

IRBA ETHICS & ORGANISATIONAL
CULTURE WEBINAR

DATE: 29 AUGUST 2025

PRESENTER: DR NGAO MOTSEI

Ethics & Organisational Culture:
Why Psychological Safety and Leader
Behaviour Matter



Agenda

- ❖ Two key drivers of organisational culture
- ❖ Consolidate the learning for
 - ❖ Self assessment
 - ❖ Application
- ❖ Summary & closeout

A hand in a grey sleeve points to a specific location on a complex, multi-colored transit map. The map features various colored lines (blue, orange, red, green, purple) representing different transit routes. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hand and the map.

Why organisational culture matters

- ❖ Culture='the way we do things around here'- shared values, norms and behaviours
- ❖ Shapes decisions, speed, performance, especially under pressure
- ❖ Strong culture improves engagement, retention and customer trust
- ❖ If strategy is the map, culture is the terrain you walk on

Drivers of organisational culture: Key focus for today



Psychological Safety

Leader Behaviour
Team Relationships
Organisational Context



Leader Behaviour

Leadership Shadow

Psychological Safety, what it is, and isn't



A shared belief that it's safe to speak up with ideas, questions, concerns and mistakes



Enables candour, learning and intelligent risk-taking



Not about being 'nice' and lowering standards



It's about high standards + high respect; about caring personally and challenging directly

the fearless organization

Creating **Psychological Safety** in the
Workplace for Learning,
Innovation, and Growth

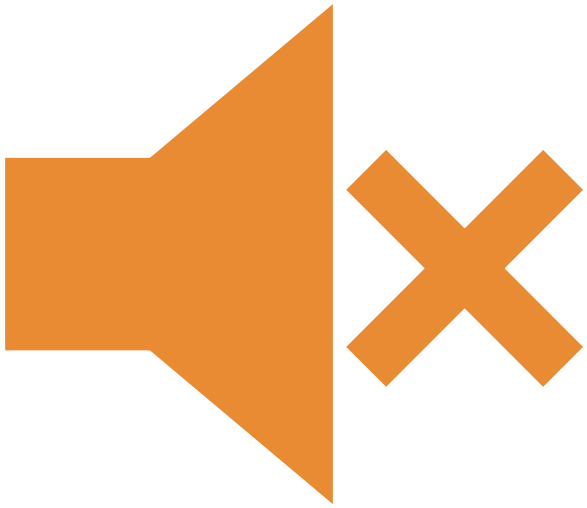
Amy C. Edmondson
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

WILEY

Amy C. Edmondson

- ❖ Amy first identified the concept of psychological safety in work teams in 1999
- ❖ Over 20 years of research on high performing teams
- ❖ Organisations with higher psychological safety perform better compared to those with lower psychological safety
- ❖ To be successful in a team, and as team, psychological safety is an enabler

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Why do people choose
to stay silent?

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Why Psychological Safety Matters



FASTER LEARNING
LOOPS AND PROBLEM
SOLVING



MORE INNOVATION AND
INCLUSIVE DECISION
MAKING



HIGHER ERROR
DETECTION AND FEWER
COSTLY SURPRISES



BETTER ENGAGEMENT,
WELLBEING AND
RETENTION

Leader Behaviour

LEADERSHIP SHADOW

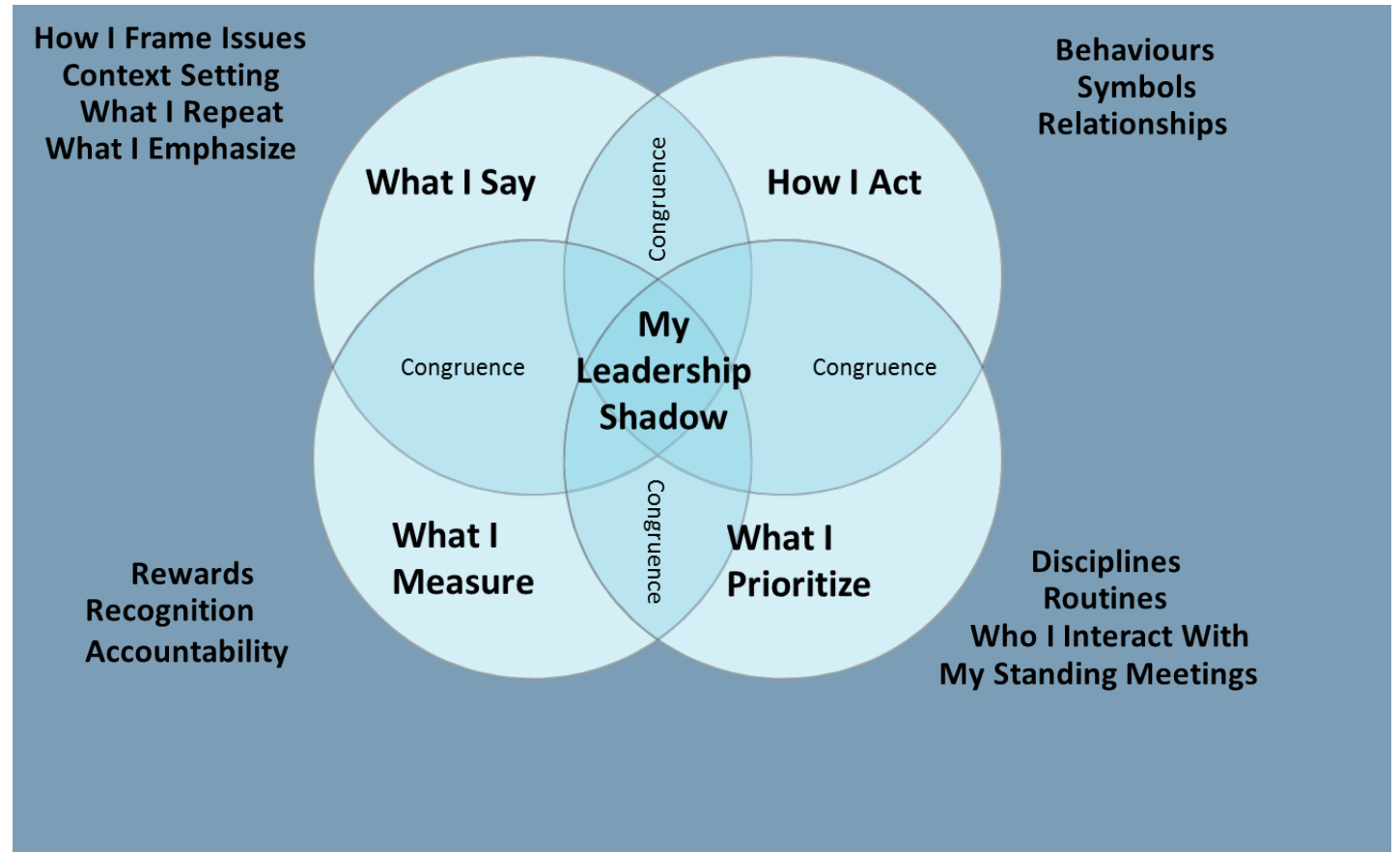
**Organizations are shadows of their
leaders that's the good news
and the bad news**



Leadership
Shadow

Leadership Shadow

- ❖ Basic elements of the Leadership Shadow
 - ❖ What a leader says
 - ❖ How a leader acts
 - ❖ What a leader prioritizes
 - ❖ What a leader measures
- ❖ To be effective and viewed as an authentic, purposeful leader, all elements must be congruent

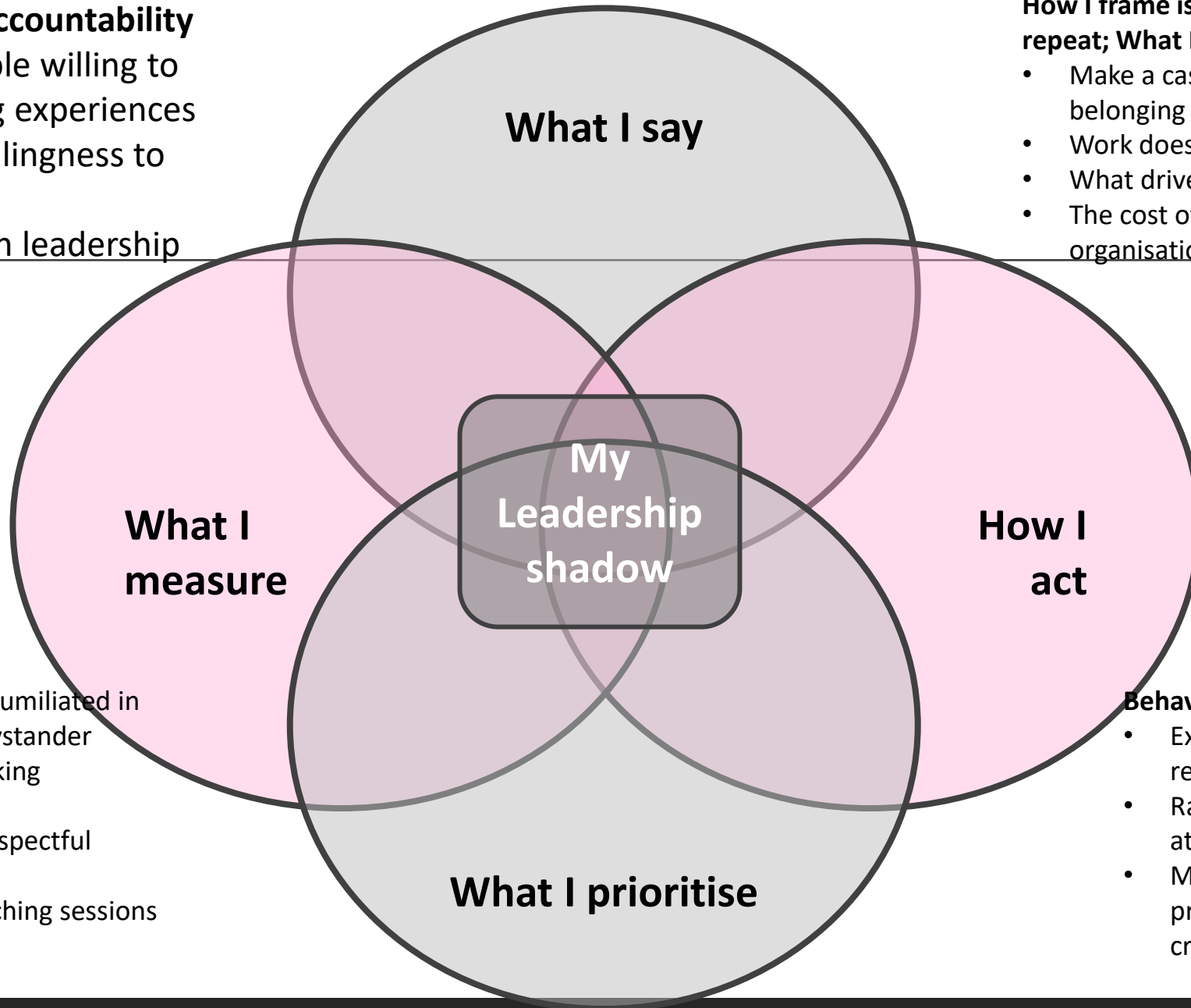


Reward, recognition, accountability

- The number of people willing to speak about bullying experiences
- Abrasive leaders' willingness to change
- Feedback on my own leadership shadow

How I frame issues; Context setting; What I repeat; What I emphasise

- Make a case for respect, dignity, and belonging at work
- Work does not have to be painful
- What drives bullying behaviour
- The cost of bullying on individuals and organisations



What I say

What I measure

My Leadership shadow

How I act

What I prioritise

Disciplines, routines, who I interact with, my standing meetings

- Not allowing anyone to be humiliated in my presence/ not being a bystander
- Awareness raising and speaking engagements
- Leaders seeking to create respectful positive cultures
- Behaviour change from coaching sessions with *abrasive leaders*

Behaviours, symbols, relationships

- Exhibit behaviour that is respectful and lead with care
- Raise awareness about bullying at any opportunity I get
- Mobilise researchers and practitioners with shared goals to create critical mass and voice

Leadership's unique role in culture



Leaders set

Signals

- What they pay attention to, reward and tolerate

Systems

- Structures, incentives, processes, and hiring / promotions

Stories

- Narratives about successes, failures, and “the way we do things”



Role-modelling is non-negotiable because people copy what leaders do, not say



Call to Action

Identify and write down actions you as a leader will take using the Leadership Shadow Model to create congruence between what you say, how to act, what you prioritise, and what you measure.

Risks & pitfalls to avoid

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- ❖ Performative listening – asking but not acting
- ❖ Punishing the first mistake after promising candour
- ❖ Skipping role modeling at the top

LEADER BEHAVIOUR

Every leader casts a shadow. Be aware that people will do what you do, not what you say. Your shadow cascades throughout the organisation you lead, resulting in “the way we do things around here”.