

The SHIELD Framework

One Framework, Two Perspectives: Individual Protection ↔ Organizational Design

SHIELD Element

Individual Perspective

(Neurodivergent Employees)

Organizational Perspective

(Managers & C-Suite)

S

SEE / SURFACE

SEE patterns early. Use pattern recognition to catch toxic dynamics before they become crises.

SURFACE problems early

Metric: Early Warning System Effectiveness Score

Anonymous survey (quarterly)

- "When I notice a problem, I know how to escalate it."
- "Problems get addressed early, before they become crises."
- "Leadership learns about issues while there's still time to prevent damage."

Target: 70%+ agreement

Predicts: Crisis prevention, early intervention savings

H

HONOR / HEALTH

HONOR body wisdom. Listen when your body signals overload. Rest before burnout, not after.

Monitor cognitive HEALTH

Metric: Workload Sustainability Index

Anonymous survey (monthly)

- "I have sufficient uninterrupted time for focused work."
- "My meeting schedule is manageable."
- "I can disconnect evenings/weekends without falling behind."
- "I have adequate time to recover between high-intensity periods."

Target: 70%+ report sustainable patterns

Predicts: Burnout risk, retention

I

INVEST

INVEST energy strategically. Direct cognitive resources toward high-value work.

INVEST in value creators

Metric: Innovation Recognition Alignment

Peer nomination survey (quarterly)

- "Who generated important innovations this quarter?"
- Track: % of promoted leaders peer-nominated as innovators.

Target: 75%+ of promotions to peer-recognized innovators

Predicts: Innovation velocity, innovator retention

E

EXECUTE / ENABLE

EXECUTE protective boundaries. Block focus time. Refuse credit theft.

ENABLE through systems

Metric: Boundary Architecture Score

Anonymous survey (quarterly)

- "Protective boundaries are built into how we work, not dependent on my assertiveness."
- "I don't constantly negotiate or defend my time boundaries."
- "Our systems protect my boundaries automatically."

Target: 70%+ agreement

Predicts: Burnout prevention, work-life balance

L

LEAD / LEGITIMIZE

LEAD with authentic vulnerability. Admit uncertainty. Value transparency.

LEGITIMIZE diverse leadership

Metric: Psychological Safety Score

Edmondson's validated 7-item survey (quarterly)

- Validated instrument measuring team safety for risk-taking, speaking up, and valuing unique skills.
- See implementation guidance (page 2).

Target: 5.0+ on 7-point scale (6.0+ exceptional)

Predicts: Innovation, speaking up, retention

D

DESIGN

DESIGN supportive environment. Reduce cognitive load and enable focus.

DESIGN organizational architecture

Metric: Values-Behavior Alignment Score

3 questions per stated value (quarterly)

e.g., innovation, transparency, collaboration

- "Leadership protects time for [value]."
- "People who embody [value] are rewarded."
- "Our meeting culture supports [value]."

Target: 70%+ alignment across all values

Predicts: Trust, cynicism prevention, culture strength

SHIELD Implementation Guidance

Measurement Priorities, Targets, and Financial Connections

Getting Started

Target 70%+ on all metrics. Build SHIELD in phases — two elements every two months.

Months 1–2: Surface + Health (gather data). Months 3–4: Invest + Enable (act on data).

Months 5–6: Legitimize + Design (make it permanent). Measure quarterly with anonymous surveys.

Surface (S) — Watch the Trend, Not the Number

The value of this metric is in the trend line, not any single quarterly score. A Surface score dropping from 78% to 62% over two quarters is a leading indicator of organizational problems

that haven't appeared in turnover or performance data yet. It's the earliest signal in the

SHIELD dashboard. Watch the direction — a declining trend requires immediate investigation.

Health (H) — Why Monthly, Not Quarterly

Health is the only SHIELD metric measured monthly because burnout develops faster than culture erodes. By the time a

quarterly survey detects unsustainable workload, your best people are already updating their resumes. Monthly measurement

catches the trajectory while intervention is still possible.

Invest (I) — The Most Diagnostic Finding in the Dashboard

The two-step measurement — peer nomination followed by promotion tracking — reveals the Projection Fallacy at its most expensive. When peers consistently nominate innovators who

don't get promoted, the organization is selecting leaders on a different criterion than innovation contribution. The gap between who peers recognize and who the system promotes is the single most diagnostic finding in the SHIELD dashboard.

Legitimize (L) — Measure at Team Level, Tie to Turnover

Measure psychological safety at the team level, not organization-wide. Scores vary significantly between teams under the same executive. 5.0 is the minimum threshold from Edmondson's research; 6.0+ is exceptional. Tie team-level scores to turnover by manager — when managers whose teams score below 5.0 show 3x the turnover rate, the business case is self-evident. Leaders scoring below 5.0 should not be promoted to lead more people regardless of business results. They may hit short-term targets, but they hollow out long-term capability and innovation.

Design (D) — Values Must Be Specific and Observable

Apply the three questions to each of your organization's existing stated values. Choose values specific enough to produce observable behavior: innovation, transparency, collaboration, psychological safety, accountability. Avoid values too vague to measure behaviorally (e.g., "excellence," "winning"). The metric detects where stated values and lived experience diverge — the gap that produces employee cynicism and erodes trust. An organization with five stated values would have fifteen total questions in this metric.

Key Insight

Each metric connects to financial outcomes. Surface saves through early intervention. Health reduces replacement costs.

Invest optimizes resource allocation. Enable reduces burnout. Legitimize accelerates innovation. Design makes everything self-sustaining.