

The Deep Dive | June 2026

By Deepsky Leaders

Clarity under pressure. Performance that lasts.



You Can't Mandate Energy

A CEO. A private equity-backed business. Ambitious targets, a tight value-creation window, a board watching closely.

On paper, they had done everything right. The strategy was set. The structure was in place. The plan had been communicated - more than once.

And yet the energy across the executive team wasn't matching the CEO's own. They were busy. They were capable. But the intensity, the ownership, the drive being looked for wasn't showing up as expected.

The CEO came to coaching with a clear question: how do I get more out of my team?

The Question Underneath the Question

This came from a 1:1 coaching engagement we're running with a CEO this year - focused on raising the standard of behaviour across their leadership team.

Over the first few sessions, the question changed. Not "how do I get more out of them" but "what am I transmitting to them?"

Energy is contagious. So is depletion. A leader running on empty, however capable, quietly sets a ceiling on what the people around them can access. This is the human foundations point: a leader's own state, presence and consistency are what make stronger performance possible in others. You cannot build something across a team that isn't first established in yourself.



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Three Ways to Build Energy in a Team

Energy isn't generated by pressure. It is created by the conditions a leader sets.

Regulate your own state first. The team calibrates to the person at the top. A short reset before a high-stakes interaction - even sixty seconds of deliberate breathing - changes the energy you carry into the room before a word is spoken.

Protect what depletes it. Endless meetings, unclear priorities and unresolved tension drain a team quietly. Removing friction is often more powerful than adding motivation.

Make progress visible. Energy follows momentum. Naming what is moving forward - not just what is outstanding - gives people something to build on rather than only firefight.

Three Ways to Raise the Standard

Raising the standard isn't a one-off push. As human performance coach Chris Whipp, who has spent more than thirty years developing high-performing leaders, puts it, it means everything you do gets reviewed, lessons get learnt, and when it really matters, you're prepared, rehearsed and ready. That is built deliberately through the behaviours a leader defines, lives and reinforces.

Make the standard explicit. Raising standards starts the moment expectations stop being assumed and start being named. Decide which specific behaviours you want to see more of, and what they look like day to day, so the whole team is working to the same definition rather than their own.

Try this: name the two or three behaviours that matter most for your team's success and say them out loud in your next meeting - don't leave people to guess.

Live it yourself. If leaders don't model the standard, it dies. People copy behaviour consciously and unconsciously, and as a leader you are always being watched. The fastest way to raise the standard is to embody the behaviour you're asking for, consistently and under pressure.

Try this: pick the one observable behaviour you most want multiplied and hold yourself accountable to it for the next month - especially on the days it's hardest.

Recognise and correct in the moment. Standards strengthen when the right behaviours are reinforced and misalignment is addressed quickly rather than left to drift. This is the balance strong cultures get right: psychological safety and high standards together.

Try this: when you see the standard being met, name it there and then and, when it's missed, address it constructively in the moment rather than saving it for a review.

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The Common Thread

Across both lists, the same pattern holds. Energy and performance aren't things a leader extracts from a team. They're conditions a leader creates - through their own state, the standards they make explicit, the behaviour they model, and what they choose to reinforce.

That is why the most practical place to start is rarely the team. It's the leader. Before the next meeting, the next decision, the next moment that matters, the question worth asking is a simple one:

What am I about to demonstrate and is it what I want multiplied?

At Deepsky, we work with leaders to build the inner foundations that make performance sustainable - for them, and for the teams they lead. If this resonates, the conversation is worth having.

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