

THE FLOURISHING EXECUTIVE PLAYBOOK

*Tactics for Leading Organizations that
Win Through Human Flourishing*

FLOURISH

Make Better Decisions
Under Pressure

An executive summit for leading in
the age of AI and constant change

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ABOUT THIS EXECUTIVE PLAYBOOK

Every organization is already experiencing the business effects of its human conditions—in performance, retention, innovation, execution, and risk. Flourishing gives leaders a way to understand and influence those conditions. To translate a complex evidence base into a practical framework for executive decision-making, we developed the proprietary five-layer Flourishing Operating System™ (Flourishing OS). The OS synthesizes more than two decades of flourishing research and related psychological and organizational science to show how individual capacities, workplace conditions, leadership, and organizational dynamics work together to support flourishing and performance. Drawing on more than two decades of flourishing research and related psychological and organizational science—including recent systematic and bibliometric reviews of the workplace flourishing literature (Thilagavathy, 2025)—we focus on the variables that matter, why they matter, and what leaders can do about them.

The Flourishing OS moves from Me, to Us, to the Organization—connecting what happens within individuals, between people, and across the systems and conditions of the enterprise. The research provides the components and relationships; the Flourishing OS provides an integrated architecture for understanding and applying them. The journey begins with the executive leader because decisions about strategy, resources, systems, culture, and leadership shape the conditions in which people—and ultimately organizations—perform.

Included in the Summit and this playbook is an early prototype of the Flourishing Financial Impact Calculator™, a thinking tool designed to help leaders explore how key workforce variables may translate into organizational and financial implications. This beta version supports more holistic decision-making while the calculator undergoes further development and testing toward a planned 2027 release.

This playbook is designed to meet leaders where they operate: at the intersection of business outcomes, people, and decisions. It works backward from the outcomes on the executive dashboard to the human variables associated with them, the psychological and organizational science underneath, and the leadership decisions and actions capable of influencing those conditions. Each chapter closes with an Execution Challenge to move from insight to action. The playbook can take you a significant distance, but sustained change requires diagnostics, measurement, leadership development, and organizational-level work beyond any single document. Use it as a guide for ongoing decisions and action—not as a one-time exercise.

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EXECUTIVE DIAGNOSTIC:

The Signals You Are Already Seeing

Entry point: The business problems leaders already recognize but cannot fully explain.

Before you can act on flourishing, you have to recognize the signals already showing up across your organization. What appear to be isolated business, operational, and workforce problems may reflect a broader pattern: conditions that are making it harder for people to function and perform at their best. Taken together, these signals may point to something broader than isolated operational problems. Research on job flourishing identifies an interconnected set of individual, work, and organizational factors associated with how well people function at work and with important workforce outcomes (A'yunnisa et al., 2024). Viewed through that lens, the pattern may signal a workforce operating below its full psychological capacity.

You may already be seeing:

- ⌕ High performers leaving despite competitive compensation
- ⌕ Strong engagement scores while discretionary effort appears to be declining
- ⌕ Leadership development investments producing inconsistent behavioral change
- ⌕ Rising workforce health costs alongside concerns of declining resilience
- ⌕ Managers spending more time responding to burnout than enabling performance
- ⌕ Decision fatigue slowing execution at senior leadership levels
- ⌕ Culture and well-being initiatives generating activity without clear evidence of business improvement

These problems rarely have a single cause, and flourishing should not be treated as one. But the research points to a connected set of psychological, social, leadership, and organizational conditions that can influence both how people function and how organizations perform.

The opportunity is to stop treating the signals one at a time and start seeing—and measuring—the system underneath them. What remains invisible as a business cost becomes actionable when you can measure it.

PART I

The Operating System Behind the Tactics

An abstract graphic consisting of numerous concentric, nested chevrons or V-shapes. These shapes are arranged in a way that they appear to recede into the distance, creating a strong sense of depth and perspective. The lines are thin and light in color, contrasting with the dark teal background.

IN THIS PART

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: How Flourishing Actually Works

CHAPTER 1:

How Flourishing Actually Works

Most organizations treat human performance in pieces. Well-being programs address one piece. Leadership development addresses another. Culture initiatives address a third. The Flourishing OS shows how the pieces connect.



FIGURE 1 · FLOURISHING OS LAYERS

Layer 1: Your Foundational Capacity Stack

Layer 1 represents the individual and workplace foundations that create the conditions for flourishing. It includes both the capacities people bring to their work and the conditions they experience while doing it. Research on job flourishing supports this broader view: flourishing at work is associated with factors within the individual, factors within the work environment, and the interaction between the two (A'yunnisa et al., 2024).

At the individual level, this means:

- ⑤ Regulating emotions effectively
- ⑤ Directing attention deliberately
- ⑤ Accurately reading yourself and your reactions
- ⑤ Drawing on strengths that support effective functioning
- ⑤ Maintaining meaning and purpose
- ⑤ Staying engaged in the work
- ⑤ Following through on goals
- ⑤ Maintaining the physical energy needed to perform

These capacities reflect a broader view of well-being in which flourishing involves functioning well—not simply feeling good. Psychological well-being includes dimensions such as purpose, personal growth, autonomy, positive relationships, self-acceptance, and the capacity to manage one's environment (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

The workplace matters too. People operate within a system of job demands and resources. Resources such as support, autonomy, feedback, and opportunities to learn can support well-being and performance, while sustained demands such as excessive workload and emotional strain can deplete the resources people have available (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Together, Layer 1 captures both sides of the foundation: the capacities within the person and the conditions surrounding the person. For leaders, that distinction matters. You cannot build a flourishing organization by developing people while ignoring the conditions in which you expect them to perform.

Layer 2: Your Inner Dashboard

Layer 2 is real-time self-management: how effectively you notice and regulate your own thinking, attention, emotions, and behavior as circumstances change. These metacognitive and self-regulatory processes help determine whether the capacities available in Layer 1 remain accessible when pressure rises.

For an executive, this is the difference between having capacity and being able to deploy it when it matters. Research comparing flourishing and non-flourishing adults found that flourishers responded to difficult situations in more constructive ways—reframing challenges rather than simply suppressing emotions or relying on unhelpful coping patterns (Richard-Sephton et al., 2024). Layer 2 represents the regulatory bridge between the capacities and conditions in Layer 1 and the psychological resources that follow.

Layer 3: Your Psychological Runway

Layer 3 is what turns capacity into durability. Layer 1 provides the personal and workplace foundations for functioning well, and Layer 2 helps you regulate and deploy those resources effectively. Psychological Capital (PsyCap) brings together four positive psychological resources: Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism (HERO). These resources are distinct but interconnected and, together, form the higher-order resource of Psychological Capital (Luthans et al., 2007).

Unlike relatively stable personality traits, PsyCap is state-like and developable. When a major setback hits, these resources shape how a leader responds: Hope helps identify alternative pathways forward; Efficacy supports confidence to act; Resilience supports adaptation and recovery; and Optimism helps sustain a constructive expectation about what comes next. Together, these resources provide psychological runway when conditions become difficult. PsyCap has emerged as an important developable personal resource associated with workplace flourishing (Verma et al., 2025).

The HERO Psychological Mechanisms

HERO Component	Established Psychological Mechanism
Hope	Goal-directed agency + pathway generation.
Efficacy	Mastery experiences + confidence in capability.
Resilience	Adaptive recovery + positive adaptation after setbacks.
Optimism	Positive attribution style + expectancy of favorable outcomes.

HERO resources are not switches you turn on. They are resources you build.

Layer 4: The Flourishing Leader

Layer 4 is where flourishing becomes visible to others through leadership behavior. A flourishing leader is both feeling well and functioning well— and creates conditions that help others function well. In the Flourishing OS, this is expressed through six observable behavior standards:

1. Support for direct reports
2. Fairness in decision-making
3. Boundary-setting
4. Autonomy support
5. Coaching for growth
6. Transparency in communication

Chapter 5 provides details on each of the behavior standards.

Layer 5: The Flourishing Organization

Leadership behavior does not stay contained. Over time, it can spread and become embedded through four channels:

1. Emotional contagion (emotional states, or moods, transfer between people)
2. Behavioral modeling (people learn from what leaders repeatedly do)
3. Norm-setting (what is repeatedly accepted and reinforced becomes expected)
4. Structural embedding (systems, practices, and rituals reinforce those expectations at scale)

Workplace flourishing also matters for discretionary effort. In one study, flourishing accounted for 42% of the variance in organizational citizenship behavior—the ways employees contribute beyond their formal job responsibilities (Redelinguys et al., 2019b). One important boundary condition: authentic leadership alone does not guarantee team flourishing under all conditions (Marques-Quinteiro et al., 2021). What matters is both the behavior leaders demonstrate and the conditions in which people are expected to perform.

*Your behavior signals what matters.
What is repeatedly modeled and
reinforced becomes expected. And that
can become culture.*

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES AT LAYER 5

Layer 5 is where flourishing connects to outcomes already visible on the executive dashboard. The Flourishing OS focuses on four business cost and performance channels:

1. Turnover
2. Productivity
3. Workforce health costs
4. Discretionary effort

These outcomes have many drivers; flourishing should not be treated as the sole cause of any of them. But research consistently links workplace flourishing with outcomes organizations already track, including performance, discretionary behavior, and intention to leave (A'yunnisa et al., 2024). Across the 40 empirical studies included in the review, flourishing was associated with lower turnover intentions, with reported correlations ranging from $r = -.22$ to $-.51$.

THE RECIPROCAL NATURE OF THE SYSTEM

Individual capacity, leadership behavior, workplace conditions, and organizational outcomes can influence one another over time. Leaders shape the conditions in which teams function, while team and organizational conditions can strengthen or deplete leaders and employees alike. Business

outcomes can also trigger decisions that improve—or further strain—the conditions supporting future performance.

The Flourishing OS therefore represents a reciprocal system rather than a simple causal chain. Changes in one layer may influence other layers, making alignment across the system important for sustained flourishing.

EXECUTION CHALLENGE

Understanding the Flourishing OS is different from operating it.

As you move through the next five chapters, identify where your organization's greatest constraint appears to sit today:

- ④ foundational conditions
- ④ individual regulation
- ④ psychological resources
- ④ leadership behavior
- ④ or organizational conditions and outcomes

Do not assume the most visible problem is where the problem begins. The executive task is to find the leverage point underneath the signal.

PART II

The Leadership Playbook: Tactics by F-OS Layer

Part II moves from understanding the system to putting it into practice. Each chapter starts with a business metric the layer can influence, translates the research into practical leadership strategies and tactics, and closes with an Execution Challenge.

IN THIS PART

Chapter 2: Your Foundational Capacity Stack (F-OS Layer 1)

Chapter 3: Running Your Inner Dashboard (F-OS Layer 2)

Chapter 4: Strengthening Your Psychological Runway (F-OS Layer 3)

Chapter 5: Leading as a Flourishing Leader (F-OS Layer 4)

Chapter 6: The Flourishing Organization (F-OS Layer 5)

CHAPTER 2:

Your Foundational Capacity Stack (F-OS Layer 1: Intrapersonal Development)

Business metric: Productivity, Workforce Health Costs.

Tactic 1: Protect the Five Foundations

These are foundational conditions that support your capacity to function and perform. Consistently neglect them, and the psychological resources addressed later in this Playbook become harder to access when demands rise.

1. **Sleep:** Protect adequate, consistent sleep. For most adults, seven to nine hours per night is the recommended range. Insufficient sleep compromises attention, judgment, emotional regulation, and performance.
2. **Recovery:** Build meaningful periods of psychological detachment and recovery into your work rhythm. Recovery is not simply stopping work; it means creating enough separation from work demands for depleted resources to replenish.
3. **Movement:** Make physical activity part of your regular operating rhythm. Even relatively modest levels matter: Hori et al. (2019) found that people who were physical active at least once per week had 39% higher odds of flourishing than those active less than once per week.
4. **Nutrition:** Protect consistent access to adequate nutrition rather than allowing work demands to dictate whether and when you eat. Meal timing interacts with circadian rhythms and research evidence linking specific meal-timing patterns to cognition remains developing.
5. **Connection:** Protect meaningful social connection rather than allowing an executive schedule to become socially isolating. A substantial evidence base links social connection with health and well-being, while social isolation and loneliness are associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes.

Executive principle: Your capacity is an operating asset. Manage it with the same intentionality you bring to other resources the organization depends on.

Tactic 2: Design Your Week Intentionally

Your cognitive performance is not constant across the day. Chronotype—your tendency toward earlier or later periods of alertness—interacts with time of day, age, sleep, and environmental factors. Research finds evidence of a synchrony effect: for some types of demanding cognitive work, performance can be better when the timing of the task aligns with an individual's optimal time of day, although the effect varies by person and task (Chauhan et al., 2025).

The practical move: identify when you are typically at your cognitive best and protect that window for work requiring your highest level of attention, judgment, or complex thinking. Where you have control over your calendar, avoid routinely placing your most consequential decisions in periods when you know your alertness and concentration tend to be lowest.

Tactic 3: The Demand-Resource Self-Assessment

Adapted from the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, use three diagnostic questions to assess where demands and available resources may be out of balance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007):

1. **What demands are elevated this week?**
Workload, cognitive load, emotional demands, decision volume, novelty, ambiguity.
2. **What resources are constrained or diminished?**
Autonomy, clarity, support, feedback, recovery, energy, and other resources you need to meet those demands.
3. **What is the mismatch and what can I change?**
Reprioritize a demand, strengthen a resource, delegate, or renegotiate expectations. Do not assume reducing demands is always the answer; research on daily job crafting suggests that seeking resources can support engagement and task performance, while some forms of demand reduction can undermine performance (Demerouti et al., 2015).

The executive move: Do not wait until depleted capacity shows up as impaired performance. Identify the demand-resource mismatch while you can still act on it.

Tactic 4: Recovery as a Performance Investment

Recovery is not simply the absence of work. It is the process of replenishing the physical and psychological resources depleted by work demands. Research identifies psychological detachment—mentally disengaging from work during nonwork time—as an important part of that recovery process. Insufficient recovery is associated with greater fatigue and exhaustion, poorer well-being and sleep, and lower task performance (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).

Treat recovery as an operational input to your performance, not a reward for it.

EXECUTION CHALLENGE

For the next two weeks, identify the one foundational condition most likely to constrain your performance—sleep, recovery, movement, nutrition, connection, or a demand-resource mismatch. Make one concrete change to protect it, and track what you notice in your energy, attention, and decision quality.

CHAPTER 3:

Running Your Inner Dashboard (F-OS Layer 2: Metacognitive Control)

Business metric: Decision Quality, Error Reduction.

Tactic 1: The Pre-Decision Check-In

Before a high-stakes decision, take 60 seconds to assess whether your current state is helping or interfering with the judgment the decision requires.

1. **What is my current state?**

Alert, depleted, activated, calm, distracted, and agitated. Name it before deciding.

2. **Is this state appropriate for this decision?**

Some decisions require calm reflection. Others require decisive energy. Match the state to the decision. Consider whether your current level of attention, emotion, and energy is likely to support the quality of judgment required.

3. **If not, what will I change?**

Reset, shift state (short break, hydration, brief walk), seek another perspective, delegate or reassign the decision, or—when circumstances allow—delay the decision.

The executive move: Your state is part of the decision environment. Account for it before making a consequential call.

Tactic 2: Managing Attention in Complex Environments

Executive attention is a finite resource competing with meetings, messages, information, and interruptions. Three moves help you manage it deliberately:

1. **Separate deep work from reactive work.**

Create protected periods for analysis, strategy, and complex problem-solving rather than continuously mixing them with email, messages, and other reactive work.

2. **Reduce unnecessary attention capture.**

Turn off nonessential notifications, batch communications where possible, and reduce avoidable interruptions during high-concentration work.

3. **Build transitions between cognitively demanding tasks.**

Create brief periods to disengage and reset before moving directly from one demanding task into another.

Tactic 3: Build in Decision Checkpoints

For consequential or difficult-to-reverse decisions, deliberately create a checkpoint before commitment. Use it to reassess assumptions, review new information, and ask whether the decision still serves the intended outcome.

Structured monitoring is a well-established self-regulation mechanism. Across 138 studies involving nearly 20,000 participants, interventions that increased monitoring of goal progress also improved goal attainment (Harkin et al., 2016).

A checkpoint is not indecision. It is a control built into the decision process.

Tactic 4: Know When Not to Decide Alone

When fatigue, heightened emotion, significant stress, or reduced concentration is compromising your ability to evaluate a consequential decision, change the decision conditions rather than simply pushing through.

When possible, seek another perspective, delegate, or postpone the decision until you can evaluate it under better conditions.

Good judgment includes recognizing when your own judgment may be compromised.

EXECUTION CHALLENGE

For one week, choose one recurring high-stakes decision or meeting and use the **Pre-Decision Check-In** before it. Track your state, whether it is affecting your judgment, and what—if anything—you change before proceeding.

At the end of the week, identify one pattern you want to manage differently going forward.

CHAPTER 4:

Strengthening Your Psychological Runway (F-OS Layer 3: Psychological Capital)

Business metric: Retention (Self and Teams), Discretionary Effort.

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) brings together four developable psychological resources: Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism (HERO). Together, they form a higher-order resources that can be strengthened rather than treated as a fixed personality characteristic (Luthans, Avolio, et al., 2007; Luthans, Youssef, et al. 2007).

PsyCap can be measured using the PCQ-5, a validated five-item measure (i.e., a questionnaire) designed for efficient use in organizational and research settings (Szerdahelyi et al., 2024). Research also consistently links PsyCap with workplace flourishing. In a three-wave study, Psychological Capital was positively associated with subsequent flourishing ($r = .43$, $p < .001$; Ho & Chan, 2022).

For executives, the implication is practical: Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism are resources you can build—and draw on when demands, uncertainty, and setbacks increase.

HOPE: Multiple Pathways to Your Goals

Hope combines goal-directed agency—the motivation to move toward an outcome—with the ability to generate pathways for getting there. When a path closes, higher Hope helps you identify another route rather than treating the obstacle as the end of the goal (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007).

Pathway-mapping: Choose a current strategic challenge and write down three viable paths to the outcome. If you can only produce one, don't treat it as your only option yet. Push yourself to generate alternatives: What is another credible route to the same outcome?

EFFICACY: Grounded Belief in Your Capability

Efficacy is confidence in your ability to mobilize the effort, knowledge, skills, and resources needed to succeed at a challenging task. Mastery experiences—evidence from successfully navigating prior challenges—are an important source of efficacy (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007).

Capability-proof: Before a consequential decision or challenge, identify three prior situations of similar scope or difficulty that you handled effectively. Write down what you did, what capabilities you relied on, and what you can apply now. Use evidence from past mastery to strengthen confidence for the challenge ahead.

RESILIENCE: Adaptive Recovery After Setbacks

Resilience is the capacity to adapt and recover when adversity, uncertainty, or significant setbacks disrupt the plan. It is not simply bouncing back to the same state; it is adapting so you can move forward under the conditions that now exist (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007).

Post-setback reset: After a significant setback, work through four moves: acknowledge what happened, extract the specific lesson, reset the plan, and resume forward motion.

OPTIMISM: Realistic Positive Expectancy

Optimism is a positive expectancy about future outcomes while remaining grounded in the realities of the situation. It is not ignoring risks or assuming everything will work out. It means maintaining a constructive expectation about what is possible while responding realistically to setbacks and constraints (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007).

Controllables check: Before a difficult meeting or decision, separate what you cannot control from what you can influence. Identify the actions available to you, the opportunities still open, and what a favorable but realistic outcome would look like. Then direct your attention and effort toward what you can influence.

Recognizing When PsyCap May Be Running Low in Your Team

When a team is under sustained pressure, changes in behavior can signal that psychological resources are being strained. You may see less initiative, greater hesitation, difficulty identifying ways forward, slower recovery after setbacks, or increasingly negative expectations about what is possible.

Rather than assuming you know the cause, use the HERO framework to ask four questions:

- 🕒 **Hope:** Are people having difficulty seeing viable pathways forward?
- 🕒 **Efficacy:** Has confidence in their ability to handle the challenge declined?
- 🕒 **Resilience:** Is the team struggling to adapt and regain forward momentum after a setback?
- 🕒 **Optimism:** Are people having difficulty seeing the realistic possibility of a positive outcome?

These are leadership prompts, not diagnostic indicators. Use them to guide conversation and determine where additional support may be needed. If you need to assess PsyCap, use a validated measure such as the PCQ-5.

EXECUTION CHALLENGE

Choose one current challenge facing you or your team. Identify the HERO resource most likely to strengthen the response—**Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, or Optimism**—and apply the corresponding tactic from this chapter. At the end of the week, assess what changed in how you or the team approached the challenge.

CHAPTER 5:

Leading as a Flourishing Leader (F-OS Layer 4: Flourishing Leader)

Business metric: All four metrics (i.e., business channels).
The integration layer.

The Dual Domain of Flourishing Leadership

A Flourishing Leader operates in two domains at once: your own capacity to function well and the conditions your leadership creates for others to function well. Layers 1 through 3 build the resources you bring to leadership. Layer 4 is where those resources become visible in how you lead others. The relationship is not automatic: greater personal capacity creates resources leaders can draw on, but those resources must still be translated into consistent leadership behavior.

The two domains are connected. Your own flourishing can influence how consistently you lead, while your decisions, behaviors, and the conditions you create can support or undermine the flourishing of others. Research reinforces the importance of those conditions: employees who experienced greater internal respect also reported stronger organizational identification and energy, which were associated with greater flourishing (Abid et al., 2018).

The leadership challenge is therefore not simply to perform well yourself, but to create conditions in which other people can perform and flourish as well.

The Six Behavior Standards

BEHAVIOR STANDARD 1: SUPPORT FOR DIRECT REPORTS

Structured, deliberate attention to what each direct report needs to succeed in their current role. Support is more than availability. It includes sustained inquiry into obstacles, not just responding when problems escalate.

BEHAVIOR STANDARD 2: FAIRNESS IN DECISION-MAKING

Use consistent, transparent criteria for the decisions that matter—promotions, assignments, exceptions, resource allocation. Organizational justice research links perceived fairness with outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, citizenship behavior, withdrawal, and performance (Colquitt et al., 2001). Teams often notice inconsistency before leaders recognize it.

BEHAVIOR STANDARD 3: BOUNDARY-SETTING

Explicitly protect the conditions that let people work well. Protect your team's working hours, focus time, and recovery. Boundary-setting is not saying no. It is preserving the capacity to say yes to what matters.

BEHAVIOR STANDARD 4: AUTONOMY SUPPORT

Give people meaningful control over how they get to outcomes. Autonomy is not the absence of accountability. It is accountability without micromanagement.

BEHAVIOR STANDARD 5: COACHING FOR GROWTH

Hold regular, structured development conversations that go beyond performance feedback. Explore what people are learning, what is stretching them, what is stalling progress, and what support they need.

BEHAVIOR STANDARD 6: TRANSPARENCY IN COMMUNICATION

Share the context, constraints, and reasoning behind decisions. Transparency is not disclosure of everything. It is disclosure of enough that your team can understand the decision and act intelligently within the frame you are setting.

Embedding These Standards Operationally

The six standards matter only if they become part of how leadership is practiced and reinforced. Build them into existing management routines:

- ⌚ **The 1:1 demand-resource check:** Take 60 seconds at the start of each 1:1 to ask: *What demands are up? What resources are down? What should we adjust?*
- ⌚ **The monthly flourishing pulse:** Take five minutes with the team to ask: *Where are we doing well? What are the friction points? What one thing should we change this month?*
- ⌚ **Hard-wire the standards into performance reviews:** Make the six behavior standards explicit leadership criteria—not merely aspirational expectations.
- ⌚ **The talent decision test:** For every promotion or hire at the manager level or above, ask, *Does this candidate create conditions for people to flourish and perform or primarily extract performance?*

EXECUTION CHALLENGE

Choose one of the six behavior standards where your intent and your team's experience may not fully align. Ask your direct reports for specific examples of what you currently do that supports—or undermines—that standard. Select one behavior to change and make it observable enough that your team can tell whether you changed it.

CHAPTER 6:

The Flourishing Organization (F-OS Layer 5: Culture Spread and Outcomes)

Business metric: Discretionary Effort, Innovation, Retention at Scale.

Four Ways Flourishing Spreads

1. EMOTIONAL CONTAGION

Emotional states can spread between people through interpersonal interaction, often without deliberate intent. For leaders, that means how you show up can influence the emotional climate around you. Calm, focus, energy, anxiety, and urgency can all become socially consequential signals.

Your state does not stay entirely with you. Pay attention to what you are transmitting.

2. BEHAVIORAL MODELING

People learn what is really expected partly by watching what leaders repeatedly do. If you say psychological safety matters but punish the person who raises a difficult issue, the behavior sends a stronger message than the stated value.

Repeated leadership behavior becomes a signal about what is truly expected. Modeling is the most credible communication channel you have.

3. NORM-SETTING

Norms are shared expectations about what is acceptable and expected in a group. They become powerful precisely because people often stop noticing them. Leaders influence norms through what they model, reinforce, reward, challenge, and tolerate.

When harmful behavior goes unaddressed, it can become part of the conditions under which people are expected to work. Research examining 1,102 employees found that workplace bullying partially mediated the relationship between job demands and flourishing: lower job demands were associated with less bullying, which in turn was associated with greater flourishing (Nel & Coetzee, 2020).

4. STRUCTURAL EMBEDDING

Structural embedding occurs when systems, policies, review cycles, and rituals codify what the organization treats as important. Recognition programs, performance criteria, budget allocation, and meeting design all embed particular behaviors as standard. When structural embedding aligns with the other three channels, flourishing spreads reliably. When it does not, informal culture and formal systems fight each other and progress stalls.

Using the Four Ways Deliberately

What a leader consistently does becomes how the team operates. How teams operate, when repeated, becomes how things are done. How things are done, over time, becomes culture others can see.

Norm-reset: Identify one repeated behavior currently undermining the conditions for flourishing. Choose a consequential moment in which that behavior normally appears and visibly model a different response. Reinforce the new behavior when others demonstrate it. Repeat until the new expectation becomes clear.

CRISIS AND AI DISRUPTION: WHAT HOLDS AND WHAT ADAPTS.

Under disruption, the six behavior standards remain useful anchors, while how they are enacted may need to adapt to the situation. Pressure makes consistency especially visible: when leaders abandon stated standards precisely when conditions become difficult, employees receive a powerful signal about which expectations are real and which are conditional.

EXECUTION CHALLENGE

Scaling behavioral change requires more than leadership behavior. At organization-wide scale, sustained change requires systems that reinforce the behaviors you want to spread—including governance, measurement, incentives, and accountability. This often requires cross-functional partnership across HR, communications, operations, and other functions that shape how work gets done.

Making Flourishing Visible at the Organizational Level

Business metric: All Four Business Channels. Leading and Lagging Indicators

What to Measure

Once flourishing enters the organizational dashboard, leaders can examine it alongside the business outcomes and workplace conditions that matter. Track four categories:

1. **Business signals:**
Turnover, absenteeism, unplanned leave, productivity indicators, healthcare costs where appropriate, and relevant discretionary-effort measures.
2. **Flourishing measures:**
Select a validated workplace flourishing measure appropriate to your workforce and measurement purpose and use it consistently enough to establish a meaningful trend. Confirm applicable licensing and administration requirements before deployment.
3. **Leading conditions and resources:**
Track relevant job demands and resources, leadership conditions, PsyCap where appropriate, and other validated measures tied to the specific conditions you are trying to influence.
4. **Financial signals:**
Use the Flourishing Calculator to examine how changes in flourishing and workforce outcomes may translate into financial exposure and opportunity.

Dashboard Design Principles

- ② Trend over point. Do not overreact to a single measurement. Look for meaningful patterns over time.
- ② Segment intelligently. Enterprise averages can conceal important differences by function, tenure, geography, level, or other relevant groups.
- ② Pair human and business indicators. Examine flourishing alongside the organizational conditions and outcomes it may be associated with.

Response Protocols

② **Green—stable or improving:**

Continue what appears to be working and monitor the trend.

② **Yellow—meaningful downward trend:**

Investigate what changed. Examine demands, resources, leadership conditions, and relevant business indicators before selecting an intervention.

② **Red—substantial or sustained deterioration:**

Diagnose before launching a new program. Identify what conditions have changed, where deterioration is concentrated, and what decisions or systems may be contributing.

These are management response categories, not validated psychometric cut scores.

Embedding the Flourishing Calculator in Governance

The Flourishing Calculator is most useful when it becomes part of an existing planning and review cycle rather than a one-time exercise. Refresh it periodically using current organizational data, review the four cost channels against actual business outcomes, and adjust assumptions or targets as conditions change. The calculator does not replace strategic decision-making. **It makes the potential financial implications of workforce conditions more visible so leaders can decide where deeper analysis or action may be warranted.**

Avoiding Measurement Theater

Measurement without a clear decision purpose becomes measurement theater. Every metric on the flourishing dashboard should be connected to a question, decision, or action it is intended to inform. Do not collect employee data simply because you can. If people are repeatedly asked about their experience without seeing meaningful response, measurement itself can lose credibility.

EXECUTION CHALLENGE

Choose one business outcome that matters now—retention, productivity, workforce health costs, or discretionary effort. Identify the **flourishing measure**, relevant workplace conditions, and existing business indicators you would need to examine together to better understand what may be influencing it. Then identify one decision you would make differently if those signals changed.

PART III

From Executive Insight to Organizational Transformation

Turning insight into organizational action.

IN THIS PART

Chapter 7: Your 90-Day Starting Point

Chapter 8: How to Talk About This So It Sticks

CHAPTER 7:

Your 90-Day Starting Point

Days 1 through 30: Personal Foundation and Team Expectations

- **Days 1-7:**
Audit your Foundational Capacity Stack. Identify the personal or workplace condition most out of alignment and make one concrete adjustment.
- **Days 8-21:**
Introduce the six behavior standards to your direct team: support, fairness, boundary-setting, autonomy support, coaching for growth, and transparency in communication. Not as a program but as explicit standards for how you intend to lead and what the team can expect from you.
- **Days 22-30:**
Establish a baseline. After you get permission, use the MHC-SF and its established categorical scoring method to determine the percentage of assessed employees meeting the flourishing criterion use by the Flourishing Financial Impact Calculator. Pair it, where appropriate, with a validated workplace flourishing measure to understand how employees are feeling and functioning at work. Do not rush to intervene. First understand the pattern.

Days 31 through 90: Governance Integration and Action

- **Days 31-45:**
Add flourishing, relevant workplace conditions, and related business indicators to your existing governance cadence—Quarterly Business Reviews, executive scorecards, or strategic-decision reviews. Use existing operating rhythms rather than creating a separate flourishing governance process.
- **Days 46-60:**
Identify the one workplace condition within your span of control that appears most likely to be constraining flourishing. Select one change you can make and define how you will know whether conditions improve.
- **Days 61-75:**
Run the Flourishing Financial Impact Calculator™ using your organization's actual workforce and business data and the flourishing rate established at baseline. Review the four cost and performance channels with your executive team.
- **Days 76-90:**
Establish a regular review of flourishing, workplace conditions, and relevant business outcomes within your existing operating rhythm. Determine the appropriate measurement frequency based on the measures being used and the decisions the data will inform.

Four Common Blockers

1. **“We already measure engagement.”**

Engagement and flourishing are related but distinct. Engagement captures how energetically and deeply people engage with their work; flourishing addresses the broader question of how well people are feeling and functioning. An engagement survey should not automatically be treated as a measure of flourishing.

2. **“We don’t have the bandwidth.”**

The 90-day plan is designed to work primarily through existing governance and operating rhythms rather than creating a parallel flourishing program.

3. **“Our culture is different.”**

Cultural context matters. Use measures with appropriate validation evidence for the populations being assessed, and use caution when comparing results across cultures, countries, or demographic groups. Flourishing research remains disproportionately based on Western populations, limiting the generalizability of some findings (Kiknadze & Fowers, 2023).

4. **“We already have an employee survey.”**

Existing employee surveys can provide valuable information about workforce conditions and may be useful alongside flourishing measures. But a custom survey score is not automatically a Flourishing Rate. The Flourishing Financial Impact Calculator™ requires the percentage of employees meeting an established flourishing criterion. Organizations can develop their own flourishing measures, but those measures and any classification thresholds should be validated before they are used to generate the Flourishing Rate for the calculator.

“What would it cost your organization to not start this?”

CHAPTER 8:

How to Talk About This So It Sticks

For Boards and Investors

Lead with the financial exposure. The four cost and performance channels—turnover, productivity, workforce health costs, and discretionary effort—are outcomes organizations already track. The Flourishing Financial Impact Calculator translates flourishing into modeled financial implications using organizational data. Avoid positioning the work primarily as “wellness,” “well-being programming,” or “self-reflection.” Use business language such as **human capital advantage, sustained performance, and enterprise adaptability.**

For Senior Leaders

Lead with the leadership multiplier. Leadership behavior shapes important conditions employees experience at work, and research links flourishing with behaviors that extend beyond formal job requirements. In a study of nurses, ethical leadership was positively associated with flourishing, and flourishing was positively associated with extra-role behavior, including discretionary contributions beyond formal job responsibilities (El-Gazar & Zoromba, 2021). **The leadership message is straightforward: how you lead can help create conditions in which people are more able to flourish and contribute.**

For the Broader Organization

Do not position flourishing as another stand-alone program or launch it as a short-term campaign. Describe it as a way of working. Communicate the six behavior standards, the four transmission channels, and the flourishing dashboard as parts of the organization’s operating architecture. **Programs can end. Ways of working become embedded in how decisions are made, people are led, and work gets done.**

Language That Tends to Undermine the Conversation

- ⊗ “Wellness program” or “well-being initiative.” Can signal something discretionary and understate the business case.
- ⊗ “Soft skills” or “people side of business.” Invites the work to be treated as secondary to business performance.
- ⊗ “Personal development.” Positions the work as primarily individuals and elective rather than organizational.
- ⊗ “Resilience training” as a stand-alone solution. Reduces a systemic approach to a single individual capability.

Use “flourishing” precisely. Flourishing is not another word for engagement, wellness, happiness, or resilience. These constructs may be related, but they are not interchangeable. Maintaining that distinction helps leaders understand why flourishing adds information rather than simply renaming something the organization already measures.

Appendix A: About the Flourishing Calculator

The Flourishing Financial Impact Calculator™ is a thinking tool that helps you estimate the potential financial implications of flourishing across four business cost and performance channels: turnover, productivity, workforce health costs, and discretionary effort. The calculator combines organizational inputs with coefficients and assumptions informed by peer-reviewed research. Its assumptions are disclosed so users can understand how estimates are generated.

Definitions of key terms:

- ⤵ **Flourishing rate:** The percentage of assessed employees who meet an established criterion for flourishing using the approved measurement methodology. For the current calculator methodology, this rate is derived using the MHC-SF categorical scoring method. Use the same instrument and scoring method when establishing baseline and follow-up rates.
- ⤵ **Fully loaded salary:** Base salary plus employer-paid benefits, payroll taxes, and applicable bonus or compensation costs. An estimate of the organization's annual employment cost per employee.
- ⤵ **Employer-side healthcare cost:** Annual healthcare spending per employee borne by the employer, excluding employee contributions.
- ⤵ **Weighted productivity loss rate:** Workforce-weighted estimate of productivity impairment across the categories incorporated into the calculator model, expressed as a percentage of payroll.
- ⤵ **R² (variance explained):** The proportion of variation in an outcome statistically accounted for by a model or predictor(s). An R² of .48 indicates that 48% of the variance in the outcome is accounted for statistically; **it does not mean that increasing flourishing will cause a 48% change in that outcome.**
- ⤵ **Coefficient or modeling parameter:** A numerical value used within a calculator formula to represent a research-derived association or an explicit modeling assumption. Research-derived values and calculator assumptions are identified separately.
- ⤵ **50% real-world adjustment factor:** A conservative modeling assumption applied within the turnover calculation that reduces by half the research-informed effect used in the calculation. The 50% adjustment is a calculator assumption and is not an empirically established effect size.
- ⤵ **Validated instrument:** An assessment for which empirical evidence supports relevant measurement properties—such as reliability and validity—for its intended construct and population.

The Conceptual Approach

The Flourishing Financial Impact Calculator uses four formulas informed by peer-reviewed research and organizational inputs to estimate financial implications across turnover, productivity, workforce health costs, and discretionary effort. Each formula combines organizational inputs—such as workforce size, flourishing rate, salary, healthcare spending, or replacement costs—with research-informed relationships and explicit modeling assumptions relevant to that channel. The resulting estimates are intended to help leaders examine the potential scale of financial exposure or opportunity associated with workforce flourishing. The detailed formulas, research sources, modeling assumptions, and worked examples are maintained separately as part of the Flourishing Financial Impact Calculator.

Appendix B: The Flourishing OS — Layer Reference

A quick reference to the five layers of the Flourishing OS, including the key capacities, behaviors, mechanisms, and outcomes represented within each layer.

5 The Flourishing Organization:

How flourishing spreads through the enterprise and shows up in workforce and business outcomes.

4 The Flourishing Leader:

Leaders who feel well, function well, and lead others toward the same.

3 Your Psychological Runway:

Developable internal capacities that strengthen psychological features (not replace them).

2 Your Inner Dashboard:

How you notice your thinking, feel your emotion, and adjust your behavior in the moment.

1 Your Foundational Capacity Stack:

The personal and contextual conditions that enable one to flourish.

Appendix C: Executive Evidence Cheat Sheet

A one-page summary of selected research findings and modeled financial estimates used in this playbook. For quick reference and executive briefings.

Retention Case

$R^2 = .48$	Flourishing accounted statistically for 48% of the variance in intention to leave in the study model (Redelinguys et al., 2019).
$r = -.22$ to $-.51$	Reported associations between flourishing and turnover intention across studies reviewed by A'yunnisa et al. (2024).

Performance Case

$r = .33$ to $.39$	Reported associations between flourishing and in-role performance across studies reviewed by A'yunnisa et al. (2024).
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Discretionary Effort

$R^2 \approx .42$	Flourishing accounted statistically for approximately 42% of the variance in organizational citizenship behavior in the study model (Redelinguys et al., 2019).
$r = .26$ to $.56$	Reported associations between flourishing and extra-role performance across studies reviewed by A'yunnisa et al. (2024).
+17.6 percentage pts	Variance accounted for in extra-role behavior increased from 22.9% to 40.5% when flourishing was added to the study model (El-Gazar & Zoromba, 2021).

Workplace Conditions

AOR = 2.34	Higher reward from work was associated with 2.34 times the odds of flourishing mental health, after adjustment for other measured factors (Hori et al., 2019).
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PsyCap

$r = .43$	Psychological Capital was positively associated with subsequent flourishing in a three-wave study (Ho & Chan, 2022).
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