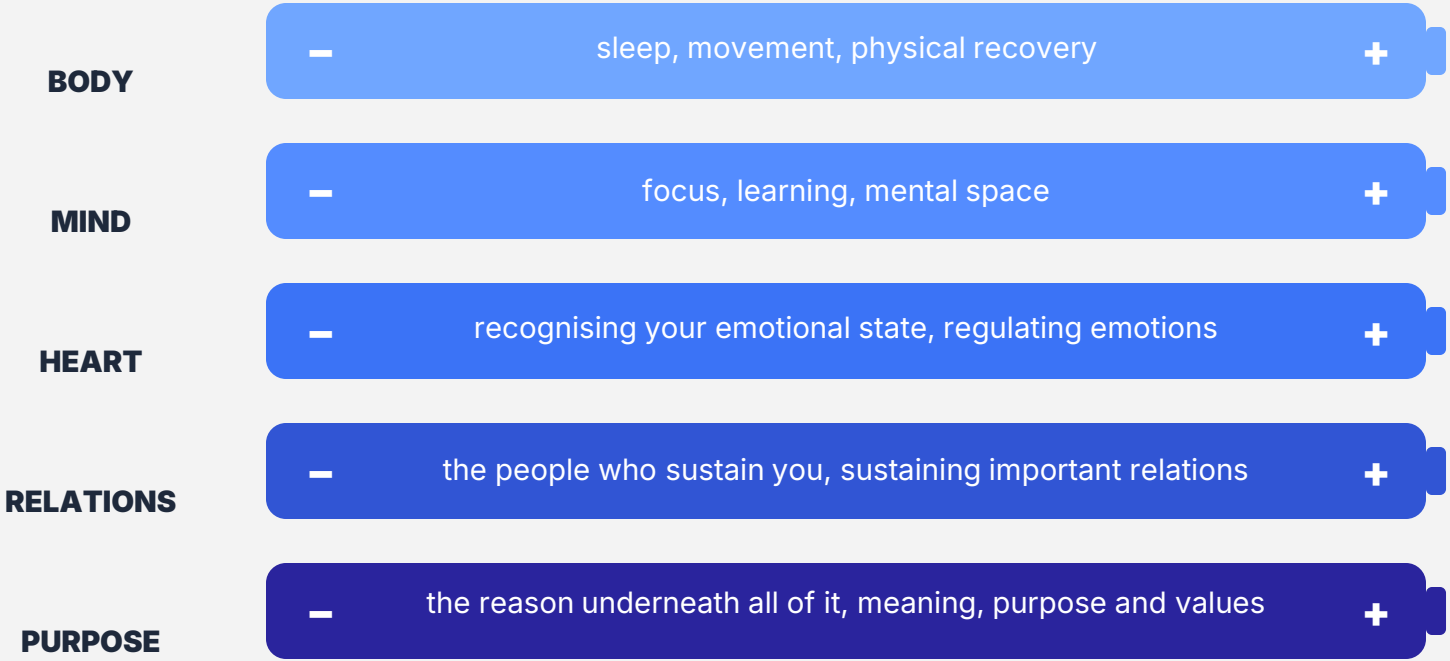
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Your fuel

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When one runs flat, the others quietly compensate — which is why you do not notice.

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Find out where you stand

A free self-assessment - your energy, and everything else we have talked about today. Scan, and it is yours.

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4. What the future demands from HR



Ask better questions.

The person who brings the right question shapes the agenda. The person who brings answers to somebody else's question delivers a service.

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Question one

How do we redesign our jobs and our structure so that we stay competitive in an era where humans and AI work alongside each other?

Few relevant facts / insights:

- Only 16% of organisations have fully redesigned their roles and processes to integrate AI - everybody else is layering it on top of how they already work.
- The organisations getting the strongest financial results from AI are twice as likely to have redesigned the work rather than simply bought the tool.

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Question two

Where does our organisational capability come from in five years?

Few relevant facts / insights:

- Half the CEOs in the world expect fewer junior roles within three years because of AI.
- As AI takes the routine tasks, learning-by-doing weakens - judgement and domain expertise stop being built at scale.
- Your senior people learned their judgement by doing thousands of small routine things, badly at first and then better. If nobody does those things any more, where does the next generation's judgement come from?

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Question three

What measurable return have we actually seen on our AI investment so far?

Few relevant facts / insights:

- Only one in five AI investments delivers any measurable return at all.
- Less than 1% of last year's layoffs were actually the result of AI making people more productive — most were made in anticipation of returns that had not arrived.
- If your organisation is planning headcount around gains nobody has measured — who in that room is going to ask the question?

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A few more questions to ask
your CEO or yourself

- What is the one change you are most worried we cannot deliver?
- Do I actually know what this business is trying to become?
- Are we redesigning how the work is done, or are we buying AI tools and laying them on top of how we already work?
- Are we redesigning how the work is done, or are we buying AI tools and laying them on top of how we already work?
- Which job in this organisation should not exist in its current shape?
- Are we still promoting people for skills the job will not need in four years?
- When you think about the next two years, what keeps you awake?

Humipower

The union of humility and power.

The gap is not capability.

It is clarity through a wider lens. It’s agency and influence. And the courage to be powerful without ever losing your humanity.