

VIABLE AF

VIABILITY. INDIVIDUALITY. AUTHENTICITY.
BOLD LEADERSHIP. EMPOWERMENT

The Aligned
Framework
That Zaps the
Corporate
Bullsh*t



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CHAPTER 1: "Meeting Fatigue and the Corporate Hangover"

Morgan's eye twitched. It always did during the third pointless meeting of the day—right around the time the word "synergy" was used for the fourth time. The projector whirred softly. The PowerPoint slide read, in bold Arial font:

"Q3 Employee Engagement Strategy: Reigniting the Flame."

Flame? What flame? Morgan hadn't seen a spark in this office in years. The room smelled like leftover Subway and apathy. Around the conference table sat the usual suspects: Derek, who said "let's circle back" like it was a sacred chant; Rachel, who mastered the art of nodding without listening; and Linda, the VP of People Ops, who was really just the VP of Procedures.

Morgan's head thudded against the inside of their skull. Their soul was flatlining.

Morgan—thirty-eight, neurospicy, and a recovering perfectionist—had once been a creative firestorm. In college, they'd built a nonprofit from a dorm room. Now? They managed mid-tier staff, mid-tier budgets, and mid-tier expectations. Their dreams were buried under Gantt charts and status updates.

A Post-it note fluttered from their day planner. It hadn't been there earlier. Scribbled in sharp, angry handwriting:

"Start with fire. Not formulas."

Morgan blinked. Looked around. No one else seemed to notice. Just Derek suggesting a 17-point action plan to "boost morale."

Something shifted in Morgan's gut. A whisper. A rebellion. A "fuck this" on the tip of their tongue.

CHAPTER 2: "The Guide in the Elevator"

Later that afternoon, Morgan got into the elevator with someone they'd never seen before. She had teal lipstick, a septum ring, and wheeled herself in confidently, trailing a briefcase covered in dog stickers and protest slogans.

"You look like someone who's been spiritually assaulted by a slide deck," she said.

Morgan laughed involuntarily. "That obvious, huh?"

"I'm Rayah. Innovation consultant. Corporate disruptor. Professional pain in the ass."

Morgan smirked. "I'm Morgan. Manager of...something. Doesn't feel like leadership."

Rayah looked Morgan up and down. "Then stop managing. Start leading. It's not the same."

Before Morgan could respond, the elevator dinged. Rayah wheeled out, tossing a card over her shoulder. It landed in Morgan's hand.

THE HIVE — Come See What Happens When Teams Are Free.

On the back, a scribble:

"Viable AF."

Morgan felt the first real spark in years.

CHAPTER 3: "Welcome to The Hive"

The Hive wasn't on the company org chart. It was tucked away in what used to be a janitor's closet—now transformed into something surreal. The walls were scribbled with ideas and memories. Lights pulsed soft neon. Paper cranes floated from the ceiling. There was a small fridge labeled "Feelings." Plants grew from repurposed mugs, and at the center of it all, a circular table shaped like a honeycomb.

Rayah opened the door and motioned dramatically. "Behold. The anti-meeting."

Morgan stepped in and met them:

- Téo, who had lime green nails, half a shaved head, and was doodling on the walls—actually on them. A street artist turned strategy wizard, Téo spoke in colors.
- Nina, whose stare could melt granite. A veteran, a mother, and a storm in heels. She carried herself with grace wrapped in grit.
- Dash, who barely looked up from coding but whose eyes sparked like thunderclouds. Every so often they muttered things like "entropy is beautiful" and everyone just accepted that.
- Lita, who tossed a stress ball at Morgan's head. She was laughing. She was always laughing. As a single mom and former bartender, she knew how to manage chaos like a goddess.
- Ari, with glitter-covered fingers and an emotional support corgi named Pixel. They greeted Morgan with a sticky note that read: *"Permission to be weird granted."*

Morgan had never been so uncomfortable. Or curious.

CHAPTER 4: "The Binder Fights Back"

Back at their desk, Morgan panicked. This wasn't policy. This wasn't procedure. So, like a good little manager, they pulled out The Binder. The sacred Binder. 346 pages of corporate commandments.

"You can't lead like this," Morgan muttered.

"Exactly," said a voice. The Binder groaned. Its cover cracked. And it spoke:

"Let me guess. You're trying to empower people using page 212 of the SOP manual? Pathetic."

Morgan screamed. Then threw it across the room. It hit the recycle bin with a satisfying *thud*.

A Post-it landed beside it.

CHAPTER 5: "The Paper Crane Rebellion"

Morgan returned to The Hive the next morning, clutching a coffee and the frayed edge of a newfound curiosity. Inside, Ari was hanging upside down from a yoga sling, narrating an idea to Dash about "digitally mapping emotional tone with team Slack reactions."

Morgan didn't understand a word—but they were *captivated*.

Rayah rolled in with a slow clap. "You came back. Congrats. That means you're either ready... or you've hit corporate rock bottom. Either way—welcome to the rebellion."

Morgan took a seat beside Lita, who slid over a napkin with a doodle of a phoenix and a donut. "That's you now. Fire and softness. Both matter."

"So what *is* this place?" Morgan asked.

"It's a story," Téó said, drawing another crane on the wall. "A story we're writing together. A workplace that feels like art. Not compliance."

Rayah added, "We don't do meetings. We do moments. We create collisions, not checklists."

That day, Morgan watched a team move as if bound by gravity made of mutual respect. No one waited for permission. Everyone brought something strange and powerful to the table. And no one asked for Morgan's title. They just asked:

"What's the weirdest idea you've never said out loud?"

Morgan's throat caught. Then, quietly:

"I once wanted to build a department where everyone was cross-trained and chose their own work week... based on energy cycles."

Silence.

Then Dash whispered: "That's hot."

Ari threw a paper crane across the table. Téo snapped their fingers. Nina raised her coffee like a toast.

Rayah smiled. "Welcome to The Hive, Morgan. Now let's light some shit up."

CHAPTER 6: "The Metrics Meltdown"

Three days into The Hive immersion, Morgan felt electric—alive in a way they hadn't in years. Ideas flowed. Collaboration felt effortless. But the corporate current was still very real.

At 8:47 AM, a summons appeared in Morgan's inbox. Subject: URGENT: Performance Metrics Review.

Linda's assistant, bland and punctual, had scheduled Morgan for a 9:00 AM "alignment chat."

Translation: someone saw the weekly report. Someone noticed Morgan had skipped a compliance meeting. Someone realized they'd been spending time in the janitor closet with a band of rebels.

At 9:03, Morgan stepped into Linda's office.

"Morgan," Linda said, with the tone of a disappointed aunt. "Let's talk about your team's velocity charts."

Morgan exhaled slowly. "I hear you, Linda. And I want to be honest with you about where I've been spending my time."

Linda raised an eyebrow.

"It's called The Hive. It's not official, but it's real. It's where people feel safe being creative, where they test wild ideas, and where they collaborate like their work *means something*."

Linda crossed her arms. "That sounds like chaos."

"It's uncomfortable," Morgan said. "But it's also powerful. And no one's burning out. They're lit up. That's not nothing."

Linda glanced at the screen. The velocity chart flickered.

"You're saying you traded metrics for morale?"

"No," Morgan replied, gently. "I'm saying I'm learning how to lead—not manage. The Hive didn't fix anything. It reminded me what matters. I know we need outcomes. But the people creating those outcomes? They deserve something better."

Linda studied Morgan in silence. Not convinced, but not dismissive either.

"You get one week," she said. "Prove that this Hive thing is viable. Bring me something measurable. Not just vibes."

Morgan stood. "Challenge accepted."

Back in The Hive, Téó handed Morgan a sparkler.

"You burn a bridge?"

Morgan smiled. "Lit a lantern. One week. Let's make it count."

Rayah smirked. "Now *that's* a leader."

CHAPTER 7: "Rules of Disengagement"

Morgan stood at the center of The Hive with a whiteboard marker and a head full of fire. One week. That was the deal. Prove the Hive worked. Show measurable impact. But how do you measure magic?

"We need to talk about process," Morgan said.

Groans echoed.

"Hold up—" Morgan raised a hand. "Not the soul-killing checklist kind. The kind that *unlocks* people instead of pinning them to their job description."

Téó laughed. "So... anti-process?"

"No," said Nina, her voice cutting through the chatter. "Process isn't the problem. Oppression disguised as procedure is the problem."

Morgan nodded. "Exactly. So let's break the cycle. What if... we write our own policies? Not the kind that protect the company from us—but the kind that protect us from bullshit."

Ari squealed and grabbed a giant roll of butcher paper.

"Let's call it the *Disengagement Clause*," Rayah added. "You know—rules for how we disengage from rules that disengage people."

They got to work.

What emerged wasn't a policy—it was a manifesto:

- If it requires three signatures but zero trust, it goes.
- If it assumes failure before it sees effort, it goes.
- If it can't flex for real life, it goes.
- If it's designed to control instead of connect, it goes.

They called it: The Permission Protocol.

Dash made it digital. Lita read it aloud, like gospel. Rayah wheeled by and added a Post-it: *"Viable isn't a title. It's a rhythm."*

Morgan sat back, stunned. Not because it was done—but because it *wasn't* perfect. And that was the point.

"This... this is what we show Linda," Morgan said.

Nina narrowed her eyes. "She won't get it. Not at first. You don't lead leaders by proving you're right. You lead them by inviting them into the fire without burning down the house."

Morgan smirked. "Then let's build a fire circle instead of a boardroom. One spark at a time."

CHAPTER 8: "Troll Dolls and Plumber Prophets"

It started with a box.

Dash rolled it into The Hive like it was a sacred artifact. "Clearance shelf. HR was tossing old team-building kits. I saved this for... reasons."

Inside: neon-haired troll dolls, stress balls shaped like toilets, and a crumpled poster of Mario and Luigi in hard hats. Rayah howled. Ari held up a troll with purple hair and gasped, "This one's our morale department."

Morgan stared. "Wait. What *was* this kit even *for*?"

"Operational Synergy Simulation," Dash read from a faded label. "A team-building game from 1997."

Téo clapped. "Perfect. Let's reclaim it."

They started assigning roles. Each troll doll was named after a department in the company that had been stuck in the same loop since fax machines were cool:

- Finance Fran: Always in the weeds.
- HR Hank: Won't process ideas without a form.

- Marketing Marge: Stuck in 2012 hashtags.

And then came the heroes.

"Mario and Luigi," Ari announced dramatically, "are not just plumbers. They're metaphorical prophets. They show up, go underground, and clear the pipes so systems can flow. They don't fix people—they unclog bullshit."

Morgan snorted. "So we're the plumbers now?"

"Exactly," Rayah said. "We're the ones willing to descend into the outdated, the broken, the absurd—and shake loose the crap that keeps people from thriving."

The troll dolls weren't a joke anymore. They were symbols—caricatures of stagnation and fear, painted in neon.

Dash digitized the characters and created a virtual simulation: The Troll Gauntlet. In it, teams navigated a pixelated office full of passive-aggressive post-its, time-sucking meetings, and workflow black holes. The only way out? Collaboration, imagination, and violating at least one outdated policy.

The Hive laughed until they cried.

Morgan didn't laugh. Not because it wasn't funny—but because it was *true*.

"We need to bring this to leadership," Morgan said. "Not as satire. As a mirror."

Nina added quietly, "And an invitation. To play again. To imagine again. To lead like the damn plumbers."

CHAPTER 9: "The Pixel Pitch"

Monday morning. Polished shoes. Filtered coffee. Beige walls. The executive boardroom.

Morgan stood in front of a screen, suit slightly wrinkled, hair still carrying a whiff of creativity from The Hive's essential oils diffuser. Across the table: Linda. Derek. Two VPs Morgan barely knew. And a consultant in an overpriced vest who had never smiled.

Morgan clicked the first slide.

Troll Gauntlet: The Reboot You Didn't Know You Needed.

Linda raised a brow.

"Before we dive in," Morgan began, "let me ask you something. When was the last time you *played* at work? I don't mean team lunches. I mean imagined. Created. Took a risk without a 12-step pre-approval form."

Dead silence. Derek sipped his coffee nervously.

Morgan clicked again. A pixelated Mario dodged a stack of reports labeled 'RED TAPE'. A troll doll hurled a 'Not My Job' grenade. Laughter—real laughter—broke out from one of the VPs.

"This," Morgan continued, "is how we showed measurable improvement in our innovation response time. Our turnaround rate for client deliverables improved by 17% last week. Because the team wasn't just *engaged*—they were unleashed."

Linda cleared her throat. "So this... video game is your solution?"

"No," Morgan said. "The game is the metaphor. The solution is rethinking what blocks our people. Sometimes the fastest way to uncover the truth... is to play it out."

Rayah, who had been silently waiting at the back of the room, rolled forward. "This isn't a gimmick. It's a mirror. And the team built it in 72 hours—on their own time. No overtime. No burnout. Just curiosity."

One VP leaned in. "What would happen if we gave every department the chance to build their own version of this?"

Morgan smiled. "They'd stop being trolls. And start being plumbers."

CHAPTER 10: "Exit the Dungeon, Enter the Hive"

The boardroom was unusually quiet.

No one rejected the idea. No one scoffed. No one asked for a slide deck appendix. The silence after Morgan's pitch wasn't disinterest—it was digestion. The kind that only happens when something disrupts *expectation*.

By Wednesday, The Hive had visitors.

First came Derek. Unannounced, arms crossed, skeptical. He stood in the doorway for ten minutes watching Nina run a "bullshit bonfire" exercise—shredding old policies they'd voted useless. He didn't say a word, but he smiled when someone offered him a s'more made of sticky notes.

Then came the consultants. They asked questions. Took notes. Dash gave them an encrypted USB and told them, "Good luck decoding joy."

And finally, Linda returned.

This time she didn't bring charts. She brought coffee. And sat. Quietly. Observing.

Rayah offered her a neon troll doll. Linda looked at it. Really looked.

"What's this one's name?" she asked.

"That's Compliance Carl," said Ari. "He's starting to loosen up."

Linda smiled.

Morgan gathered the team. "We've sparked something. But sparks fade without story. So let's tell it. Together."

That week, The Hive wrote a new document—not a policy. A living, breathing collective memoir called The Unmanual. It held:

- Their origins
- Their experiments
- Their rituals
- Their rebellion
- Their rhythm

Every department would get a copy. Not to follow. To be inspired. It opened with a single line:

"This is not a rulebook. This is what freedom at work feels like."

By Friday, people from other floors started popping in. Sometimes just to sit. To think. To breathe.

One HR assistant asked if she could start a "Tiny Hive" in the copy room. Morgan nodded. That was the point.

Nina looked around at the buzzing, eclectic, wonderful mess and said, "We didn't just make a new team. We rewrote what being a team means."

Morgan, holding the troll doll now proudly pinned to their lanyard, replied, "We didn't kill the system. We gave it permission to imagine."

And for the first time in a long time, the workplace didn't feel like a dungeon—it felt like a damn playground.

Not the end. Just the new game.

THE UNMANUAL

This is not a rulebook. This is what freedom at work feels like.

Chapter Zero: Origins of the Hive

- Built in a janitor's closet.
- Born from burnout.
- Fueled by rebellion, post-its, and a hell of a lot of questions.

Experiments We Ran

- The Bullshit Bonfire: shredded outdated policies.
- The Troll Gauntlet: gamified dysfunction to create awareness.
- The Permission Protocol: a living policy that flexes with the human behind the role.

Rituals We Keep

- Real Talk Circles: no hierarchy, no blame, just truth.
- Idea Toss: literal throwing of ideas across the table—catch it or build on it.
- Digital Detours: designated hours where no one is required to be reachable.

What We Rebel Against

- Metrics that don't measure meaning.
- Policies that punish progress.
- Cultures that confuse busyness with brilliance.

Our Rhythm

- Monday Mindstorms: chaos first, then clarity.
- Wednesday Wanderings: off-site walks with one weird question.
- Friday Fuel-Ups: a meal, a laugh, and one bold idea to bring next week.

If You're Reading This... You're invited. Not to copy us. But to wake up where you are. To ask your own better questions. To gather your own Hive.

You don't need permission. You just need the spark.