

# ALIGNMENT ISN'T ENOUGH

Connection

Values

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Why Human  
Connection  
Drives  
Competitive  
Advantage

**BTFA.**  
Believe-Think-Feel-Act

**MAKE LIFE  
BETTER**

# The Myth of Alignment

Most organisations *think* they are aligned. They can point to a strategic plan, a list of shared values, and a set of KPIs.

But here's the truth:

Alignment on paper is not alignment in brains. In recent conversations with BTFA students, we explored why this matters more than ever. It became clear that most people *assume* alignment because they believe in broadly similar principles: honesty, respect, fairness. But scratch beneath the surface, and you find something more troubling:

**Some leaders are aligned to values.**  
**Others are aligned to numbers.**



**And the actions taken to hit the numbers often *contradict* the values.**

That's not just misalignment. That's invisible, systemic dissonance.

When people feel it but can't name it, they **disengage**. They **distrust**. They **detach**.

Worse still, they might say the right things in meetings but act on different incentives in private.



You end up with organisational theatre, not culture. It's no wonder Gallup found global disengagement as high as 96% in some countries.

Alignment is not about agreement. It's about coherence. And coherence requires human connection, trust, and emotional clarity – all proxies for brain function!

When our brains sense those things, we feel safe. When they're absent, we protect ourselves instead. When we're in defence mode, we don't collaborate to solve problems, *we cause them*.

In the following pages, we'll explore: Why **culture is a symptom, not a cause** ... How the quality of relationships drives engagement and performance. Why even small choices in communication, tech, and leadership style either connect or disconnect brains, and ultimately, we'll show why the fastest path to competitive advantage isn't strategy models, finance decks or AI tools, it's creating workplaces that are more human.

Let's begin.

# Alignment in Disguise

Alignment is rarely broken by disagreement over goals. More often, it's broken by **invisible divergence** in values, motives, or methods.

Ask any leadership team: "Are we aligned?" You'll almost always hear yes!



Ask: "Aligned to what?"  
And you might see eyes shift sideways.

Some are aligned to growth. Some to safety.  
Some to keeping their job. Some to fairness,  
inclusion, speed, or shareholder return.

These can all be valid, but not when they  
*contradict each other* without being  
acknowledged.

Imagine this: One executive champions "respect and trust". Another cuts headcount without explanation to protect quarterly numbers. A third spins the narrative to keep morale up.

They will each justify their actions as aligned to the strategic goals, but in practice, its cognitive dissonance, and everyone below them feels it.

When values and behaviours don't match, the result is relational friction. Rarely loud. Often Insidious. Always Exhausting.

And that quiet strain feeds disengagement.  
Not because people don't care, but because their brains are **trying to protect them from contradiction**.

We rationalise. We detach. We quietly opt out.

If leaders don't see this happening, it's not because it's not happening. It's because the disengaged don't usually raise their hand.

They just stop showing up fully.

- Real alignment isn't about having the same mission statement.

It's about creating enough psychological coherence between values, behaviours, and systems that the brain feels safe to stay engaged.

It all starts with **relationships** ...

*(Human Relations, with self, others and things = brain function).*



# Culture is a Symptom, *Not* a Lever

Culture is not something you manage. It's something that *emerges*. It emerges from how people relate, to self, to one another, to their leaders, to the systems they operate in, and to the data they are judged by.

Culture is the emotional residue of these relationships. And the quality of those relationships is what matters most. When relationships are strong, people feel safe, valued, trusted, and part of something bigger than themselves. **They feel seen.**



When relationships are weak, people feel exposed, judged, disconnected, and unappreciated. **They shut down.**

In neuroscience terms, we can say:

**Good relational quality = low threat, high connection.**  
**Poor relational quality = high threat, low connection.**

This means that culture is not a lever to pull. It's a mirror. It reflects the quality of relational interactions taking place across the organisation.



And it's why improving culture starts with improving connection. Not writing new values. Not launching *yet another* campaign. Real engagement is not driven by brand or policy. It's driven by how safe and significant someone feels in their daily interactions.

If your culture feels brittle or toxic, ask yourself:

- Are people being heard?
- Do they feel trusted?
- Are performance systems emotionally intelligent?
- Do meetings energise or drain?
- Do my own beliefs, thoughts, feelings and actions contribute or contaminate **'Good relational quality'**?

Your answers to those questions will tell you more about your culture than any engagement survey.

The summary is simple - **To change the culture, change the relationships behind it.**

# Tech as a Double-Edged Sword

Technology helps us move faster, access more, and scale our operations with less effort.

But there is a cost.

The human brain is a social organ. It evolved to thrive on subtle cues: eye contact, tone of voice, physical presence, shared emotion. All of these are essential for trust-building, empathy, and psychological safety.

When communication is mediated through technology, we strip out most of the cues that allow brains to assess safety and intent.



A well-intentioned message over email can easily be read as cold, critical, or dismissive. A meeting replaced with a dashboard can feel like surveillance. Slack messages with no context can feel abrupt or passive-aggressive.

## The result?

Our brains fill in the blanks. And when under pressure, they fill them with *threat assumptions*.

- “Why did they copy my boss?”
- “Why didn’t they add a smiley face like they usually do?”
- “Why am I only hearing about this through a group announcement?”

## These may seem minor. But they accumulate.

And when the nervous system is exposed to persistent uncertainty, connection is replaced by defence.

This is why hybrid and remote workplaces need more *intentional* human design, not less. If leaders fail to understand the emotional impact of tech-mediated communication, they will confuse *efficiency* with *effectiveness*, and miss the real cost in engagement, trust, and team coherence.



## Tools are neutral.

**But how we use them either supports human connection or erodes it.**

The strategic imperative for modern leaders isn’t just adopting new tech.

It’s learning to use it in ways that keep brains feeling safe, connected, and aligned.

Because disconnection isn’t just a culture risk. It’s a performance risk too.

# The Data We Can't Ignore

We don't need to guess what disconnection costs.

## The data is in.

According to Gallup, global employee disengagement averages 79 percent. In some countries, it exceeds 90 percent. In others, it reaches 96 percent.

At the same time, Gallup's research shows that organisations with the highest employee engagement levels outperform the lowest quartile by:

- **23 percent in profitability**
- **18 percent in productivity**
- **10 percent in customer loyalty**
- **66 percent in wellbeing metrics**

This is not soft data. This is board-level impact.

And yet, many organisations still treat engagement as an HR project, not a strategic advantage.

What these numbers reveal is simple:

**Disconnection kills performance.**  
**Connection drives it.**

Engagement is not about perks, slogans, or pulse surveys.

It's about whether people feel psychologically and emotionally safe enough to fully participate.



It's about whether the brain believes:

“I'm part of something that matters.”

“My voice is heard.”

“I'm treated with fairness and respect.”

“I'm not being measured in ways that feel dehumanising.”

If the brain doesn't believe those things, it starts to conserve energy, limit contribution, and **focus on survival**. In short, **it disengages**.

But if those signals are present, something powerful happens:

People lean in. They solve problems. They collaborate. They take ownership.

That's *the switch*.

And it's one every leader has the power to flip, once they understand what the brain needs to stay engaged.



# "More-Human Workplaces" Aren't Soft. They're Smart!



There's a common misconception that bringing emotion, empathy, and humanity into the workplace is "soft."

But neuroscience tells us the opposite.

Creating an environment where brains feel safe, connected, and valued isn't sentimentality.

***It's strategy.***

Because when brains feel safe, they unlock higher-order functions:

- Better problem solving
- Stronger collaboration
- Deeper trust
- Sharper decision-making (aligned to optimal brain performance)

These aren't luxuries. They are the building blocks of sustainable performance. And they don't come from posters, perks, or pressure. They come from the **everyday relational signals** leaders send.

**So, the real question is:**

What kind of workplace are you creating through your behaviour, your systems, and your unspoken norms?

Are you designing for:

- Connection or caution?
- Clarity or confusion?
- Coherence or contradiction?



Every interaction is a vote. Every meeting, every metric, every conversation, reinforces or erodes the culture you say you want.

And in a world of increasing automation, AI, and uncertainty, the one advantage your competitors can't copy is the **quality of human connection inside your organisation**.

That's what BTFA helps leaders unlock.

Because understanding how the brain functions under pressure, uncertainty, and social threat isn't theoretical. It's practical. It's measurable. It's transformational.

So, if your culture feels misaligned, your people seem disengaged, or your strategies aren't landing the way you hoped ... It may be time to stop tweaking the system and start rewiring the relationships.

**More human workplaces aren't soft. They're smart.**

And they're the future.

# About BTFA

BTFA stands for **Believe – Think – Feel – Act**.

It is a neuroscience-based framework that helps leaders decode human behaviour in themselves and others, so they can lead more effectively in a complex, fast-changing world.



BTFA isn't a theory. It's a practical method that:

- Maps how beliefs drive thinking, how thinking generates emotion, and how emotion leads to action
- Builds self-awareness and metacognition in leadership teams
- Uncovers misalignment that's often hidden beneath the surface
- Improves decision-making by helping teams see and resolve invisible friction
- Translates neuroscience into business results – without jargon

Leaders who go through BTFA report improved communication, greater trust, clearer delegation, stronger resilience under pressure, and a newfound ability to manage culture as a living system rather than a static goal.

We've helped organisations across sectors, from aerospace and automotive to tech and education, bridge the gap between ambition and reality by first bridging the gap between intention and impact.



**If you're ready to:**

- Improve your culture without another rebranding exercise
- Unlock performance by building trust and alignment
- Future-proof your leadership style using brain science and human connection

**Then BTFA is your next move.**

# Let's Talk



If this e-book sparked something in you, if you recognised a pattern, a problem, or a possibility ... Then the next step is simple.

Don't file this away as "interesting." Act on it. Reach out. Let's explore how BTFA could help you and your team:

- Rewire unproductive patterns
- Strengthen engagement from the inside out
- Make your culture coherent, not performative
- Align values, behaviours, and business outcomes in a way the brain understands

Whether you're in HR, operations, leadership or transformation, the fastest way to unlock profit, performance, and potential is through the brain's oldest system:

***human connection.***

**Book a discovery call.**

**Bring BTFA to your team.**

**Let's create a culture that works, because the brains inside it do.**

 Message me on LinkedIn or visit [www.duxinaroe.com](http://www.duxinaroe.com) to get started.

#BTFA #Leadership #OrganisationalCulture #Neuroscience #Engagement  
#ChangeLeadership #HumanConnection #FutureOfWork