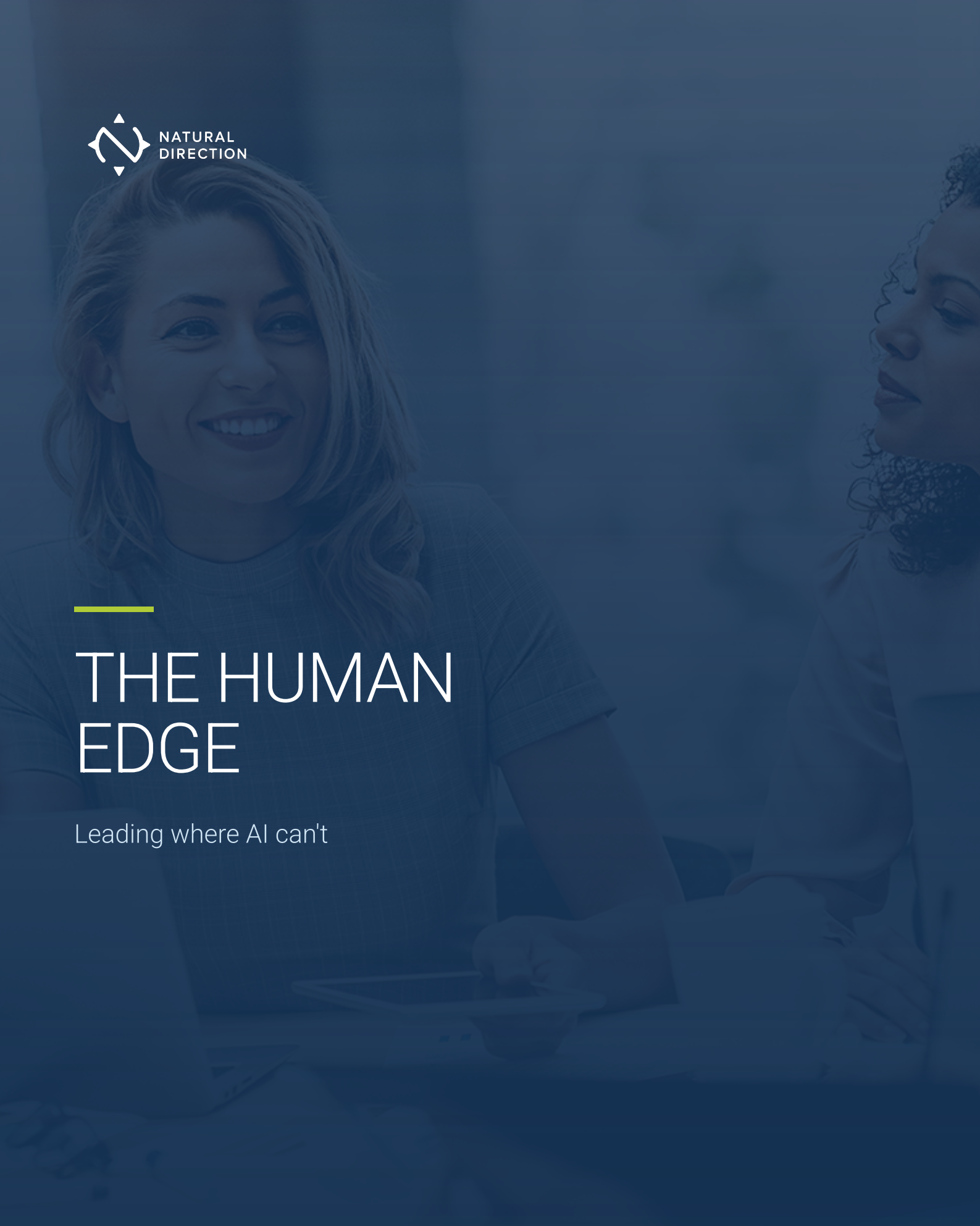
NATURAL DIRECTION



THE HUMAN EDGE

Leading where AI can't

SESSION SUMMARY

CFO Vision

13 October 2026

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WHAT LEADERSHIP IS FOR NOW

AI is the biggest shift reshaping leadership right now, and the pace of change around it is just as significant.

The move from industrial to digital took around 200 years. Digital to AI took about 70. AI to autonomous intelligence has taken roughly three. Many of us will see a century's worth of change in the next ten years.

What AI can do matters less than what leadership is for when intelligence is available on demand.

Leadership is for the things machines can't do: judging well, building trust, and helping people find meaning in work that's changing under their feet.

AI IS ACCELERATING

Analyse · Summarise · Predict · Draft · Research · Process

THE HUMAN PREMIUM

Judge · Connect · Challenge · Care · Create meaning · Build trust



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ALWAYS CONNECTED, RARELY CONNECTING

We have more tools, more data and more capability than ever. Yet people feel further from their leaders, from each other and from the point of their work. Uninterrupted thinking time has become rare.

63%

of UK workers show burnout symptoms, up from 51% two years earlier.

Mental Health First Aid England, 2024

91%

experienced high or extreme stress in the past year.

The Burnout Report, 2025

33%

control their own pace, while 60% face tight deadlines and 40% work at very high speed.

European Working Conditions Survey, cited in HRME, 2024

41%

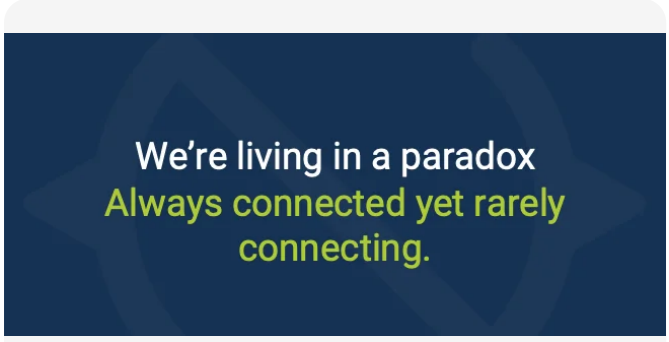
feel stressed by notification overload and always-on culture. 30% report digital overwhelm.

ITPro / Digital Transformation Study, 2024

£21.6bn

the cost of work stress, depression and anxiety, which affected 776,000 workers in 2023/24.

UK Health & Safety Executive, 2024



FIVE GENERATIONS, ONE TEAM

For the first time, five generations work side by side. They differ in what a career means to them, how they relate to each other and what they expect from a leader. Almost three quarters of the youngest workers say they'd rather freelance than become middle managers.

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FROM MAP TO COMPASS

Faced with a deliberately wrong map, people still try to make sense of it, looking for familiar landmarks and putting things back where they "should" be. That's leadership right now. The world has been rearranged and our instinct is to fix it, rather than learn to find our way again.

We used to lead with maps: stable routes, predictable terrain. The map has changed, so the compass matters more. Human-centric leadership is how we show up when the map runs out. It's less about control and more about orientation. Less about knowing the route, more about sensing the direction.

OLD MAP	NEW COMPASS
Leading by expertise	**Leading by curiosity**
Efficiency and control	**Empathy and adaptability**
Certainty	**Sensemaking**
Power holder	**Power sharer**
Tactician	**Visionary**
Constant	**Adapting**
Perfectionist	**Accelerator**
Teller	**Listener**



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THE PACE OF YOUR HUMANITY

Deeply human leadership shows up in listening with empathy, mentoring, recognising others and making ethical calls. These behaviours fall into four qualities. Two sit in the head, two in the heart.



HEAD

P Purpose

A clear, shared sense of why the organisation exists and why its work matters, beyond profit or efficiency.

If 40% of today's work is automated in five years, what will still give your team a sense of purpose?

A Adaptability

The capacity to learn, flex and respond quickly without losing focus or integrity. Moving from having the answers to framing better questions.

What would being a "learn-it-all", not a "know-it-all", look like here? (Satya Nadella)

HEART

C Connection

The quality of trust, empathy and collaboration at every level. Noticing how much of your day is transactional and how much is meaningful.

What one human moment, if you created it, would shift the quality of connection in your team?

E Equity

Making sure everyone has a fair chance to contribute and be heard, so difference becomes a strength. Inclusion as a daily habit, not a policy.

On a recent project, whose perspective shaped things most? Whose was missing?

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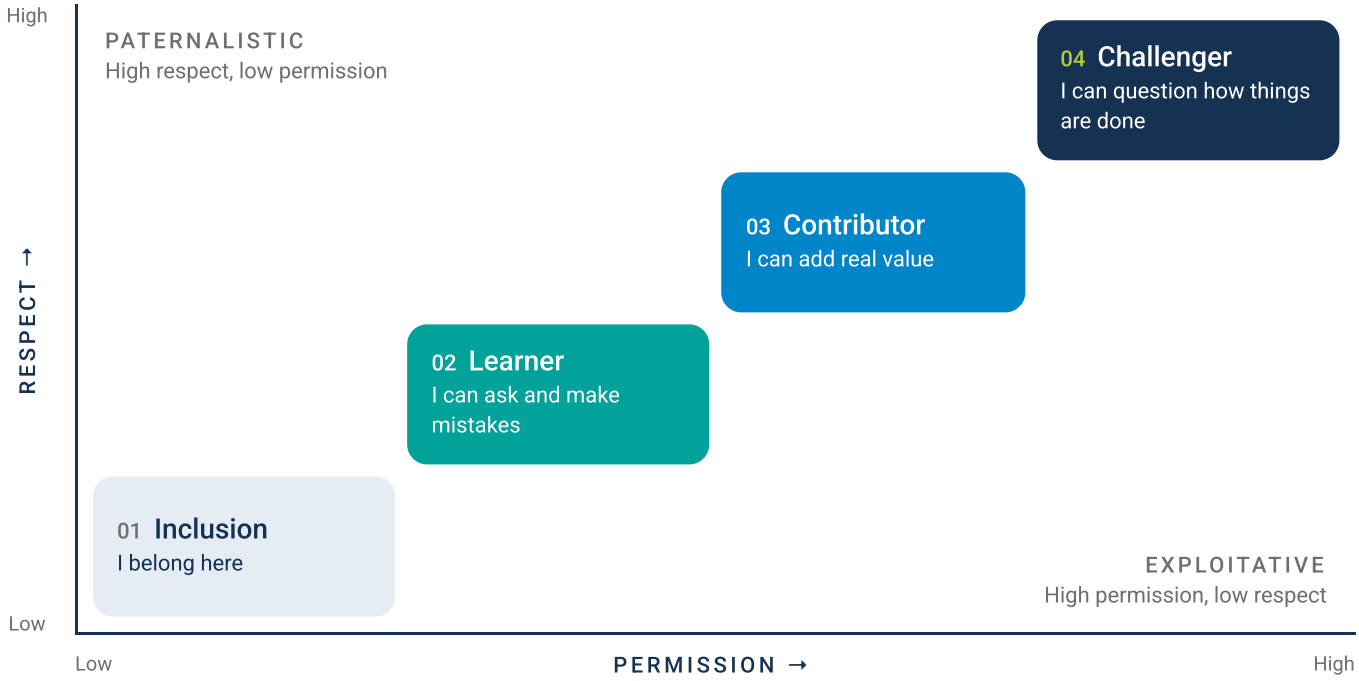
SETTING THE CONDITIONS

None of PACE works if people don't feel safe to speak. In our experience, fear tends to grow the further up an organisation you go, which is exactly where the decisions that shape culture get made. Timothy R. Clark's four stages of psychological safety give us a way to see where a team really is.



RESPECT

Knowing you're valued as a person. Without permission, it turns paternalistic: "we care about you, but stay in your lane."

PERMISSION

The freedom to take part, question and contribute. Without respect, it feels exploitative: "speak up, but your voice doesn't really count."

30%

Deloitte found multi-generational teams outperform single-generation teams by up to 30% on problem-solving, when leaders deliberately foster inclusion. The same holds for neurodiversity: different ways of thinking are an asset, not an obstacle.

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MY NEXT MOVE

Every organisation has things that build humanity and things that quietly wear it down. This page is for committing to what you'll do about it.

Imagine it's 2030 and the map has gone completely. What words describe your compass, and the principles that will still guide you?

Which part of PACE is strongest for us right now, and which needs attention?

01 **One behaviour to stop, because it blocks humanity**

02 **One behaviour to start, because it builds connection**

03 **One relationship to strengthen, because it multiplies trust**

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NATURAL DIRECTION

Disruption isn't the enemy. Disconnection is.

Trust grows at the speed of human connection. The shift is from managing performance to leading with humanity: less task, update, deliverable, and more presence and relationship. Leadership is a relationship, not a role.

Thank you for your openness and contribution. We'd love to hear how your next move goes.

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