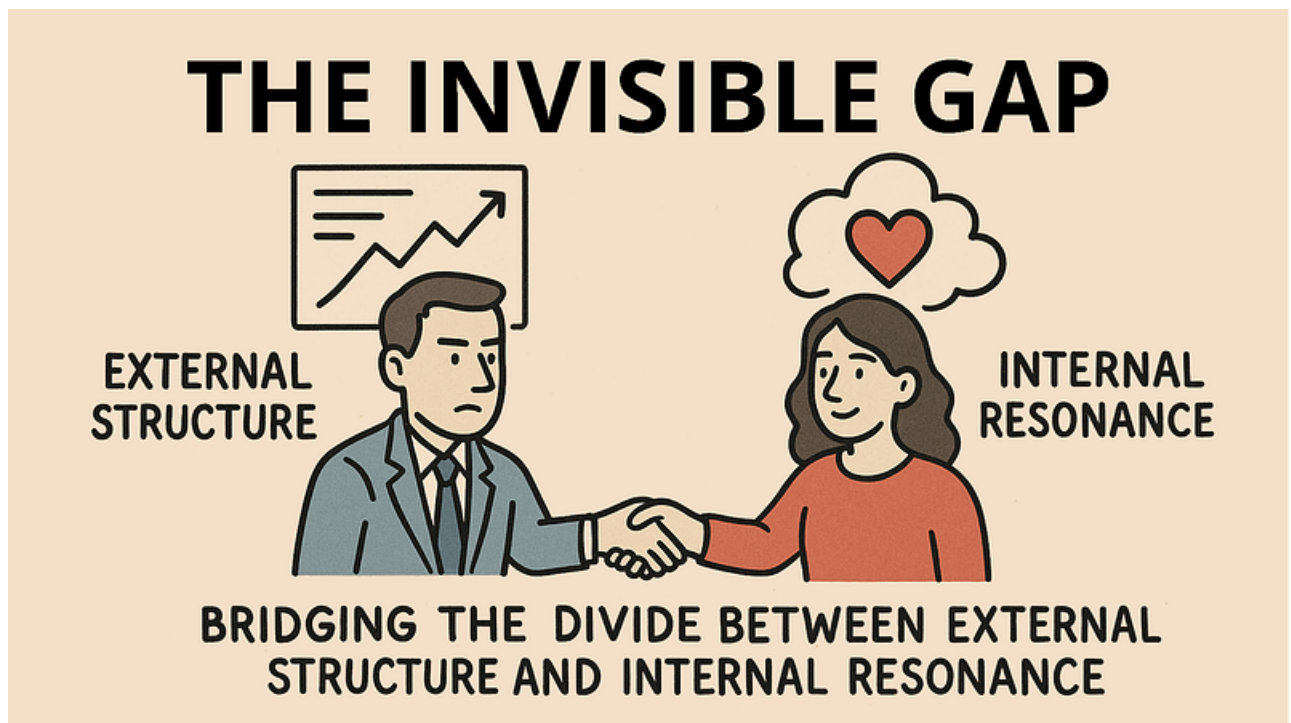


# The Invisible Gap



Bridging the divide between external structure and internal resonance

**We like to think communication breakdowns happen because of poor listening, unclear messages, or mismatched expectations. But what if the real issue is more subtle?**

In many leadership spaces, there is an invisible but critical gap between two ways of knowing:

- **External Structure:** Knowledge that presents as structured, logical, and measurable.
- **Internal Resonance:** Knowledge that emerges from experience, emotional empathy and pattern recognition.

This divide (rarely named but often felt) mirrors the classic tension between thinking and feeling. In many organisations, thinking is associated with logic, metrics, and structure, while feeling is too often seen as subjective or unreliable. As a result, leaders may miss or dismiss powerful insights not because they lack value, but because they arrive

through emotional resonance rather than analytical form. When insight doesn't fit the preferred model of structured data or linear argument, it risks being overlooked regardless of its relevance or truth.

### The Axis of Understanding

We often frame workplace communication as a matter of thinking vs feeling, but that's overly simplistic. A better lens might be:

	External Structure	Internal Resonance
How insight forms	Abstract → Evaluate → Communicate	Sense → Reflect → Articulate
Trust signal	Consistency Repeatability Clarity	Emotional coherence Pattern familiarity
Default mode	Frameworks Metrics Models	Stories Moments Metaphors
Common misreading	"Too cold" or over-analytical	"Too soft" or subjective
Risk in translation	Feels dismissive or rigid	Feels vague or hard to action

This is more than a style issue. It's a cultural blind spot, especially in leadership environments that over rely on rationality, KPIs, and strategic abstraction.

### What Gets Lost in Translation

Many neurodivergent leaders (and the sensitive or emotionally attuned ones) process information through **internal resonance** first. They feel when something is off before they can explain it. They notice interpersonal shifts before they become measurable team dynamics. They trust what they've lived, not just what they can quantify.

The problem: if that insight can't be immediately plotted on a dashboard, it often gets ignored.

"I know this is true. I just don't have a graph for it."

This mismatch is exhausting. It can lead to:

- Masking or second-guessing your instincts
- Doubting your leadership when your way of knowing isn't affirmed
- Being talked over in decision-making spaces that privilege structure over sense

The organisation suffers too because those early signals, they're often right.

## **Resonant Leadership: The Research Case**

The good news is this isn't just a hunch. Studies in **resonant leadership**, particularly those by Richard Boyatzis and Daniel Goleman, show that emotionally attuned leadership doesn't just feel good it drives results. Their work emphasises the role of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management) as critical to building trust and sustaining team performance.

A 2022 study in *Frontiers in Psychology* demonstrated that resonant leadership increases psychological capital (hope, resilience, optimism, and efficacy), especially during crisis periods like the COVID-19 pandemic. These traits strongly correlated with improved team productivity and morale.

Additional research from Portland State University links emotionally intelligent leadership to reduced workplace stress and higher job satisfaction. And in the context of innovation, findings published in *Cogent Business & Management* show that resonant leadership fosters

affective trust, which enhances creativity and team cohesion.

- Leaders high in emotional intelligence build trust, reduce stress, and increase resilience.
- Teams led by resonant leaders show higher engagement, psychological safety, and innovation.
- Emotional insight, when validated and acted upon, leads to stronger performance outcomes.

Emotional data is *real* data. We just need to learn how to hear it.

To start bridging this gap, it helps to understand your own default mode. Do you naturally seek clarity through frameworks, evidence, and structured arguments or do you find yourself tuning into emotional dynamics, drawing insight from experience, and sensing patterns others might miss?

Consider these reflective prompts:

- When facing a tough decision, do you look for data or pay attention to what feels right?
- Do you often spot issues early through a “gut feeling” before there’s hard proof?
- Do others see you as the one who brings logic and order or the one who picks up what’s unspoken?

There’s no right answer, but knowing your orientation helps you understand how you lead, how you communicate, and where you may be misunderstood. It also helps you notice what kinds of insight you might be unintentionally undervaluing in others.

## **Bridging the Gap**

If you lead through internal resonance, here are some ways to stay effective without abandoning your truth:

- Translate intuition into curiosity: *“I’m noticing a shift, can we explore what’s behind it?”*
- Anchor emotion in pattern: *“This feels familiar. Last time we ignored this, we*

*saw...*"

- Pair resonance with hypotheses: *"It may not show up in metrics yet, but what if we tested...?"*

If you're someone who leans on external structure:

- Ask, *"What are we sensing but not saying?"*
- Remember that clarity isn't always clean. Some truths show up messy first.
- Make room for slow data the kind that arrives through trust, not tools.

## Final Thought

Not all wisdom comes in spreadsheets. Not all insight is articulate at first pass.

To build truly inclusive, intelligent leadership cultures, we need to honour both ways of knowing. We need to close the gap between what feels true and what sounds valid.

That starts with learning to hear each other differently.

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