

# Organisations in Flow

## The Value Question

With the current economic climate, organisations are up against the most fundamental question from their stakeholders—of value.

Is your organisation able to consistently create value?

With the pandemic receding from collective awareness, organisations are back to tracing their trajectories of revival and growth. Progress is slow and sometimes, made harder by strategies that haven't quite hit the mark as expected. This is particularly strong in India which saw a great upswing in startup investment and growth through the pandemic.

Viewed simply, every organisation is a human system designed to consistently create value for its stakeholders. Value, in itself may have different dimensions, but it remains the defining denominator for any organisation's credibility and particularly, for its leadership.

The ability to create value under challenging circumstances is what differentiates great companies from others. In addition, the capacity to be agile and competitive while wrestling with constant uncertainty is the ultimate prize every organisation strives for.

However, in what has been a challenging pursuit to say the least, organisations have hustled to win the race for resilience, often landing in some unexpected and uncomfortable places.

*“A culture of silence is a dangerous culture.”*

*Amy Edmondson, author of 'The Fearless Organisation'*

## Burnout, erosion of trust on the rise

In 2023, the WHO reported that 40% of people are suffering from burnout symptoms worldwide. This comes after the WHO officially declaring burnout as an occupational hazard. An Amazon India survey found that 68% of people are looking to switch industries at a pay cut. The unforeseen pandemic-induced isolation has forced companies to commit to the mental health and wellness of their staff. Gartner finds as much as 85% of companies reporting an increase in mental health & wellbeing investments in 2021-22. Despite best intentions, organisations are finding that trust in leadership may be eroding along with a clear increase in the 'culture of silence.'

With such disturbing trends, it begs the obvious question.

What lessons can be drawn from organisations who are still thriving today?

Contemporary research points to two 'human' factors that underpin successful, thriving enterprises.

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*Psychological Safety and Sense of Purpose.*

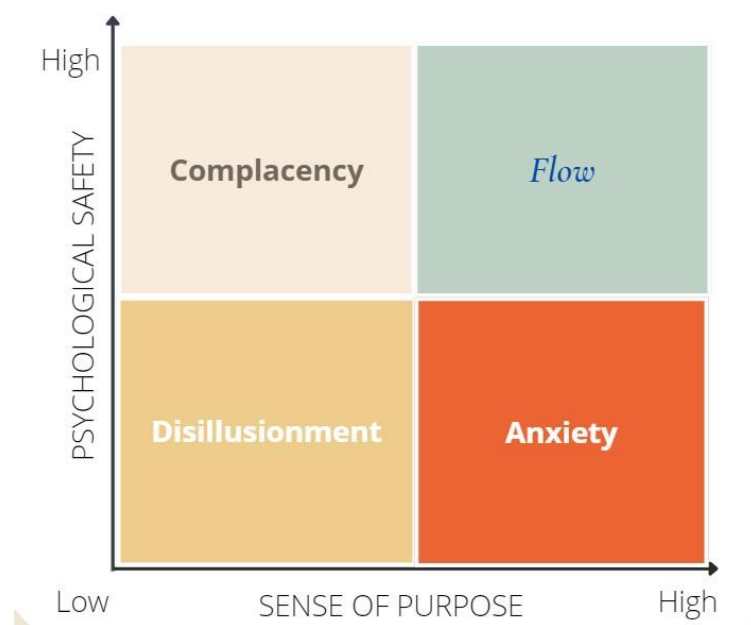
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[Psychological safety](#) is an environment where people are not afraid to be themselves. This means, being able to share their opinions even if they are contrarian and, feeling safe to own up to their mistakes and learning from them.

While safety forms the ground, a sense of purpose provides the forward momentum. With a sense of purpose, people feel as though they are working for their reasons, not someone else's. This is a major shift which activates a totally different part of the brain's network, rebalances the nervous system and puts people in a 'toward' state. This is when people hold themselves accountable to a higher standard, to better outcomes by being more resourceful and resilient.

### Balancing Safety and Sense of Purpose

As more and more research and resources on these topics have emerged, attempts to intervene into these time-tested factors have brought their own consequences.



Getting the right balance of psychological safety and a sense of purpose is critical for every organisation, based on the evolutionary stage it finds itself in.

Cultures that are high on purpose and low on safety can feel like being on a high-speed highway, where everyone is driving way faster than normal, hoping no one gets hurt, whilst still worrying if they are good or fast enough.

Where the scale tilts too much in favour of safety, it can create complacency at one level and anxiety at another. This perhaps explains why managers are feeling more stressed than individual contributors as per Gallup.

The only state that maximises safety and purpose in an intuitive, embodied way is flow. When one is in flow, they are in sync with their environment, creating value with ease.

### The ease of creating value

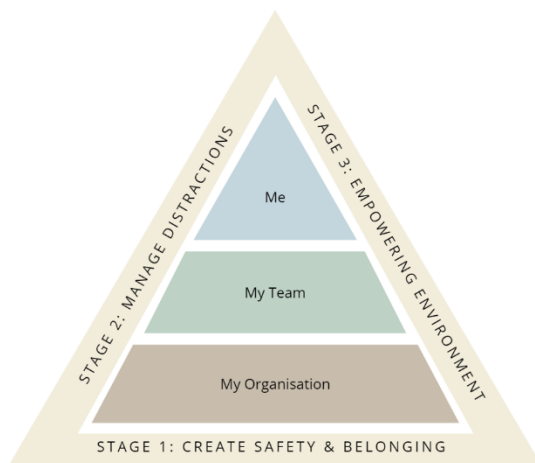
The concept of flow, defined as the optimal human experience by the eminent psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi ([watch his video here](#)) can be applied equally to individuals and organisations, with slight adaptations.

At Somajna, we define flow as the ease of creating value.

All our coaching and consulting interventions are focused on enabling leaders and organisations to find flow; to create value with ease.

However, taking the first steps towards flow can mean having to confront an uncomfortable, almost impregnable silence.

It takes some patience and a lot of courage to lean into that silence, as it can lead one to quite an unflattering mirror. We are inspired by leaders and organisations who care enough do that, to go beyond the obvious, to pave their own path to flow.



### ALiVE: The Organisational Flow Diagnostic

ALiVE is the first step for leaders willing to take that step. It serves as an indicator of the level of the flow within the team/organisation.

It is an anonymous online survey with 22 questions categorised under three themes, stacked across three levels. The design enables the instrument to provide clear actionable insights about areas that need attention. The attention may be required to mobilise leadership, remove roadblocks, build capability or any combination of

factors necessary to enhance the ease of creating value. The three themes which the survey organises itself around are:

1. Safety and Belonging: Do people feel safe to be themselves, take risk and responsibility and, challenge authority when required?
2. Alignment & Focus: How much of the organisation's energy and capabilities are dedicated to distractions?
3. Empowering Environment: With safety and alignment to purpose, do people have the right environment to accelerate and create value with ease?

It is important to remember that flow is distinct from employee engagement. It is possible for an individual or team to be engaged in a distraction to the point that they enjoy it. A lot of distractions in modern workplaces are disguised as projects, reports, tools which don't always have a direct correlation with value or bottom line results but are carried out nevertheless.

ALiVE helps organisations see through such aberrations. With that level of clarity, organisations are then able to take decisive actions towards flow.