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ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

What do you do when the right decision might displease your supervisor or delay outcomes? Ethical leadership is never just about "not breaking the rules"—it is the gene of culture, the core of influence, and the cornerstone of team trust. Ethical leadership is not only the right thing to do; it is key to driving an organization's success. Every choice a leader makes conveys "what matters most"; even when no one is watching, these choices quietly shape the team's code of conduct and determine whether the organization can earn long-term respect.



REFLECTION JOURNAL

The core of ethical leadership is not never making mistakes but promptly realigning when your value compass drifts. Think back to your recent decisions: Did you blur process details to "meet deadlines"? Did you replace "explanations" with "authority" when the team questioned you? Those seemingly harmless compromises are subtly eroding team trust. Try anchoring your thoughts with these questions:

- ☒ When was the last time I compromised on a small value for the sake of speed or convenience?
- ☒ Do I relax my standards when no one is monitoring me?
- ☒ When facing conflicts of interest, do I prioritize the team over personal convenience?
- ☒ When making pressured decisions, do I clearly explain my reasoning to the team, rather than just demanding, "this is how it must be"?
- ☒ When a decision yields unsatisfactory results, do I honestly review any compromises of my values during the process?

DECISION CHECKLIST

Before making a tough call, pause and ask yourself:

- ☒ Is this decision aligned with my values and the organization's stated principles?
- ☒ Would I make the same choice if no one ever found out?
- ☒ Can this decision stand up to public scrutiny?
- ☒ Does it treat everyone affected fairly?
- ☒ Are there any "gray areas" when measured against the company's values?
- ☒ Would I want my team to follow this decision-making logic?
- ☒ Will this choice make the team trust me more, rather than doubt me?

Jojo Wang

Director of Audit,
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CULTURE AUDIT FROM THE MANAGEMENT DRIVES LENS

By Sharmini Karim in conversation with Lotte Harensiak (Sales and Marketing Director, MD Asia)



Many of us have asked: *What really motivates people at work, and how does that shape team culture?* This month, we introduce **Management Drives**, a powerful tool that reveals what motivates individuals and teams, and how these inner drives shape the way we work, lead, and succeed together.

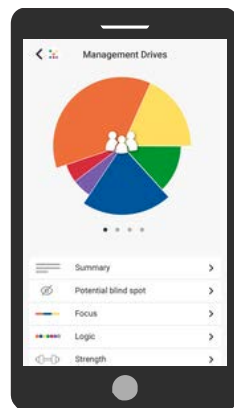
1. What does Management Drives reveal about a team's or organization's underlying culture and behaviors?

The Management Drives survey reveals what truly drives people: not just what they do, but why they do it. Your internal drives are shaped by nature (who we are), nurture (how we were raised), and also by culture (the environment we operate in). That last part—culture—is critical. People don't exist in isolation. They're influenced by the unwritten rules, shared beliefs, and dominant behaviors around them. That's where the Management Drives Culture Scan comes in. It looks not just at the people but at the system they operate in. The Culture Scan shows the perceived culture (how people experience the organization) and compares it with the actual drives of the individuals. Together, the Management Drives survey and the Management Drives Culture Scan provide a rich picture of an organization's underlying culture. You might discover, for example, that teams are full of collaboration-minded individuals (Green), but the culture is focused too much on individual achievement (Orange). These insights help leaders understand the often-invisible gap between the people they have and the culture they've created. And that's the first step toward meaningful change.

2. How do you map the collective Drives results into a meaningful picture of an organization's current cultural state?

When we map Drives, we look at three layers: the individual Drives of each person, the collective Drives of the team or organization, and the perceived culture through the Culture Scan. The individual profiles show what motivates people: what gives them energy and what they tend to avoid. When we combine these into a team profile, we start to see patterns: What energy dominates the group? How are decisions made? Where does the team experience flow or friction? Then comes the third layer: the Culture Scan. This shows us how people experience the culture around them. Sometimes, there's alignment and people feel like they can be themselves.

But often, there's a gap between who people are and how the culture feels. That gap tells us a lot: it can explain resistance, frustration, or why change isn't landing. What makes this process powerful is that by the time we reach the Culture Scan, people already understand themselves and each other better. That creates trust and a shared language. So when we talk about culture, it's not abstract anymore. It's not about blame. It becomes a real, open conversation: What do we want to hold onto? What needs to shift? And how can we use our strengths to get there together?



CONTINUE



3. In what ways does Management Drives help to uncover cultural tensions or misalignments that traditional audits may miss?

Traditional tools often focus on behavior or outcomes. They tell you what is happening, but not why. At Management Drives, we go a level deeper. We work with Drives: the intrinsic motivations and values that sit beneath behavior. We step back and look at the underlying energy in the system. Not just what people do, but what gives them energy, what blocks it—and why. With Management Drives, we don't stop at insights. It is used to help teams grow, reflect, and learn to work with each other's Drives, not against them. Because when people understand themselves and their team on that level, something shifts. They stop trying to fix behavior and start building from strength. That's why Management Drives creates sustainable change.



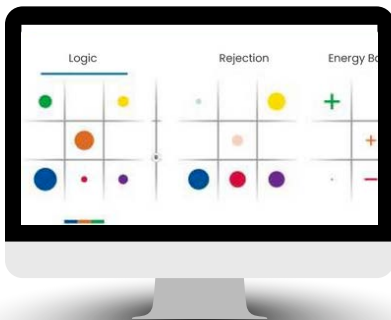
4. Have you seen organizations use Management Drives results to not only identify gaps but to reinforce cultural strengths and drivers? Can you share an example?

So many! Once people understand their own Drives and those of their team, something shifts. They stop focusing on what's missing and start building on each other's strengths. Every team has differences. We don't want to smooth those out. We want to activate them. That's how you create stronger collaboration, better decisions, and more resilient cultures. We've supported organizations through mergers, where two different cultures had to be integrated into one. We've helped companies shift from an overly optimistic mindset to one focused on sustainable growth. One organization reduced sick leave from 8% to 2% after embedding Management Drives. Another redesigned their entire R&D organization structure using Management Drives. Even recruitment firms use Management Drives to assess cultural fit—not just whether someone can do the job, but whether they belong in the team they'll join. In many organizations, Management Drives has become part of the culture itself: a common language that helps people understand, challenge, and support each other more effectively.



5. How does Management Drives support intentional culture redesign or alignment with strategy post-audit?

Once teams understand their Drives, we invite them to come up with their own answers: What do YOU need to grow? What's realistic in your context? That makes change stick because it's owned by the team itself. Further support is given to help the organization strengthen the culture.



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Lotte Harenslak
Sales and Marketing Director,
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DEAR LEADERS:

WHAT WE HOPE YOU'LL BUILD IN TOMORROW'S CULTURE

When I entered the workforce, I quickly learned that “**company culture**” is not just about office perks or team-building events. It is about how people treat each other, how they make decisions, and whether you feel like you belong. Working in a hybrid environment, I noticed how much culture depends on intentionality. It appears in the little things: how meetings are run, how feedback is shared, and who gets included.

For those of us early in our careers, these moments shape whether we feel connected or invisible. Working in Hong Kong without speaking Cantonese has shaped my day-to-day experience. Small gestures such as translating a quick comment or checking in after a meeting hold significant meaning. I am eager to learn about other cultures, and I appreciate when the effort is reciprocated. These gestures may seem minor, but they reinforce that inclusion is a shared responsibility.

When small acts of inclusion become part of every day, it creates a culture where people feel safe to contribute and grow. A strong culture is built on the quiet signals that people are valued not only for what they do but who they are. We notice when leaders make room for a range of voices. Trusting us with new challenges signals your belief in our potential, which becomes our motivation. Thoughtful, consistent feedback shows us that our work is being noticed, and that personal and professional development is part of the culture.



As I continue to find my place in the working world, I think about the kind of culture that not only allows growth but invites it—where continuous learning and curiosity are genuinely valued. We do not want to wait for formal programs to feel included. Often, we admire the work of others and want to learn from their experience. Encouraging open communication breaks down barriers and helps everyone grow together.

We do not expect a perfect environment, but we do hope to be included in the journey of improvement. Invite us in. We are ready to listen, contribute, and help build what comes next.

Third-year student pursuing a Bachelor of Psychology at the University of Hong Kong, with a strong interest in exploring diverse branches of the field.



Rysha Khanna
Intern



RITUALS THAT REINFORCE CULTURE AND BELONGING

What makes you feel you belong at your workplace?

Work culture isn't just about policies; it's woven from shared habits and intentional acts. Workplace rituals, whether big or small, serve as emotional anchors, transforming ordinary moments into meaningful experiences that signal "you belong here." Especially in remote or hybrid settings, these powerful psychological tools are crucial for fostering genuine human connections and building stronger, more resilient teams.

Rituals are not just routines; they are powerful psychological tools that provide a psychological anchor, fostering predictability and reducing anxiety. They activate endorphins and dopamine, boosting mood and sharpening focus. By creating a consistent rhythm, rituals unify teams under a shared identity and purpose, enhancing the perceived meaningfulness of work by up to 16%. This leads to higher engagement and a willingness to go the extra mile.

These intentional acts can manifest in various forms:



A welcoming onboarding ritual for new hires



Weekly gratitude shares



Daily team breaks



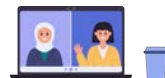
Monthly reflection and goal-setting sessions



End-of-week "high-fives"



Recognition rituals like public shout-outs for achievements



Virtual "random one-on-ones"

Such rituals are vital for building connection and combating isolation, especially in hybrid or remote settings. They cultivate a sense of belonging, making employees feel seen and valued, while increasing psychological safety, which is essential for open communication and trust.

The ROI of rituals is clear: stronger teams, higher engagement, and a workplace where people genuinely want to contribute. To foster a thriving culture, start small and stay consistent. Reflect on your team's practices: What simple, authentic ritual can you initiate, revive, or be more intentional about today? Whether it's a quick check-in or a shared laugh, these small acts are the key to a more connected, resilient, and human workplace.



Leeann L. Dio
Managing Director